
Dušan Janák

The extensive increase of coal production in the Ostrava-Karvina mining region between 1945 and 1955 was made possible by utilizing several categories of forced labour: In 1945 and 1946, interned Germans were put to work there, and following their expulsion, up to 1950, volunteers from the armed forces took their place. From 1950 to 1954, the technical battalions were supplemented by auxiliary battalions, and from 1949, on a smaller scale, by prisoners. In addition, up to 1951 inmates of forced labour camps worked in the coal mines. The wage structure for the workers, formed after the Soviet model and introduced in successive stages in 1947, 1949 and 1951, was among the factors contributing to a decrease in the numbers of long-term employees and a corresponding increase in the numbers of unskilled volunteers. Forced labour was housed in special camps, volunteers in hostels where living conditions were not much better. The labour problem of the Ostrava-Karvina mining region, however, remained, and even when thousands of flats were allocated to the workers, this brought only a partial solution.


Jiří Mašata

This article offers an overview of the policies governing wage allocation during the 1950s. It traces changes in the system of work norms and wage rates in the period 1950–52 and again in 1958–59. Those changes aimed at ensuring swift economic growth while at the same time keeping wage rises to a minimum. Special attention is devoted to the participation of the unified trade union, ROH, and especially its supreme organs, the District Councils, in the wage reforms. Its activities are examined in the exemplary case of the most important industrial district in prewar Czechoslovakia, the Ostrava district. Analysis of wage policies in the Ostrava district gives ample evidence that the role of the unions after the February 1948 turnaround switched from an organization representing workers’ interests to the role of agent of the highest state and party organs.