

TOTALITARIANISM AND POST-TOTALITARIANISM IN THE CZECH REPUBLIC

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This contribution traces the changing interpretations to which the concept of totalitarianism was subject in their respective ideological contexts since its emergence in the 1920s. The authors make the point that if one discounts claims of a purely ideological nature, only two periods in 20th-century Czech history were truly totalitarian: the "protectorate" (1939-1945) and the first years of communist rule from 1948 to 1953. As regards the post-Stalinist communist period, they suggest that the concept of post-totalitarianism proposed by Juan Linz be applied. This would make it possible, on one hand, to distinguish between the goals the system claimed to be putting into practice, and societal reality and thus to describe, for instance, the changing importance of ideology and mass mobilization. On the other hand, this model offers a differentiated terminology for the early, mature, and ultimately the "frozen" stages of post-totalitarianism during the period of "normalization."