

MILITARY DEFENCE TRAINING AS AN ELEMENT OF CIVIL DEFENCE EDUCATION IN FORMER CZECHOSLOVAKIA

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ABSTRACT

Civil defence education in Czechoslovakia was one of the elements of education and the creation of conditions for every citizen to be physically and

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mentally capable and willing to fulfil his or her duties related to homeland defence. The aim of the paper is to examine the basic approaches to the implementation of military defence training as one of the basic elements of civil defence education in Czechoslovakia in the period from 1918 to 1989. The historical-comparative analysis is used as a method for researching military defence training issues. This method is treated as a qualitative research tool. The individual elements that military defence training included, such as exercising in nature, field orientation practice, and marching exercises are characterized. In military defence training in Czechoslovakia, emphasis was simultaneously placed on enabling children to be in touch with nature, to toughen them up and to train their observation skills. The training was an organizational form of school civil defence education. Its main aim was to train and prepare individuals, as well as schools as wholes, for emergencies.

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1. INTRODUCTION

The aim of the paper is to examine the basic approaches to the implementation of military defence training as one of the basic elements of civil defence education in Czechoslovakia. The first monitored period is that between 1918 and 1939, i.e. the years from the establishment of independent Czechoslovakia until the beginning of World War II. The second monitored period is that between 1945 and 1989, i.e. from the end of the Second World War until the Velvet Revolution, which was the period of the socialist governance of the state.

Perceptions and ideas about the tasks of the state gradually changed and evolved over time. This concerned the creation and development of the rule of law and ensuring security and order within the state.¹ Civil defence education was intended to create such an environment in which every

¹ P. Lošonczi, *Risk of physical assaults on health care workers in course of their work*, "Košická bezpečnostná revue", 2018, vol. 8, no. 1, pp. 22–34.

citizen could, from the physical point of view, be able and willing to fulfil his or her civil duties with enthusiasm and faithfulness. Military defence training was one of the ways to achieve this goal, with the support of the theoretical knowledge, that was applied and verified during the training. Self-defence and protection education is of paramount importance for the protection of the population, especially in this era of global menaces. The need for safety has increased.²

2. METHODOLOGY

Comparative historical analysis is used as the method of researching the subject of military defence training as an element of civil defence education in former Czechoslovakia. This method is also used for similar purposes by other educational researchers worldwide.³ The method is useful in this field because each question that is examined in pedagogical research has its genesis. “The comparative historical analysis therefore does not only constitute a key method for historical pedagogy, but it is in fact the initial step in resolving any pedagogical issue”.⁴ Comparative historical analysis is therefore referred to as a method, which, together with empirical research of educational reality, forms two basic sources of information for creating pedagogical knowledge.⁵

The comparative historical analysis is regarded as a specific type of qualitative research. In general, analysis is understood by the authors as the investigation of a certain structure with an aim to break it down into simplified components. This means the breakdown of a certain phenomenon – in this case, the issue of statehood education – to its basic elements, by which one can better understand this phenomenon and subsequently clarify and explain it.⁶ The comparative historical method synthesizes the analogous elements identified via the specific analysis and determines their

² L. Kováčová, *Bezpečnostné vzdelávanie ako nástroj budovania bezpečnostného povedomia v oblasti prevencie kriminality*, [in:] *Sustainability – Environment – Safety 2015: Proceedings of the International Scientific Conference*, 1st edition, Bratislava 2015, pp. 29–34.

³ E.g. M.D. Gall, J.P. Gall, W.R. Borg, *Educational research: An introduction*, New York 2003.

⁴ V. Jůva, *Historická pedagogika*, [in:] *Pedagogická encyklopedie*, J. Průcha (ed.), Praha 2009, pp. 672–676.

⁵ J. Maňák, Š. Švec, V. Švec, *Slovník pedagogické metodologie. Pedagogický výzkum v teorii a praxi*, Brno 2005.

⁶ S. Julínek et al., *Základy oborové didaktiky dějepisu*, Brno 2004.

mutual relations. The method identifies similarities and differences and then, on this basis, determines analogous contexts and relations – both external and internal, substantial and insubstantial, etc.⁷ The comparative historical analysis monitors and compares statehood instruction and military training in the process of their development. This method therefore combines two methodological tools: historical research and comparative analysis. Historical research is specific in that the object of its scientific interest does not exist here and now. Unlike in empirical research, here one is unable to observe this object, or subject it to experiments.⁸ In the current study the authors moved through the following stages of comparative historical analysis:⁹

- selection of pedagogical facts, analysis thereof, exact description and organization from the historical and the logical point of view in order to create a basis for further research activities;
- relational analysis that reveals the dependencies between the studied pedagogical facts and their relationships to the broader social conditions under which they occur (i.e. inclusion in the cultural, political, social and economic context) – comparison is carried out during this stage;
- critical evaluation of the results of the previous analysis and comparison (in order to define the priorities, relationships, dependencies, and influences that have shaped the studied pedagogical problems, and which manifested in subsequent development).

3. RESULTS

General teaching methods, applicable for all subjects, were also useful for civil defence education in the former Czechoslovakia; in particular the observation and demonstration method. Furthermore, the methods were developed via group training, military defence training with combat, medical training, fire protection, and elements of civil defence training, e.g. evacuation. Common methods such as repetition, verification and knowledge assessment were recommended for consolidating, deepening and verifying

⁷ V. Čapek et al., *Didaktika dějepisu I*, Praha 1985.

⁸ J. Maňák, Š. Švec, V. Švec, *Slovník...*, *op. cit.*

⁹ V. Jůva V., *Historická...*, *op. cit.*

the knowledge of students in schools and youth or adults in civil defence education.¹⁰

3.1 EXERCISING IN NATURE AND CIVIL DEFENCE EDUCATION IN FIELD CONDITIONS FROM 1918 TO 1939

The Decree of the Ministry of Education and National Awareness of 24 May 1935 no. 26.969-I/35, on the education of students of national schools for civil defence, required that increased care be devoted to games and exercising in nature, practice in field orientation and marching exercises. According to the Decree of the Ministry of Education and National Awareness of 9 June 1932 no. 69.485-I-32, a proper curriculum for middle schools also included walks as one of the means of physical education: in the first and second grade walking exercises with marching practice up to three hours were recommended, and in the third and fourth grade their duration increased.¹¹

The most important task of civil defence physical education in primary schools was to provide children with the highest possible level of direct contact with nature in the form of, for example, exercises boosting physical toughening up and orientation, sensory training for insightful observation, and exercises in quick decision-making and quick action. Furthermore, the training included voluntary and strict discipline training with brief commands and patriotic education exercises in the form of marching exercises, walks, trips, in accordance with the homeland studies programme.¹² The importance of training, proper nutrition, as well as sleep and rest after physical exercise was explained during practical work. The emphasis on returning to nature was perceived as a healing bath for the tired society.¹³

In the interwar period, civil defence education was dealt with in a comprehensive set of five publications, each of them dedicated to one of consecutive target age groups of students, from six to eleven years of age.¹⁴

¹⁰ L. Reitmayer, *Stručný nárys obecné teorie branné výchovy*, Praha 1972, p. 131.

¹¹ J. Dolenský, *Příklad pochodového cvičení s chlapci 13–15-letými*, "Časopis pro občanskou nauku a brannou výchovu", 1936, year I (XIII), vol. 1, p. 5.

¹² K. Bradáč, *Brannost ve školní tělovýchovné praxi*, "Časopis pro občanskou nauku a brannou výchovu", 1936, year I (XIII), vol. 1, p. 20.

¹³ J. Rublič, *Obrana národa a státu podle vzoru přírody*, Chrudim 1935, p. 11.

¹⁴ K. Kalivoda, B. Stýblová, B. Valla, *10 branných vycházek, vol. I: Pro hochy i dívky 6–7 leté*, Praha 1939; *iidem*, *10 branných vycházek, vol. II: Pro hochy i dívky 7–8 leté*, Praha 1939; *iidem*, *10 branných vycházek, vol. III: Pro hochy i dívky 8–9 leté*, Praha 1939; *iidem*,

The publications were based on Decree No. 34.419-I of 10 March 1938, in which the Ministry of Education and National Awareness determined the exact principles for implementing the element of civil defence education in primary schools. Among other things, the Decree set out the following: “Military physical training is incorporated into physical education – the required number of hours is devoted to exercise in nature”.¹⁵ In addition to the previous schedule, a two-hour compulsory outdoor exercise with military physical training and practical tasks in moral and educational military preparation was established for the middle level.¹⁶ In addition to exercises in the form of games in lower grades, civil defence education was carried out in the form of exercising in nature.

Since the aforementioned publications were released, it was possible to observe a recurrence of a situation that had already repeated itself in history, in which important spiritual leaders of nations would point to the return to nature as a remedy, as societies, due to excess of knowledge, discord between reason and human feelings or other similar causes, were rushing to spiritual helplessness and collapse. The return to nature approach was perceived as the only true source of pure life, wisdom and true earthly happiness. This mental attitude followed the ideas of, for example, J. J. Rousseau.¹⁷

Exercising in nature was commonplace. Marching exercises were organized in order to get to know one’s surroundings and toughen up.¹⁸ Exercise in nature was dealt with in relation to the Decree of the Ministry of Education and National Awareness in five consecutive publications *10 branných vycházek [Ten military walks]*, volumes I–V.¹⁹ The publication series based on the idea that ten military walks were to take place in each single school year. The purpose of these walks was not only to march, but also to walk a certain number of kilometres and always practice certain knowledge and actions as part of the walk. Military walks were presented

10 branných vycházek, vol. IV: *Pro hochy i dívky 9–10 leté*, Praha 1939; *idem*, *10 branných vycházek*, vol. V: *Pro hochy i dívky 10–11 leté*, Praha 1939.

¹⁵ *Idem*, *10 branných vycházek*, vol. IV, *op. cit.*, p. 3.

¹⁶ *Ibidem*.

¹⁷ J. Rublič, *Obrana...*, p. 13.

¹⁸ J. Horák, *Po pochodovém cvičení*, “Časopis pro občanskou nauku a výchovu”, 1924, year I, vol. 9, p. 134.

¹⁹ K. Kalivoda, B. Stýblová, B. Valla, *10 branných vycházek*, vol. I–V, *op. cit.*

as new mandatory conditions necessary for providing civil defence education in its entirety.

The situation of a school collective staying in an outdoor environment with all of its difficulties is a unique opportunity to gain moral fitness, as negotiating natural obstacles helps to boost physical stamina, and movement and orientation in the field lead to the acquisition of knowledge, abilities and skills that belong to military preparation and to the competences of auxiliary and protective services. Among other things, outdoor activities allow for the practical use of knowledge and skills in the field of civil defence education, which students previously acquire in general education subjects, and for the further improvement of these skills.

The requirements from the first walk in the school year to the last, and from the lowest level to the highest were gradually increased. Apart from the students' age, the length of the walks and their distance were adjusted to their physical fitness. The minimum duration of a military walk equalled the time span of two lessons. The place of the walk corresponded to the training goal. The season, the length of the day and the weather were also decisive for the choice of the location and duration of the walk. What went on during the military walks depended on the month. Autumn and winter walks were shorter than summer walks, because their program was limited by low temperature and shorter days.

The use of means of transport (streetcars, buses) was recommended for city school collectives to quickly reach the city's perimeter. Proposals for individual monthly walks were designed to target both boys and girls. The exercises for boys and girls were differentiated. In addition to the aforementioned foci, love of nature and, above all, love of the homeland was supported and emphasized.

In most cases the walk was conceived as a verification of the results of physical education, i.e. of the preparation received at the gym, in the classroom and on the playground, when previously practiced skills, such as commands, signalling, writing messages or preparing sketches, were to be used in field conditions. In particular, during walks, students were supposed to learn and practice activities that could not be carried out elsewhere, e.g. camping or starting a fire and keeping it going. There was a warning in the aforementioned publications that a military walk is not a military exercise.²⁰

²⁰ K. Kalivoda, B. Stýblová, B. Valla, *10 branných vycházek*, vol. IV, *op. cit.*, p. 3.

In order to further illustrate civil defence education, period themes are given in the following overviews as examples for each type of activity, broken down by the age of the students.²¹

3.2 MILITARY DEFENCE TRAINING AND OTHER ACTIVITIES BETWEEN 1945 AND 1989

Each Czechoslovakian school in the period 1945–1989 was a relatively independent social unit that was responsible for the safety of the entrusted students and staff of the school, both during time of peace and war. The school could carry out its protective service task, provided that its staff would be ready to operate under different conditions. Military defence training was one of the main means of preparation for these conditions, where each individual submitted themselves to a common goal, mandated by the principles of the life regime, necessary cooperation, discipline, and mutual assistance.²²

Ministry of Education directives of that period addressed the preparation, implementation and evaluation of military defence training. These were laid out in the following directives:

- Directive of the Ministry of Education of the Czech Socialist Republic reference number 23 071/70-25 of 27.07.1970 on military defence training for primary nine-year schools and schools providing secondary and higher education
- Directive of the Ministry of Education of the Czech Socialist Republic reference number 34 620/77-25 of 5.01.1978 on military courses in schools providing secondary and higher education
- Directive of the Ministry of Education of the Czech Socialist Republic reference number 30 402/84-25 of 12.11.1984 on military defence training and military courses in primary and secondary schools

Military defence training was an organizational form of school civil defence education. Its purpose was to perfect and verify a school as a whole for emergencies. The training took place at the first and second levels of primary schools and at secondary schools twice a year, once in winter and

²¹ K. Kalivoda, B. Stýblová, B. Valla, *10 branných vycházek*, vol. I–IV, *op. cit.*

²² L. Krátký, *Branná výchova II*, České Budějovice 1989, p. 93.

once in summer.²³ It was carried out once a year at apprentice schools. Military defence training was mandatory for students. Its task was to develop the ability of students and school staff to play their military roles in practical group activities. Furthermore, the training educated students in the field of sporting military activities in nature and enabled them to use military skills, develop physical fitness and to toughen up in general. Another goal was to improve the management activities of headmasters and the educational work of teachers in the aspect of complete care for students when performing military tasks.

The content of military defence training was determined by the Directive of the Ministry of Education of the Czech Socialist Republic on military defence training and military courses in primary and secondary schools, which stated: “The following are trained in military exercises – organized departure to a premises of prepared exercise sites, exercises in observation, perception, orientation, distance estimation, training in the use of protective masks and means of protection against the effects of weapons of mass destruction, with inserted sections of running or alternating walking with running”.²⁴

When organizing and carrying out military defence training, it was necessary to focus on fulfilling specific requirements:

- military defence training should test the efficiency of the activities conducted in a given school aimed at teaching students to behave in situations close to public threats or wars (including teaching them to build structure shelters), and at practicing the hiding of students in the school’s sheltered areas,
- during military defence training, the content of civil defence education had to be concretized in practicing a subject matter that was suitable for group teaching and not appropriate for classroom conditions (overcoming natural obstacles, shooting, etc.), as well as in putting into practice the subject matter that had earlier been discussed in a theoretical and practical way within other forms of school civil defence education,
- suitable inclusion of military races and games,

²³ Z. Obdržálek, *Branná výchova ako súčasť komunistickej výchovy*, Bratislava 1977, p. 155.

²⁴ L. Krátký, *Branná... , op. cit.*, p. 94.

- as a school-wide form of teaching, military defence training should allow for the training and verification of organizational and military professional skills of the teaching staff and for the independence of their decision-making.²⁵

Given its content, military defence training consisted of indoor activities, exercising in nature including overcoming certain distances, or a combination of both activities simultaneously. Combined military defence training began with exercises in a building, followed by exercising in nature. The mixed type was considered to be more advantageous due to the fact that it overcame the one-sidedness of military defence training, and there was no reduction to indoor exercising only, or understanding military defence training as simply a walk and a trip into nature. The content of military defence training consisted of:

- activities mastering the skills of the whole class and school in self-protection and in aiding others,
- activities resulting from civil defence measures applied in a given school,
- other military defence activities, physical exercises, games and competitions,
- elements of traffic education.²⁶

The aim of military defence training at the first level was to guarantee that under the guidance of their teachers, students can protect themselves from the effects of potential hostile attacks, especially those involving weapons of mass destruction. At the second level, the exercises were aimed at demonstrating that the students were equipped with the skills necessary for self-reliance and self-defence, and for helping others. The focus of military defence training was put on perfecting the military skills of students. At primary school, military defence training fulfilled the following tasks:

²⁵ V. Matička *et al.*, *Branná výchova*, Brno 1979, pp. 237–238.

²⁶ L. Reitmayer, *Stručný... op. cit.*, p. 143.

- integration, verification, deepening and completion of military knowledge, in particular students' skills gained at classes in various subjects,
- teaching military defence and sports in the field, allowing for students' intellectual skills and physical fitness to be used simultaneously and contributing to the toughening up of their bodies,
- improving the management activities of headmasters and the educational work of teachers, their comprehensive care for students in terms of military defence tasks.²⁷

In order to implement the content and mission of military defence training, education methods such as demonstration with explanation, practice and exercise were used. According to the content focus, military defence training was divided into:

- activities focused on students' self-protection and on aiding others,
- school activities arising from civil defence tasks,
- other military defence activities, physical exercises, military defence games in the field and military defence competitions.²⁸

Military defence games and competitions were amongst the significant and popular forms of civil defence education. Their purpose was to measure and compare students' physical strength and skills. The first group of these activities consisted of games and competitions that had a complex character, basically developing all the elements of the military educational process. The second group were competitions where technical professional focus was the primary factor. A nationwide military defence game for children and youth aged 8–15 called "Signal", implemented by the Pioneer Organization of the Socialist Youth Union, can be used as an example. Other competitions were competitions for fitness badges named "Ready to Work and Defend my Homeland" (PPOV), "Be ready to Work and to Defend your Homeland (BPPOV), and the superior "Badge of Basic Military Defence Readiness".²⁹ *Basic military defence readiness, men-*

²⁷ L. Krátký, *Branná...*, *op. cit.*, p. 93–94.

²⁸ V. Matička *et al.*, *Branná...*, *op. cit.*, p. 241.

²⁹ I. Čapák, V. Pechánek, *Branná výchova. Inovace témat Branná výchova na školách a Zájmová branná činnost pro učitelské směry studia*, Brno 1986, p. 64.

tioned in the badge's name, was a set of disciplines aimed at obtaining basic movement habits needed for work, defence, the strengthening of health, and the increase of fitness. Another competition was the "Military Defence Versatility Race", which was designed for middle school and apprentice youth. The race was the crowning activity of the preparation of students conducted during physical education lessons and military defence training. Mass military defence races for youths and adults included the "Dukla Military Fitness Race", which included running in terrain, shooting and throwing a practice grenade at a target, and the "Sokolov Military Fitness Race", which was a biathlon.

The nationwide military defence game "Always Prepared" and the central military defence competition "For a Partisan Machine Gun", co-organised by the Pioneer Organization SSM, was intended for primary school students. The "Military Defence Versatility Race for Middle Schools" was organized at middle schools nationwide.³⁰ Another related competition for individuals was the "Competition in Artistic and Technical Expression on the Theme of Military Defence" for students, pupils and apprentice schools of all levels, and for teachers.³¹

Another group of competitions were activities that consisted of the fulfilment of professional technical conditions, where young people and adults had to demonstrate their knowledge and skills. These consisted of, for example, "Ready for Health Defence" and "Exemplary Firefighter" competitions. This group included military defence technical competitions that were organized according to individual expertise. These consisted of, for example, motoring competitions – motorcycle and car competitions, competitions in the field of air sports and skydiving, paddling sports, diving, modelling, radio engineering, electronics and shooting.³²

Walks, trips, as well as wandering and camping activities were carried out as part of the physical education component of civil defence education. This mainly consisted of staying in nature combined with homeland study and physical training. Another possible educational activities in this field were: patronage cooperation (i.e. friendly partnership) with armed forces departments; military defence activities in after-school clubs; anniversary celebrations; the readership of magazines on military defence such as

³⁰ L. Krátký, *Branná...*, *op. cit.*, p. 180; V. Matička *et al.*, *Branná...*, *op. cit.*, p. 281.

³¹ I. Čapák, V. Pechánek, *Branná...*, p. 64.

³² L. Reitmayer, *Stručný...*, *op. cit.*, p. 145–147.

“Diary”, “Atom”, “Defence of the People” and “Czechoslovak Soldier”. Among the tools of historical education there were halls, i.e. historical exhibitions, of combat and revolutionary traditions, where examples of heroes and events associated with defence of the state were presented. An example is the current building of the South Bohemian Science Library in České Budějovice, where the Museum of the Workers and Revolutionary Movement was originally located. Part of military upbringing were also the traditions and customs that were created by the individual schools. These included various anniversaries and occasions connected with the Liberation Day and the Army Day celebrations (see Table 1). The military defence tradition also included such celebrations as making pioneer vows, which could e.g. take place in the “halls of tradition”.³³ The goal of all of the above organizational forms was to make youths independent, self-sufficient and modest. Other recommended activities were excursions to military units so that youths could get the right idea about the life of a soldier and the mission of the army in times of peace and war.

TABLE 1. MILITARY DEFENCE CALENDAR, ANNIVERSARIES AND IMPORTANT DAYS IN THE SCHOOL YEAR

MONTH	ANNIVERSARY, IMPORTANT DAY
SEPTEMBER – OCTOBER	September 17th (1944), Czechoslovak Air Force Day October 6th (1944), Czechoslovak People’s Army Day
NOVEMBER – DECEMBER	November 7th (1917), The Great October Socialist Revolution December 12th (1943), Anniversary of the First Agreement on Friendship and Cooperation between Czechoslovakia and the USSR
JANUARY – FEBRUARY	January 15th (1945), Czechoslovak Artillery Day; Battle of Jaslo Anniversary February 25th (1948), February Victory Day February 23th (1918), The Establishment of the Soviet Army

³³ V. Matička *et al.*, *Branná...*, *op. cit.*, p. 251.

<p>MARCH – APRIL</p>	<p>March 8th (1945), Battle of Czechoslovak Soldiers at Sokolov April 5th (1945), Košice Government Program April 12th (1961), The first human flight into space April 22th (1870), Anniversary of the birth of V. I. Lenin</p>
<p>MAY – JUNE</p>	<p>May 1st, Labour Day May 5th (1945), Prague Uprising of the Czech People May 9th (1945), The Liberation of Czechoslovakia by the Soviet Army May 14th–16th (1921), Founding of the Communist Party June 1st, International Children’s Day</p>
<p>JULY – AUGUST</p>	<p>July 11th, Border Guards Holiday August 29th, (1944), Slovak National Uprising</p>

Source: V. Matička *et al.*, *Branná výchova*, Brno 1979, pp. 272–273.

4. CONCLUSION

Military preparation and defence education primarily focused on awakening love of country, nation, state, and on instilling a sense of duty thereto and encouraging efforts for protecting one’s home. The aim was to focus mental and physical strengths to defend the state. Primarily, civil defence education in the broader sense and military training was to be emphasized and deepened at schools. Civil defence education is clearly seen as a certain foundation and a precursor to military education. School training was to support the subsequent physical fitness of the army, and its spirit. The foundation for defence training and education of the entire nation from childhood was thus laid out. The basic idea was that advanced military abilities can avert the war, or at least reduce its negative consequences.

A nation that was considered safe was one that educated the population to carry out creative activities with the same care as that applied to education in defensive awareness. Civil defence education was the vital interest of the national unit itself, and its level was a contemporary measure of security. Civil defence involved a sense of responsibility, duty, order and discipline, and it was also an expression of patriotism and civic solidarity. The aim was to support civil defence for the entire population, regardless of age and whether one was subject to military duty.

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