When Do-It-Yourself became Doctrine of the State Socialism

Doubravka Olšáková

Institute of Contemporary History, Academy of Sciences of the Czech Republic, Prague

The ‘Do-It-Yourself’ phenomenon was very closely related to new concept of a socialist man able to overcome all obstacles and limitations, should they be physical or intellectual. Workers were supposed to replace scientists and work out new, more effective methods. Not surprisingly, workers such as e.g. Alexey Stakhanov became socialist heroes.

The paper will however show that the ideological concept invented in 1950s turned into economic necessity in 1960s when the economic situation of centrally planned economics drastically changed. The Do-It-Yourself phenomenon combined original concept of a new socialist hero replacing scientists and the wish of new regimes to solve economic shortages by ‘autarkic’ methods. Did the ‘Do-It-Yourself’ movement fulfil expectations of new regime - or was it an economic lost?