**Kuklíková Kateřina**

Return to Europe. The International Student Mobility at Charles University Between

Dictatorship and Democracy.

Was it even possible for Czechoslovak students to study in the West before 1989? Under

which conditions? How did the circumstances change after 1989? Was it possible to build on

something from the politically tense period shaped by the Cold War? These questions will be

answered by the dissertation on the international mobility of students at Charles University. With

regard to the time frame, the main topic is situated in the period reaching from late socialism up to the

year 2004, in which the Czech Republic accessed the EU.

With respect to Charles University’s internationalization, student exchanges with the West

were a specific and, before 1989, even a unique form of cooperation beyond the Iron Curtain. With a

few countries from the West, Charles University even established an official collaboration. The

research, therefore, focuses on the students who have studied at universities in these specific states. In

particular, these were the Federal Republic of Germany and the USA, with which Charles University

successfully maintained official academic partnerships even in the years after 1989. The dissertation’s

main starting point is the hypothesis that students&#39; international mobility increased due to the gradual

global relaxation of the socio-political conditions during late socialism. This fact also indirectly

confirmed the attractiveness and former dominance of the West. Therefore, the phenomenon of student

mobility is seen as part of the emerging East-West youth network.

The thesis aims to analyse the dynamic of these contacts in the context of Charles University

Students’ connections with the West, the respective socio-political situation before and after 1989, and

Czechoslovakia’s position on the border of the two blocs. The student exchange research before 1989

will then serve as the cornerstone of further analysis of the potential continuities or discontinuities in

the time after the end of the Cold War. In terms of the methodological framework, the dissertation

builds on transnational historical research highlighting East-West interaction and accentuating the

many different causes that led to the Eastern Bloc&#39;s implosion. Therefore, both the changes of the

structural conditions and the motivation of both parties, i.e., the Charles University and the western

partners, to participate in the student exchange, are examined. Archival research in the Czech

Republic, Germany, and the USA is crucial for elaborating on this topic. Besides, interviews will be

held with exchange participants to gain a supplementary information source on their perception of

contacts between students from the East and the West.