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Behind the Iron Curtain

Review of the Institute for the Study
of Totalitarian Regimes, Czech Republic

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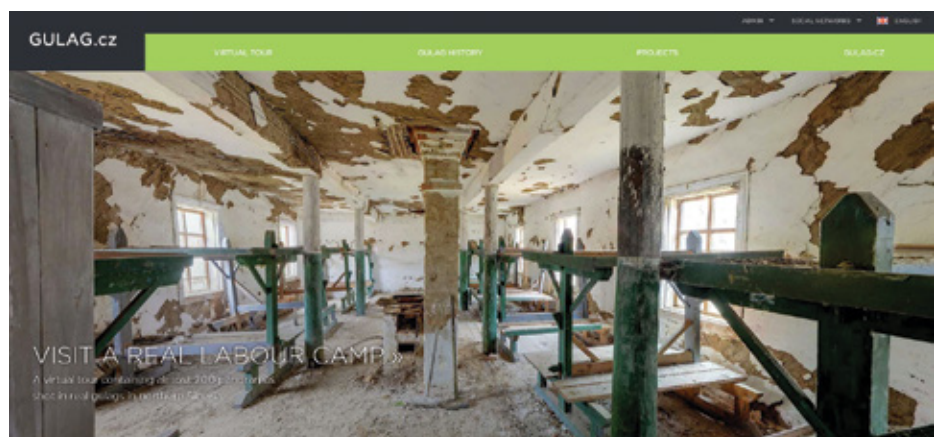
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**Review of the Institute for the Study
of Totalitarian Regimes, Czech Republic**



1/2014, Volume 3

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Dear readers,

You have just opened the third edition of the English-language magazine *Behind the Iron Curtain*. It is comprised of articles published in the last three years (2012–2014) in the journal *Paměť a dějiny* (*Memory and History*), which is issued by the Institute for the Study of Totalitarian Regimes. I write this introduction just as the Czech Republic and other former Soviet Bloc states are marking the 25th anniversary of the fall of the Iron Curtain and systems based on the hegemony of communist or socialist parties. It is an occasion to assess how far we have come from that fateful moment and how much we know about the path taken by society in the Czech Republic and elsewhere in the 20th century (particularly in the period of totalitarian repression), how it changed society, and what insights can be gleaned from it today.

One of today's most pressing problems is, in my view, ignorance of modern history stemming from the prevalent lack of interest in the past as such. I am, therefore, all the more convinced that our country has great need of an institution capable of shaking up the general indifference towards modern history. We need an institution that is unafraid to raise issues of the recent past, even the thorniest of them. I emphasize this wherever I go and make the same point here: Being able to come to terms with the past – which means being in essence willing to explore the past, learn about it and discuss it without prejudice – is of fundamental importance to every society that wishes to regard itself as developed. In my view, this is just as important as nurturing basic civic virtues. Furthermore, if we get to know the past, we don't just learn about predecessors but also ourselves.

The Institute's mission is specific in several regards. It is not intended to be a purely scientific centre, even though its academic and research aspect is essential. It is an institution that also performs (or should perform even more intensively) an important role in the field of education (and not just



in terms of school-based education). It also plays a part in making accessible and interpreting materials related to the Nazi occupation and the communist era (this is in itself a broad span), as well as preparing expert opinions that help the Ministry of Defence respond to applications for recognition of “resistance” or “opposition” to the communist regime. This places the Institute and the Security Services Archive in a very demanding and highly responsible position.

In my vision of the Institute's future, its role will be as a recognised scientific centre that is also society-focused and has a reach beyond its own walls. This means it should not confine itself to scientific research, as many might expect, but rather make use of its findings directly in educational and adult educational activities that are not a sideline but rather central to its activities. It is just in the deepening of the Institute's cooperation with the educational and civic society spheres that I see one of the key conditions for it achieving greater acknowledgement. If, as a state institute, we succeed in becoming a recognized part of civil society, I believe that we have long-term perspective. Such recognition would unquestionably benefit the Institute, as well as representing a positive signal

of change in society's relationship to its own past.

Last but not least, I regard cooperation with our foreign partners as highly important. After all, the Czech Republic has not been alone in experiencing totalitarian or authoritarian regimes – the majority of European states have. What's more, countries that managed to maintain democratic systems frequently found themselves at odds with just those states where democracy and the natural rights of man were repressed. The fact that similar institutions to the Institute for the Study of Totalitarian Regimes exist in most countries, and that we can share our findings, is a good thing. After all, to a certain degree we are talking about shared memories, albeit marked by different nations' specific experiences. In the Czech case, that memory takes the form of a six-year period of Nazi occupation and a dictatorship of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia that persisted for over four decades. It is just those two epochs that are the focus of the articles in this journal. I firmly believe that you will find it an engrossing, pleasurable and enlightening read.

Sincerely

Zdeněk Hazdra, *Director*

ARTICLES AND STUDIES



BBC Broadcasting House head office damaged during an air raid on London.

Source: Jeremy Bennett: British Broadcasting and the Danish Resistance Movement 1940–1945

The Overseas Resistance on the Airwaves of the BBC

CZECHOSLOVAK BROADCASTS FROM LONDON 1939–1945

During World War II radio propaganda became a mass impact weapon. In effect, the war was not just a clash of military forces and increasingly sophisticated weapons – it was also a contest of words and arguments. All sides began using international radio broadcasts to that end. For the Czechoslovak resistance-in-exile in London, radio was even more important: It enabled direct connection with the distant homeland, addressing and encouraging the occupied nation during its most trying times.

ONDŘEJ KOUTEK

International broadcasting

The British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC), initially a privately held limited liability company before being transformed into a public corporation in 1927, broadcast in the United Kingdom. The BBC Empire Service was founded in 1932 for the purposes of broadcasting to the entire British Empire. The service started regular international broadcasts on 19 December 1932 with special programming intended for Australia; from 25 December 1932 onwards it delivered programmes for the entire British Empire. In the years to come, it would broadcast solely in English, focusing on the British citizens dispersed in colonies all over the world. However, international developments eventually led the UK to commence broadcasting in other languages also.¹ The BBC first launched regular broadcasts in Arabic on 3 January 1938, with a view to counterbalancing the influence of Italy's station in Abyssinia. It then focused on Latin American countries, broadcasting in Spanish and Portuguese from March 1938. As a direct response to the escalating Sudeten crisis, broadcasting in French, German and Italian commenced on 27 September 1938 with an address from Prime Minister Neville Chamberlain. The three languages were increasingly heard in BBC's internation-

al broadcasts during the subsequent period and French, German and Italian departments were officially set up in April 1939. As WWII progressed, international broadcasting grew to include all major European languages. In connection with these developments, the Empire Service was renamed the BBC Overseas Service in November 1939. The BBC European Service was established for broadcasts to mainland Europe. At the end of the war, the BBC was the biggest international radio station with services in 45 languages.

Beginnings of the BBC's Czech service

The BBC started expanding its international services rapidly after the declaration of war on Germany on 3 September 1939. A Polish service was being readied in August 1939 but was only launched on 7 September 1939, due to a shortage of staff proficient in the language. Hungarian, Romanian, Serbo-Croat and Greek services were added during the same month (the British were concerned about a rise in Nazi influence in Southeast Europe). Czech was first heard on the BBC's airwaves on 6 September 1939. Social Democrat Josef Kosina² read a statement by Arthur Greenwood, a leading representative of the Labour Party. The following words of encouragement were

addressed to Czech listeners: *We are calling on all the workers of Czechoslovakia to remain firm and keep their hearts strong amid the new wave of violence and to remain true to the deeds and principles of the great Tomas Masaryk. Do not desert the flag that Eduard Benes and his associates continue to bear in our free country. The hour of your liberation is near. Your tragedy has opened the eyes of the world. The cruel injustices now imposed upon you must be righted. The British Labour party declares that the Czechs and Slovaks now under the iron heel of Hitler will be free again soon.*³

The BBC started regular broadcasts in Czech two days later.⁴ To that end, the station hired Josef Kosina. Initially there was just one 15-minute broadcast a day. Jan Masaryk was asked to launch daily broadcasts on 8 September 1939. In his two-minute speech, he stated that the Czech nation was at war with Nazi Germany and emphasised: *The hour of retribution has come. The limits of the patience of the Western democracies have been reached and the struggle to eradicate Nazism has begun. Our programme is a free Czechoslovakia in a free Europe, and we are willing to sacrifice everything to achieve this goal. Czech legions will soon join the Allies on the frontline. The day will come when Nazism, and our oppressors with it, will*



A caricature of R. B. Lockhart, the British propaganda coordinator. Source: Českoslovák, 23 August 1940

*disappear from the face of the Earth. The Czechoslovak nation is calling them to God's court. In the name that I bear, I declare that we will win this fight and that the truth will triumph.*⁵ Masaryk was trying to encourage his fellow countrymen back home in difficult times and give them confidence in future victory while simultaneously asking them to regularly listen to the BBC. Edvard Beneš spoke into a BBC microphone for the first time on 19 September 1939, stressing once again the necessity to fight for a free Czechoslovakia in a free Europe and saying that the country would return to its former borders.⁶ Czech broadcasts from London soon grew to two 15-minute programmes. Focusing on the news, the first one started at 3:45 p.m. and was transmitted in the 41m and 25m wavelengths. The second broadcast, consisting of lectures, commentaries and weekly overviews, went out every day at 8:45 p.m. in the 49–59m shortwave band and on the 262m medium wave band. Occasional Slovak programmes were added to the Czech broadcasts from 31 December 1939. This was the moment when Czechoslovak broadcasts actually started on the BBC.⁷ Initially, their content was mostly limited to reading Czech and Slovak translations of original English programmes. A third 15-minute broadcast, featuring news and repeats of key lectures and transmitted at 7:00 every morning in the shortwave band, was added in



A meeting at the MZV in London. From left: Jiří Špaček, Josef Korbel, Hubert Ripka and Jan Masaryk.

Source: Czech News Agency

March 1940. From then on, the evening broadcasts had a fixed structure – lectures on a topical issue on Sundays, Jan Masaryk's addresses on Wednesdays, political essays on Thursdays, and a weekly review of military and other developments on Saturdays. Sunday afternoon programming offered a weekly review of developments in Slovak. On an as-needed basis, the BBC also included News Talks, carrying for instance reports on the submarine war and the economic efforts of the British Empire.⁸

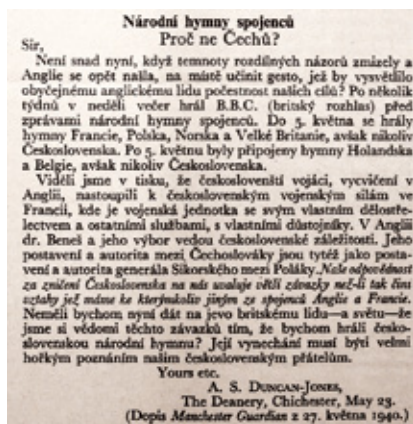
The Czechoslovak government-in-exile had virtually no influence on the broadcasts during the first months of the war. It was fully in the hands of the BBC. British censors supervised the Czechoslovak broadcasts very keenly with the goal of preventing the divulging of military information valuable to the enemy or the promotion of opinions contrary to British political interests. As a result, promoting the opinions of the resistance movement by means of radio propaganda was at first very difficult. In addition to preliminary reviews of the texts, censorship also took place directly in the studio during broadcasts. If the announcer strayed too far from a pre-approved text, dedicated censors were able to interrupt the signal. Many of those supervisors could not speak Czech and their qualification was only partial knowledge of another Slavic language. Sometimes it appeared that their actions were solely

based on their momentary mood. This often led to strange situations.

A Czechoslovak office within the BBC

The BBC's broadcasts to occupied Europe were supervised by three British government departments – the Ministry of Information, the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs and the Minister for Economic Warfare. In order to improve war propaganda and its coordination, the Political Warfare Executive (PWE), an inter-ministerial agency, was established in 1941. Its director general was Robert Bruce Lockhart, who had previously acted as the British government's liaison officer to the Czechoslovak government-in-exile (he actively cooperated with the BBC Czechoslovak service after the war).

A Czechoslovak section – led by a British editor – was set up for the purposes of Czech and Slovak broadcasting as part of the BBC European Service. Elizabeth Barker led the section in 1940. She was later replaced by Phyllis Auty, a historian specialising in Central Europe and the Balkans. For a period, Michael Winch, who led the BBC Polish office, also held the position. Sheila Grant Duff, a leading journalist who had worked as the Prague correspondent of *The Observer*, headed the Czechoslovak section from May 1941. She was followed by Professor Reginald Robert Betts, a historian specialising in Czech medieval history, in



Translation of Dean A. S. Duncan-Jones's letter of 23 May 1940, requesting the inclusion of the Czechoslovak anthem in the BBC broadcasting.
Source: Čechoslovák v Anglii, 12 July 1940.

September 1943. He left the post for health reasons in April 1944. His replacement was the writer Michael Roberts, who had previously been involved in the Polish service as an editor. Finally, in August 1944, the translator Vernon Duckworth-Barker was appointed editor and held the position until the end of the war and through to 1948. The BBC always tried to fill this position with specialists conversant with the situation in Czechoslovakia and Central Europe in general.⁹ The overseas resistance had an indirect influence on the radio broadcasting, supplying the BBC department with news, primarily relating to the situation in the Protectorate. The announcers were Czechoslovaks employed by the BBC. As the broadcaster's employees, they reported to their British superiors and could not receive binding instructions from anyone else. Unfortunately, this work was initially entrusted to people who did not possess the requisite skills or experience. Over time, experienced journalists joined the editors and announcers, helping improve the standard of the broadcasts. However, despite the growing level of professionalism, complaints about poor Czech, stylistic errors and imprecise military terminology were still to be heard occasionally during the latter years of the war. A number of prominent journalists joined the BBC in several waves: in addition to Josef Kosina, they includ-



Prime Minister-in-exile Jan Šrámek (front) chairing deliberations. To his left are Minister of Defence Sergěj Ingr, Minister Rudolf Viest and Minister of Justice Jaroslav Stránský.
Source: Czech News Agency

ed Jiří Hronek, the former Paris correspondent of the Melantrich publishing house's newspapers; Josef Kodíček, a theatre critic; Anna Patzaková, an editor of *Národní osvobození* and music critic; Přemysl "Míša" Papírník, a former London correspondent of *Národní politika*; Gustav Stern, a former *Tribuna* and *Prager Presse* editor; Gustav Winter, a former Paris correspondent of *Právo lidu*; Karel Kříž, an editor and later the parliamentary reporter of the same paper; and V. Vojáček. Later the younger generation made its presence felt. The Czechoslovak team at the BBC included Ota Ornest, a theatre actor and director; Pavel Tigrid, a journalist; Josef Schwarz who had gained radio experience before the occupation; and translator Leo Braun. Later still, the poet and journalist Karel Brušák joined the team. Of the young members, Ivan Jelínek, a poet and pre-war editor of *Lidové noviny*, had the most extensive radio experience. The poet Josef Lederer started working as an announcer in 1943.

The majority of the Czechoslovak programming involved news reporting, which did not do much in the way of challenging Protectorate propaganda. Wednesday addresses by Jan Masaryk, which received their regular slot in the BBC service in March 1940, were the most original and popular pieces. Unlike the other programmes, they were not just translations of English texts – they were the original work of

a popular Czech celebrity, imbued with wit and emotion. When Masaryk left for the USA late in June 1940, Prokop Drtina replaced him on the Wednesday shows. He used the pseudonym Pavel Svátý ("Paul Saint"), which he had chosen while still a member of the domestic resistance. It was derived from St. Procopius, with the name Pavel used for the sake of secrecy. "Pavel Svátý" soon became popular among Czech and Slovak listeners.

Other exiled politicians were offered the opportunity to speak only sporadically – and always at the express invitation of the BBC. This applied most often to Edvard Beneš and Hubert Ripka, who occasionally appeared on BBC shows with important political messages. Beneš's voice and speaking style were not very radio-friendly, so he only delivered very important messages on air.¹⁰ As the political reporter of his office, Prokop Drtina would often present his official statements on the radio. The content of the radio broadcasts dictated by BBC headquarters was often at odds with the expectations and tastes of Czech and Slovak listeners. The BBC's Czech broadcasts initially met with dissatisfaction on the part of the audience at home. Communications from the domestic resistance movement frequently voiced criticism of them, while many Czechoslovaks in London agreed with this criticism. The resistance back home blamed the country's exile political represen-



BBC Monitoring Service Editors at work.

A cutting from the morning edition of *Národní politika* dated 2 September 1939 concerning the ban on listening to external radio stations.

Source: Asa Briggs: *The War of Words*; the author's archive

tatives, believing that they were responsible. They were unaware how little they could actually influence the broadcasts.

The beginning of government broadcasts

The UK's recognition of the Czechoslovak interim government on 21 July 1940 was an important milestone. Two days later, Prokop Drtina spoke on the radio as the political reporter of the newly formed presidential office, announcing this important event to the listeners at home.¹¹ Edvard Beneš followed this with an official address delivered on the BBC on 24 July 1940, explaining the formation of the government-in-exile on the basis of the theory of continuity: *Not having recognised Munich or anything that resulted, we have defended and will defend the principle that the Czechoslovak Republic, Masaryk's republic, lived and existed even after Munich. Hence, our entire legal system continues in terms of international law and politically: in legal terms, there is no such thing as me leaving my office and country; legally, there is no such thing as the disruption of our republic; legally and politically, nothing exists for us that violent Nazism did in our country after the 15th of March.*¹² Vladimír Krajina, a domestic resistance leader, later remembered that when the presi-

dent's speech was being broadcast, *all the streets were empty, and not only in Prague but in the countryside as well.*¹³

The formation of the Czechoslovak interim government had direct implications for the organisation of radio propaganda. The information service was reorganised alongside the formation of the Foreign Ministry (MZV). A special department was formed. Led by Jaroslav Kraus, it was in charge of all government propaganda and included a radio section headed by Josef Korbel.¹⁴ Within the Ministry, the organisation of propaganda fell under the remit of State Secretary Hubert Ripka. The information department was first based in a building in Park Street; after it was bombed in October 1940, the department moved to the Fursecroft palace on George Street.

A single clerk, Eva Strimplová-Outratová, assisted Josef Korbel with the radio department's work in the initial period up until November 1941. Given the extent of the agenda, such modest staffing was highly insufficient. This is why the editor Jiří Hronek and Bohuslav Laštovička, a communist journalist, joined the team towards the end of 1941. Mr Haasz-Kysucký was recruited for Slovak broadcasts. Josef Kodíček came from the BBC as an extern. The military had its own radio editorial team, which successively included Jiří Mucha, Ivan Jelínek,



Lubor Zink, Jaroslav Brož and Josef Josten.¹⁵

The structure of the radio department stabilised in 1942. There were six editors preparing speeches for the Czech government service. Eight to ten additional externs collaborated with the team. In addition to Laštovička, more communists joined the radio department later – first Fridrich Biheller and then in March 1945 Vavro Hajdů. Růžena Hájková, who was in charge of Slovak broadcasts, worked at the radio department from August 1942. The department recruited two BBC employees in March 1943 – Ota Ornest and Josef Kodíček. Josef Korbel remained at the helm of the radio department throughout the war, even though his replacement by Josef Hejret, a journalist and diplomat who had been the editor-in-chief of the *Čechoslovák* exile periodical since 1942, was considered in early 1944. This change did not come to pass in the end.

The stronger position of the Czechoslovak overseas resistance in the UK was apparent in the radio broadcasts themselves. On 28 July 1940, the BBC played the Czechoslovak anthem along with

p. Ripka 1 *K. Ripka*

PŘEHLED ČESKOSLOVENSKÉHO VYSÍLÁNÍ ZA MĚSÍC ČERVEN 1941.

| | |
|------------------|---|
| 1.6. - 7.00 a.m. | Odborářské vysílání - J.Kalina. |
| 6.30 p.m. | Labour party - Dr.G.Winter./opakováno/ |
| 6.45 p.m. | Slovenský přehled - četl Ján Bečko. |
| | Výročí bitvy u Skagerraku - Dr.I.Ducháček/K/ |
| | Zemnovy válečné oile - J.Kodíček |
| 12.15 p.m. | Nový Pád - Dr.Drtina |
| | Komentáře: Čeští odboráři |
| | Krétá |
| | Pardubice |
| | Syrie |
| | Cloth rations |
| | Německé pochyby |
| | Sjend Labour Party |
| 2.6. - 6.45 p.m. | Komentátoři: Rusko-česko-slovenský Klinger-Laudman |
| | Angličan mluví k Českoslovákům - R.Auty |
| 12.15 p.m. | Obříše německého zásobování - Dr.Brđely |
| | Komentáře: Kréta |
| | Roosevelt |
| | Schůzka na Brenneru |
| | Přesila ve vzduchu |
| | Hopkinsonova řeč |
| | Moravec |
| 3.6. - 6.45 p.m. | Komentátoři: Ducháček-Stránský |
| | Obříše slovenského zásobování - Dr.Čaplovič |
| | Hlasý o přístáve uspořádání Evropy - Dr.V.Útrata |
| | Mezinárodní situace - Dr.J.Kreus |
| 12.15 p.m. | Komentáře: Zeměny v N.S. |
| | Goeringův rozkaz |
| | Fráňský rozhlas |
| | Hegs |
| | Grónsko |
| | Komentátoři: Koerbel-Drtina |
| | Voskovec a Werich |
| 4.6. - 6.45 p.m. | Vojenská beseda-Koutník-Mucha |
| 10.45 p.m. | Jan Masaryk |
| 12.15 p.m. | Komentáře: Syrie |
| | Vilém II. |
| | Rusko-česko-slovenský Jugoslávie |
| | Sociální ústav v Tatrách |
| | Labour party |
| | Slováci nechtí bojovat pro Němce |
| | Komentátoři: Císar-Mlávík |

Overview of the BBC Czech broadcasts from London in early June 1941.

Source: National Archive

Trucháček *70*

B.B.C. - Czechoslovak Programme
Friday, 12th September, 1941 - 8.45 p.m.
Written by Dr. F. Urtina - Read by Mr. Ernest.
The names are not to be mentioned.

A nyní vyslechněte výzvu, ke které jsme vás sezváli na začátku dnešního vysílání.

Češi, a Slováci, bratři a sestry!

Dnes je 12.září 1941, dnes jsou tomu tři roky, co vypuklo henleinovské povstání proti Československé Republice. Dnes jsou tomu tři roky, co byla prolita krev prvních Českoslováků - četníků a členů Stráže obrany státu. Dnes před třemi roky obětováni svoje životy za vlast první státní obránci našich odvážných hranic.

Dnes je na čas ukázat, že památky těchto padlých jsme nezapomněli a nezapomeneme! Dnes je na čas ukázat, že oběť těchto padlých nebyla marná. Proto volíme dnešní den - Češi a Slováci - abychom vyhlásili generální bojkot všech českých a slovenských novin, tištěných pod německou cenzurou! Generální bojkot všeho československého tisku začne v neděli 14.září 1941, ve čtvrtý výroční den smrti Prezidenta Osvoobodite: Tomáše Garrigua Masaryka. Generální bojkot potrvá po celý Masar: kvů týden, včetně neděle 21.září 1941. Po tento týden, den co den, každý uvědomil Čech a Slovák, každá uvědomilá česká a slovenská žena se budou řídit tímto pokynem.

The introduction of the call to start the boycott of the Protectorate press

of 12 September 1941.

Source: T. G. Masaryk Institute Archive

the Allies' anthems at the beginning of the broadcast for the first time since the launch of the service. From 11 August 1940 the Czechoslovak interim government was given the opportunity to produce 15 minutes of its own radio content every day - the 7:15 p.m. evening broadcast in the shortwave band, titled *Talks with Home*. At the same time, broadcasts provided directly by the BBC continued at the usual times and previous scope. What listeners at home perceived as a whole when listening to the London broadcasts were in fact two separate programmes. The government broadcasts obviously had to take into consideration the requirements of the British radio and commentators had to be submitted to the British censors in English.¹⁶ The requirement to translate texts into English for censorship purposes remained in place until the end of the war. The British side continued editing the standard news service. Nevertheless, the overseas resistance acquired space of its own in the broadcasts. The Czechoslovak service was extended again after three months, receiving a regular structure in the process.

There were three 15-minute broadcasts per day from 10 November 1940 - at 7:00 a.m. in the 261m, 285m and 373m wavebands and the 31m and 49m wavebands, at 5:30 p.m. in the 25m and 49m wavebands, and finally at 10:30 p.m. in the 261m and 285m wavebands and the 31m and 49m wavebands. At 5:45 p.m. *Talks with Home* would begin, a 15-minute government broadcast containing various commentaries and lectures. Fridays featured 15 minutes of military broadcasts, in the main offering overviews of the current situation on the fronts. This programme was prepared by František Moravec, the chairman of the intelligence section of the Ministry of National Defence (MNO). Sunday morning services at 7:00 featured workers' programmes provided by the social democrats Josef Bělina, Josef Kosina, Jiří Stolz and Ján Bečko, the State Secretary of the Ministry of Social Care.¹⁷ Czechoslovak military forces were not active at the BBC alone. Short-wave transmissions from Cairo in the 29.83m waveband started on 1 February 1942. The programme aired every day, first at 10:45 and then at 8:30 p.m. Egypt Daylight Saving Time. These

broadcasts continued until 27 November 1944.¹⁸ Czech and Slovak programs were also aired on the stations Levant Beirut (medium wave, 283m) and Radio Jerusalem (449m).

Radio commentators

Talks with Home, the daily government programme, provided space to a broader range of exile politicians to be heard on the airwaves. As a result, national socialists Jaroslav Stránský and Vladimír Klecanda (using the pseudonym Vladimír Kalvoda), Christian democrat Jan Šrámek, social democrats Jaromír Nečas and František Němec, and Agrarian Party member Ladislav Feierabend joined Masaryk, Beneš, Drtina and Ripka as radio commentators. Pavol Macháček established himself as a regular commentator for Slovakia. In addition to him, Slovak agrarian politicians Juraj Slávik and Ján Lichner, social democrat Ján Čaplovič, and communist Vladimír Clementis (from 1941) spoke most often. Top representatives of the Czechoslovak Army occasionally spoke on air as well; they included Generals Sergěj Ingr and Rudolf Viest and Fran-

Broadcasting under the sign of Victory

Victor de Laveleye, a Belgian politician who worked at the BBC as the head and regular commentator of the Belgian service in French, came up with a very successful initiative in early 1941. He proposed on 14 January 1941 that all Belgians – both Flemings and Walloons – use the letter “V” as a shared symbol of resistance to the occupation. The sign could stand for both “victory” (victoire in French) and “freedom” (vrijheid in Flemish). Soon after, Belgians started spontaneously painting the letter “V” on walls all over the country. Given the success of the campaign, Winston Churchill asked all nations of the occupied Europe on 19 July 1941 to use the symbol “V” as the sign of the final victory over Nazism.^a

At the end of June 1941, the BBC started filling the intermissions between broadcasts with a new jingle in the form of four drum beats – three short and one long. This is Morse code for the letter “V”. The new jingle was intended to remind listeners in Europe that the victory over Germany will finally come despite all hardships. The four beats are also the same as the introduction to Beethoven’s Symphony No 5, also known as the Symphony of Destiny. The “V” symbol became an opportunity to provide a common framework for the broadcasts to the occupied countries and a unifying idea against the Nazi notion of a new order in Europe.

The Nazis initially tried to ignore the campaign, then referred to its bearers as saboteurs and threatened them with severe punishment. The symbol “V” appeared increasingly often in the Czech lands too. Someone even painted large white “V”s on the door of the Oberlandrat office in Olomouc. Jan Masaryk praised the success of the campaign at home in his radio address of 23 July 1941: I am happy to see the letter “V” doing so well among you, as it has in the rest of Europe. “V” is almost at the end of the alphabet; one day we will reach the letter Z and that will not be written in chalk: by then we will be starting a purge and settling of accounts with pseudo-Germans.^b

Goebbels’ propaganda struck back on 16 July 1941: The Germans made their own campaign, claiming the “V” sign as a symbol of the victorious campaign against the USSR (with the “Viktoria” slogan). The next day, all the Protectorate papers came out with a coloured V printed all over them; the letter also appeared on posters, banners and even roads in municipalities. It was also present on postage stamps and in radio broadcasts and weekly newsreels. Nazi propaganda took the project to an absurd dimension. The Reich Protector’s office ordered a downscaling of the project at the end of August 1941 and it was only discontinued for good in January 1942.

The BBC mocked the German action with the slogan “Stolen V”. Ota Ornest made the following commentary on what the Nazi propaganda did: *The notorious advertising conman Josef Goebbels has completed yet another big fraud. [...] Goebbels was unable to not steal, and when you are born as a liar and thief you have to lie and steal. You have to lie and steal, even though the theft cannot reap anything but scorn, shame and ultimately the deserved punishment. This is why Goebbels has tried to steal the letter “V” from you, even though he cannot steal your victory away.*^c

a For the “V for Victory” campaign refer to BRIGGS, Asa: *The War of Words*, pp. 365–384.

b MASARYK, Jan: *Volá Londýn*, p. 115.

c AČRo, f. Londýn, k. 1941/8, issue 710, radio address, 28 July 1941.



Installing the “V” (“Viktoria”) flag on Wenceslas Square in Prague, July 1941...



... and the “V” after the war. Winston Churchill with wife Clementine in 1945 as we all know him – with a cigar (in his left hand) and the victory sign.

Source: Czech News Agency

tišek Langer, writer and the head of the military health services, who wrote several radio plays for the Czechoslovak service.¹⁹

Exile politicians were keen to appear on the BBC. The broadcasts could increase their popularity at home, and provide an income. In 1940 the BBC paid about one pound per minute on the air. As a result of jealousy among the exiles, in August 1941 the payment became the target of open criticism in *Naše noviny*, the daily of the Czechoslo-

vak Army in England. A rather incendiary debate ensued, meeting with little understanding on the part of the Allies. Critics of the payments completely disregarded the fact that taxes ate up half of them. *Naše noviny* wrote that it was strange encouraging listeners at home to be brave and make sacrifices while receiving money for each minute of speech.²⁰ The criticism was joined by *Nová svoboda*. The magazine first attacked the radio commentator Ivo Ducháček with a brief epigram, adding

in the next issue that young commentators should rather serve in the military and leave room for older and more qualified personnel.²¹

Criticism of the compensation was successfully subdued during the autumn of 1941. However, it left a bad aftertaste, so when the BBC started considering the inevitable savings in the Czechoslovak section, Ripka immediately agreed with halting the payments altogether. This occurred on 16 August 1942, ending the payment dispute once and for all.²² The

exile politicians sometimes quarrelled jealously over getting equal opportunities to appear on air. One of the earliest conflicts of this type involved Jan Masaryk. When he returned to office on 25 September 1940, the equally popular “Pavel Svátý” lost his slot in the government service. This led to tension between the two. Drtina was given a new opportunity to appear on the radio on the occasion of the 28 October holiday in 1940. It was later decided that he would appear regularly as part of the Sunday evening broadcasts.

Drtina's style differed substantially from Masaryk's, but was equally successful at providing encouragement to people at home. Masaryk enjoyed the role of earthy storyteller, sometimes preferring to take things a bit too far than being less witty.²³ He put his folksy cheekiness to use in particular when referring to Nazi representatives, devising a new ironic nickname on every occasion (for example, by calling Adolf Hitler a “Vienna upholsterer”, Joachim von Ribbentrop a “liquor seller” and Karl Hermann Frank an “undead jackal”). While his rough and belligerent style won him hordes of listeners, exile circles criticised Masaryk for losing self-control while on the microphone.²⁴ He benefited from his ability to improvise, often preparing several alternatives of his address and changing lines at the last moment. Drtina was more sober. He gradually cultivated an original style capturing the exile's warm relationship to his motherland. Jaroslav Stránský was another popular commentator with a refined and elegant style and strong emphasis on the moral side of combating Nazism. In his addresses, he sought the eternal and universal truths that Germans had sadly abandoned under the Nazi regime.²⁵

The London broadcasts developed and improved successfully despite many challenges, in particular following the air raids on London. Its workers were often exposed to high risk. Despite all the complications, however, they managed to fulfil their mission. In December 1940 the Czechoslovak section had to move from the head office building, BBC Broadcasting House, damaged during air raids, to the Maida Vale studio. This building was also later severely damaged by a German bomb. From 1941, the Czechoslovaks broad-

cast from Bush House, an impressive radio building between Aldwych and The Strand in the very heart of London.

Protectorate measures to counter international broadcasts

Listening to international radio stations entailed a great deal of risk, but this did not discourage listeners at home and the occupation and Protectorate authorities attempted to combat it. As early as on 1 September 1939, the Council of Ministers for Defence of the Reich in Berlin issued an ordinance on extraordinary radio measures that forbade listening to international radio stations. A breach of the ban could be punishable by penitentiary or prison. “Misused” radio receivers were to be seized. The ordinance also banned the dissemination of news from foreign stations. A breach of this ban was punishable by penitentiary, or the death penalty in especially severe cases. Special courts had jurisdiction to hear “radio crime” cases.²⁶ On 11 September 1939 an implementing regulation was issued, laying down the jurisdiction of martial courts for the extraordinary radio measures of 1 September. A Protectorate sign with a warning, reminding listeners of potential sanctions, was to be placed on every radio receiver on a mandatory basis. The special courts were often draconian, rating activities associated with listening to foreign radio as severely as high treason or sabotage. Those who listened to London faced the real threat of the death penalty. It has been documented that in the Pankrác prison alone 23 out of those executed from April 1943 to the end of the war were sentenced to death for “radio crimes”. In total, the number of Protectorate citizens executed for listening to foreign radio stations and disseminating news is estimated at several dozen. Many others were sentenced to many years behind bars.²⁷ Even the threat of punishment did not discourage listeners, so various possibilities for interference with foreign broadcasts were considered, be it in the form of blocking radio sets from receiving specific wavelengths or the use of jammers. Eventually the Gestapo was authorised to seize radio receivers en masse on 30 September 1941. Seizures began immediately in some municipalities. On 11 October 1941 the Protectorate press wrote that

radios had been confiscated from all citizens in Lysá nad Labem, Čelákovice, Heřmanův Městec, Litomyšl and Úvaly due to irresponsible individuals breaching the ban.²⁸ Intensifying this effect, the police director in Prague issued a decree stating that all citizens of Vršovice and Jinonice had to submit their radios less than a week later.²⁹ Since this also prevented them from listening to the Protectorate and Reich broadcasts, confiscated radios were later returned to some owners. To prevent listening to foreign broadcasts, a Reich Protector's decree on shortwave receiving devices was issued on 10 March 1943. All radio receiver owners were obliged to have their shortwave receiving devices removed. People had to submit receivers for this modification on the basis of official decrees issued by the respective district or police authorities. Receiving medium wave and long wave broadcasts was permitted. Receivers that allowed only for shortwave reception were confiscated, with adequate compensation. Disobedience of these instructions was to be punished severely – at least five years in a penitentiary for not having the shortwave receiving devices removed and at least 10 for having such apparatus reinstalled.³⁰ However, Czech DIY enthusiasts found a workaround, replacing the removed components with makeshift coils, popularly referred to as “čerčilkas”. The word was derived from the name of the then British Prime Minister W. Churchill – which clearly shows that their main purpose was to facilitate listening to broadcasts from London.

Radio Advisory Board

In connection with the extension of the Czechoslovak service from 10 November 1940, Hubert Ripka decided to establish the Radio Advisory Board (Poradní rozhlasový sbor) in order to *provide assessment, advice and suggestions to aid the work of the Information Department of the Foreign Ministry*.³¹ It was intended to bring together representatives of political, official and journalistic circles among the London exiles, who could contribute towards improving the quality of broadcasts and discuss programming. The inaugural meeting took place on 2 December 1940. Ripka and Foreign Minister Ma-

Most important figures involved in the broadcasts from London

Hubert Ripka (1895–1958), politician, journalist and historian

He worked as an archivist for the MNO from 1919–1925 and then as an active journalist. He was an international politics commentator at the *Demokratický střed* weekly and at *Lidové noviny*, and was the parliamentary reporter of *Národní osvobození* from 1925–1930. He was initially a member of the Czechoslovak National Democrats, then joined the Czechoslovak National Socialist Party (ČSNS). One of Edvard Beneš's political confidants. He left the country in 1938. A member of the Czechoslovak National Committee (1939–1940), State Secretary (1940–1941), State Minister of the Foreign Ministry in London (1941–1945), member of the ČSNS presidium and an MP (1945–1948), and Minister of Foreign Trade. He fled again in 1948 and taught international politics and contemporary history in the USA (1949–1955). He lived in the UK from 1955. He was active in exile as a member of the committee of the Council of Free Czechoslovakia. He wrote a number of books and essays including *Munich: Before and After* (1939), *Le Coup de Prague. Une Révolution Préfabriquée. Souvenirs* (1949), *A Federation of Central Europe* (1953), and *Eastern Europe in the Post-War World* (1961).

Josef Korbel, né Körbel (1909–1977), diplomat and political scholar, father of American diplomat and politician Madeleine Albright

He joined the Press Department of the MZV in 1934. He worked as press attaché with the Czechoslovak Embassy in Belgrade (1936–1939) and as the head of the radio department of the exiled MZV (1940–1945), actively shaping BBC broadcasts to Czechoslovakia. He headed the Czechoslovak Embassy in Yugoslavia from 1945–1948 (while also being ambassador to Albania 1947–1948). In 1948 he led the UN Commission for India and Pakistan in Kashmir. He settled in the USA towards the end of 1948 and started teaching political science at the University of Denver where he worked until his death. He founded the School of International Studies there in 1964 and became its first dean (the school was named The Josef Korbel School of International Studies in his honour in 2008). The University of Denver established the Josef Korbel Humanitarian Award in 2000. He wrote many books and essays, e.g., *The Communist Subversion of Czechoslovakia. 1938–1948. The Failure of Co-existence* (1959) and *Poland Between East and West. Soviet and German Diplomacy toward Poland, 1919–1933* (1963).

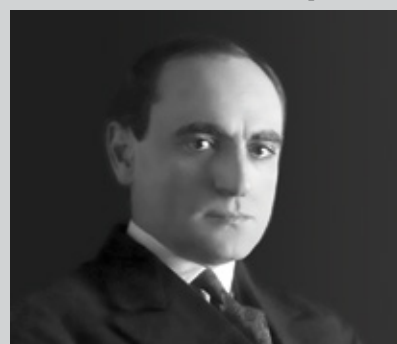


Prokop Drtina (1900–1980), politician, lawyer, son of philosopher, pedagogue and politician František Drtina

He worked at the Financial Prosecutor's Office in Prague (1924–1929). A member of the National Labour Party (1925–1928), he then joined the ČSNS in 1928. He actively organised the Přítomnost (Present) club and contributed to *Demokratický střed* (1926–1939). He worked as an official in the President's Office ("KPR") from 1929 and then as President Beneš's personal secretary (1936–1938). In 1939 he worked as an assistant clerk with the Supreme Administrative Court. One of the founders of the Political Centre resistance movement after the occupation. Exiled in 1939, worked as a political official of the KPR in London (1940–1945) and as vice-chairman of the Legal Council (1942–1945). Led the Radio Advisory Board from 1941. He was a member of the government delegation for the liberated territory in 1944. He worked as the principal of the KPR political section in 1945. He served as an MP and Minister of Justice as well as a member of the central executive committee of the ČSNS (1945–1948; from 1946 he was also a member of the presidium). He was held in detention from 1948–1953, sentenced for 15 years imprisonment in a secret trial in 1953 and released on 10 May 1960 under a presidential amnesty. He worked as an assistant at the National Technical Museum library (1961–1967). Although he was rehabilitated by a court in 1969, the ruling was annulled in 1971. In 1975 he was sentenced for treason again. He was an active dissident and samizdat author in the 1970s and signed Charter 77. He published several books, his chief work being the memoirs *Československo můj osud. Kniha života českého demokrata 20. století (Czechoslovakia My Destiny. A Book of the Life of a Czech Democrat in the 20th Century, 1982)*.

Josef Kosina, né Kalina (1905–1977), journalist and trade unionist

He was active as an official of the Social Democratic party (ČSSD), the Czechoslovak Trade Unions and as an editor of various trade union magazines from 1929. He left the country in 1939 and became an announcer and then editor at the BBC's Czechoslovak section in London, where he worked until the early 1970s. Between 1940 and 1945 he also was the secretary of the single trade union of the Czechoslovak exiles in the UK and represented the ČSSD with the UK's Labour Party (1945–1948). He stayed in the UK after 1948 and participated in the work of the ČSSD in exile. He was an opponent of the mainstream of anti-communist expatriates.



Josef Kodíček (1892–1954), journalist, arts critic, playwright, screenwriter, and theatre, film and radio director

He was a culture journalist from 1919. He was an editor of *Scéna* and editor-in-chief of the theatre department at the daily *Tribuna* (1919–1927). Between 1927 and 1930 he worked as a script editor and occasional director at the Municipal Theatre in Prague's Vinohrady. He contributed articles to many newspapers and magazines in the 1930s (mainly *Přítomnost*, *Lidové noviny*, *České slovo* and *Prager Mittag*) and was a member of the "Friday Men". Left for London in 1938. From 1939 he worked as an editor of the BBC's Czech section and as the editor-in-chief of the *Central European Observer*. From 1943–1945 he worked at the radio department of the MZV in exile. He never returned to Czechoslovakia after the war and worked at Radio Free Europe in Munich from 1951 to his death. He co-edited three volumes of the *New Czech Drama* compilation (1926, 1927, 1929), wrote the drama *Zůstane to mezi námi (It Will Remain Between Us)* (1933), contributed to several film scripts and direction and wrote the monograph *Václav Špála* (1927).

Source of images: Czech News Agency



Commemoration of Lidice held symbolically in the destroyed cathedral in Coventry, 10 June 1944.
In attendance are, inter alia, Prokop Drtina (fourth from left) and Hubert Ripka (seventh from left).

Source: author's archive

saryk took part in the meetings quite regularly.

Jaroslav Stránský was the first Chairman of the Radio Advisory Board and Josef Kosina was its secretary. When Stránský was appointed a member of the government-in-exile in October 1941, Prokop Drtina replaced him. Pavol Macháček was appointed vice-chairman of the Board. Its members included various exile politicians, journalists, radio editors and representatives of the military. The very first term of office of the Radio Advisory Board in 1941 demonstrated how useful it was. Many of its suggestions led to a number of partial improvements in the broadcasts. The Board met roughly once a month and its membership gradually grew. Among the new members were a group of communists, Bohuslav Lastovička, Fridrich Biheller, Vilém Nový and Jindřich Spurný, who joined in September 1941; Spurný was appointed second vice-chairman on 30 November 1942. The Radio Advisory Board had about 30 members in the end.

Given its mixed composition, the Board saw fundamental ideological disputes concerning the focus of the broadcasts. This reflected the more general political differences regarding the direction of the resistance-in-exile. The Radio Advisory Board often criticised the broadcasts very sharply, while the debates helped fine tune the line taken by exile propaganda. The opposing voice of the communists was loud in the debates.³²

Further development of the BBC's Czechoslovak service

The BBC further expanded the government broadcasts on 16 February 1941. A new programme, night-time news with commentaries ("talks"), was broadcast from 0:15 a.m., benefiting from high topicality and good audibility. This was a joint effort of the government and the BBC. The special quarter-hour usually contained up to the minute news that offered a counterpoint to the enemy's latest propaganda. Following requests from the homeland, the afternoon *Talks with Home* show

was aired one hour later (beginning at 6:45 p.m.) so that more people could listen to it. It always revolved around a brief lecture (usually focusing on social issues on Sundays and commenting on military developments every second Monday). The BBC's routine news service in the Czech and Slovak languages was still broadcast three times a day, at 7:00 a.m., 6:30 p.m. and 10:45 p.m.³³ With a view to increasing the audience, the number of frequency bands for the broadcasting of the Czechoslovak programme was increased to seven different wavelengths. When the UK finally recognised the Czechoslovak government in London on 18 July 1941, the government broadcasts were not expanded further, but at least control over them loosened noticeably. However, certain restrictions due to the political situation remained in place. The time allocated for Czechoslovak broadcasts was extended significantly. However, the extent of broadcasts in Slovak was inordinately small. Therefore, it was decided in June 1941 to include Slovak lectures of five to six minutes as

part of *Talks with Home* twice a week (on Mondays and Thursdays). The supervision of the Slovak programmes was entrusted to Ján Čaplovič. The Slovaks appointed a committee of four members, Jozef Valo, Pavol Macháček, Ján Paulíny-Tóth and Pavel Viboch, in November 1942 with the aim of promoting further changes to the broadcasts. The committee was given the right to send a representative to the daily meetings of the radio department. Attempts to further expand Slovak broadcasts did not come to fruition, however, as from the BBC's viewpoint the language aspect was not so important; the content of the addresses mattered more.

The Protectorate media did not engage in polemics with the BBC during the initial period of the war. The turning point came in April 1941 when the Protectorate press tried to use the defeat of Yugoslavia to play down the optimistic outlook expressed in the BBC's broadcasts. "Pavel Svatý" responded in a speech to his homeland: *They are writing about the BBC, about rumours, about rumour mongers, obdurate democrats, unrepentant Benešites and Jewish Masons, and the London propaganda is even described as "so misleading that many fools fall for it and reportedly believe that England will win". Reportedly, all of us here in England are "in the service of English plutocrats and lords who betrayed us already in 1938 and Dr Beneš is someone to whom bargaining with the nation's blood has become second nature."* It is all so pathetic and stupid that there is no point in responding to it.³⁴ The government-in-exile also intensified its propaganda in 1941. The BBC scored a major victory with the homeland press boycott of September 1941, intended to openly show disapproval of the work of collaborating journalists. The key to its success was that the idea was embraced by the Central Leadership of the Home Resistance Movement (Ústřední vedení odboje domácího, "ÚVOD") as an ideal form of passive resistance. The boycott took place for a full week from 14 September 1941 on the occasion of the anniversary of T. G. Masaryk's death. The BBC played the leading role in promoting the project. The first call was heard on the BBC on 12 September 1941, with announcer Ota Ornest speaking. It requested that no Czechs in the Protectorate buy, read or borrow any newspaper during

"Masaryk Week".³⁵ The campaign escalated in the addresses of popular radio commentators in subsequent days. The press boycott was a huge success. Piles of unread papers were left at outlets and hardly anybody bought newspapers or magazines. Activist journalists responded with a sharp counter-campaign, labelling the effort as a man-hunt organised by Czech Jews that had fled to England. They also voiced their concerns that demonstrative rejection of newspapers might lead the occupation authorities to halt the Czech press altogether.

Changes to the BBC's Czechoslovak service resulting from the Heydrich assassination

The BBC broadcasts depended to a great extent on the regular supply of information from the homeland, which was provided in particular using radio/telegraphic links with the resistance. When the deputy Reich Protector Reinhard Heydrich assumed office, martial law was declared and the domestic resistance was largely wiped out. As a result, the connection between the Protectorate and the exiles in London was interrupted at the end of 1941 and was maintained only with major difficulty afterwards. The situation got worse in time. The BBC Monitoring Service was a big help, monitoring the broadcasts of enemy radio stations.

Only thanks to monitoring was it possible to organise various radio activities in response to Protectorate propaganda. For example, the BBC organised a campaign targeted at Czech young people in February 1942, trying to thwart Nazi attempts at re-educating them. Similarly, several campaigns targeting farmers were prepared in the same year. Workers' campaigns were quite frequent (27 addresses were delivered in March 1942 alone), aimed at nullifying Heydrich's attempts at winning over Czech workers. Other campaigns pointed out major anniversaries (such as 13 addresses on the occasion of the third anniversary of the beginning of the German occupation). The increased interest among the world public in the destiny of a nation put to a grave test during Heydrich's rule contributed to yet further strengthening of radio broadcasts in Czech and Slovak. The BBC's morning

news broadcasts were extended beyond the existing schedule in March 1942. From then, four 10-minute broadcasts were transmitted in the morning (at 7:10, 8:10, 9:10 and 10:10 a.m.).³⁶ With effect from 1 May 1942 the Czechoslovak service received another quarter-hour at 3:00 p.m., although this broadcast was not part of the government service and was fully in British hands. It contained primarily news and press reviews.³⁷ These changes to the radio schedule were a part of extensive remodelling of the BBC's services for Central and Western Europe (with the French section being significantly expanded).³⁸

The development of propaganda from London was greatly influenced by events following the assassination of Reinhard Heydrich.³⁹ Martial law was declared in the Protectorate and State President Hácha read an address on Prague radio on 30 May 1942, referring to Beneš as the *Czech nation's enemy number one*.⁴⁰ K. H. Frank decided to organise a massive propaganda campaign in which the Czech nation was to express demonstratively its loyalty to the Reich. The situation escalated with the response to the razing of Lidice and Ležáky in June 1942. The government-in-exile responded with official protests and the BBC's broadcasts followed the same spirit in the subsequent period.

In many addresses Czech announcers were already taking a hard-line stand toward Germans in the spirit of the concept of collective guilt. British censors began tolerating this line of thought. Initially, the increasingly radical attitude of the overseas resistance was in conflict with the British government's position. Also, until 1942 the British were reluctant to consider in advance the issue of the future borders of a liberated Czechoslovakia, which was closely connected with relations with the German minority.

The distinction between Germans and Nazis in Czech addresses broadcast on the BBC started to wane in the autumn of 1941, when for instance Vladimír Klecanda said the distinction was a false notion, stating that the entire German nation has been afflicted by the terrible illness of Nazism.⁴¹ The same commentator was also one of the first to expressly state the idea of expatriation of the Germans. In an address



Announcer Růžena Hájková at the BBC microphone.

Source: Rada žen, 1946, year 2, issue 43

on 27 December 1941, he stated that *there will be no more German villages in the Czech settlement, no more German isles in the Czech sea, no more German Svitavy, no more German Znojmo, and the German villages in the Vyškov area and the Jindřichův Hradec area and everywhere they are in our living space will disappear with finality.*⁴² Beginning from 1942 demands to expatriate Germans from the Czech lands would be voiced with increasing frequency and openness.

The government-in-exile was disquieted by the fact that from July 1941 the German broadcasts of the BBC regularly featured Wenzel Jaksch, a Sudeten German social democrat. Beneš and Ripka repeatedly requested that he be transferred to the Czechoslovak section, but the British declined. It was not until the razing of Lidice that the situation changed radically. The UK's Foreign Minister Anthony Eden decided to discontinue Jaksch's broadcasts on 27 June 1942.⁴³ Jaksch never succeeded in renewing his broadcasts. However, some Germans did speak on Czechoslovak broadcasts, notably the communist Karel Kreibich.

The response to the assassination of Heydrich and to Lidice and Ležáky was huge; the *Lidice Shall Live Again* movement burst into life all over the Allied world and radio joined the campaign. Lidice became a symbol of Nazi bestiality. Beneš convinced the UK's government to declare that it felt free of the Munich obligations of 1938. Of course, this was duly celebrated in the BBC broadcasts, with President Beneš himself reading a special address on the de-recognition of Munich on 8 August 1942.

The Heydrich assassination called for the adoption of updated directives on the radio propaganda broadcast from London, which Hubert Ripka issued on 5 June 1942. The principles to observe were as follows: avoid any calls and instructions to sabotage, continuously express admiration for the heroism of the opponents of the occupation at home, and avoid referring to the Protectorate government and State President Hácha broadly as traitors while strictly rejecting all of their specific actions that go too far.⁴⁴ The belligerent speeches that the Protectorate Minister of Education and National Enlightenment

Emanuel Moravec made with reference to the exiles in London could not go unanswered – the BBC broadcasts became very radical in relation to Protectorate representatives after the spring of 1942.

The Czechoslovak service was remodelled again on 29 March 1943 following complex discussions with the BBC. The BBC proposed a full merger of Korbels's department with the BBC and moving it to the broadcaster's head office at Bush House. Ripka was not entirely against it, though he insisted on maintaining a certain degree of autonomy for the radio department. The two parties found it difficult to agree on a continued broadcasting model, which is why eventually government broadcasts were allocated free time (the Czechoslovak government could not influence the BBC's news and commentaries, but it was completely free when it came to choosing topics, as government broadcasts were subject to basic censorship only).⁴⁵

This opportunity was also used to restructure the government broadcast, freshly renamed *Hlas svobodné republiky* (Voice of the Free Republic). There were two relays per day – a 10-minute one at 7:10 in the morning and a 15-minute one from 8:45 in the evening. The morning programme included various topics during the week (Monday – Carpathian Ruthenia; Tuesdays and Fridays – workers' shows; Wednesdays – programmes for young people; Thursdays – programme for farmers; Saturday – women's show; Sunday – religious programme). The Wednesday programme titled *Hlas pražské ulice* (The Voice of the Prague Streets) proved very popular. It was a dialogue between two characters – Pepík and Vašek (Joe and Wenzel) – who reflected humorously on the latest developments. The evening programme included commentaries, lectures and overviews of Czech News Agency. **Towards a New Life**, a march composed by Josef Suk, was used as the programme's jingle. The BBC aired its own programmes in the Czech and Slovak languages eight times a day (four news shows and four news with commentaries shows a day), but the news with comments programme that went out after midnight was discontinued. The programme *America Calling Czechoslovakia* was included in the 6:15 p.m.

broadcasts on Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays. A quarter-hour show focusing on the Soviet Union was broadcast once a week.⁴⁶ The autumn of 1943 saw the launch of the regular *Cultural News from the Free World* on Saturdays. The last major change to the Czech broadcasting during the war was made on the occasion of the public holiday of 28 October 1944. The *Voice of the Free Republic* was expanded to include another 15 minutes at 5:45 p.m. It was broadcast in two medium wave bands and four shortwave bands. The inclusion of a regular programme for Carpathian Ruthenia as part of the Sunday schedule was a new feature at the time.⁴⁷

Political disputes over the content of radio propaganda

A major breakthrough came with the Soviet Union's entry into the war in June 1941 and the subsequent start of Czech (and later Slovak) broadcasts from Moscow, which to some degree represented competition for the BBC. The possibility of coordinating them was considered in London, but it never came to pass due to the fundamental differences between the ideologies of the Western and Eastern exiles. However, the substantially more radical voices from Moscow contributed to the radio broadcasts from London taking on a sharper tone. The communist group in London tried to influence BBC propaganda. From 1942 on the differences between the communists and the other exile representatives caused increasingly pronounced disputes about the focus of programming.

The debate was most pronounced on the Radio Advisory Board. The communists wanted the BBC broadcasts to incite active sabotage and guerrilla warfare, regardless of the actual situ-

ation in the Protectorate. Drtina, who led the Board, was radically against such requirements. He believed the exiles had no right to instruct the nation to engage in combat when the war fronts were still so far from the homeland and there were almost no weapons at home.⁴⁸ A breakthrough came after Beneš's negotiations in Moscow in December 1943. On his return he gave in to communist pressure and agreed to adapt the London broadcasting to the Moscow model. In an address of 3 February 1944 to the State Council, an advisory body replacing the parliament in exile, he called for preparations for an armed rebellion and the content of the London broadcasts began to be adapted accordingly. Beneš confirmed this line in a radio address on 10 June 1944.

The discussion on calls to massive sabotage and guerrilla warfare reached the State Council. Ripka told a Council meeting on 21 February 1944 that the resistance at home was asking that calls to active combat be avoided because the situation was not yet suitable, and he suggested this be taken into consideration. The communists, led by Václav Nosek, were against this. They referred to Beneš's speech of 3 February 1944 as an incontestable directive that the radio must take into consideration.⁴⁹ Similar disputes concerned the promotion of National Committees in the British broadcasts. The communists' tenacity won them success in this matter in the end. As early as 16 April 1944, the BBC broadcast a declaration concerning the formation of illegal National Committees and the nature of their activities.⁵⁰

Further debate stemmed from the communists' demands that the campaign against traitors and collaborators should be further intensified. Ripka and Drtina, not willing to condemn Pro-

tectorate officials en masse, advocated a more nuanced approach. In their view, criticism should always be targeted at specific acts of collaboration. Last but not least, the Slovak issue and the concept of Czechoslovakism were also included among radio propaganda topics, stirring major disputes in 1944.

End of government broadcasts from London

The population at home listened to the radio from London despite various difficulties, and occasionally at high risk, throughout the Nazi occupation. When the Prague Uprising broke out on 5 May 1945, many listeners first heard about it on the BBC. After the liberation, people could listen to the BBC directly from street loudspeakers until 3 June 1945. Towards the end of the war, the Czechoslovak section of the BBC symbolically returned to its modest beginnings. Many officials relocated to Moscow in February 1945 and just a minority of the BBC collaborators remained in London. Despite this, radio operations continued to the same extent. The government's *Voice of the Free Republic* broadcasts officially ended on 11 May 1945, with Hubert Ripka and announcers Jiří Hronek, Pavel Tigrid, Ota Ornest and Růžena Hájková saying goodbye to their loyal listeners.⁵¹

The BBC broadcasts in Czech and Slovak did not end completely even then; conversely, they developed intensively from 1948 on. Several announcers and editors who had worked at the BBC's Czechoslovak section during the war stayed, helping to maintain continuity of broadcasting. The BBC's airwaves still featured the voices of Karel Brušák, Ivan Jelínek, Josef Kosina and Míša Papírník. It was not until 2006 that the BBC's Czech service ended completely.

NOTES

- 1 The broadest depiction of the BBC from its inception to 1974 is presented in the five volumes of BRIGGS, Asa: *The History of Broadcasting in the United Kingdom*. Oxford University Press, London 1961-1995; also BRIGGS, Asa: *BBC. The First Fifty Years*. Oxford University Press, Oxford – New York 1985; for BBC's international service, see *The European Service of the BBC. Two Decades of Broadcasting to Europe 1938-1959*. BBC, London 1959; MANSELL, Gerard: *Let Truth Be Told. 50 Years of BBC External Broadcasting*. Weidenfeld and Nicholson, London 1982; TUSA, John: *Conversations with the World*. BBC Books, London 1990; WALKER, Andrew: *A Skyful of Freedom. 60 Years of the BBC World Service*. Broadside Books, London 1992; RADAKOVIČ, Dušan: Intelektuální invaze na kontinent. Evropské vysílání BBC za druhé světové války, In: *Dvacáté století – The Twentieth Century*, issue 1, FF UK Prague, Prague 2009, pp. 133-147. A remarkable study on the Danish service is BENNETT, Jeremy: *British Broadcasting and the Danish Resistance Movement 1940-1945. A Study of the Wartime Broadcasts of the B.B.C. Danish Service*. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 1966; for the Arab service in particular, refer to PARTNER, Peter: *Arab Voices. The BBC Arabic Service 1938-1988*. BBC Books, London 1988. Basic information, although very biased, is also conveyed by ARTEMOV, Vladimír – SEMYONOV, Vladimír: *Na vlnách BBC. Historie. Aparát. Metody rozhlasové propagandy*. Horizont, Prague 1983. A wealth of information is also available at <http://www.bbc.co.uk/historyofthebbc> (quoted as of 21 February 2014).
- 2 Many interesting figures were involved in the BBC's service. Given the limited scope of this article, detailed biographical information is only provided for a few of the most important ones.
- 3 For the history of the BBC in Czech refer to http://www.bbc.co.uk/czech/specials/934_bbc_history/page2.shtml (quoted as of 21 February 2014); also compare TÁBORSKÝ, Eduard: *Pravda zvítězila. Deník druhého zahraničního odboje*, vol. 1. Družstevní práce, Prague 1947, p. 336.
- 4 For the history of the BBC's Czechoslovak broadcasting from 1939 to 1945 refer to KOCOUREK, Milan: *Od začátků rozhlasu do konce druhé světové války*. In: KOCOUREK, Milan (ed.): *Volá Londýn. Historie českého a slovenského vysílání BBC (1939-2006)*. Ottovo nakladatelství, Prague 2013, pp. 25-46; HRONEK, Jiří: Československý rozhlas v Londýně za války. In: FUKSÍK, Mansvelt (ed.): *Kapitoly z dějin Čs. rozhlasu*, issue 2. Čs. rozhlas, Prague 1964, pp. 32-62; HRONEK, Jiří: *Od porážky k vítězství. Český novinář v emigraci*, part 2. Práce, Prague 1947, pp. 136-152; KOVÁŘÍK, Vladimír: *Proměny rozhlasové publicistiky II. Od mnichovského diktátu k Vítěznému únoru 1948*. SPN, Prague 1982, pp. 46-53; JEŠUTOVÁ, Eva a kol.: *Od mikrofonu k posluchačům. Z osmi desetiletí českého rozhlasu*. Český rozhlas, Prague 2003, pp. 173-174; SRBA, Bořivoj: *Múzy v exilu. Kulturní a umělecké aktivity čs. exulantů v Londýně v předečer a v průběhu druhé světové války 1939-1945: kulturní politika, „pódiové“ programy, koncerty, literární a recitační pořady, taneční vystoupení, divadelní představení, rozhlasová pásma a hry, filmová tvorba, časopisecká a ediční činnost, ideové diskuse*. Masarykova univerzita, Brno 2003; DRTINA, Prokop: *Československo můj osud. Kniha života českého demokrata 20. století. Emigraci k vítězství*, Vol. 1, Book 2. Melantrich, Prague 1991, in particular pp. 535-560; VALTROVÁ, Marie – ORNEST, Ota: *Hraje Váš tatínek ještě na housle? Rozhovor Marie Valtrové s Otou Ornestem*. Primus, Prague 1993, pp. 60-73, 106-113; for certain aspects see e.g., FRIEDL, Jiří: *Londýn volá severní Moravu*. In: *Severní Morava*, 2001, vol. 82, pp. 23-30; VOJÁČEK, Ladislav: *Otázky poválečného uspořádání v československém vysílání londýnského rozhlasu 1940-45*. In: 15. březen 1939. Sborník z vědeckého kolokvia. Dům techniky ČSVTS, Brno 1989, pp. 49-54. Extensive documents on radio broadcasts from London are held at the Czech Radio Archive (*Archiv Českého rozhlasu*, hereinafter "AČRo") in Prague. Some fragments also survive in the BBC's archive in Reading (BBC Written Archives Centre, Caversham Park).
- 5 MASARYK, Jan: *Volá Londýn*. Lincolns-Prager, London 1945, p. 7. The speeches underwent many stylistic changes for the book publication. For a sound recording of the speech refer to http://www.pribehrozhlasu.cz/#!/tenkrat-v-rozhlase/1939/1939_7 (quoted as of 21 February 2014).
- 6 BENEŠ, Edvard: *Šest let exilu a druhé světové války. Řeči, projevy a dokumenty z r. 1938-45*. Orbis – Družstevní práce, Prague 1946, pp. 67-69.
- 7 JEŠUTOVÁ, Eva et al.: *Od mikrofonu k posluchačům*, p. 173.
- 8 Czech broadcast from London. *Čechoslovák v Anglii*, 29 March 1940, year II, issue 13, p. 4.
- 9 For the Czechoslovak section of the BBC and its editors, refer to BRIGGS, Asa: *The War of Words. The History of Broadcasting in the United Kingdom*, vol. III. Oxford University Press, London 1970, pp. 469-471.
- 10 For Beneš's relationship to radio and his appearances on the BBC, refer to VACEK, Zdeněk: *Distanční elektronická komunikace – jeden z nástrojů politiky* Edvarda Beneše. In: VESELÝ, Zdeněk et al.: *Edvard Beneš – Československo – Evropa*. Professional Publishing, Prague 2005, pp. 102-111.
- 11 DRTINA, Prokop: *Plnoprávní občan Československé republiky! Čechoslovák v Anglii*, 26 July 1940, year II, issue 30, pp. 7-8.
- 12 BENEŠ, Edvard: *Šest let exilu a druhé světové války*, p. 89.
- 13 KRAJINA, Vladimír: *Ve službách odboje a demokracie*, p. 756. An unpublished manuscript held in the Institute for Contemporary History of the Academy of Sciences of the Czech Republic.
- 14 Korbels' radio work has also been reported by his daughter. Refer to ALBRIGHT, Madeleine: *Prague Winter. A Personal Story of Remembrance and War, 1937-1948*. A Czech translation published by Argo, Prague 2012, in particular pp. 146-150.
- 15 For the radio department, refer to HRONEK, Jiří: *Československý rozhlas v Londýně za války*, pp. 32-62; JEŠUTOVÁ, Eva et al.: *Od mikrofonu k posluchačům*, p. 182.
- 16 HRONEK, Jiří: *Od porážky k vítězství*, p. 137.
- 17 Czechoslovak Radio by BBC from London. *Čechoslovák*, 15 November 1940, year II, issue 46, p. 8.
- 18 For details refer to RULF, Eduard: *Volá Káhira. 1939-1945. Vzpomínky na čs. vojenské rozhlasové vysílání z Káhiry*. Votobia, Olomouc 2000.
- 19 MASARYK, Jan: *Volá Londýn*; BENEŠ, Edvard: *Šest let exilu a druhé světové války*; DRTINA, Prokop: *A nyní promluví Pavel Svátý... Londýnské rozhlasové epistolý z let 1940-1945*. Vladimír Žikeš, Prague 1946; STRÁNSKÝ, Jaroslav: *Hovory k domovu*. Fr. Borový, Prague 1946; ŠRÁMEK, Jan: *Politické projevy v zahraničí*. VV ČSL, Prague 1945; CLEMENTIS, Vladimír: *Odказы z Londýna*. Obroda, Bratislava 1947; LANGER, František: *BBC Londýn*. Fr. Borový, Prague 1947.
- 20 Honorář za rozhlas (signed V. R. R.). *Naše noviny*, 29 August 1941, year II, issue 242, p. 1.
- 21 Statečný dupe a ček. *Nová svoboda*, 1941, issue 8-9, p. 174; Šlechtický titul a epigram; signed R. B. *Nová svoboda*, 1941, issue 10, p. 207.
- 22 For the dispute over payments, refer to NA, f. Ministry of the Interior-London (hereinafter "MV-L"), k. 271, sign. 2-82-4/2, Minutes of the Radio Advisory Board Meetings, 17 December 1941 and 27 August 1942; *ibid.*, sign. 2-82-4/6, Speech of the Chairman of the Radio Advisory Board, 17 Dec 1941.
- 23 KOSATÍK, Pavel – KOLÁŘ, Michal: *Jan Masaryk. Pravdivý příběh*. Mladá fronta, Prague 1998, p. 180.
- 24 *Ibid.*, pp. 181-182.
- 25 STRÁNSKÝ, Jaroslav: *Hovory k domovu*, p. 6.
- 26 Listening to Foreign Radio in the Reich Forbidden. *Národní politika* (morning issue), 2 September 1939, year 57, issue 244, p. 4.
- 27 For the persecution mentioned refer e.g., to LINHARTOVÁ, Lenka – MEŠTÁNKOVÁ, Vlasta – MILOTOVÁ, Jaroslava (eds.): *Heydrichova okupační politika v dokumentech*. ČSPB, Prague 1987; KAREL, R.: *Žaluji. Pankrácká kalvárie*. Orbis, Prague 1946; ČELOVSKÝ, Bořivoj: *So oder so. Řešení české otázky podle německých dokumentů 1933-1945*. Tilia, Šenov u Ostravy 2002; MALLOTA, Petr: *František Havlíček – obět dvou totalit. Pamět a dějiny*, 2008, year 2, issue 4, pp. 24-40.
- 28 See e.g., *Zabavené rozhlasové přístroje. Lidové noviny*, 11 October 1941, year 49, issue 519, p. 3.
- 29 Obyvatelé Vršovic a Jinonic musí odevzdat rozhlasové přístroje. *Národní politika*, 16 October 1941, year 59, issue 288, p. 4.
- 30 *Verordnungsblatt des Reichsprotektors in Böhmen und Mähren*. Böhmisch-Mährische Verlags- und Druckerei-G.m.b.H., Prag 1943, p. 31-32.
- 31 Czechoslovak Radio Advisory Board. *Čechoslovák*, 22 November 1940, year II, issue 47, p. 2.
- 32 Refer to *National Archive* (hereinafter only NA), f. MV-L, k. 271, sign. 2-82-4/2, Minutes of the Radio Advisory Board Meetings.
- 33 Czechoslovak Radio in London (signed M. J.). *Čechoslovák*, 21 March 1941, year III, issue 12, p. 7.
- 34 DRTINA, Prokop: *A nyní promluví Pavel Svátý...*, pp. 105-106.
- 35 *Masaryk Institute and Archive of the Academy of Sciences (MÚAAVČR) – Masaryk Institute, T. G. Masaryk Institute Archive managed by the Masaryk Institute and the AV CR Archive ("AÚTGM")*, f. Klecanda Vladimír (Collection), sign. 442/2, Statement on the Press Boycott, 12 September 1941.
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- 37 NA, f. MV-L, k. 271, sign. 2-82-4/2, Minutes of the Radio Advisory Board Meeting, 28 May 1942.
- 38 BRIGGS, Asa: *The War of Words*, p. 484.
- 39 For the immediate response, see BERÁNEK, Jaroslav: *Volá Londýn. Vysílání československé sekce zahraničního servisu BBC o atentátu na Heydricha*. In *Historie a vojenství* 2012, year 61, issue 2, pp. 87-93.
- 40 BRANDES, Detlef: *Češi pod německým protektorátem. Okupační politika, kolaborace a odboj 1939-1945*. Prostor, Prague 1999, p. 308; TOMÁŠEK, Dušan – KVAČEK, Robert: *Causa Emil Hácha*. Themis, Prague 1995, pp. 151-152.
- 41 *AČRo*, f. London, no. 949, V. Klecanda's Speech, 10 August 1941.
- 42 *Ibid.*, no. 1181, V. Klecanda: The Fall of the German Rule in the Lands of Bohemia, 27 December 1941.
- 43 RAŠKA, Francis D.: *Rozhlasové vysílání BBC Wenzla Jaksche. Zapomenutá kapitola česko-sudetóněmeckých vztahů v britském exilu za druhé světové války*. In: *Acta Universitatis Carolinae. Studia territorialia*, 2001, č. 3. Univerzita Karlova – Karolinum, Prague 2002, s. 189-204; BROWN, Martin David: *Dealing with Democrats*. The British Foreign Office and the Czechoslovak Émigrés in Great Britain, 1939 to 1945. Pavel Dobrovský – BETA and Jiří Ševčík, Prague – Plzeň 2008, p. 183-185.

- 44 HRONEK, Jiří: *Od porážky k vítězství*, pp. 144-145; NA, f. MV-L, k. 271, sign. 2-82-4/2, Minutes of the Radio Advisory Board Meeting, 9 July 1942.
- 45 NA, f. MV-L, k. 271, sign. 2-82-4/2, Record of the Radio Department Meeting, 23 March 1943; *ibid.*, Record on the new form of the Czechoslovak broadcasts, 29 March 1943.
- 46 Czech broadcast from London. *Čechoslovák*, 9 April 1943, year V, issue 15, p. 7; Co říkáme domů (signed J. S.). *Čechoslovák*, 21 May 1943, year V, issue 21, p. 4; NĚMEČEK, Jan – ŠTOVÍČEK, Ivan – NOVÁČKOVÁ, Helena – KUKLÍK, Jan – BÍLEK, Jan (eds.): *Zápisy ze schůzí československé vlády v Londýně III/1 (leden – červen 1943)*. Faculty of Law of Charles University – The Institute of History, Academy of Sciences of the Czech Republic – Masaryk Institute and Archive of the Academy of Sciences of the Czech Republic, Prague 2012, pp. 225–230; NA, f. MV-L, k. 271, sign. 2-82-4/2, Record of the radio department meeting, 23 March 1943.
- 47 Extension of the Czech broadcast from London. *Čechoslovák*, 27. 10. 1944, year VI, issue 42, p. 8.
- 48 See e.g. HRONEK, Jiří: *Československý rozhlas v Londýně za války*, p. 53; LAŠTOVIČKA, Bohuslav: *V Londýně za války. Zápasy o novou ČSR 1939–1945*. Státní nakladatelství politické literatury, Prague 1961, p. 232.
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BBC Broadcasting House in 1947. Source: Czech News Agency



A "forest" of wires and poles. Voice of America's last wartime transmitter, the Delano Transmitting Station in California, closed after 63 years of service in October 2007.
Source: author's archive

This Is the Voice of America

CZECHOSLOVAK SERVICE WITHIN VOICE OF AMERICA, THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA'S GOVERNMENT BROADCASTER

Voice of America (VOA) and Radio Free Europe (RFE) were two of the most popular external radio stations prior to November 1989. The history of Voice of America's Czechoslovak service and its past popularity in Czechoslovakia are unfortunately somewhat forgotten now.

PROKOP TOMEK

Voice of America policy

Voice of America started broadcasting on 24 February 1942, not long after the United States got involved in the Second World War. As a state-controlled American external radio station, it was initially a part of the United States Foreign Information Service and, from June 1942, the Office of War Information. Naturally, the purpose of the broadcasting was the support of the war effort. The station rapidly increased its programmes and went on to broadcast in more than forty languages in the course of the war.

The Czechoslovak programme on VOA was one of the first in 1942. It was popular during wartime primarily thanks to the involvement of actors and comedians Jan Werich and Jiří Voskovec, who had been in exile in the USA since January 1939 and had previously worked for the BBC.¹ The involvement of these two artists shows clearly that just a part of the programming at the time was dedicated to news service, other anti-Nazi propaganda and strengthening of the national spirit of the listeners back in the occupied homeland.

After the war had been won, the VOA seemingly lost the rationale for its existence. As a result, its budget was radically cut and many national offices were soon closed. Isolationism was still quite alive and well in the USA.² In addition, the radio business

in general was mostly privately held. In addition to being a news service, it served primarily for entertainment and advertising. Unlike in wartime Europe, listening to external radio stations was a phenomenon largely unheard of in the United States.

Considering the perceived Soviet threat and the developing cold war, broadcasts met with massive support again during the latter half of the 1940s. The federal piece of legislation intended to encourage the dissemination of information about the USA across the globe and international educational exchange and to contribute towards understanding of the goals of the US's international policy, also known as the Smith-Mundt Act, was the first signal of change in the US's attitude to international propaganda. It was enacted in 1948.³

Ever since the post-war years, the VOA's principal task was to present the American policy and life in the US in general across the border. It was definitely a state-controlled station and as such it was funded from the public purse. Hence, its primary focus was not on the developments in the countries where it broadcast. This distinguishes it from RFE for which the developments in the target countries were crucial. However, this neutral stance changed markedly over time.

The US Government established the United States Information Agency

(USIA) on 1 August 1953 and included the VOA in its structure. The purpose of this move was to separate the information apparatus from the US Department of State. With effect from 1954, VOA was headquartered at 330 Independence Avenue in Washington D. C. It had broadcast from New York prior to that. It had been a part of the State Department, the United States' foreign ministry. VOA was also an instrument in the struggle for the human mind, though. At any rate, its principal scope of business encompassed news and information about the USA, also with the intent to respond to the popular beliefs and to the communist propaganda. VOA was also part of the psychological war. It was supposed to: 1) become a steady, credible and authoritative source of news while being precise, objective and comprehensive; 2) represent the US as a whole, offering a balanced and comprehensive image of the American thinking and American institutions; and 3) as the official radio outlet, present the US's policy as well as the discussion and opinions on the policy clearly and efficiently.

Edward Barrett, the first head of the USIA, defined the agency's four steps in pursuit of taking over the initiative in the psychological offensive of the cold war.⁴ All of them were related to the security of the USA. The steps were to: 1) create an atmosphere of trust in the free world craving peace; 2) pres-



VOA – the genuine America of the 1940s and 1950s.

Source: author's archive

ent the proper image illustrating the moral and psychological strength of the country and its desire for peace; 3) negate the Soviet disruptions obstructing the psychological preparation of the USA for a potential war; and 4) suppress the Soviet influence.⁵

The analysis *USIA Broadcast Policy for Czechoslovakia* illustrates the programming principles in 1957. This policy calls for eventual “liberation of the captive peoples” through the encouragement of evolutionary development and peaceful change. Emphasis on evolutionary development is required by the need to reconcile ultimate liberation of the Satellite States with US determination to preserve the peace and to deter nuclear warfare which could threaten the survival of Western civilization as we know it. Although the ultimate objective for the area is governments and institutions of the peoples’ own choosing, the immediate objective and emphasis is on loosening the ties binding Czechoslovakia to the USSR and on evolutionary development contributing to eventual achievement of the long-range goal. The role assigned to VOA ... is determined by the official character of VOA. In fulfilling this role, it is essential that VOA broadcasts place even greater emphasis on straight news and factual information.⁶ VOA’s later official mandate is laid down in the *VOA Charter and Journalistic Code*. President Gerald Ford signed the document defining the principles of the station’s activity on 12 July 1976. It demonstrates that the principal ideas

have not changed: *The long-range interests of the United States are served by communicating directly with the peoples of the world by radio. To be effective, the Voice of America must win the attention and respect of listeners. These principles will therefore govern Voice of America (VOA) broadcasts. Firstly: VOA will serve as a consistently reliable and authoritative source of news. VOA news will be accurate, objective, and comprehensive. Secondly: VOA will represent America, not any single segment of American society, and will therefore present a balanced and comprehensive projection of significant American thought and institutions. Thirdly: VOA will present the policies of the United States clearly and effectively, and will also present responsible discussions and opinion on these policies. Signed: President Gerald R. Ford, July 20, 1976.*⁷

Hence, the principal mission of VOA as the government radio station was to inform listeners in the world about the American policy and life in the USA. In day-to-day operation, precisely defined political criteria of the treatment of specific events were not applied. The attitude to them undoubtedly reflected the political atmosphere in the USA at the time. This is why, in particular in the 1950s, we can attribute much more to VOA than just the role of a news radio station. It played a role in the cold war as well.

According to 1983 figures, more than 100 million listeners listened to VOA programmes around the world every

week. The annual budget was about 150 million dollars and the broadcaster employed 3,000 people. But it was not until the Reagan administration that major investments in obsolete equipment were made. Approximately 35% of transmitters had been in operation for thirty or more years at the time. Some equipment even dated back to before World War II.⁸ It was the first half of the 1980s that brought true development of VOA as a station that actively addressed listeners in countries behind the iron curtain.

The Czechoslovak service of Voice of America remained single and bilingual until the split of the country in 1993. Based on tables, 32 people were supposed to work there in the 1980s. In reality, the actual headcount was lower by up to eight people in 1985, for example.⁹

The relatively small number of employees matched the economical style of work. Editors usually wrote and recorded their own material as well as editing the supplied sound recordings. Editors would read the news as well as their own texts. There were no specialised announcers working at the office. Positions were accumulated: director-editor or announcer-editor. Roughly six senior editors had the right to check and approve texts for broadcasts (they were referred to as “okay guys”), a practice similar to that in place at RFE. Naturally, this was proofreading rather than censorship of political views, at least by the period standards.¹⁰

Voice of America co-workers

Freelancers participated in the preparation of VOA programming¹¹ but their contribution was by far not as high as it was at RFE. It was limited by the financial resources. Despite that they include many attractive names. The writer and exile publisher Josef Škvorecký (1924–2012) was an important contributor. Beginning in the 1970s, he introduced listeners to interesting books from the American continent that were generally not published in Czechoslovakia. He eventually published his literary reviews for VOA as a book titled *Hlas z Ameriky*.¹²

Ivan Medek (1925–2010) started working with the office in late 1978 following his forced exile. He supplied reports about the situation in Czecho-



Various graphic designs of the Voice of America logo / The building at Independence Avenue in Washington, D.C. where the station has resided since 1954.

Source: author's archive

slovakia obtained from his own sources via the office of Ron Pemstein, VOA representative in Vienna. However, it took about two years for Washington to recognise him as a permanent, regular and paid co-worker.¹³ Later on, his ever-current reports about the opposition and its persecution in Czechoslovakia became a popular and appreciated information source. Ivan Medek worked with Voice of America until the 1990s.¹⁴

Martin Čermák's Sunday Notebook, a regular and very popular programme, certainly deserves a mention. It was there for listeners for a full 39 years from October 1949! The nom-de-plume stood for a co-worker of the office, journalist and politician Ivo Ducháček (27 February 1913 – 1 March 1988). He graduated in law but focused primarily on journalism in the pre-war era Czechoslovakia, working as a *Lidové noviny* correspondent in London and Paris. After the war, he contributed to the People's Party's weekly, *Obzory*. He gained prominence as an active member of the National Assembly for the People's Party prior to February 1948. He chose to leave the country after February 1948 and joined the Council of Free Czechoslovakia and the Czechoslovak Society for Arts and Sciences. He was a professor of the New York College and wrote many papers. He was one of Ferdinand Peroutka's close friends in the USA. He bid his listeners farewell in a brave manner before he

died of a severe illness.¹⁵ He revealed his identity in his last *Notebook* broadcast. He spoke about his incurable illness and about the life of an exile in the USA. The recording was broadcast shortly after his death.

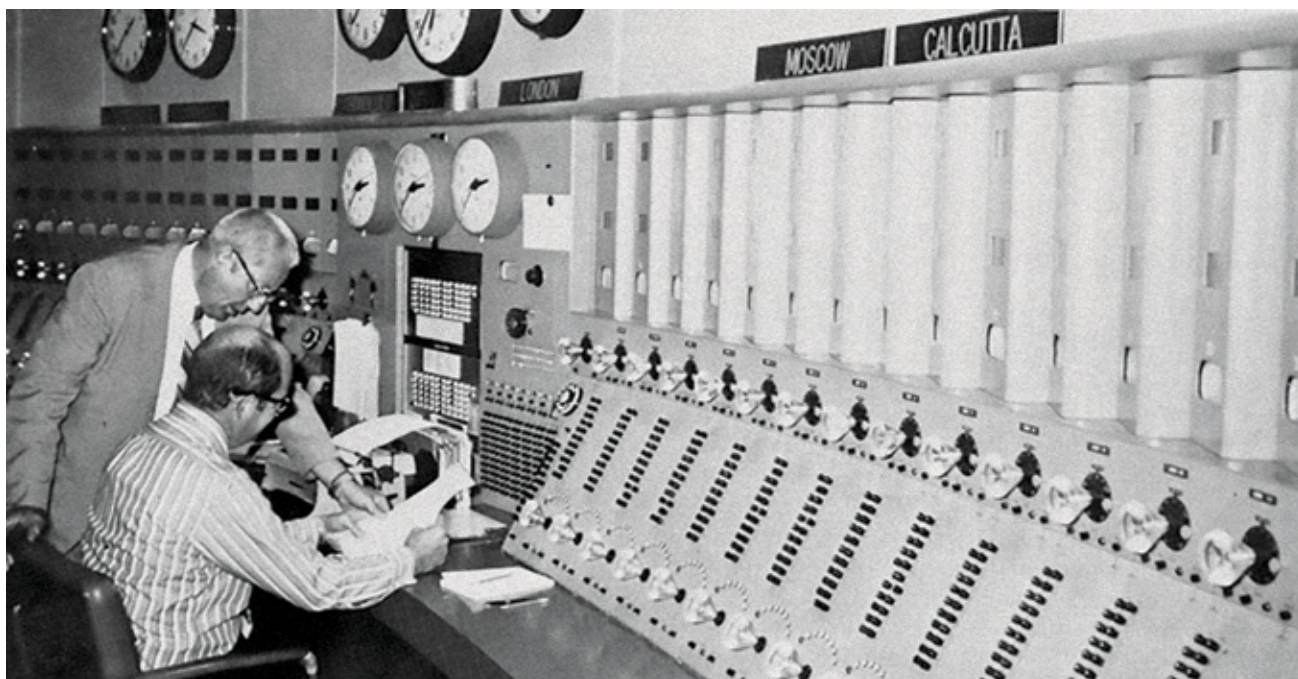
Development of the content broadcast

The days of February 1948 can serve as an example of VOA's early working style. For example, the thirty-minute broadcast from 9:30 p.m. (CET) on 21 February 1948 contained an overview of news from Czechoslovakia in Czech and Slovak and a summary of the US press and radio commentaries on the topic. A cultural commentary followed. On 26 February VOA aired a Czech reportage from Prague prepared by Seymour Freidin, the *New York Herald Tribune* correspondent, and more news about Czechoslovakia from the press at 6:49 p.m. A Czech overview of the American press commentaries on the developments in Czechoslovakia aired at 6:42 p.m., Slovak news aired at 6:30 p.m., and Czech and Slovak commentaries on the developments in Czechoslovakia from around the world were broadcast at 9:30 p.m.¹⁶ On 29 February 1948 VOA announced at 6:50 p.m. that with effect from 1 March 1948 the station would air three Czechoslovak broadcasts: fifteen minutes at 5:00 p.m. (also transmitted by the BBC), half an hour at 6:30 p.m. and fifteen minutes again at 9:30 p.m.¹⁷ Since the early 1950s VOA held a promi-

nent position among all external radio stations broadcasting to Czechoslovakia. RFE, or Radio Free Europe, did not start trial operation until 4 July 1950 and regular broadcasts until 1 May 1951. The extraordinary importance of VOA is also confirmed by a 1951 report of the Ministry of the Interior concerning Czechoslovak émigrés. According to the report, the western powers dedicated the radio station *fully to anti-Czechoslovak propaganda, aiming to discredit the regime in Czechoslovakia*. VOA allegedly played the leading role, *denouncing and attacking*, often quoting Czechoslovak émigrés living in the USA. All the leading personalities of the Council of Free Czechoslovakia spoke on air – Ján Papánek, Petr Zenkl, František Hřebík, Jozef Lettrich, Jaroslav Drábek, Arnošt Heidrich, Ivo Ducháček, Juraj Slávik, Ferdinand Peroutka, Antonín Hasal et al. The programme made references to the First Republic era and the major anniversaries of the democratic state.¹⁸

In the 1970s and 1980s (until 1985) VOA broadcast in Czech and Slovak for a total of four hours a day in four sessions: 5:30–5:45 a.m., 6:30–6:45 a.m., 5:30–6:00 p.m. and 9:00–10:00 p.m. (CET), in shortwave bands of 16, 19, 25, 31, 41, 48, 49 and 75 metres as well as in the medium wave band of 251 metres.

The fifteen-minute morning broadcasts included detailed news and overviews of the day's most important



The photo from 1983 shows how obsolete transmission equipment VOA was using at the time.

Source: USIA

events. Correspondents' articles and commentaries on the important events followed. The thirty-minute and one-hour evening broadcasts were made up of regular programmes:

Mondays: *Not Just for Ladies; Science and Technology* (plus *Postcards from America* in the 1980s), *American English Course* and *Sport*

Tuesdays: *Culture in America, Economic Overview* (later titled *From the World of Labor and Business*) and *About Jazz and from Jazz* (later *American Jazz*)

Wednesdays: *Man, Technology and Nature, Cultural Overview* and *Focus on Youth*

Thursdays: *News from America's Music Scene, Reportage from America* (later *This is America*; and later still *History* in addition) plus a repeat of the *American English Course*

Fridays: *School and Education, Sport* (*Decorative Art* instead of *Sport* in the 1980s), *From the World of Labor and Business*, and *Of Books and Reading*

Saturdays: *Czechs and Slovaks in America, Week in the World, Interview, Horizons of the Arts*

Sundays: *Environment* (discontinued in the 1980s), *Religious Programme, Weekly Press Overview, Martin Čermák's Sunday Notebook, American Music Scene* and *Popular Music from Studio 20*.

In addition, VOA also broadcast a programme in English to Europe. This was

thirty minutes of news every hour from 3:00 a.m. to 7:00 a.m. and continuous programmes on various topics from 5:00 p.m. to 10:00 p.m.¹⁹ Overall, VOA broadcast in forty-two languages to the whole world. Curiously enough, the Czechoslovak service was the only bilingual programme.²⁰

The Czechoslovak desk received the news content from the shared pool. The editor was the one who decided on the final selection of the news to be featured. As a result, it was possible to add an important piece of news from correspondents concerning the target country of the broadcast. The US Government's stand on the current developments was a regular and mandatory part of the programme. These contributions were a somewhat boring – and hence somewhat less popular – item on the agenda for both the editors and the listeners.²¹

When Pavel Pecháček took the position of the head of the Czechoslovak desk on 29 September 1985 the allotment of broadcasts was increased to three hours a day. News still accounted for a major part of the programme, totalling more than one hour per day now. Other, new programmes proved to be much more important. Every week, the office staff prepared a radio play or an adaptation of a literary work as part of a new series titled *From Uncensored Literature*.²²

The testimony to the uncommon skills and élan of the VOA's Czech desk staff is the fact that they won the Grand Prize of the 7th Pater International TV and Radio Festival in Brisbane, Australia in 1988. The Australian Academy of Broadcasting Arts and Sciences granted its prize for the Slovak adaptation of George Orwell's *Animal Farm* in the "drama" category. The competition was very strong – there were more than 300 radio stations from all over the world participating with more than 1,600 programmes! The Slovak translation of the *Animal Farm* was provided by Vladimír Machajdík, it was adapted and directed by Ernest Stredňanský, and Stanislav Ďuriš was the assistant director and technician. The cast included Daniela Kočvarová, Miroslav Dobrovodský, Ján Kočvara, Vladimír Machajdík, Juraj Sever, Erik Stražan and Ernest Stredňanský.²³

The broadcasts existed in this extended form until the end of the 1980s and this is when they earned the greatest popularity among listeners.

Programming areas

The structure of the broadcasts was very varied in terms of content. Unfortunately, almost nothing from VOA broadcasts has survived in the form of sound recordings because nobody archived them. Former employees own just rare snippets of recordings and

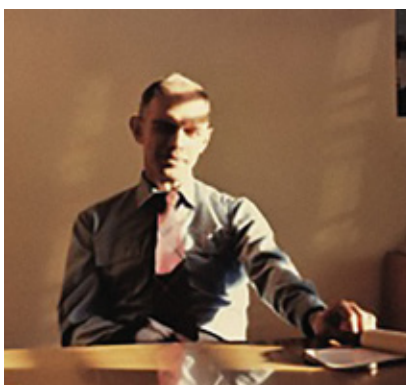
written broadcast scripts. Listeners in Czechoslovakia have saved some of the programmes to this day by recording them on tapes. The content was also recorded in written form by the Czechoslovak monitoring stations that provided recordings for the regime's security, political and propaganda machinery. Certain important and typical areas among the wide variety of topics deserve mentioning.

Czechoslovak-American relations

VOA as a part of the US public diplomatic apparatus worked with the US State Department and with the Embassy of the USA in Prague. Both institutions supported each other. For example, on 10 September 1986 VOA broadcast an interview with the newly inaugurated American Ambassador to Czechoslovakia, Julian Niemczyk.²⁴ The US Embassy in Prague also collected valued reactions of the general public to VOA broadcasts and forwarded them to the USIA.

The broadcasts regularly included programmes about the fact that the US Army in fact liberated the west of Bohemia in May 1945, which was suppressed by the propaganda, and commemorated US airmen who perished on the territory of Czechoslovakia during World War II. This is also illustrated by a State Security report: *The employees of the USA Embassy in Prague led by Ambassador J. Niemczyk laid wreaths on the graves of the US airmen who died in WWII in the districts of Uherské Hradiště, Gottwaldov and Kroměříž on 19 and 20 September 1987. The Ambassador delivered addresses in the Czech language at all locations, commemorating the victims of the war and the US's strife to achieve better understanding among the nations of the world. The 1st Secretary Norman then spoke about the US airmen's mission in WWII. Taking place in eight locations on the basis of a schedule broadcast by the Voice of America radio station, the ceremonies included on average 55 Czechoslovak citizens. The members of the "preparatory committee of the Society of Friends of the USA" also laid a wreath at the memorial of the dead airmen in the municipality of Napajedla.*²⁵

The format of certain programmes was very unusual and dictated by the circumstances. A listener whose daughter was ill responded to a programme



Few knew his face but many knew his voice:

Ivan Medek, Voice of America, Vienna.

Source: Medek family archive

about a new medication for the treatment of cancer developed in the USA. Subsequently, VOA broadcast an interview with an expert who described the medication and the possibilities for its application in detail on 27 June 1986. The inquiry did not arrive directly by mail – it was mediated by the US Embassy in Prague.²⁶

In the same year, the summer double issue of the *USIA World* monthly published a photo of a huge crowd on Prague's Tržiště Street with the following caption: *Czechoslovaks with John Updike's books standing in line along the US Embassy library in Prague. They learned about Updike's visit only in correspondence with the library or from the VOA broadcasts, which are locally referred to as 'Prague Three'.*²⁷

The surviving telegrams between the USIA and the US Embassy in Prague demonstrate that the two offices maintained lively correspondence.

Religion

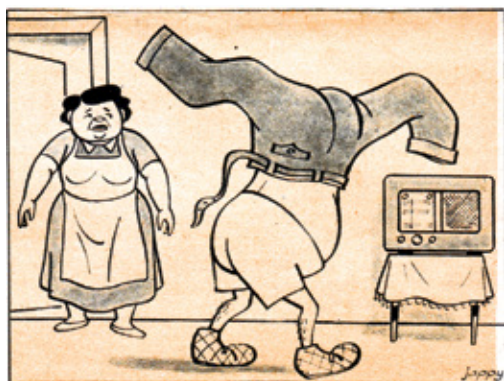
Religion was an important topic covered by the broadcasts. As this sphere of life was largely suppressed in Czechoslovakia, it was very important for listeners. For example, the overview of news from the religious world was a very varied and rich mix of information from the life of various religions and religious Czechs and Slovaks in exile, news of anniversaries and the obituaries of premier clergymen. Despite its specific focus, VOA gave ample room to the persecution of religious people in the Eastern Bloc. For example, on 11 June 1984 Pavel Pecháček prepared a story on the US Senate hearing on religious persecution in Eastern Europe and Czechoslo-

vakia. Broadcasts frequently featured interviews with Evangelical priest Blahoslav Hrubý and his wife Olga. The Hrubýs produced the *Religion in Communist Dominated Areas* magazine published since 1966. In 1984 Pavel Pecháček interviewed Olga and Blahoslav Hrubý at a Washington, D.C. conference on religious and national oppression in the Soviet Union. VOA also dedicated a lot of space to news about the travels and statements of Pope John Paul II. The election of the pope who came from a communist-ruled country had a huge political impact. Washington was well aware of this political potential. The pope came to the USA in October 1979 and VOA was also there covering his journey.²⁸

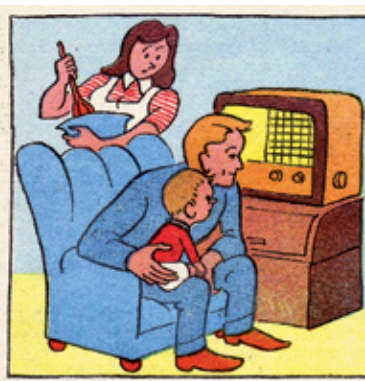
Religious reports were not confined only to Catholicism or Christianity. True to its mandate, the station covered the extensive range of religions of US citizens including Islam and Judaism as well as the customs, teachings and the manifestations of religious life in the USA.

Religion was given more space in particular during major holidays. For example, Karel Skalický, a major Czech theologian, spoke about Easter from Rome on 5 April 1984. In 1973 there began a Christmas tradition on VOA of broadcasting edited ecumenical services for Czech and Slovak expatriates held in the Lutheran church in Bethesda on the outskirts of Washington. Listening to Czech Christmas carols as well as other (often original) musical programmes performed by major artists, being broadcast from the USA, could have been quite an experience for listeners in Czechoslovakia.

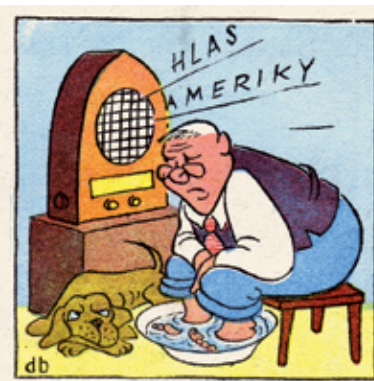
A major religious event of importance for Czechs and Slovaks took place in Rome on 6 January 1983 as two bishops were ordained for the spiritual care of the exiles. One of them was Monsignor Jaroslav Škarvada, the former personal secretary of Cardinal Beran and papal delegate for pastoral care of exiled Czechs. Pope John Paul II ordained him the Titular Bishop of Litomyšl after a discontinued episcopate in Bohemia. The other was papal delegate for exiled Slovaks Monsignor Dominik Hrušovský from the Slovak Institute of St Cyril and Methodius. Pavel Pecháček covered the ceremony in Rome as the VOA reporter. At the time, he even got to meet Pope John Paul II who was keen to know about Voice of America.



Tos už zase poslouchal Hlas Ameriky – že jdeš na všechno s opačného konce?
Kreslil V. Reichmann



Poslouchají Oslo.



Poslouchá osel.

Kreslil M. Nesvadba

The ideological struggle took place on either side of the iron curtain. Two cartoons derogating VOA broadcasts; left – by Vilém Reichmann, 1951, right – by Míloš Nesvadba, 1952. Source: Dikobraz

The religion-oriented broadcasts represented another opportunity for informing about the developments in Czechoslovakia. VOA aired a review of *Rozhodl jsem se. Odvaha k víře* (*I Made a Decision. Courage to Believe*), a book by Charter 77 signatory and priest Josef Zvěřina introduced at the Frankfurt Book Fair, as part of the *Horizons* programme on 24 December 1980. Broadcasts on 4 and 5 March 1985 featured two pieces by VOA reporter Jolyon Naegele on the relations between the church and the state and about the negotiations led by the Vatican delegation in Czechoslovakia.²⁹

Sports

Even if it comes as a bit of a surprise, sports in the free world formed an important part of the broadcasts as well. It was especially true in 1984 when the Summer Olympics were held in Los Angeles. The news coverage of the Olympics by VOA met with a great response among listeners in Czechoslovakia and the US Embassy in Prague noticed this as well. It is a known fact that the Soviet Union and its satellites boycotted the LA Olympics as retribution for the West's boycott of the Moscow Olympics in 1980. The USA originally decided to make this gesture as a protest against the Soviet intervention in Afghanistan in 1979. For Moscow, the boycott was a big blow in terms of both propaganda and finance. As a result, sports fans had hardly any opportunity to watch the Olympics in Los Angeles on Czechoslovak Television. This made the radio coverage on Voice of America even more sought-after.³⁰

Czechs and Slovaks made their mark in the USA primarily in two sports: ice hockey and tennis. Pavel Pecháček

regularly commented on matches of the US/Canadian National Hockey League, in particular the local Washington Capitals team. The broadcasts met with huge success among listeners in Czechoslovakia. This was not just because of the interest in the league, which was only sporadically covered by the official Czechoslovak media for ideological reasons at the time. There were also many excellent Czech and Slovak ice hockey players active in hockey clubs in the USA and Canada and fans at home were interested in their achievements. Pavel Pecháček covered the key moments of the matches with his own commentaries and also conducted interviews with the players. Due to the time zone difference the hockey match coverage was broadcast to Czechoslovakia several hours after the matches had ended.

Some of the Czechoslovak ice hockey players stayed abroad without the permission of the Czechoslovak authorities; at the same time, there were also Czechoslovak players who were involved in the NHL legally with the domestic authorities' approval. The regime capitalised on this ideological concession in hard currency. The possibility that players released to the NHL would emigrate was obviously a nightmare for the Czechoslovak regime. On the other hand, the income from the West resulting from the players' involvement was very welcome. This is why the Czechoslovak Ice Hockey Federation attempted to solve the problem in 1981 by executing an agreement with the NHL that would prevent the players from participating in the league for eighteen months after their potential emigration. The agreement was strongly criticised by the media

and the general public on the American continent since it was interpreted as bargaining with human rights. This was also covered by a VOA broadcast on 17 December 1981. Sports were very much a political matter in that era. Without a doubt, the hidden agenda of the ice hockey match recordings and interviews with Czechoslovak hockey players was to serve as a bridge towards those listeners whose focus was not primarily political or who were distrustful of external radio stations. Through listening to officially suppressed information about ice hockey and popular players they may have found their way to Voice of America.

The other sport with Czech representatives in the USA was tennis. "Pavel Skála" informed about Martina Navrátilová's success at the Forest Hills tournament in the broadcast of 4 September 1975. Shortly thereafter, on 8 September, he informed about Martina Navrátilová's application for asylum. She applied for it at the end of the tournament. The head of VOA's European Division Jones forbade Pecháček to read this piece of news on air. As a result, the sentences *our editor Pavel Skála speaking* and *this was our editor Pavel Skála* are crossed out in the script. This detail is a good illustration of VOA broadcasts' relation to events directly connected with Czechoslovakia to which the regime's negative response was to be expected.³¹

The sporting ties between Czechoslovakia and the USA were, perhaps surprisingly, a much more varied and extensive topic. VOA broadcast a remarkable piece on 4 October 1982 as part of *Themes: This is America*. "Pavel Skála" and "Zdena Zámecká" (Zdena Vozáriková) spoke about the influence



Most VOA programmes have not survived; just a few were lucky to survive on records and cassettes.

Source: author's archive

of Czechoslovak gymnasts on the successful development of gymnastics in the USA. The report included an interview with Jody Fountain, the owner of the Marveteens gymnastics school in Maryland. Fountain highly rated the influence of the Czech Sokol and German Turnverein movements. These associations were brought to the USA by immigrants many years earlier and there they became the foundation and model for contemporary American gymnastics. Without any connection to Bohemia, Fountain knew a surprising amount of facts about Sokol as well as a lot of technical terms used at Sokol. The fifth Sokol gathering in exile took place in Vienna in June 1982. VOA mentioned it in an interview with Marie Provazníková, the ninety-one-year-old principal of Sokol and with Dagmar Filová from Washington who was the author of the set of exercises prepared for the occasion. In addition to being a specific type of sports association, Sokol was a tie to fellow countrymen overseas, and this was obviously a topic for VOA to cover.

An interview with Richard Konkolski aired on 28 February 1982. The popular Czech sea voyager related the reasons why he had escaped to the USA along with his entire family. In addition to the interview, Konkolski's letter to the Czechoslovak TV office in Ostrava was read on the broadcast. It was a quite convincing account of the nonsensical obstacles with which the regime hindered the citizens' self-fulfilment. VOA would repeatedly cover Konkolski and his participation in sailing regattas. VOA introduced many fellow countrymen who made a big mark in the world

to the Czech listeners who had barely any knowledge of them. On 16 September 1982 it aired Pavel Pecháček's interview with Dr Věra Komárková, a botanist from the University of Colorado in Boulder who had immigrated to the USA in 1968. As a member of the US female Himalaya expedition in 1978, she and Irene Miller were the first women and the first Americans to conquer Annapurna. Komárková later led another US female climbing expedition to Dhaulagiri in the Himalayas and another female expedition to Tibet in 1984.³²

Exile

Despite the markedly reserved attitude to the issue of covering the exile politics openly in VOA broadcasts (and, for that matter, in RFE broadcasts as well), the life of the exiles and fellow countrymen became a natural part of the broadcasting. Space was also offered to the prominent exile activities such as the Society for Arts and Sciences (SVU) congress in Toronto in December 1984. Pavel Pecháček conducted interviews with František Janouch, the Chairman of the Charter 77 Foundation, and Josef Škvorecký. Of course, the granting of the Nobel Prize to Jaroslav Seifert, poet and Charter 77 signatory, did not pass unmentioned. VOA also aired an SVU declaration on the 40th anniversary of the end of the war in Europe, a programme about Czech exile literature in the USA, a report from the festival of forbidden Czech films in Toronto and a report from the celebration of the 135th anniversary of T. G. Masaryk's birthday on 14 March 1985 in Washington, D.C. On 19 March 1985 VOA also broadcast a recording of a part of opera diva Jarmila Novotná's performance during the celebration.

In 1982 Pavel Pecháček conducted an extensive interview with the legendary Dr Karel Steinbach who remembered T. G. Masaryk, Jan Masaryk, Karel Čapek, Jiří Voskovec and Jan Werich. VOA broadcast Pavel Pecháček's interview with the writer Arnošt Lustig on 23 and 24 October 1985; later an interview with Tomáš Baťa; and on 9 April 1984 an interview with Vojtěch Mastný, a historian and Boston University Professor, on East-West relations.³³ It remembered the anniversary of the Rudolf Slánský et al. trial in November

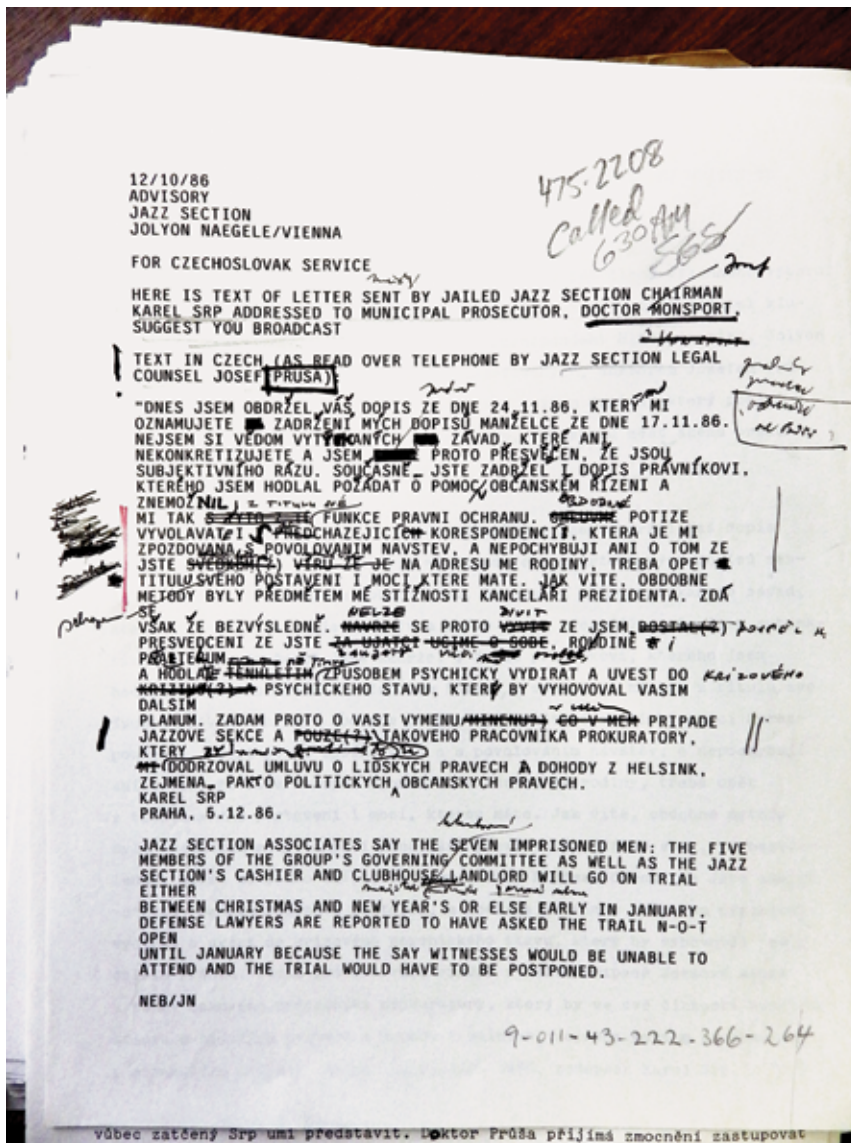
1982. Agneša "Havranová" Jergová and Pavel "Skála" Pecháček conducted an interview with Evžen Löbl, one of the people convicted in the trial who had survived and had been living in America. It aired in two instalments.³⁴

Developments in Czechoslovakia

The focus on developments in Czechoslovakia and on the Czechoslovak exiles showed an increasing tendency in the broadcasts. Every year, VOA included programmes on the anniversary of the occupation of Czechoslovakia in August 1968; the broadcast of 26 August 1988 included the reading of Charter 77 documents: a letter to the workers on strike in Poland and a letter to the Democratic Union in Moscow with thanks to the Soviet citizens for their solidarity shown with a demonstration on Pushkin Square in Moscow on the anniversary of the military intervention in Czechoslovakia on 21 August 1988.

The position of VOA was peculiar. On the one hand, it broadcast – quite freely – a wealth of information and materials from the areas that were not permitted by the official Czechoslovak regime, and on the other hand it did interviews with representatives of Czechoslovak diplomacy, business and culture. For example, on 2 September 1986 it aired a keenly monitored telephone call between Pavel Pecháček and pop singer Waldemar Matuška who had just been granted asylum in the USA, and on 13 July 1987 it covered the legitimate tour of Prague's Vinohrady Theatre to Toronto.

Jolyon Naegele came to Vienna in the mid-1980s; he could speak Czech and would visit Prague. For example, in December 1986 he prepared coverage of the trial with the Jazz Section leaders. At the time, Naegele had spoken to the defendants' counsel Dr Josef Průša. In December 1988, shortly after the first permitted demonstration of civic initiatives, he recorded an interview with Jiří Dienstbier that aired on 14 January 1989. The way that Jolyon Naegele described the meaning and popularity of VOA broadcasts may have been too optimistic in October 1987: *The latest conversations with the leading Czech and Slovak intellectuals suggest that the coverage of developments in Czechoslovakia by the VOA's Czechoslovak section has greater influence on the party*



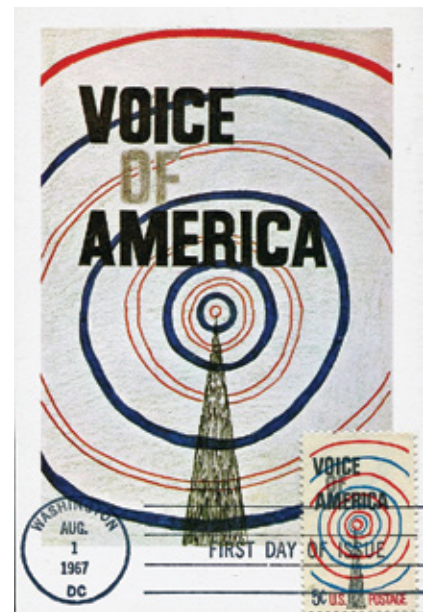
The report by VOA correspondent Jolyon Naegele and its treatment for broadcasting shows both the editorial work with sources and the interest in developments in Czechoslovakia. Source: National Archive

and government decisions than the party press has. My opinion: the authorities that originally treated me as a notorious spy prefer prudent treatment now. Masses listen to us religiously; authorities grudgingly respect us. We have no match, domestic or international. It appears to be in someone's interest (an unknown Czechoslovak Gorbachev lurking deep inside the Central Committee building?) to let VOA operate in Czechoslovakia, forcing the domestic media towards greater openness.³⁵

Listeners' responses

Listeners' responses to Voice of America broadcasts were telling. For example, Alex Černý from České Budějovice who was visiting his son in Singapore

wrote to "Martin Čermák" aka Ivo Ducháček: Dear Mr Čermák! Cordial regards from Singapore. I am here on an invitation from my son who works as a geophysicist (an émigré). Why am I writing? I have been meeting you for years, every Sunday evening at 9:00 p.m. I never miss your broadcasts! They are intelligent and intriguing stories written in true Czech. Your Czech is excellent, along the lines of Čapek's style, rich, witty and to the point. I tip my hat to you! In effect, we hear our cultured mother tongue from America whereas back at home we have to make do with prefab phrases in awkward Czech. I like listening to the well-informed sports commentaries by Pavel Skála. His Olympics coverage from Los Angeles, uncov-



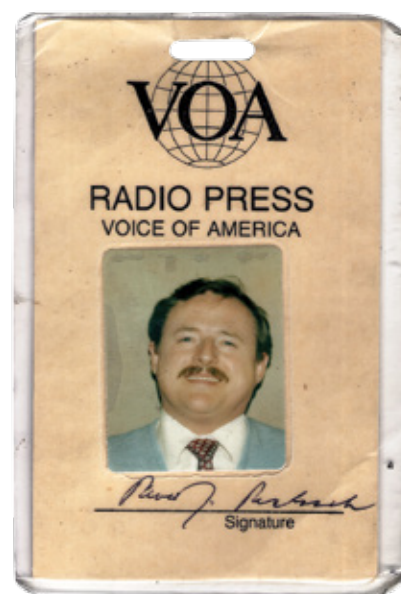
Voice of America even made it to postal stamps. Shown here is a five-cent with the collectors' seal on the first day of issue, 1 August 1967. Source: author's archive

ering the pathetic attempts of Eastern reporters at incriminating the Olympics, deserves an underlined A-grade. I would also like to extend my greetings to Jana Šrámková, Eva Passerová and other announcers. [...] Mr Čermák, along with the entire Czechoslovak team at Voice of America, please accept my best regards and a word of recognition for your praiseworthy work in the field of objective information.³⁶

Listener Jan Mašek from Prague in his letter of 28 December 1988 asked VOA for a copy of the sermon by reverend Pavel Pecháček broadcast as part of the Czech ecumenical Christmas service in Washington, citing its rich content, Biblical spiritual depth and high theological standard. It must have been the sermon titled "Stand thou by My good pleasure, and thou shalt suffer no loss" delivered by Pavel Pecháček during the Christmas service in the Lutheran church in Bethesda on the outskirts of Washington on 18 December 1988. However, not all letters reached VOA. Although they were sent to cover addresses, the State Security could easily foil this ruse. As part of censoring the correspondence sent abroad, it would catch letters sent to VOA. One of those who were interrogated for sending such a letter, a railroad worker and a Communist Party member, had asked for photographs of American astronauts that were offered in VOA broadcasts. In



The personal audience with Pope John Paul II took place during Pavel Pecháček's trip to the Vatican on 6 January 1983 when Jaroslav Škarvada was ordained a bishop for pastoral care for Czechs abroad. Pictured from left: Pope John Paul II, Jaroslav Škarvada, Pavel Pecháček and Father Vojtěch Vít, a Czech priest from Chicago. Source: author's archive



VOA employee ID card. Source: Pavel Pecháček's archive

the record of his interrogation made on 11 December 1975 by the State Security, he signed the following sentences: *I am sorry for my actions and I fully realise the danger of ideological influence on our citizens by international radio stations, which in certain cases try to disparage or dispute the policy of the CPC and/or our national economy. I will henceforth refrain from listening to those stations, and I have done this purely in order to find out details about space flights, which is my hobby. I will try to make up for my actions so that if I encounter or learn of similar actions on the part of anyone else, I will explain the way it was explained to me and, potentially, report this to the security authorities, including any potential problems that could impair our policy or national economy.*³⁷

There was more evidence of the effect of VOA broadcasts. The Federal Ministry of the Interior's summary report from 1971 states: *The showing of films in the US Embassy building in Prague, planned by the Americans until 9 February 1971, was prolonged to the end of February 1971. Approximately 6,000 to 7,000 Czechoslovak citizens visited these film showings between 1 February and 14 February 1971. An additional 4,000 persons will see the films by the end of February. The filmgoers come from various social strata and age groups. The significant rate of child filmgoers is not negligible. The visitorship*

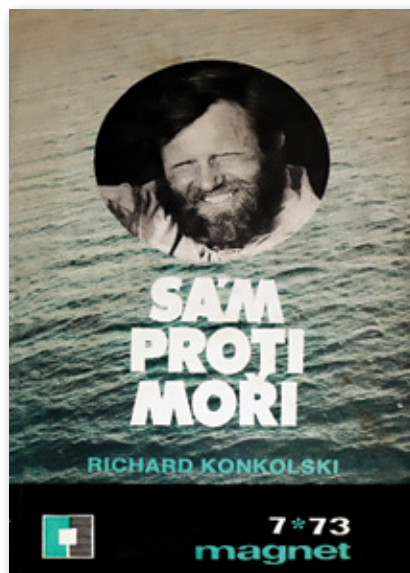
*increased after 10 February 1971 when the Voice of America radio station aired a broadcast informing the listeners that they could obtain free photographs of the Apollo 14 crew by either visiting the US Embassy in Prague or upon written request addressed to the Embassy. Since then, a significant number of Czechoslovak citizens have been coming to the US Embassy. Some visitors express a great deal of gratitude and liking for the United States as well as derogatory statements against the USSR.*³⁸

Another report follows: *In Status Update No. 59 of 17 February 1971 we reported that the Voice of America radio station had broadcast a programme where it announced the possibility of obtaining certain photographs of American astronauts. The announcement met with a great response among the citizens. A total of 1,437 citizens wrote in for a photograph between 11 and 17 February 1971. Registered letters and 50 other standard ones were released for transport; the 1,322 others were excluded from transport.*³⁹

'Excluded' means illegally destroyed. A total of 341 letters arrived at Voice of America's Czechoslovak service in 1986. The vast majority was song requests. The various difficulties involved in letters from listeners are described in a memorandum from the Head of the Czechoslovak Service, Pavel Pecháček, intended for the editors: *As soon as any*

*interesting information appears in a letter, I will inform you in a memorandum. As a rule, though, I receive interesting information via telephone more than via mail. If a letter mentions an individual, the person will certainly learn about it. I do not inform you about silly stuff, so for example you have not heard about the listeners' request to raise funds for their car among ourselves because we are loaded with money, or about an invitation to a village on the Slovak-Soviet border for "our nephew" Ronald Reagan. My experience from the Prague radio and other media is the majority of what you receive is weird stuff coming from weird people. So, being self-critical, I admit that I'm not really sorry that we don't have a world record in terms of the number of letters received. (Certainly, this is also due to the fact that there is still a communist regime in Czechoslovakia that cited listening to the Voice and collaboration with us as an aggravating circumstance in trials [author's note: court trials with the regime's opponents] in December and this month.) We have no right to nourish our vanity with requests that people openly write to our VOA address, citing the sender address. We don't walk in their shoes and if they are to risk it must be entirely voluntary on their part. By the way, many letters from Czechoslovakia will, without a doubt, not arrive because they are withheld by the postal censorship.*⁴⁰

The responses were quite straightforward.



Two of our famous fellow countrymen – US émigrés whose stories were aired on Voice of America: tennis player Martina Navrátilová (photographed with Elton John) and seafarer Richard Konkolski.

Source: Martina Navrátilová's archive, author's archive



Every listener to Voice of America knew his excellent Czech. Jolyon Naegele greets President Václav Havel during a meeting with international journalists who witnessed the November 1989 events in Czechoslovakia, Prague, 17 November 1999.

Source: Czech News Agency



Enthusiastic readers waiting for an autograph by John Updike, about whose visits they learned from VOA broadcasts, in front of the US Embassy in the summer of 1986.

Source: National Archive

ward sometimes: *A member of the Jazz Section committee called our Vienna office yesterday morning and, on behalf of the J.[azz] S.[ection], thanked Voice of America for the broadcast on the Section and its trial. He said literally that we had "saved the Jazz Section" with our broadcast and that we "cannot have the slightest idea of how important the influence of [y]our broadcast on the trial and all developments regarding the Jazz Section was."*⁴¹

The results of the Czechoslovak service of VOA were demonstrable in the latter half of the 1980s. This showed in a number of internal awards. The station management bestowed the 1987 Regional Language Broadcasting Award on Pavel Pecháček in 1988 for his direction of the Czechoslovak service and the excellent rating of the programmes in Czechoslovakia. The award rationale says, among other things, that a telegram of the US Embassy in Prague referred to VOA's Czechoslovak programme as a highly efficient and credible tool for addressing Czechoslovaks.⁴²

The Czechoslovak service as a whole received a special award from VOA's European Division and two programming awards in July 1987; six programmes made it to the finals of VOA's internal ratings in their respective categories.

StB and Voice of America

The State Security's interest in VOA was by far not as intense as when it

comes to Radio Free Europe.⁴³ Unlike with RFE, the Czechoslovak intelligence service did not open an object file for VOA. VOA employees were "covered" on an individual basis and largely in different contexts. The reason for this lies most likely in the openly governmental nature of the broadcaster, its geographic distance, and perhaps also a shortage of agency facilities for monitoring. This is not to say, however, that the State Security gave up on finding out about VOA's plans and activities. For example, the intelligence service says in a well-informed report from 1989, among other things, that *Pavel Pecháček, the Director of the Czechoslovak Section of Voice of America, said at the end of May this year among his close friends in Washington, D.C. that the BIB [author's note: Board for International Broadcasting] had informed him officially that he was appointed the Director of the Czechoslovak Section of RFE. He should assume his position on 1 August 1989.*⁴⁴

More attention was focused on the influence of VOA broadcasts in Czechoslovakia and listeners' responses. For example, the StB Directorate in Hradec Králové opened at least eight operational files for listeners who wrote to VOA between 1975 and 1976; they were all based on the letters sent to the editorial office's cover address of Vladimír Mácha, Box 777, Washington DC 20044. Without a doubt, this was the result of the thematic censorship of

correspondence. All cases ended with a "preventive-educative measure", meaning intimidating interviews. Listeners usually asked for postcards capturing the natural beauty of the USA and for astronaut photographs.⁴⁵

Unlike RFE, Voice of America benefited from the fact that it was not jammed by Czechoslovak technologies most of the time. The broadcasts were jammed in Czechoslovakia between 1950 and 1964. The number of jammed broadcasts was reduced thereafter. VOA was jammed again, along with other radio stations, in August 1968 (initially using the means of the Warsaw Pact armies), and this lasted until 1973. Since then, the signal of VOA as a government station was not jammed in Czechoslovakia. Without a doubt, this influenced the success of the broadcasts where the real number of listeners was a major indicator.

Numbers of audience of the international broadcasts

RFE's internal audience rating survey from 1978-1979 includes the results for the other international radio stations as well. The most popular radio station in our country following RFE (35%) was Voice of America listened to by 24% of Czechs and Slovaks older than fourteen years (i.e. 2.75 million people). This was also the highest percentage of VOA listeners in all the target countries surveyed (the survey also included Poland, Hungary, Romania and Bulgaria). Another surprising figure was the result of Austria's radio station, listened to by 23% (2.62 million people) in Czechoslovakia, by far the highest percentage in all five countries surveyed. The other results also indicated that Czechoslovaks sought various sources of free information: 22% (2.1 million) listened to the BBC; 15% (1.77 million) listened to Radio Luxemburg; 15% (1.7 million) listened to Deutschlandfunk (DLF); and 5% (0.57 million) listened to other Western radio broadcasters.⁴⁶ According to subsequent surveys made abroad, Voice of America gained a significant edge over Radio Free Europe in terms of the number of listeners within several years.

A singular survey directly from Czechoslovakia is available as of 7 June 1986. A group of independent sociologists (dissidents) conducted it with 342 re-



Czechoslovak office of Voice of America in Washington, D.C., 1989 (farewell to Director Pavel Pecháček leaving for Radio Free Europe in Munich). Left to right: Ján Kočvara, Miroslav "Oravec" Dobrovodský (the director of the Slovak office after the split of Czechoslovakia in 1993), Luděk "Březina" Čížinský, Pavel "Skála" Pecháček, Eva Šašeková, Peter von Freiburg (né Cvach), Štefan Anderko, Eva Límanová, Libor Rouček (later a member of the European Parliament), Jarmila Čechová, Procházka, Štěpán Tomšů covered in the back, Hana Palcová, and Eva Neničková. Source: Pavel Pecháček's archive



National Voice of America Museum of Broadcasting in Bethany Station, Ohio, USA.

Source: author's archive

spondents. The sample was relatively small, plus those were probably people with above-average education. The survey found a high rate of international radio listeners at 86% of the respondents. One-quarter of them listened regularly, and one-half listened often. VOA reigned supreme and the BBC had one-half fewer listeners. Only then followed RFE, Vienna, Western German broadcasters and others.⁴⁷ ↓

| Listening to | VOA | RFE | BBC | Vienna | FRG radio | For Poland ⁴⁸ | Other |
|--------------------------|-------|------|------|--------|-----------|--------------------------|-------|
| Regularly | 24.8% | 5.6 | 9.9 | 7.9 | 3.2 | 5.8 | 2.3 |
| Often | 24.5 | 13.4 | 13.4 | 7.3 | 4.7 | 5.3 | 1.5 |
| Occasionally | 36.5 | 28.9 | 29.2 | 10.8 | 13.7 | 10.5 | 7.0 |
| Exceptionally/not at all | 13.1 | 51.1 | 45.9 | 72.5 | 76.6 | 76.6 | 82.7 |

RFE's internal rating department submitted the results of another in-house survey to the management in September 1988. The results came from questions asked of 1,539 visitors from Czechoslovakia who came to the Western countries between June 1987 and March 1988. VOA was the leader once again: ↓

| Station | Hours broadcast per week | (% of listeners) | | | |
|---------|--------------------------|------------------|------|------|------|
| | | 1984 | 1985 | 1986 | 1987 |
| RFE | 144 hours | 37 | 34 | 34 | 35 |
| VOA | 21 hours | 38 | 37 | 39 | 39 |
| BBC | 20.5 hours | 21 | 20 | 18 | 20 |
| DLF | 24 hours | 10 | 9 | 11 | 11 |

Another RFE survey for the period from June 1988 to January 1989 was based on the replies of 1,081 adult Czechoslovaks. VOA's listenership had increased by 12% (!) to 51%, i.e.

5.7 million listeners. The BBC's listenership had increased by 5% to 25% of listeners. Given the basically identical number of the hours broadcast, RFE's Czechoslovak service had the same result as in 1987, i.e. 35% of listeners to international broadcasts, or about 3.9 million Czechoslovak citizens. The number of listeners to Deutschlandfunk decreased by 1% to 10%. Vatican Radio also scored a ma-

jor result with 10% of citizens listening to its broadcasts. About two million citizens listened to Austrian radio and 1.8 million listened to Radio Luxemburg.⁴⁹

These results can be confronted with the results of the official survey conducted by the Institute for Public Opinion Research ("ÚVVM")

five premier external radio stations: RFE, VOA, BBC, Deutschlandfunk and Vatican Radio, and the ARD and ZDF TV channels (of Germany) as well as the first and sometimes also the second channel of Austrian TV (ORF). Data collection in the field took place between 12 and 25 October 1982 in Czech, Slovak and Hungarian. 1,752 respondents aged over fifteen replied to questions. 25% of respondents listened to external radio in 1978 and 36% did so in 1982. Almost one-tenth of the citizens, i.e. 1.2 million, listened to some of the above stations every day. VOA was mentioned most frequently – by 23% of respondents, followed by RFE with 16%, BBC with 10%, Vatican Radio with 7%, and Deutschlandfunk with 6%. 32% of respondents listened to or watched external radio or TV at least once a week, and 13% did so less often than once a week. 35% of citizens were informed about the content of the broadcasts by other citizens and just 20% of respondents had no contact whatsoever with external broadcasts(!). This means that not just the total number of listeners but also the frequency of listening increased between 1978 and 1982. External radio stations reached some 1.1 million Czechoslovak citizens in 1978 and 2.9 million in 1982.⁵⁰

In 1988 the ÚVVM conducted its research titled "Czechoslovak Citizens on Mass Media and *Rudé právo*". The survey found the percentages of people

aged over 15 listening to external radio stations to be as follows:⁵¹

same – with either side confirming the popularity of VOA.

| Radio station | (% of listeners) | | |
|-----------------|------------------|------|------|
| | 1980 | 1982 | 1985 |
| VOA | 24 | 25 | 22 |
| RFE | 14 | 16 | 16 |
| BBC | 10 | 10 | 10 |
| Deutschlandfunk | 7 | 6 | 6 |
| Vatican Radio | 5 | 7 | 4 |

This is important information without a doubt, in particular considering that this was a state-organised survey, which according to the ÚVVM's express reservation was distorted by the respondents' fear of answering politically sensitive questions. The percentages of listeners found by the ÚVVM differ materially from the survey results presented by RFE – they are about one-half lower. This degree of distortion is not surprising. The substantial circumstance is that the ratio of the results of the surveys on either side of the iron curtain is virtually the

same. Surveys conducted both in the West and in the East show considerable interest among the citizens of Czechoslovakia in western radio broadcasts and the long-term leadership of Voice of America among external broadcasters despite understandable distortion on both sides (which is why they should be understood as just an approximate guide). The total percentage of listeners who tuned in to external stations grew over time, indicating citizens' distrust of the regime's media policy and their growing interest in information and in public matters.

Conclusion

VOA did a great deal to inform citizens, break through the censorship blockade in culture, promote human rights, and pursue gradual political change in Czechoslovakia. Of external radio stations, it probably had the most common traits with RFE. To an extent, the stations even competed. From the 1960s onwards VOA benefited from the fact that its broadcasts were not jammed. Over time, it would include an increasing amount of coverage connected with Czechoslovakia. Despite a relatively small number of broadcast hours, its programme offered a varied palette of topics. This is how Voice of America became a radio station that was close to Czechoslovak listeners. Along the way there were many locally unknown or forgotten personalities whose work and life mediated news and ideas from the other side of the iron curtain to listeners in Czechoslovakia.

NOTES

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- Edward W. Barrett (1910–1989) an American journalist (*Newsweek*); worked at the Office of Strategic Services (US military intelligence service between 1942–1945) during the war; head of overseas intelligence and the Office of War Information from 1942. President Harry Truman appointed him the Assistant Secretary of State for Public Affairs in 1950. He held that office from February 1950 to February 1952. He later ran his own business as a public relations expert and worked as a university teacher.
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- AA, VOA leaflets with information on broadcasting from the 1970s and the 1980s.
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One of the still extant transmitter pylons in Poděbrady used for the long-range jamming of RFE broadcasts to the USSR.

Source: Prokop Tomek

Halt the Jamming of the Blue Right Away

THE HALTING OF RADIO FREE EUROPE JAMMING IN 1968

Radio stations broadcasting from the West to communist bloc countries became an important means of exerting ideological influence on their citizens. Radio waves radiated freely and without restriction through the ether across the Iron Curtain dividing Eastern and Western Europe. The communist rulers of Soviet Bloc states tried, therefore, to create a kind of aerial parallel to the Iron Curtain to run along the Western borders of their countries. Its designers intended the network of mutually supplementary jamming centres to become, thanks to international cooperation, an impenetrable barrier preventing as much as possible the citizens of communist states from receiving the signals of Western radio stations.

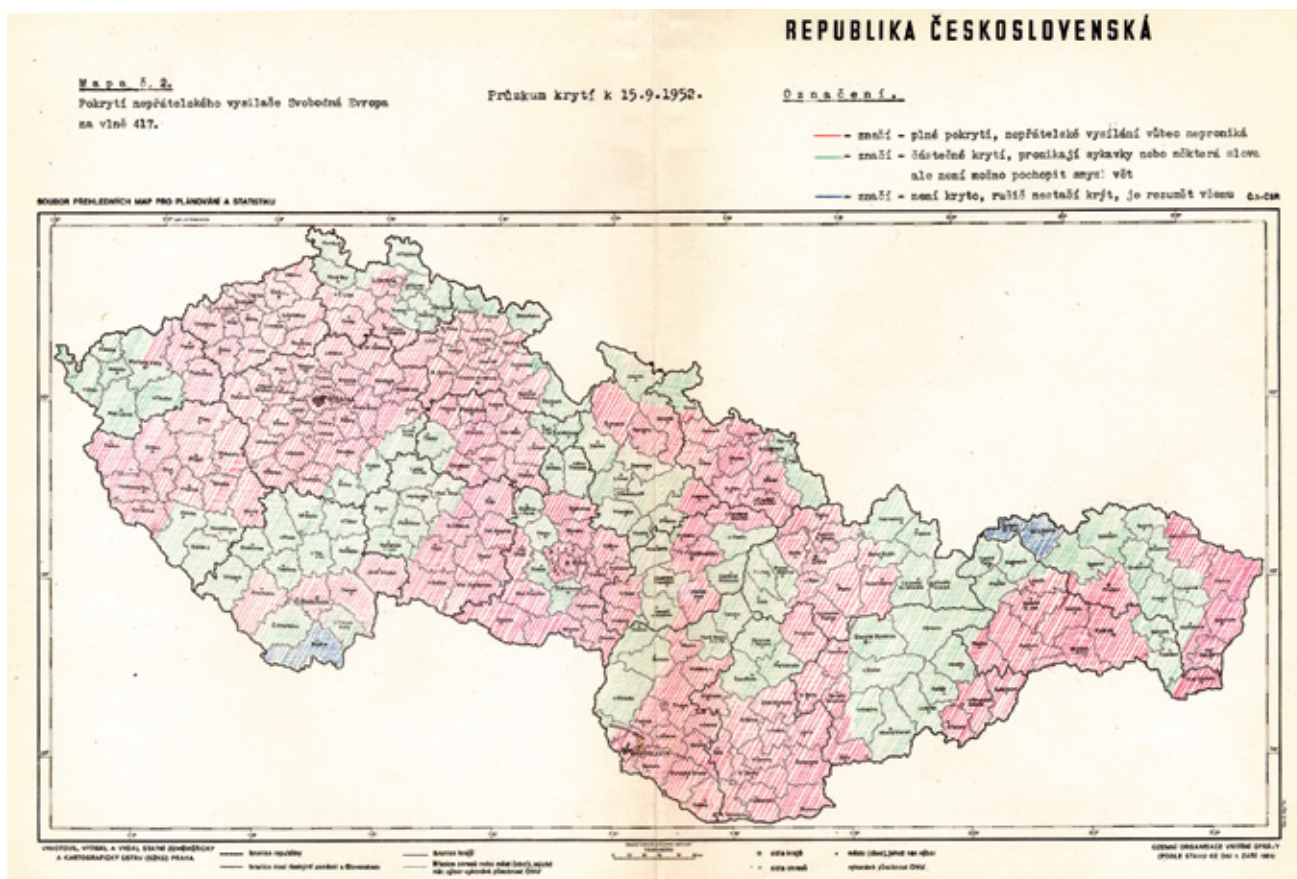
MILAN BÁRTA

The most important and successful radio station broadcasting from Western Europe into Communist Czechoslovakia was Radio Free Europe (RFE).¹ The leadership of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia was keenly interested in the station's activities and combating its broadcasts was a priority of the country's security services from the early 1950s until the fall of communism in 1989.² The radio broadcasts were not perceived as solely an instrument of propaganda but also as an effective means of contact between the US intelligence services and their collaborators in Czechoslovakia.³ The jamming of radio signals in Czechoslovakia – “radio defence” in the period terminology of the communist system – began in 1952 in reaction to an intensification of Western radio stations' broadcasts in Czech and Slovak and in particular to the launch of RFE's activities. On the basis of a decision of the political secretariat of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia (ÚV KSČ), the construction of a network of jamming transmitters was begun under a secret operation codenamed “R-405”.⁴ The first stage of the construction of jamming stations was to have been com-

pleted by the end of 1953 and was, according to the government decision, to have been followed by a second stage of construction.⁵ On the basis of bilateral treaties the network of jamming stations built in Czechoslovakia was to be linked to similar networks on the territory of the Soviet Union, Poland and Hungary. At the same time, the Czechoslovak delegation attempted repeatedly and without success to raise the issue of halting radio propaganda against the Czechoslovak Socialist Republic (ČSSR) on the floor of the United Nations. They referred to UN resolution no. 110 of 1947, under which any propaganda carried out against another country was in contravention of the UN Charter.

From the beginning of the 1960s a review of the security policy of communist Czechoslovakia took place. The focus of operations was to switch to what were referred as external adversaries, meaning foreign intelligence services' networks of agents and their local collaborators (however, this by no means meant an end to repression of the domestic opposition, referred to as internal adversaries). The security apparatus's activities were to be streamlined (and subject to far tighter

control by senior communist leaders). The Ministry of the Interior (MV) repeatedly informed top party and state functionaries that there was a decline in listening to “hostile” Western radio stations, insisting the existing jamming stations were sufficient to combating such broadcasting. The drafting of a new plan of defence against Western radio broadcasts was also spurred by the fact that Poland had abrogated a treaty on jamming broadcasts in 1956. Hungary followed suit in 1964. The blocking of a number of stations (Radio Canada International, Radio Luxembourg, BBC, Voice of America, etc.) gradually came to an end (though their activities continued to be monitored and jamming could have been renewed at any time). The capacity saved was available for use in the jamming of other stations. Hitherto blanket jamming of Vatican Radio and Radio Madrid was to be replaced by selective, targeted jamming of particular “hostile broadcasts”. However, the jamming of Radio Free Europe, which had the biggest listenership in Czechoslovakia and was regarded as the most dangerous, was to continue at the hitherto level. As a result of these changes, the number of active jamming stations was



Map of jamming of Radio Free Europe, 1952.

Source: Security Services Archive

reduced. Gradually only local jamming stations remained in large populations centres, i.e., Prague, Bratislava and Brno. The remaining stations were closed, with their absence to be filled by the launch of new, more effective long-range centres in Pilsen and Košice fitted with high-powered transmitters. Long-range jamming centres in the Soviet Union also contributed to the defence of Czechoslovak territory, with Czechoslovakia repaying the USSR through the long-range jamming of Western radio broadcast from transmitters in Litomyšl, Poděbrady and Rimavská Sobota.

The situation in Czechoslovakia at the end of the 1960s crystallised in a reform process that was named, in view of the hope it engendered and its short duration, the Prague Spring. The influence of Western radio stations, which prior to the abolition of censorship were regarded as one of the few sources of accurate information, is attested to be a statement from Alexander Dubček, who commented that information on the January session of the ÚV KSČ had *by means of foreign ra-*

*dio stations quickly spread throughout the entire country.*⁶ On the other hand, such broadcasting had become a thorn in the side of the conservative pro-Moscow leaders of Soviet Bloc states, who frequently asserted that they were “malignant”. At a meeting in Dresden in March 1968, Władysław Gomułka upbraided Czechoslovak communists for preaching socialism according to a RFE recipe.⁷

In the course of the Prague Spring, the MV (the State Security in particular) became the target of sharp criticism from media now freed of censorship, with the public and even some leading communist politicians adding their condemnation. The lawlessness of the 1950s, but also later cases such as a brutal intervention against students at the Strahov dorms in October 1967 and the alleged monitoring of opponents of president and ÚV KSČ first secretary Antonín Novotný, came in for particular denunciation. These voices also pointed to the inappropriateness and unlawfulness of jamming foreign radio broadcasts and demanded a halt to the practice.

In mid-March 1968 the minister of the interior, Josef Kudrna⁸, was dismissed. On 25 March the collegium of the MV (its advisory body) charged the 7th Directorate of the MV (the communications directorate, under which defence against Western radio stations fell) with preparing a proposal to terminate the jamming of Western radio stations on Czechoslovak territory. Seventh Directorate staff had likely expected such a commission, because in a short period they prepared several alternative approaches to termination that were sent to the leadership of the Ministry with a recommendation to get the approval of leading ÚV KSČ functionaries for some of them as quickly as possible as there was an expectation that voices pointing to the unlawfulness of jamming would intensify.⁹

A meeting of representatives of the MV and the Central Communications Directorate was held on April 12, 1968.¹⁰ Both sides committed to producing a report on the situation surrounding the termination of the jamming of foreign radio broadcasts that would be presented to the government with a recommenda-

tion to halt such jamming as quickly as possible. On agreement with Soviet representatives, some Czechoslovak transmitters would remain in operation for the purpose of interrupting Western radio stations broadcasting to the territory of the USSR. The subsequent report acknowledged problems linked to jamming, the continuation of which it said would not be *politically feasible*. It stated that the jamming system was approved in a *period of marked hostile propaganda* and that it was not *possible to achieve domination in the ideological sphere* by means of passive defence against broadcasting alone. It recommended proceeding by *active methods*, primarily with the help of effective counterpropaganda and *making the public better informed through improved work by the Czechoslovak media*. It also pointed to technical problems (the inappropriateness and obsolescence of technology used, the low effectiveness of jamming, particularly at some times of day), the political circumstances (the political situation had changed considerably since the early 1950s when it was launched, jamming was in contravention of international treaties signed by Czechoslovak representatives) and other problems stemming from the practice (operating the system was financially demanding, it required a considerable number of qualified staff, experts pointed to health risks linked to operating jamming stations in large cities and it reduced the quality of reception of official Czechoslovak television and radio broadcasts). In view of the complicated nature of the whole subject, the Ministry of Culture and Information was also asked for its views.¹¹ How did radio jamming actually operate in 1968? According to reports from the delegated centres, it ran successfully all day in Prague, Brno and Bratislava, while in other parts of the country it was, thanks to long-range defence, relatively effective during the day but had little effect in the mornings and evenings (in particular with regard to high frequency broadcasts). In July 1968 some 156 people (147 civilians and nine MV officials) were officially engaged in defence against Western radio stations and the related monitoring of their content. In reality, however, there were only 129 civilian staff and nine Ministry officials. Sixty-four 1kW transmitters (41 were of the new KRV 1 type and 23 of the older



Radio Free Europe pylons in Germany.

Source: Security Services Archive

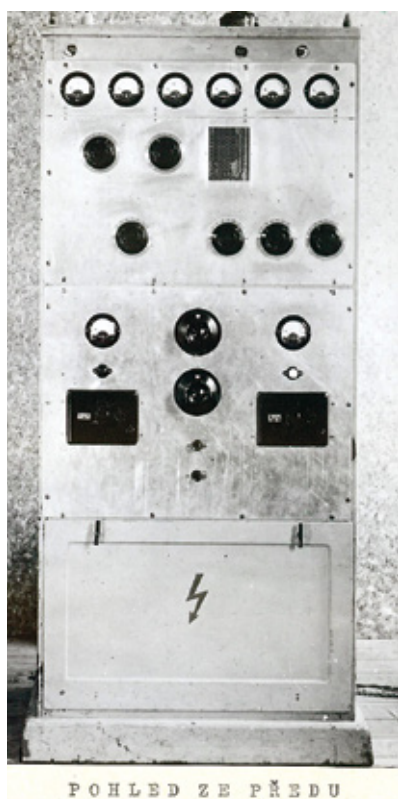
KSV 1 type) and 16 20kW transmitters (KSV 20) were connected to the radio defence system. At that time the MV had at its disposal separate shortwave jamming stations in Prague (29 1kW transmitters), Bratislava (19 1kW transmitters) and Brno (16 1kW transmitters). Transmitters for long-range jamming were located in Pilsen (8 20kW transmitters) and Košice (also 8 20kW transmitters). The monitoring of Western radio broadcasts for the needs of the counterintelligence and intelligence services also took place in Prague. All the stations also served as communications nodes for units of the security forces. Long-range transmitters to jam Western radio broadcasts to the territory of the USSR existed in Poděbrady (5 KUV 18/30 transmitters), Litomyšl (10 KUV 18/30 transmitters) and Rimavská Sobota (6 KUV 40/50 and 6 KTV 50 transmitters). Alongside the MV, the Central Communications Directorate played a smaller role in the jamming, operating seven medium-wave transmitters in Radomyšl, Karlovy Vary, České Budějovice, Mnichovo Hradiště, Brno's Komárov, Banská Bystrica and Prešov.¹²

The new leadership of the MV, headed by Josef Pavel¹³, a staunch supporter of reformist thinking, did not support the jamming of foreign radio broadcasts. The hitherto system of jamming did not square with Pavel's idea of radically overhauling the work of the

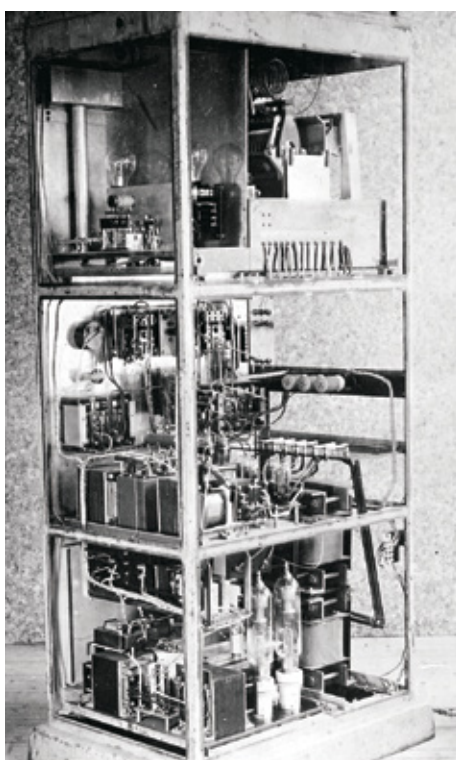
Ministry, which was to be transformed into a modern and highly effective security service. In addition, defence against foreign radio broadcasting was transferred to the Central Communications Directorate under a MV action plan (based on that of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia) that was to serve as the ideological basis for a reform of the security service.

At a press conference on 6 May 1968, Pavel announced that apart from certain RFE broadcasts no Western radio stations were being jammed in Czechoslovakia, adding that a proposal had been presented to the government to also terminate the jamming of RFE. However, either Pavel did not interpret the prepared documents correctly or they were incorrect. A proposal to end jamming was in fact just being prepared for the government at that moment. Furthermore, selected jamming of Radio Madrid broadcasts was still taking place. A fortnight after the press conference, the deputy commander of the 7th Directorate, Ladislav Sýkorovský, issued an order to halt the jamming of the station after consultation with the Ministry leadership.¹⁴

The drafting of a proposal to end the jamming of Western radio broadcasts dragged on, held up in particular by the necessity of consulting with all the other departments concerned (the Ministry of Culture and Information



Czechoslovak-made jamming transmitter, 1952.



Source: National Archive

and the Central Communications Directorate). The eventual report was not discussed by the MV collegium until 27 July. In its first point, the report stated unequivocally that the Ministry wished to *halt the jamming of RFE broadcasts, thereby bringing all such jamming to an end on Czechoslovak territory*.¹⁵ In connection with this, discussions were to be held with Soviet Union on halting the transmission of jamming signals to Czechoslovakia from its territory. The issue of the use of Czechoslovak transmitters in the “radio defence” of the USSR was to be resolved by a bilateral agreement. Modern transmitters were to be held in reserve in case of some extraordinary event (24 employees were to maintain them with the rest transferred to posts corresponding to their qualifications). The remaining transmitters were to be provided to different ministries with the most obsolete possibly being decommissioned. Under the proposal, potential demands for the renewal of radio jamming in extraordinary circumstances were to have been dealt with in cooperation with the Central Communications Directorate and the Ministry of Culture and Information, possibly with the technical assistance

of the Soviet Union. At the same time, a decision was taken to carry on monitoring foreign radio stations for the requirements of the Czechoslovak security services.¹⁶ On the orders of the MV, 7th Directorate staff had already drawn up a timetable of work necessary for the termination of the jamming of Western radio stations, while the text of a Ministry order explaining the move was also prepared. Naturally it was not possible to keep such preparations secret and many rank-and-file employees left of their own accord a job they regarded as having no future. At the start of August the final version of the proposal to halt jamming of foreign broadcasts (in practical terms this only concerned the jamming of RFE) was presented to the Czechoslovak government. If it approved the proposal, it was then to have been discussed with the Soviet Union. However, the government returned the proposal for reworking, pointing to insufficient substantiation and the fact that it had not been discussed with the Ministry of National Defence. In cooperation with the leadership of the MV, Seventh Directorate staff began preparing a new proposal. Nobody anticipated that the jamming of RFE would be ended earlier than expect-

ed; however, the situation was to last far shorter than they could have imagined. At that time, after all, the troops and military hardware of five Warsaw Pact states were being assembled on the Czechoslovak border...

On the night of 20 and 21 August, the invasion of Czechoslovakia began. It was the biggest military operation in Europe since the end of WWII. While the occupation of the surprised country was on the whole smooth, the political plans of the rulers of the Kremlin and its satellites did not pan out so well. Apart from a handful of collaborators from the ranks of senior politicians and State Security officials, the overwhelming majority of both the public and the political leadership condemned the invasion.¹⁷

The majority of State Security officers, headed by Minister Josef Pavel, also opposed the occupation and proclaimed allegiance to the legal leadership of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia and the state – at least in the first days of the invasion. Staff of the 7th Directorate, including senior functionaries and members of the department Communist Party organisation, also condemned it. Naturally the invasion also seriously disrupted the activities of the State Security. On 21 August, the crew at the jamming station in Poděbrady reported problems with occupying soldiers, the station in Pilsen was occupied by Soviet troops, who barred staff from entry, and the centres in Brno and Ostrava were also later occupied. Deputy Minister of the Interior Viliam Šalgovič¹⁸, who headed a pro-Moscow group at the Ministry tasked with ensuring the invasion went smoothly, attempted to win the cooperation of the commander of the 7th Directorate, Col. Oldřich Šebor. Šalgovič asked him for help in disrupting legal radio broadcasts relaying the supreme state organs’ rejection of the occupation. However, Šebor steadfastly refused to work in any way with collaborators or occupiers. His situation was unenviable. During the first day of the invasion he had received practically only one order from the MV leadership: to follow the orders of the legal leadership of the Ministry (in which Šalgovič no longer figured) and the government. It was courageous of him then to begin taking independent action. He issued an order to end all radio communications between Soviet representatives

in Czechoslovakia and their mother country (and communications with the ministries of the interior of other states taking part in the occupation) and despite repeated demands refused to renew them, insisting that would constitute collaboration. With or without the knowledge of their commanders, 7th Directorate staff played a role in the organisation of passive resistance to the occupiers and in the activities of the legal organs of the Communist Party and the state. This included cooperating in the production of anti-occupation flyers and printed materials and in the operation of Czechoslovak radio stations and television, maintaining radio communications for senior state and party organs and arranging their cooperation with the media.

On 22 August at 7:00 a.m., Col. Šebor issued an order to *halt the jamming of the blue right away*, meaning RFE's broadcasts in Czech and Slovak (jamming of Russian broadcasting was to continue)¹⁹. He justified the order by saying that it was necessary to free up the transmitters to support the broadcasting of the official programme schedule of Czechoslovak Radio and the jamming of the Vltava occupation station (the intermittent jamming of Vltava was actually launched on the afternoon of 22 August). Just five minutes after that order was given, the commander of the Bratislava Regional Directorate of the MV complained to Šalgovič (he was not dismissed as deputy minister for the State Security until 24 August)²⁰. He in turn protested to Šebor that such a step was inappropriate to the situation, calling on him to reconsider his termination of the jamming. Soon afterwards the secretary of the ÚV KSČ Drahomír Kolder (one of the signatories of the so-called letter of invitation, which called on the Soviet leadership to intervene against the counterrevolution in Czechoslovakia and served as a pretext for the invasion) called Šebor. In the latter's own words, he refused to meet Kolder, saying he had to carry out important tasks entrusted to him by his superior Josef Pavel.²¹ Soviet representatives also demanded that jamming restart, referring to a Soviet-Czechoslovak treaty. Šebor replied that the treaty had been signed in normal circumstances that no longer applied when people in Prague were dying under the wheels of Soviet tanks.²²

In reaction to this, Soviet soldiers began to occupy jamming stations.²³ While the order to halt broadcasts explicitly stated that the jamming of broadcasts targeted at the USSR was to continue, such jamming was switched off after the Soviet soldiers occupied the technical centres.²⁴ In some cases bearing weapons, the soldiers drove out the Czechoslovak employees, some of whom they briefly interned and interrogated, and shut off transmitters and connecting technology. The occupiers forced their way through locked doors and the theft of service and private items and damage to equipment occurred. Two days later, after learning that the HQ of the 7th Directorate was also to be occupied by Soviet soldiers, Col. Šebor and his staff moved to other departments.

However, the closing of Czechoslovak jamming stations did not automatically mean an end to the jamming of RFE. The Soviets continued long-range jamming, which they gratuitously extended to all Czech and Slovak broadcasts without consultation with the Czechoslovaks. Unprompted by the Czechoslovak authorities, the jamming of Czech and Slovak broadcasts of the BBC, Radio Tirana, Deutsche Welle, Vatican Radio, Radio Paris and Voice of America began on Hungarian territory. On 27–29 August 1968, Soviet soldiers gradually withdrew from occupied jamming stations and their employees returned. Dealing with the damage and preparing to restart operations took some time. On 9 September Soviet representatives received information that preparations for the relaunch of jamming of Western radio stations on the territory of the USSR had been completed. A jamming schedule was requested. It was turned in the following day and the stations gradually went back into operation.²⁵ Contractually agreed jamming for the Soviet Union was fully renewed.

The Soviets repeatedly complained that their broadcasts were being jammed and demanded cooperation from the Czechoslovak side. Šebor responded that it would continue as *the illegal Vltava station (located in the GDR) was continuing to broadcast in the same offensive vein*.²⁶

On 20 September the deputy commander of the 7th Directorate, Lieut. Col. Ladislav Sýkorovský, and the com-

mander of the 1st section, Lieut. Col. Miroslav Šulc, met representatives of the Soviet Army and the KGB. They again highlighted problems connected to jamming, its relative ineffectiveness, the obsolescence of the equipment, the purely passive nature of that method of combating enemy propaganda and above all the fact that only the Czechoslovak government could decide to relaunch it. Šebor informed them that he had repeatedly suggested transferring the jamming of Western stations to the Central Communications Directorate, pointing out that in the USSR such activities fell under the Ministry of Communications.²⁷

At the end of September 1968, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs received a memorandum from the Soviet Embassy warning of *Czechoslovakia's defencelessness against hostile radio broadcasting* and calling for the renewal of "radio protection" against Western radio stations.²⁸

Responding to the memorandum, at a meeting on 25 September the government presidium tasked the interior minister with outlining within a week Czechoslovakia's options with regard to meeting the Soviet proposal. The new interior minister, Jan Pelnář²⁹, presented the government with a proposal drafted by the MV, the Central Communications Directorate, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Office for Press and Information containing a summary of the situation at the defence against foreign radio broadcasting section. Long-range defence of the USSR was carried out at three stations (Poděbrady, Litomyšl and Rimavská Sobota) with 27 transmitters with a combined output of 1060kW. The MV also operated further transmitters in Prague, Bratislava and Brno (64 transmitters in total, each with an output of 1kW) and in Pilsen and Košice (16 transmitters all together, each with an output of 20kW). The Central Communications Directorate had 3–30 kW transmitters for medium-wave jamming in Radomyšl, Karlovy Vary, České Budějovice, Mnichovo Hradiště, Brno's Komárov, Banská Bystrice and Prešov. The Soviet Union at that time continued to jam Czech and Slovak broadcasts from RFE. Without the consent of the Czechoslovaks, it carried on jamming the BBC, Radio Tirana, Deutsche Welle, Vatican Radio,



Oldřich Šebor, commander of the 7th Directorate of the MV in 1968 who issued the order to halt the jamming of RFE.

Source: Security Services Archive



Ladislav Sýkorovský, deputy commander of the 7th Directorate of the MV in 1968.

Source: Security Services Archive



Miroslav Rous, commander of a special department at the 7th Directorate of the MV, was sentenced to 12 months in prison in 1971 for abuse of office in August 1968.

Source: Security Services Archive

Radio Paris and Voice of America from Hungary.

The report tabled was actually a re-worked version of Pavel's proposal to the government but adapted to the altered conditions and not stating that ending jamming was the only option not under consideration. In essence the report summarised the development of defence against foreign radio broadcasts, stated that there had been a relaxation in that area since the start of the 1960s and repeated objections to continuing jamming (the negative impact on the health of the population and on the quality of the television and radio signal in big cities). On the basis of a government declaration, the MV, in cooperation with the Central Communications Directorate, therefore drafted a proposal to halt the jamming of foreign radio stations (but keeping it in reserve in case of necessity). If it was to continue to work, the jamming of foreign radio stations should, the proposal stated, be based on legislation and relevant measures made public. In this way Pelnář highlighted the impossibility of fulfilling the USSR's demand for the jamming of all major Western stations in view of Czechoslovakia's technological limitations and the international commitments that jamming would contravene. If jamming was to be expanded, it would be necessary to invest large amounts in building new jamming stations – and with an uncertain outcome to boot. He proposed the selective

jamming of broadcasting on the orders of the Office for Press and Information, which the government approved.³⁰

At the end of October the MV handed the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the USSR a reply to its memorandum in the form of an analysis (again drafted in cooperation with the Central Communications Directorate). It pointed out that despite efforts to use current means as quickly and fully as possible, jamming was restricted due to technical conditions to selective jamming, carried out in accord with Czechoslovak law on the defence of society's interests. Jamming was therefore to be targeted at broadcasts disturbing the peaceful coexistence of nations, inciting war; proclaiming national, ethnic, racial or religious or intolerance; defaming the nation, race or persuasion of population groups, the ČSSR or other states of the world socialist system and their representatives; inflaming opinion against the ČSSR and its allies; spreading alarm or pornography; inciting crime; spreading reports against the political and ideological line of the state; and threatening the honour and rights of citizens of the ČSSR or their socialist coexistence.³¹ The MV subsequently called several times for the issuing of a government edict that would comprehensively elucidate activities that contravened interests of society.

Discussions with the Office for Press and Information on selecting broadcasts to jam dragged on, as did the

drafting of an edict legalising jamming. The General Public Prosecutor's Office and the Ministry of Justice had major reservations. Nevertheless, in the second half of November 1968 the jamming of RFE broadcasts on the territory of Prague, Bratislava and Brno was launched using local resources. All of its programming was jammed. Protests were raised by the public, the Academy of Sciences, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Municipal Directorate of the Public Security in Prague, whose activities were restricted by it.³² According to listenership research carried out by Czechoslovak Radio in spring 1969, RFE was the most listened to foreign station broadcasting in Czech and Slovak with 40% listenership, followed by some distance by the station Vienna and the BBC.

Some days after the renewal of jamming, Col. Šebor informed his superiors that it was working well on some frequencies but less well on others. He again made the point that from the perspective of potential negative influence on citizens of the ČSSR the broadcasts of RFE and Vltava were the same. The only difference was of approach – one was attempting to destabilise the situation in Czechoslovakia by proclaiming right-wing views, the other left-wing propaganda. At the same time, neither broadcast information that it was illegal to disseminate in the ČSSR.³³

It was clear that a decision on the fate of jamming Western radio stations would

be predominantly a political one.³⁴ In view of the rapid advent of normalisation in Czechoslovakia and the fact that the new party leadership had become an obedient instrument of Moscow, it is unsurprising that RFE soon began to be again described as one of NATO's main weapons in the ideological battle against socialist countries and an enemy of the ČSSR's socialist system, the proletariat international and representatives of the KSČ, the government of the ČSSR, which broadcasts bare-faced, scathing anti-communist propaganda aimed at overturning the socialist system. Even official communist materials were forced to admit that RFE's broadcasts for Czechoslovakia were the most extensive time-wise, the most pronounced in terms of content and the most effective when it came to impact on listeners in the ČSSR.

The MV continued in its attempts to transfer the jamming of Western radio stations from itself to the Communications Directorate, finally achieving this after protracted and complicated negotiations in 1977. At the same time, financial difficulties put a kibosh on plans to further develop the network of jamming transmitters.

Meanwhile, there had been complicated developments at the MV. After August 1968 it became clear that the Soviet troops would not be leaving Czechoslovak territory any time soon and within a few months it was obvious that a continuation of the policies of the Prague Spring was unrealistic. Senior party functionaries lost their posts; reformers were removed, replaced by people willing to meet Moscow's demands. The MV was one of the first where "normalisation" was achieved.

A special commission was established within the Inspectorate of the MV (later transformed into a separate department) to investigate the actions of individual functionaries and whole sections in 1968 and 1969.³⁵ This investigation, in conjunction with what was called an exchange of party ID cards (intended to help expel those "guilty" in 1968 of a positive attitude to the reform movement and standing up to the invasion of Warsaw Pact troops), led to extensive purges, particularly in leadership positions. It is estimated that around 3,000–4,500 were forced to leave the MV in 1969–1974. Many others were punished in different ways, most commonly by demotion.³⁶

Within the framework of this screening process, developments at the 7th Directorate in August 1968 were particularly scrutinised. The investigators stated that senior officials had adopted *a position at odds with the fundamentals of proletarian internationalism and avoided all cooperation or even negotiations with Soviet Army representatives; in so doing they influenced the activities of subordinates and issued orders in contravention of legal norms.*³⁷ According to the conclusions of the investigation, the ending of jamming was unjustified and contributed in its consequences to the further stirring up of the political situation.³⁸

In a report for the MV of 19 November 1968, Oldřich Šebor nevertheless stated: *I regarded and still regard the incursion of foreign soldiers as a violent and unnecessary action and on that basis conducted my behaviour and orders to subordinates until the signing of the Moscow Communiqué.*³⁹ It is no surprise therefore that the investigators focused their attention on the commander of the 7th Directorate. On 15 May 1969 he was relieved of his duties until the conclusion of the investigation. On 15 September that year his file was handed to the chief military prosecutor. On 31 October 1969 he was stripped of his rank and a medal by a decision of the minister of the interior.⁴⁰

However, Oldřich Šebor did not give in and continued to defend his stance. When he was charged with not only refusing in August 1968 to halt Czechoslovak Radio broadcasts but, on the contrary, providing technical means for the extension of broadcasting (7th Directorate staff supplied some of the equipment for the operation of legal Czechoslovak radio stations), he defended himself by saying he identified with the content of the broadcasts and was merely relaying the orders of the then legal leadership of Czechoslovakia. In his view, this was linked to the issue of jamming RFE, which in August 1968 essentially transmitted only the official broadcasts of Czechoslovak Radio.⁴¹ He repeatedly made solicitations in his own defence, saying he had not done anything illegal. He even wrote a letter about his case to the former leading representative of the Prague Spring, Alexander Dubček.⁴²

The most radical proponents of normalisation at the MV demanded exemplary punishments for the Prague Spring's protagonists, culminating in the trial of its former leadership, headed

by Josef Pavel. That plan was eventually dropped and only a few former State Security officers were tried, receiving for the most part suspended sentences.

On 26 February 1971 the main hearing in the case of former staff of a special section at the 7th Directorate, who had in August 1968 played a role in printing anti-occupation leaflets, took place at the Supreme Military Court in Příbram. For abuse of public office and in some cases collusion in the abuse of public office suspended sentences were handed to Miroslav Rous (12 months) and Zdeněk Souček (10 months), while Zdeněk Stehlík and Oldřich Pekárek received six-month jail terms.⁴³

One of the most severely punished former MV officials was Oldřich Šebor. On 19 January 1972, the Supreme Military Court in Příbram found the former commander of the 7th Directorate guilty of abuse of public office, stating that as commander of an important MV unit he had given orders limiting and later precluding the communications of several users of an important telephone network (this concerned the order to terminate the communications of five states involved in aggression against Czechoslovakia with their home countries) and had *issued an order halting of defence transmissions against the radio station Radio Free Europe*; in this way he had as a public official deliberately harmed others, partly by exceeding his powers and partly by exercising his powers in a manner contravening the law. For this he received an unconditional sentence of 20 months in prison.

Interestingly, the military prosecutor had recommended a conditional sentence only for Šebor. The defence had proposed the charges be dropped as the danger of the crime had passed, or suggested that mere disciplinary measures be imposed. The judges, as they stated in the verdict reasoning, in the end came to the view that the degree of danger in the defendant's actions had, according to expert assessment, been considerable. He had in August 1968 unequivocally taken a right-wing stance, betraying his military oath and the working class in general. The verdict states word for word that in *this critical period he left our country completely open to seditious Free Europe broadcasts, in so doing intensifying the disorientation of citizens. In essence he gave the green light to enemy ideologi-*

cal diversion. The court's response to Šebor's defence that the government had in 1968 been preparing to discontinue jamming Western radio broadcasts is also interesting. The judges' statement says that the proposal still envisaged its existence in extraordinary situations. And an extraordinary situation had occurred in August 1968. Therefore, according to the court, Šebor had erred in this matter too; *instead of acting to boost radio defence, he approved completely contrary measures*.⁴⁴ The State Security also took an interest in him as a former leading "exponent of the right at the MV". A special department was even set up at the State Security to pursue "exponents of the right from among former state apparatus staff", i.e., people who had been

engaged in some manner in 1968 and subsequently had to leave their jobs under normalisation purges. It focused particular attention on former MV employees, attempting, above all through secret collaborators, to monitor their activities closely.

On 15 June 1971 – when information on Šebor's crimes was still being gathered for future usage in court – a monitoring file was opened on him with the registration number 2139 and the codename "Olda". It was in place until 1989 and destroyed shortly after the Velvet Revolution, when intensive shredding took place at the MV.

From the files of former colleagues of Šebor's at the 7th Directorate it is clear that they stayed in touch during the normalisation period.⁴⁵ However,

despite heightened attention, State Security officers were unable to find evidence that Šebor conducted anti-state activities.

In 1990 Oldřich Šebor again entered service at the MV, also receiving out-of-court rehabilitation. At that time, the jamming of RFE broadcasts on Czechoslovak territory had been discontinued for almost two years, specifically since December 1988.

This article is adapted from the paper Die vorübergehende Einstellung der Störungen des Empfangs von Radio Free Europe in der Tschechoslowakei im Jahr 1968, which was delivered in Munich on 29 April 2011 at the conference "Stimmen der Freiheit – westliche Provokation? 60 Jahre Radio Free Europe in München und Prag".

NOTES

- 1 There is a wealth of literature on Radio Free Europe, primarily memoirs, e.g., JUNEK, Marek and coll.: *Svobodně! Rádio Svobodná Evropa 1951–2011. 60 let RFE. Radioservis – Czech Radio – Arts Faculty of Charles University, Prague 2011; KRYL, Karel: Krylogie. Autorské pořady vysílané v letech 1975–1989 rozhlasovou stanicí Svobodná Evropa. Academia, Prague 1994; PEROUTKA, Ferdinand: *Mluví k vám Ferdinand Peroutka. Rozhlasové komentáře – Rádio Svobodná Evropa*. Argo, Prague 2003; SEDLÁČEK, Karel: *Volá Svobodná Evropa. Radio Free Europa, Radio Liberty*. Archa 90, Prague 1993; TOMÁŠ, František: *Je sedm hodin středověkého času. Postavy a příběhy ze začátků Svobodné Evropy*. J. Kanzelsberger, Prague 1991; see also <http://www.rozhlas.cz/svobodne/portal/> (quoted as of 21 January 2014).*
- 2 For more see TOMEK, Prokop: Objekt ALFA. Československé bezpečnostní složky proti Rádiu Svobodná Evropa. In: *Sešity ÚDV č. 14. ÚDV, Prague 2006*.
- 3 See e.g., *Security Services Archive* (hereinafter only ABS), collection (hereinafter only f.), Counterintelligence Directorate (1947) 1954–1990, part 1 (A 34), inventory unit (hereinafter only inv. j.) 2416, Orientation Report on the Activities and Aims of Radio Free Europe, where it is stated that the content of RFE's broadcasting is subordinate to the policies of the USA [...] it is primarily focused on demonstrating the advantages of the capitalist system over the socialist system. [...] This activity is carried out along two lines – political and news (which is run by American intelligence services).
- 4 See TOMEK, Prokop: Rušení zahraničního rozhlasového vysílání pro Československo. *Securitas Imperii*, 2002, no. 9, pp. 334–367.
- 5 The MV even developed a special 20kW transmitter called the KSV 20 intended solely for radio defence. A total of 16 were produced and deployed in Pilsen and Košice.
- 6 HOCHMAN, Jiří (ed.): *Naděje umírá poslední. Vlastní životopis Alexandra Dubčeka*. Svoboda-Libertas, Prague 1993, p. 142.
- 7 PAUER, Jan: *Praha 1968. Vpád Varšavské smlouvy. Pozadí – plánování – provedení*. Argo, Prague 2004, p. 39.
- 8 For more on Kudrna's career see KALOUS, Jan and coll.: *Biografický slovník představitelů ministerstva vnitra v letech 1948–1989. Ministři a jejich náměstci*. Institute for the Study of Totalitarian Regimes, Prague 2009, pp. 112–115.
- 9 ABS, f. Secretariat of Deputy Interior Minister Col. Jindřich Kotal (A 5), inv. j. 1020, Letter by Deputy Kotal addressed to the Minister of the Interior, 2. 4. 1968.
- 10 ABS, f. 7th Directorate of the National Security Corps – Communications Directorate (hereinafter only A 21), inv. j. 43, Termination of the activities of the radio defence of the Czechoslovak Socialist Republic, proposal for the government of the CSR.
- 11 ABS, f. Organisational and Internal Directorate of the Federal MV, Part 2, 1946–1973 (hereinafter only A 6/2), inv. j. 1115, Information for First Deputy Minister of the Interior Lieut. Col. Stanislav Padrůněk, 28. 6. 1968.
- 12 ABS, f. MV Inspectorate, unprocessed fragment (hereinafter only IMV), call-number (hereinafter only sign.) 01-I-III.
- 13 For more on the career of J. Pavel see KALOUS, Jan and coll.: *Biografický slovník představitelů ministerstva vnitra v letech 1948–1989. Ministři a jejich náměstci*, p. 136–138.
- 14 ABS, f. A 21, inv. j. 93, Report on the results of an investigation into the activities of the MV's Communications Directorate, 11. 11. 1969.
- 15 Ibid, inv. j. 74, Record of a meeting of the collegium of the MV, point 4), Proposal to terminate the radio defence of the Czechoslovak Socialist Republic, 27. 7. 1968.
- 16 Ibid.
- 17 On the role of the State Security in August 1968 see ŽÁČEK, Pavel: *Odvracená tvář Pražského jara. Státní bezpečnost v Praze a srpen 1968*. Svět křídlel, Cheb 2010.
- 18 On the career of Šalgovič see KALOUS, Jan and coll.: *Biografický slovník představitelů ministerstva vnitra v letech 1948–1989. Ministři a jejich náměstci*, pp. 164–170.
- 19 ABS, f. IMV, sign. 01-I-XIV, Report on the questioning of Jiří Pánek, former employee of the 7th Directorate of the MV, 30. 8. 1971.
- 20 ABS, Organisational and Internal Directorate of the Federal MV, Part 4, 1951–1970 (A 6/4), inv. j. 1158, Order of the MV of the Czechoslovak Socialist Republic no. 60 of 24. 8. 1968, Notification of the dismissal of Col. Viliam Šalgovič from the post of Deputy Minister of the Interior, further personnel measures and the laying out of immediate tasks. The order was not officially printed and sent until 13. 9. 1968. It was published in: KOUDELKA, František – SUK, Jiří: *Ministerstvo vnitra a bezpečnostní aparát v období pražského jara 1968 (leden – srpen 1968); Prameny k dějinám československé krize v letech 1967–1970, Part 7*, Institute for Contemporary History of the Academy of Sciences of the Czech Republic – Supplement, Prague – Brno 1996, pp. 229–230.
- 21 ABS, f. A 21, inv. j. 85, Activities of the staff of the 7th Directorate of the MV, 21. 8.–28. 8. 1968 – report.
- 22 Ibid, inv. j. 82, Minutes of a meeting held on 28. 8. 1968.
- 23 Ibid, inv. j. 85, Activities of the staff of the 7th Directorate of the MV, 21. 8.–28. 8. 1968 – report.
- 24 Ibid, inv. j. 85, Activities of the former staff of the communications directorate of the MV in August 1968 – results of investigation, 11. 11. 1969.
- 25 Ibid, inv. j. 43, Radio defence.
- 26 Ibid, inv. j. 79, Radio broadcasting – report for MV 1st deputy Col. Ján Majer, 1. 10. 1968.
- 27 ABS, f. A 6/2, inv. j. 1115, Report of 7th Directorate commander Lieut. Col. O. Šebor, 23. 9. 1968.
- 28 ABS, f. A 21, inv. j. 34, analysis – copy.
- 29 For more on the career of J. Pelnář see KALOUS, Jan and coll.: *Biografický slovník představitelů ministerstva vnitra v letech 1948–1989. Ministři a jejich náměstci*, pp. 139–141.
- 30 ABS, f. Secretariat of the MV, Part 3, 1966–1975 (A 2/3), inv. j. 2248, Treatment of radio defence of the Czechoslovakia Socialist Republic, 2. 10. 1968.
- 31 TOMEK, Prokop: *Rušení zahraničního rozhlasového vysílání pro Československo (The Jamming of Foreign Radio Broadcasting for Czechoslovakia)*, p. 358.
- 32 ABS, f. A 21, inv. j. 68, Note from academic F. Šorm to first secretary of the ÚV KSČ Alexander Dubček calling for the halting of jamming transmitters in Prague, 28. 11. 1968.
- 33 ABS, f. A 6/2, inv. j. 1115, Information for First Deputy Minister of the Interior Lieut. Col. Stanislav Padrůněk, 28. 6. 1968.
- 34 ABS, f. A 21, inv. j. 43, Information on the current situation regarding the issue of radio defence, 18. 3. 1970.
- 35 For more see BARTA, Milan: Inspekce ministra vnitra v roce 1968 a posrpnové čistky v aparátu ministerstva. *Paměť a dějiny*, 2009, no. 1, pp. 105–114.
- 36 KOUDELKA, František – SUK, Jiří: *Ministerstvo vnitra a bezpečnostní aparát v období pražského jara 1968 (leden – srpen 1968). Prameny k dějinám československé krize v letech 1967–1970, Part 7*, p. 27.
- 37 ABS, f. A 21, inv. j. 93, Activities of the former staff of the communications directorate of the MV in August 1968 – results of investigation, 11. 11. 1969.
- 38 Ibid.
- 39 ABS, f. Secretariat of state secretary at the MV of the ČSSR Col. JUDr. Ján Majer (A 10), inv. j. 75, Statement for comrade interior minister, 19. 11. 1968.
- 40 ABS, f. IMV, sign. 01-I-XV, Evaluation of the most serious facts surrounding the actions of the Communications Directorate of the MV in August 1968.
- 41 The fact that RFE essentially only transmitted the official information of Czechoslovak Radio is confirmed by, e.g., SEDLÁČEK, Karel: *Volá Svobodná Evropa. Radio Free Europe, Radio Liberty*, p. 95.
- 42 ABS, f. Inspectorate of the MV of the ČSSR Part 2, 1951–1981 (A 8/2), inv. j. 80, Col. Šebor Oldřich – complaint, 3. 6. 1969.
- 43 ABS, f. Personnel file of MV officials, personnel file, evidential no. 6583 Rous Miroslav (born 2 March 1924).
- 44 KOUDELKA, František – SUK, Jiří: *Ministerstvo vnitra a bezpečnostní aparát v období pražského jara 1968. Prameny k dějinám československé krize v letech 1967–1970, Part 7*, pp. 307–309.
- 45 For more see the file on Miroslav Rous, archived at ABS, f. Agency files – HQ (MV-TS), under a. no. 707594 (r. no. 8599), codename HLAVICA.





A broadcast from the first Radio Free Europe studio in Munich.

Source: RFE/RL



In July 1946, K. Gottwald – already as prime minister – paid a visit to generalissimos J. V. Stalin.

Source: Czech News Agency

Communists before the Courts

ON SOME ASPECTS OF POLITICAL TRIALS IN CZECHOSLOVAKIA IN THE EARLY 1950s

Sixty years ago, on 27 November 1952, the trial "of the leadership of the anti-state conspiracy centre led by Rudolf Slánský" was concluded in Prague. The revealed "crimes" of until recently leading representatives of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia and the extent of the sentences shocked the world. Klement Gottwald "wrung the necks" of not only the factual or potential adversaries of the regime established in February 1948 but this time, evidently under the Soviet influence, also of his faithful collaborators and in many cases personal friends.

JAN KALOUS

How was it possible that the projection of hitherto determined creators of new tomorrows changed so radically? Why did the most faithful sons and daughters of the communist movement turn into despicable monsters at the incitement of the media? There are many answers to these questions. At the same time, it is necessary to draw not only on the Czechoslovak context but to also take into account the reality and context of international political events as well as what was happening inside the Soviet Union and inside the Eastern bloc.

"SOVIET MODEL"

By coincidence, it was also in November, though 95 years ago, when the Bolshevik regime was born in underdeveloped Russia, which had been unsuccessfully fighting on the fronts of WWI for three years. Social deprivation had reached its peak at the beginning of the year 1917 (there was a shortage of basic foods, supplies mostly in the cities were problematic and wartime success did not happen) and it led to the dethronement of Tsar Nicholas II. In this complicated situation, the Provisional Governments (there were four by November 1917) were trying to create mechanisms in the Russian conditions which would lead to establishment of democracy (for example, elections to the Constituent Assembly were planned for December 1917). However, they faced a deep social crisis (economic, social, military and political).

In November (in October, according to the old Russian calendar) 1917, Bolsheviks led by Vladimir Ilyich Lenin and Lev Davidovich Trotsky seized power. Their visions were extremely ambitious. Nevertheless, it soon turned out that Lenin's promises (including the abolishment of money, the traditionally constituted army and the secret police) were not viable. In order to defend its position, the Bolshevik regime needed a strong army as well as a suitable secret police. It is remarkable how swiftly the party apparatus penetrated the state structures, mastered them and used them to its advantage.

The peace promised by the Bolsheviks did not happen either. They only transferred the fighting from the WWI Eastern front to the front of a civil war. The bloodshed continued in the same extent, the hardships and persecution of the civilians did not end but went on continuously from the moment the Bolsheviks seized power until their demise in December 1991. It is certainly possible to trace certain phases of strengthening or loosening of the regime's grip; the forms, extent and depth of the rendered repressions were also changing. But what did not change by definition of the regime was the coordinating role of the Bolshevik (later Communist) party. Society was bound by omnipresent control – from censorship of the media and a refined system of propaganda to surveillance of the regime's opponents by the secret police (including

the use of agency operative measures), and the elimination of whole classes in the society on the basis of race or class to the overwhelming party apparatus.

In his theoretical work *The State and Revolution* Lenin outlined the vision of a dictatorship of the proletariat as a sort of a transition phase on the way to a classless society, including the use of violence against the defeated classes. However, violence and terror were accepted by the new Bolshevik society as its integral part. From conquering power to the civil war and the 1920s, violent elimination of kulaks in the countryside and the forced collectivization and industrialization, the Russian (Soviet) society staggered to the 1930s, to the time of the monstrous Stalinist trials. From the red terror at the beginning of their reign, to the elimination of the political, religious, intellectual and economic elites to the creation of a perfect systematized and centralized system of repression and persecution of their own people. Tens of millions of dead were the tax paid for establishing and sustaining the Bolshevik regime.

The Moscow trials in the 1930s did not emerge incidentally or randomly. They were a result of the previous social experiments and the systematic pressure imposed by the power and security apparatus centralized in the hands of Iosif Vissarionovich Stalin and his closest collaborators. The shots at Kirov in December 1934 initiated a merciless purge within the Bolshevik party, the army, the

security and the society as a whole. The Moscow trials – these unchallenged human tragedies which even then the whole world watched in disbelief – of course affected all layers of society. They became infamous for the elimination of the old party nomenclature, Stalin's opponents within the apparatus, his potential adversaries as well as dangerous witnesses of activities (and failures) of the "great leader". But we also need to realize that apart from the communist victims whose names we know (and we also know their previous careers, etc.), there are also non-communist victims whose numbers were many times higher and about whom it is impossible to learn more without deep and systematic research.

It has been estimated that at the time of the Moscow trials, the ratio was one imprisoned communist to five imprisoned non-communists. In 1937 alone, the ratio of people affected by the purges was 5-7 percent of all inhabitants, which at that time equalled 8-11 million people. About 1 percent of arrested (but not objectively guilty) people were executed. In the years 1927-1938 alone, 13.8 million people died due to the repressions unleashed and more millions were forcibly sent to the Gulag labour camps. Czech historian Václav Veber quotes in this context that solely in the period between January 1935 to the outbreak of war in June 1941, the repressions hit at least 19,840,000 people, of which about 7 million were shot dead.¹ It has been estimated that as a result of the Stalinist purges, a total of 28 million people were affected between 1930-1953.²

The Moscow trials did not end in August 1938 with the execution of Yezhov and the taking over of Beria as the head of the NKVD. The repressions continued, a little hidden from the eyes of the world even during WWII. However, Stalin soon stopped any considerations about possible liberalization of the regime after the victory over fascism.

New victories in WWII and the position that the Soviet Union won brought with them a new danger which Stalin and his faithful circle understood and which consequently was under the scrutiny of the security forces. Newly designed political trials aimed once again at the army (the Zhukov case) and as usual into Leningrad (the Leningrad secretary Kuznetsov was sentenced to death and executed in the autumn of 1950 for alleged party opposition), at non-Russian nations and

ethnic groups (a continuation of trends from the war times, now also aimed at Jews).³ Probably the most interesting post-war case was the absurd case of the "white coats" in the years 1952-1953, who were doctors of a Kremlin hospital accused of having systematically killed representatives of the Soviet regime since the 1930s.

Stalin, who was living in a state of constant threat to the interests of the USSR from without as well as from within, imposed a campaign against different "isms" on the Soviet public. In his opinion, the communist world was then facing a threat of a new, third world war which would mean a conflict with the Western democracies, a global conflict of the former allies in the anti-Hitler coalition.⁴ At the same time, it was necessary to find people who were responsible for the problems within the Soviet society (e.g. in agriculture, in supplies to people, etc.) not only outside the Communist party, but logically also inside.

Stalin's Soviet Union found itself in a permanent state of danger. Different adversaries, real or imaginary, were mercilessly exterminated by a system of refined judicial and extrajudicial repression. After the end of WWII, the influence of the USSR extended into Central and South-Eastern Europe. Thus, it was only logical that the newly established communist rulers in those states copied and, under Moscow's coordination and control, practiced "proven" Soviet models and methods. This also involved the construction and work of the party, security and judiciary apparatus. All these aspects and the so called Soviet experience played a part in the construction of the political trials⁵ of the late 1940s and early 1950s.

REALITY IN CZECHOSLOVAKIA

In February 1948, the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia (CPC) concluded its long-term effort to seize political power in the country. Gradual dissolution of democratic traditions followed together with curtailment and later elimination of human and civil rights. The CPC carried out purges in state institutions throughout the whole society by means of so called de-activating. Non-communist political parties got their "new", non-conflicting leaderships and their influence was marginalized within the National Front. Unyielding citizens lost their jobs and they either left the country volun-

tarily (when it was still possible), or if they did not make it in time, they were persecuted and often deprived of their personal freedom, imprisoned and some of them even executed.

What preconditions existed in Czechoslovakia that allowed for the communist seizure of power? From the long-term perspective, the favourable results of the Communist Party were due to the reflection and trauma of the Munich agreement of 1938 together with negative experience with the Western democracies. There were no doubts about Soviet readiness to help Czechoslovakia although we know today that the interests of the USSR were different and definitely not unselfish. It was particularly the Soviet politicians who were hopeful in September 1938 that the imperialist war in Czechoslovakia would change into a proletariat revolution. The real military possibilities of the USSR helping Czechoslovakia under Hitler's threats had serious limits (purges within the Soviet army, the question of the corridor to the CSR, synchronization of armaments, etc.) However, the pure substance of the Soviet alliance in the critical period just after September 1938 was not doubted during the war or right after it. President Edvard Beneš together with representatives of non-communist parties played a significant role in this as they agreed with the foreign policy concept of alliance with the USSR, manifested, among others, by the Košice Government Programme of April 1945.

Another moment which needs to be taken into account was the traditional Czech Russophilia – the belief in the grand Slavic linden tree which would protect the weak nations in Central Europe against the aggressive Pan-Germanism. The admiration for the USSR was also helped by the fact that the Soviet troops liberated a huge part of the CSR, as well as the fact that no-one or hardly anyone had any immediate negative experience with the nature of the Russian Bolshevik (after November 1917) regime. It was evident that the Soviet Union had made immense human sacrifices for the liberation of Europe from fascism. Czechoslovak communists, apart from overstating their anti-fascist resistance during WWII (they adequately tried to marginalize the western resistance in London), promoted the public picture of the USSR as a safeguard of the future independence of the state and a selfless ally ready to help whenever necessary.



Klement Gottwald with Rudolf Slánský (left) and other guests at the construction site of the Klement Gottwald Vítkovice steelworks in Ostrava, September 1950.

Source: Czech News Agency

All the above mentioned factors helped to strengthen the political influence of the CPC in the society after the end of WWII under the conditions of limited political competition. Let me remind you that the CPC was in fact established like a faction within the Social Democracy. In 1921, it split the Social Democracy in two and started its own political existence. However, democratic principles and procedures within the CPC began to collide with the conditions that the party had adopted by entering the Communist International established and controlled by the Bolsheviks. Disagreements about the form of the party later resulted in installation of a clearly pro-Moscow leadership led by Klement Gottwald in 1929. From that moment on, the Communist Party and its leadership rigidly subordinated to interests and tasks from Moscow.

In the years 1945-1948, the communists concentrated on gaining control over all key positions in the state. This concerned political as well as economic and security (i.e. intelligence and state secu-

urity) areas. Based on this, the CPC apparatus collected all sorts of information about the functioning of the state as well as information concerning activities and plans of their political adversaries who were carefully surveyed and monitored by the agencies. Provocations were carried out against non-communist persons which were supposed to damage their personal reputations and positions in the eyes of the public as well as draw attention to dishonest practices of the non-communist parties. The legitimate party leaderships were to be gradually discredited and replaced by helpful executors of the communist tyranny.

We also have to consider the fact that there was no unified anti-communist opposition. There were a lot of internal disputes within the non-communist parties which were also not able to get over particular interests. They relied on the personality of President Edvard Beneš and well-established, traditional democratic mechanisms. They had underestimated the threat of communism for many years

and even though they initiated a crucial power clash with the CPC in February 1948, at the given moment they failed to mobilize the public as efficiently and openly as the communists.

After February 1948, the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia focused on strengthening of the acquired power. Apart from the party apparatus, communist cadres in the security were used in order to purge the state institutions; they were later used in construction of the first political trials. The State Security became a feared power-political organ. It was necessary to compromise the representatives of the non-communist parties, selected diplomats, Czechoslovak Army officers, church representatives, etc. The State Security, an obedient tool of the CPC gradually built for persecution of unbending citizens, "got to work" and using "its own methods" it created and refined the mechanism of the state lawlessness. Provocations, physical and psychological violence, omnipresent humiliation in the prisons, and finally the arrival of the So-



Celebration of Rudolf Slánský's 50th birthday, 31 July 1951.
Source: Czech News Agency



Klement Gottwald and Rudolf Slánský at a ceremonial reception at Prague Castle, 24 October 1951.
Source: Czech News Agency

viet advisors in the autumn of 1949, led to unprecedented creation of monster trials. But why did the CPC design them? The developments in the international situation were definitely an important aspect. I have already mentioned the Soviet models and concepts which Czechoslovakia happily adopted. The tense relations between the USSR and the West also played their part (the 1st Berlin crisis, from the early 1950s on the war on the Korean Peninsula); some motives could surely be due to the change in the relations with Israel, or in the just opened, intense conflict within the Soviet bloc in Yugoslavia. The reasons within were due to the effort on the part of the Communist Party to break any, be it only potential, resistance and subordination of the society. The heroes of the 1st and 2nd resistance, the intellectual elite of the society, opponents of collectivization and the CPC policy, faced loss of their personal freedom, torture, loss of dignity and humiliation. The CPC had more than 240 of them executed. The terror unleashed in the early 1950s concerned literally every citizen. Apart from the national cases with extraordinary propagandistic effects, local trials were also carried out whose exemplary meaning was related to the specific local conditions. Consequently, the trials served as a warning and were meant to educate people as well as stabilize the society.⁵ Another aspect of construction of the trials was connected to the expectations that the Communist Party had invoked in the public before and after February 1948 (realistic, less realistic and totally unrealistic promises). But soon after

February 1948 the CPC found out that it was not able to fulfil its visions. At the beginning of the 1950s, the regime found itself in an economic, social and political crisis.⁷ It was necessary to find someone who could be made responsible for failing to fulfil the set targets. Thus a strong wave of repressions became the catalyst of a crisis. First, the regime logically focused on adversaries outside the Communist Party. Later, with direct Soviet assistance it took up purges within the Communist Party. Hitherto unquestionable representatives of the regime were now introduced in a new constellation and interpretation; however, this also caused a huge shock within the party apparatus and an avalanche effect in an environment represented by the tried communists. The trials designed in this way fulfilled the propagandist as well as mobilization functions. With respect to the analysis of the impact of the judiciary persecution upon a certain layer of the public, the communists must not be seen as the main target group. According to Jan Foitzik, who mainly draws on data presented by Karel Kaplan, communists made up only 0.3 percent of those convicted, while at the same time they made up 6 percent of all people executed for political reasons.⁸ The importance of the trials against communists lies in the impact their arrests and trials caused within the party. They were people directly involved with the regime, with its functioning so far, with repressions, and, as propaganda had it, with the achievements and failures of the movement.

Now, the arrested communist representatives were discredited in the eyes of the public. How was it possible that they had been hiding their anti-state activities for so long? How would it affect the change in the policy in the given branch with respect to the work of the arrested and now condemned communists? What would happen to cadres who until then had been carrying out their decisions consistently and without any doubts? Would they also have to cope with the consequences of the mistakes made by the condemned CPC leaders? Where and at what level of the apparatus would assuming responsibility stop? The arrested and tried communists represented the elite of the party at that time. They belonged to the *crème de la crème* of what the CPC had at hand, they were battle-proven, trusted by the Soviets, and that was why they occupied responsible positions in the state apparatus. On the other hand, they were no "poor devils" upon whom the purges "had befallen by mistake". Many of them were actively and remorselessly involved in the purges in the society. Many of them knew how the trials proceeded in the Soviet Union in the 1930s. They knew the comrades who were tried then and they even might have known that they had not committed any of the crimes they stood accused of. And finally, they personally participated in the establishment of the repressive system which they were now to experience as its victims. Let me remind you that trials of representatives of the Communist Party did not happen only in Czechoslovakia,

though here they were the largest as to their extent and impact. Already in June 1949, general secretary of Albania's Communist Party, deputy prime minister and minister of the interior, Koci Džodze was executed for allegedly planning a secession of the country from the alliance with the USSR. In October 1949, Lázsló Rajk, member of the politburo of the Hungarian Communist Party and minister of foreign affairs (formerly the minister of the interior), was sentenced and executed for alleged anti-state activities. In December 1949, Traicho Kostov, secretary of the Central Committee of the Communist Party and deputy prime minister, was executed in Bulgaria. Purges within the apparatus of the communist parties were also carried out in Yugoslavia and Poland.

However, in Czechoslovakia, several aspects coincided. The range of the arrested and later tried members of the "anti-state conspiracy centre" was enormous; it truly involved the whole society. There were people from the party apparatus, from diplomacy, foreign trade, the economic sphere, as well as representatives of the army, security and mass media. There were people who (unluckily for them) decided to go and fight in Spain in the 1930s and later on served in the West during WWII; people of Jewish origin (who were abused in a distasteful manner in the Slánský trial as well as in some others); people with links to Tito's Yugoslavia (so called "Titoists") or who had to undergo self-criticism procedures within the party before the war. They faced incredible, even fantas-

tic accusations, they were found guilty and mercilessly executed. However, they were not (as I have mentioned before and want to underline) innocent. They were witnesses and direct actors in many communist crimes.

Let's take a brief look at the head of the conspiracy depicted by the Soviets. Rudolf Slánský was an important figure within the CPC. He was a close collaborator and friend of Klement Gottwald. He belonged among the trustees and enjoyed Gottwald's full trust. It is evidenced by the fact that when an arrest warrant was issued for Gottwald in 1934 when he was hiding in Moscow, Slánský and Šverma took over the leadership of the party. Slánský was at the side of the CPC chairman during WWII too. After the war he became second in command in the CPC. He held the post of the general secretary from May 1945 to September 1951. This position gave him control over the party apparatus. He was heavily responsible for the establishment of the communist regime. He organized provocations against non-communists in the security apparatus, was in charge of communists within the security apparatus, and coordinated activities of different departments of the party's Central Secretariat. It is also due to these competencies that Slánský's role in the February events must not be marginalized. February 1948 and Gottwald's election for president further strengthened his position. He acted authoritatively, often with reference to the Soviets and Gottwald. He was also one of the communist representatives who were most re-

sponsible for introduction of repressive measures and unleashing of the wave of political trials and mass injustices. Perhaps he understood the instability of his position the moment he was demoted from the post of general secretary and was appointed deputy prime minister. He might have considered it even before that. At the time when the Kremlin ignored his 50th birthday or when, with his help, the hunt for the "enemy" within the CPC was unleashed.

I would like to mention one more absurdity of the early 1950s. In the times when the first arrests and accusations of communist cadres had taken place, their future cellmates and co-accused were sitting in meetings approving the methods of the security and the party (unanimously, of course). Perhaps they were able to admit privately that a person whom they had known was not capable of committing the deeds he was accused of. But they were happy that they were not in their shoes, that it did not concern them. However, they were not aware of the big game being staged behind the scenes at the end of which their deep self-criticism before the plenum (or retirement) would not suffice and they would be lucky to get out alive.

The system they had been working for happily and unscrupulously for many years no longer had a need for them and so disposed of them. Some of the tried communists realised this fact. Before his execution, Slánský said: *I got what I deserve*. Others left this world despairing at what their party had done to them.

NOTES

- 1 VEBER, Václav: *Stalin. Stručný životopis (Stalin. A Brief Biography)*. Karolinum, Prague 1998, p. 108.
- 2 On the other hand, Christian Gerlach and Nicolas Werth quote figures which are lower by several orders of magnitude. According to them, 1 to 1.2 million Soviet people were executed between the early 1930s and the year 1953. They also state that most capital sentences were carried out at that time based on extrajudicial decisions and 75 percent of them were carried out between July 1937 and the end of 1938. See GERLACH, Christian - WERTH, Nicolas: *State Violence - Violent Societies*. In GEYER, Michael - FITZPATRICK, Sheila (eds.): *Beyond Totalitarianism. Stalinism and Nazism Compared*, Academia, Prague 2012, pp. 240-241.
- 3 The highlighted anti-Semitism was connected to the change in relations between the USSR and Israel. The USSR had supported the establishment of this state. Stalin had supposed that he might use it as means of enlarging the influence of the USSR into the territory of the Middle East. But when Israel had demonstrated its independence in foreign affairs, the Soviet policy changed completely. Israel shifted to the position of an enemy of the USSR, Jewish organizations within the USSR were dissolved and their members persecuted. Anti-Semitism in the USSR gained momentum. However, this was nothing really new in the Soviet repressive policy. As proof that this was a continuation of trends started in the late 1930s we can mention the case of a trial with members of the allegedly anti-state Jewish Anti-Fascist Committee which was conducted in Moscow between May and July 1937.
- 4 The disputes between the USSR and the West were probably best seen in defeated Germany (the failed Soviet blockade of Berlin, among others). However, Stalin misjudged the US interest in the post-war development in Europe, evidenced by the Truman Doctrine and the Marshall Plan. He was also taken by surprise by the departure of the French (and later also Italian and Belgian) communists from the respective governments. The necessity to coordinate further steps within the communist movement led him to the idea to renew the international organization clearly controlled by Moscow, the so called Information Bureau. However, this was not able to prevent further conflicts within the communist bloc either.
- 5 In my opinion, a trial becomes a political trial (i.e. procedurally flawed) if political power intervenes in the investigative phase or into the very trial itself. Its aim is not only to influence who is to be arrested and of what he/she will be accused but also the course and result of the trial. All these attributes are evidenced in trials into which fascist and communist parties intervened throughout the 20th century.
- 6 According to Karel Kaplan, the stabilization function of the trials was related to intimidating the public against the consequences of opposition activities; after 1956, however, the same trials became a destabilizing factor. See KAPLAN, Karel: *Politické procesy 50. let v Československu*. In: PERNES, Jiří - FOITZIK, Jan (eds.): *Politické procesy v Československu po roce 1945 a "případ Slánský"*. Sborník příspěvků ze stejnojmenné konference pořádané ve dnech 14.-16. dubna 2003 v Praze, ÚSD AV ČR - Prius, Prague - Brno 2005, pp. 107-114.
- 7 All these aspects have been looked into by Jiří Pernes. See PERNES, Jiří: *Krise komunistického režimu v Československu v 50. letech 20. století*. CDK, Brno 2008.
- 8 FOITZIK, Jan: *Souvislosti politických procesů ve střední a východní Evropě*. In: PERNES, Jiří - FOITZIK, Jan (eds.): *Politické procesy v Československu po roce 1945 a "případ Slánský"*, p. 11.



Prague May 25th 1949. First meeting of newly elected Central Committee of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia.
Committee members from left: Václav Kopecký, Marie Švermová, Antonín Zápotocký, Klement Gottwald and Rudolf Slánský.

Source: Czech News Agency





Nikita Sergeyevich Khrushchev en route to Prague Castle, July 1957, Krasnoarmějskú (Red Army) square (today Palach square).

Source: Czech News Agency

The Gensek's Visit

THE GENERAL SECRETARY OF THE CENTRAL COMMITTEE OF THE COMMUNIST PARTY OF THE SOVIET UNION AND CHAIRMAN OF THE SUPREME SOVIET LEONID ILYICH BREZHNEV IN CZECHOSLOVAKIA, 1978¹

A visit by a Soviet gensek² to Czechoslovakia was always an extraordinary event. The preparation, course and sometimes consequences were reminiscent of an emperor's inspection tour of distant governorates where vice-regents ruled by his grace. Such visits can be used to map the transformation and nature of Czechoslovak-Soviet relations, various methods of mobilising society and the pacification of political opponents in authoritarian regimes. This was clearly visible in the visit of Leonid Ilyich Brezhnev in 1978, which is the main subject of this paper. It was of great significance, coming as it did shortly before the tenth anniversary of the August 1968 invasion of Czechoslovakia.

PETR BLAŽEK

THE VISITS OF SOVIET EMPERORS

If we overlook Lenin's visit to Prague before WWI³, the first leader of the Soviet Bolsheviks to visit Czechoslovakia arrived several years later, after local Communists had seized power. In June 1954, the first secretary of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (CC CPSU) Nikita Sergeyevich Khrushchev headed a large delegation that flew to Prague to take part in the 10th congress of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia (KSČ). On the eve of its opening, Khrushchev made a symbolic visit to the mausoleum of Klement Gottwald to bow before the embalmed remains of the founder of Czechoslovakia's communist regime.⁴ Khrushchev subsequently visited Czechoslovakia three more times, in 1957, 1961 and 1964. In each case the visit lasted several days and involved trips to selected regions outside Prague. His host Antonín Novotný, who from 1957 combined the posts of first secretary of the Central Committee (ÚV) of the KSČ

and president of Czechoslovakia, held several gala events in honour of the Soviet leader. He also prepared a private programme for his guest that took in hunting, Khrushchev's favourite pastime. Khrushchev's final trip to Prague occurred in August 1964. Two months later he was forced out of office and replaced by Leonid Ilyich Brezhnev. The new gensek first visited Czechoslovakia at a time when internal disputes in the KSČ were coming to a head. His improvised two-day visit in December 1967 did not deliver the hoped for unity. On the contrary, the situation became more acute, resulting in the departure of Antonín Novotný from the post of leader of the KSČ, where he was replaced by Alexander Dubček.⁵ Brezhnev returned to Prague in February 1968, taking part in celebrations of the 20th anniversary of the KSČ's seizure of power in February 1948. At a ceremonial conference, he presented the Czechoslovak comrades with a gift – a model of the battle-cruiser Aurora. This, said Brezhnev, was to become a symbol of the martial friendship of

*the communist parties of our countries and the indissoluble, eternal friendship of our brother countries, going hand in hand towards the bright future of communism.*⁶ What kind of joint future the Soviet leadership had in mind became clear a few months later. Brezhnev appeared on Czechoslovak territory at the turn of July and August 1968 when he travelled to Čierná nad Tisou in a bid to force the KSČ leadership to put a halt to reforms. The form the four-day meeting took speaks volumes about the charged relations. Brezhnev and other members of the Soviet delegation arrived at the border town in a special train on which they returned every evening to the USSR.

These bilateral talks culminated in a meeting in Bratislava on 3 August 1968 attended by representatives of the communist parties of Bulgaria, the GDR, Poland and Hungary. This diplomacy by intimidation did not produce results⁷ and within three weeks units from five Warsaw Pact states set off for the Czechoslovak border and Brezhnev's name became for many



Typical picture from a welcoming ceremony for a gensek, frequently the subject of jokes in the past. Brezhnev and Husák kiss in comradely fashion at Prague airport. ČSSR president Ludvík Svoboda looks on from left, 24 January 1972.

Source: Czech News Agency

Czechoslovaks a hated symbol of the 1968 occupation.⁸ The frequency of Brezhnev's visits to Czechoslovakia subsequently eased off. The first time the Soviet leader came after the 1968 occupation was in May 1970, for the 25th anniversary of the end of WWII. On that occasion he signed a new treaty of alliance between Czechoslovakia and the Soviet Union, along with the chairman of the USSR's Council of Ministers, Alexei Nikolayevich Kosygin, the first secretary of the ÚV KSČ, Gustáv Husák, and the prime minister of the Czechoslovak Socialist Republic (ČSSR), Lubomír Štrougal. Brezhnev's doctrine of limited sovereignty was evident in its preamble, in a passage in which both parties confirmed that the *maintenance, reinforcement and defence of socialist achievements, achieved by the heroic efforts and unselfish work of the people, are the shared international duty of socialist countries.*⁹ On this occasion, President Svoboda bestowed the honorary title of

Hero of the Czechoslovak Socialist Republic on Brezhnev *for exceptional service in the liberation of Czechoslovakia and cooperation between the ČSSR and USSR nations.*¹⁰ Brezhnev subsequently took part in the 14th Congress of the KSČ in May 1971, at which the conclusive defeat of the reformists was clear. In January 1972, Brezhnev visited Prague in connection with a meeting of representatives of the Warsaw Pact states. The gensek also appeared in Czechoslovakia in February 1973, taking part in celebrations of "Victorious February" with local comrades. On that occasion he travelled to Prague on a special train which made several stops along the way. At a ceremonial gathering at Prague Castle on 22 February 1973 Brezhnev presented Husák with the Order of Lenin on the occasion of his 60th birthday.¹¹ After 1973 Brezhnev was not seen in Czechoslovakia for some years. His visit in 1978 was, therefore, of great

significance. This was – as previously stated – intensified by the approaching anniversary of the August 1968 occupation. Most importantly, it was the first official independent visit by the Soviet leader to Czechoslovakia, as previously he had come unexpectedly (as in 1967) or with delegations from Soviet satellites. Brezhnev later came to Prague, for the last time, in April 1981 for the 16th Congress of the KSČ, when he was already in poor health. The last ever visit by a Soviet gensek to Czechoslovakia took place in 1987. It was unique for several reasons. By contrast with Brezhnev's visits, Mikhail Sergeyevich Gorbachev's stay in Czechoslovakia was linked to expectations of political change and a re-evaluation of the 1968 occupation. People in Prague and Bratislava welcomed the Soviet leader with spontaneous enthusiasm as a proponent of political perestroika and glasnost. As swiftly became apparent, their expectations did

not correspond to reality. Some months later, Gustáv Husák was replaced as general secretary of the ÚV KSČ by Miloš Jakeš, whose famous statement suggesting the party and himself were akin to a lonely fence-post left to overcome hardships alone subsequently became a symbol of the breakdown of the entire system.¹²

POTEMKIN SYNDROME

According to archival documents, Leonid Ilyich Brezhnev was invited to Czechoslovakia in November 1975 by Husák during a visit to Moscow. After long negotiations, Moscow agreed and the genssek flew to Prague at the turn of May and June, 1978. During a four-day stay, the Soviet delegation was to visit not only Prague but also spend a day in Bratislava.¹³

On 19 May 1978, Brezhnev's programme was approved at a session of the leadership of the ÚV KSČ, whose members made small but important changes to the draft. Among other things, they dropped a point in the programme under which the representative of the Soviet "proletariat" was to meet workers (specifically a tour of a Bratislava electro-technical plant scheduled for 1 June 1978). The programme consisted almost exclusively of traditional official ceremonies: the laying of wreathes at Vítkov, Olšany and the Slávin pantheon and at a memorial to the Slovak National Uprising, a visit to the V.I. Lenin Museum, an honours ceremony and ceremonial gatherings, receptions and lunches. The sole exception was a tour of the recently opened Prague metro, which the Soviets had supplied with trains.¹⁴ Preparations for Brezhnev's visit were carried out in a manner typical in authoritarian regimes. This could be dubbed, with some exaggeration, the Potemkin Syndrome, as the Czechoslovak governors did their best to make sure the visit made a positive impression on the Kremlin leader. Places the Soviet delegation was to visit were spruced up well in advance. Frequently this literally involved painting the facades of buildings that were otherwise in disrepair. In addition a detailed plan for the visit was put in place, including the deploying of pioneers and citizens to "spontaneously" welcome the Soviet delegation. Simultaneously the secret police also carried out a "clean-up"; as



Visits by Soviet leaders were always carefully organised, including mass welcomes. Around 5,000 workers came to greet the Soviet leader at a station in Ostrava on 22 February 1973. Source: Czech News Agency

well as being tasked with protecting the guests during their visit¹⁵, they were ordered to keep dissidents quiet and ensure they did not protest in any way against the abysmal situation in Czechoslovakia.¹⁶

As the spokespersons of Charter 77 summed it up in a statement issued on 3 June 1978, during Brezhnev's visit the security apparatus carried out *measures which significantly exceeded the framework of operations usually carried out during similar state visits in their scope and the character of methods used*.¹⁷ Even before Brezhnev's arrival the secret police had arrested several persons, including Charter 77 signatories.¹⁸ The majority were taken to Ruzyně prison on the outskirts of Prague where they spent 48 (in some cases more) hours in preliminary custody cells. *It was indicated to the prisoners during questioning that they could expect similar and more drastic operations in connection with the ap-*

proaching anniversary [August 1968], read the Charter 77 statement in reference to the threats of State Security (StB) officers.¹⁹ Many of the detainees were formally released after 48 hours, only to be immediately rearrested after leaving the prison grounds and again placed behind bars. Among them was the philosopher Ladislav Hejdínek, who protested against the secret police's action in a letter addressed to the ČSSR's minister of the interior, Jaromír Obzina.²⁰

The preventative arrest of those who had done nothing unlawful was to become routine practice during various events in subsequent years (most frequently during anniversaries of the 1968 occupation). It is a paradox that such an approach was not peculiar to authoritarian regimes. When in October 1971 Brezhnev flew to France on an official visit, the French police detained selected Eastern European exiles during his stay. By contrast with

Při oficiální návštěvě Leonida Brežněva v Československu ve dnech 30. 5. až 2. 6. 1978 provázely všechny složky SNB na území ČSSR opatření, která svým rozsahem i povahou určitých metod podstatně přesáhla rámec akcí, obvyklých při podobných státních návštěvách. Ačkoli šlo o právní řád, nešlo o institut preventivního zadržení, ocitly se stovky osob, které se nikdo nedopustily, po dobu Brežněvovy návštěvy ve věznicích. Jejich zajištění a zadržení byla kryta neformálními, fingovanými důvody, především předstíraným vyšetřováním neexistujících tr. činů. Bezpečnostní orgány se přitom dopouštěly různých dalších konkrétních nedopustitelných jako například překročení osmatisícetihodinové liboty zadržení (resp. zajištění), porušení domovní svobody a podobně. Srovnání se vůbec neobližely na dohled ty, které měly v občanském životě lidí způsobit sám fakt, že byli ve vězení a že byli zadrženi se skutky, kterých se nedopustili. Součástí této akce bylo i vězení – ve většině případů čtyřdenní – mnoha signatářů Charter 77 a osob, které a Charter 77 spolupracují, nebo sympatizují nebo jsou v přímém příbuzenském či přátelském styku s jejími signatáři. Jak se nám zatím podařilo zjistit, bylo tímto způsobem jen v Praze a Brně postřeno nejméně 60 osob. Vzniklé podněty z různých trestních činů byla zjevnou a občas i otevřenou priznáním zamlouk. Celé akce však využíly orgány StB zároveň k tomu, že provedly částe domovní prohlídky, při nichž zabavily velké množství knih, ručních soukromou korespondenci apod. a že ukartednily i bezpečnost výsledků, při nichž se pokoušely získat informace o práci Charter 77. Aby formálně zdůvodnily čtyřdenní vězení, pro-pověděly veřejně po dvou úsecích a vzápětí je před věznicí nebo přímo v prostorách věznic znovu zatýkali a vrátili do cel. Dva z nich, signatáři Charter 77, Ing. Pavel Roubal a spolupracovník Jiří Grunš a František Jan Sima se dosud nevzdali, protože na ně byla valná vazba. Celá tato akce je výrazem slovestně se stupující útlakové politiky proti nepohodlnému občanství. Při výsledcích bylo vězněno namátkově, že v souvislosti s blízkostí se výroční mlouou očeká-vat podobné a ještě drastičtější akce. Celý tento varovný vývoj, vyvolávající se viditelná spetrování policejních zákroků a proni-hující se nesnadnost občanství, považujeme za velice nebezpečný. Strach mocenského aparátu z občana je přitom v hlubokém rozporu se všemi oficiálními tvrzeními o vnitropolitické stabilitě. Charter 77 proti poslední akci bezpečnostní rozhodně protestuje a je vážně znepokojená na situaci, kterou tato akce stvoří.

Dr. Ladislav Hejdiček
mluvčí Charter 77

Marta Kubišová
mluvčí Charter 77

Dr. Jaroslav Šebata
mluvčí Charter 77

1978

Ministři vnitra ČSSR

dr. Obštinovi

P r a h a

Pane ministře dr. Obštině,

U příležitosti přijetí nejvyššího představitelů ČSSR do naší země bylo zcela absurdním upraveno nařízení několika desítek signatářů Charter 77. Opět se to pro neochopnost nebo nemalost vědomí na straně složek StB neobešlo bez porušování zákonů. Na nejhorší z nich vás chci upozornit, neboť je tím charakterizován stav "nebezpečnosti", jak si jej představitel některé složky StB. Šlo o nás, kteří jsme byli po zadržení na 48 hodin a věznice Ruzyně propuštěni, byla ještě před věznici vrátníci okamžitě znovu zadrženi a znovu předáni věznicím. Násle akce (konkrétně trestní řád) mluvčí zcela jasně o 48 hodinách jako o maximální přípustné délce zadržení. V našem případě nebylo vnášeno žádné obvinění a nebyla navržena vazba, propuštění byla fiktivní a podvodná, a to s cílem obejít rozhodnutí prokurátora. Je možné, že dnes odpoledne, kdy prokurátor už "nemůže k zastílení", bude obvinění proti nám přece jenom vnášeno, takže se prokurátor bude muset vyjádřit až v pondělí. Je ovšem možné, že budeme znovu propuštěni a zase hned va vrátíme opět zadržení. Někdo machinacemi se může domnívat toho, že zadržení kterékoli obžalova může být zma-něno bez vědomí a souhlasu prokurátora ve "vazbu" libovolně dlouhou. Jde o flagrantní a cynické porušení zákona v jeho podstatě. Šedím vás, pane ministře, abyste dal své úřadu představit a abyste náležitě potvrdil vinnosti a provedení podobných překratů pro příště. Předseda vlády prohlásil v zahraničí, že se proti Charter 77 postupuje jen politickými prostředky. Máme mnoho důkazů, že tomu tak není; tento poslední, o němž vás informuji, je jedním z nich. Chci bych vás kromě toho upozornit, že během svého státního útěku pobytu v Ruzyni jsem se setkal ještě s dalšími případy porušení zákonů a navíc hrubého jednání, týkajícího se osob, které v šedím souvislosti s Charter 77 nebyly a nejsou. Byl bych rád, kdybyste se pro me (nebo pro někoho z nás) našel někdy, až budu opět na svobodě, trochu času k osobnímu setkání a krátkému rozhovoru. Je výslovně neobvyklé, že s námi státní hovoří jen příslušníci složek Bezpečnosti.

V Praze-Ruzyně, 2. 6. 78.

Dr. Ladislav Hejdiček v.r.
mluvčí Charter 77

Dr. Ladislav Hejdiček
Slovenská 11/1146
12000 Praha 2 - Vinohrady
t.č. věznice Ruzyně.

Charter 77 statement on National Security Corps measures linked to the visit of Leonid Brezhnev to Czechoslovakia, 3 June 1978.

Source: Libri prohibiti

Charter 77 spokesman Ladislav Hejdiček wrote a complaint about the behaviour of State Security officers at Ruzyně prison itself, 2 June 1978.

Source: Libri prohibiti

Charter 77 signatories they did not end up in preliminary custody cells but in a hotel on a Mediterranean island, drinking cognac at the expense of the French government and expressing their grievances to journalists who subsequently criticised the Elysee Palace for succumbing to Soviet influence.²¹

The arrival of the Soviet delegation was preceded by a massive propaganda campaign in the domestic media, carefully orchestrated by ÚV KSČ staff according to an approved scenario. Reports on the planned visit gradually pushed other events off the front pages almost entirely. On 30 May 1978 the main ÚV KSČ newspaper Rudé právo carried only articles on that subject on its front page. Its headlines spoke volumes: *We welcome you warmly, dear comrades!* (in the daily's masthead), *A great day for our nation* (a servile lead on friendship with the Soviet Union), *Comrade L. I. Brezhnev* (a panegyric biography with a large portrait photo), *The lilac embrace of Prague*

Pavel Tigríd, an editor of the exile magazine Svědectví (Testimony), remembered with amusement the internment of selected Eastern European émigrés by the French secret service in connection with Brezhnev's visit to France in October 1971:

Like every service, the French Interior Ministry had lists of emigrants who were active against the governments of other countries. Prior to the official visit of Leonid Brezhnev the Soviet secret service, the KGB, requested that such people be "removed", as it was called officially. One morning the French police simply took us to Corsica. I was in a dark suit because I was meant to fly to London for some conference and suddenly at 6 in the morning two policeman arrived and said: "You've got to come with us to Paris, it won't take long." The kids were small and they cried. Nobody knew what was going on. It wasn't until the evening that my wife heard the radio and found out what it was all about. The funniest thing was that the police kept apologising to us profusely. Otherwise, it was great on Corsica – we played volleyball and drank and whole TV crews travelled to us, lots of journalists. The entire French political scene was indignant and articles appeared with titles like *The KGB also rules in France*. Some of us got off Corsica sooner than the others. Imagine, in Marseille we were transferred from a police plane to a civilian one and at that moment one runway across Brezhnev was boarding his plane, so we waved at him and fell about with laughter.

PEČINKA, Bohumil – TIGRID, Pavel: *Marx na Hradčanech*. Barrister & Principal, Brno 2001, p. 22.

(a phrase bringing to mind the end of WWII) and *Rich fruits of friendship* (an overview of how the Soviet press was covering the planned visit). The laudatory articles were supplemented by reminiscences from cosmonaut Vladimír Remek about his space mis-

sion in 1978 and his subsequent reception with Brezhnev (*For peace on the blue planet*). The final text on page one was a one-dimensional poem by Jaroslav Mucha reminiscent of lame rhymes from a school reader (*Glory to you, sons of the Soviets*).²²



Front page of Rudé právo, 30 May 1978.

Source: National Archive

KISSES AND OTHER RITUALS

In 1974 Brezhnev's health deteriorated seriously when he suffered two strokes in succession. His medication negatively impacted his ability to fulfil his senior party function. He spent most of his time sleeping or watching TV. He loved watching football and ice hockey games. Unlike previously, politburo meetings were short and by and large informal. Other politburo members gradually gained influence, in particular the triumvirate of Yuri Vladimirovich Andropov, Andrey Andreyevich Gromyko and Andrei Antonovich Grechko. They were united by loyalty to the gensek, whose cult of personality grew despite the decline in Brezhnev's physical strength. In 1977

Brezhnev was elected chairman of the presidium of the Supreme Soviet.²³ Brezhnev's worsening health in his later years curtailed his foreign travel. Leaders of satellite states were disquieted by the fact that the last vehicle in cavalcades was always fitted with resuscitation equipment, the historian Karel Duman wrote in his excellent book on the gradual fall of the Soviet empire.²⁴ It is not known from the available archival documents whether the cavalcade in Prague in spring 1978 also featured such a vehicle. It is certain that the procession was long, as the Soviet gensek landed on 30 May 1978 in an Ilyushin 62 M shortly before 10 a.m. at Prague's old Ruzyně airport with a sizable delegation.²⁵ When they alighted on the red

carpet they were welcomed by Czechoslovak comrades led by Gustáv Husák with the traditional kisses (a favourite target of sarcastic jokes) as well as a guard of honour from the Prague army garrison, the national anthems of both states and a 21-gun salute. Even at the airport the visitors were "spontaneously" welcomed by around 4,000 citizens who had in actual fact been transported there on organised buses during work hours from many factories and offices.²⁶ After the airport welcoming ceremony, broadcast live on Czechoslovak Television, the Soviet delegation drove in black limousines with motorcycle outriders along Lenin St. (today Evropská, or European, St.) to the centre of Prague. The route was lined with another crowd consisting largely of school pupils with colourful crepe paper "wavers" and signs.²⁷ The cavalcade's destination was Prague Castle. When they arrived, numerous rituals combining national customs and communist traditions awaited the Soviet delegation at Hradčanské náměstí. Brezhnev received bouquets of lilacs from pioneers in ceremonial folk costumes before youths in national folk costumes welcomed him with bread and salt. Rudé právo reported that songs of Soviet and Czechoslovak partisans accompanied Brezhnev and his companion Katusha as they made their way to the Castle's Matyáš Gate. In the first courtyard the Internationale was performed before Brezhnev and Husák undertook an inspection of the Castle Guard. The Soviet delegation were then taken to the residence at Prague Castle, where they were to be accommodated.²⁸

Unfortunately, stenographic records of the negotiations of the two delegations have not been preserved in the archive of the ÚV KSČ. Only partial documents are accessible²⁹, Husák's barely legible notes, a recording of pre-prepared speeches (naturally there is a question as to whether more serious discussion also took place) and official communiqués containing nothing but woolly phrases. Furthermore, the published memoirs of participants do not provide any important information on the meetings.³⁰ The first meeting of the delegations' leaders was scheduled to take place as soon as the Soviets got to Prague Castle. Brezhnev and Husák had lunch together at the same time in the Green Room. The subsequent programme corresponded to the slow pace the gensek was used to in

Podklad pro jednání se soudruhem L.I. Brežněvem

/Praha, 30.5.1978/

Přivítat s. Brežněva, ostatní členy delegace
Ocenit význam návštěvy a setkání se s. Brežněvem
Poděkovat za společný let čs. kosmonauta se sovětskými kosmonauty
Předat slovo s. Brežněvovi

x x x

Poděkovat za výklad - ocenit.

K situaci v ČSSR.

Hlavní pozornost - plnění závěrů XV.sjezdu KSČ

- na březnovém zasedání ÚV jsme provedli bilanci dvou let
- program XV.sjezdu náročný, potřebný, reálný
- sjezdová linie ve všech oblastech správná, není třeba nic měnit
- na všech úsecích se daří úkoly plnit, někde i překračovat
- za období dvou let došlo k dalším kvalitativním změnám v celé společnosti
- dále se upevnil vztah k Sovětskému svazu, KSSS.

Situace ve straně

- dobrá, upevnila se jednota, akceschopnost, vzrostla autorita strany v celé společnosti, důvěra v její politiku
- výroční členské schůze - vysoká aktivita komunistů
 - věcnost, kritičnost, náročnost v jednání
 - odhodlání splnit závěry XV.sjezdu
- okresní a krajské konference
 - jako součást života celé společnosti

ferred to as a shining example of co-operation between the two countries, made an obsequious speech. This was followed by the two main orators, Gustáv Husák and Leonid Ilyich Brezhnev. In his address, the general secretary of the ÚV KSČ highlighted the Soviet role in 1968: *We will never forget that it has been the Soviet Union that has stood faithfully by our side, when necessary providing a helping hand without hesitation. It was that way ten years ago when the very existence of socialism in Czechoslovakia was under threat. Years later, we again highly appreciate the international help of the Soviet Union and other socialist countries.*³⁴

Like his main host, the Soviet leader read his speech from cards on which individual passages were printed in large letters. He paid tribute to the role of Czechoslovak communists after WWII: *It was necessary to overcome the results of the war and fascist occupation, to rebuild society on new, socialist principles, to ensure economic expansion and improve in every way workers' living conditions. This huge work of construction had to be carried out amid a dogged battle against class enemies. They were audible for a long time. And in 1968 the opponents of socialism carried out a broadly conceived attack on the revolutionary achievements of the working class. When at the end of his speech Brezhnev wished every Czech family happiness and satisfaction, the entire hall stood and prolonged applause rang out. Brezhnev, betraying signs of approaching dementia, with his hand raised and fist clenched, delivered his concluding slogans: *Long live our common goal - the brotherly friendship of the Soviet Union and Czechoslovakia! Long live peace! Long live communism!*³⁵ The gathering concluded with the mass singing of the Internationale, which virtually all those in attendance took part in, the TV footage suggests.³⁶ Another point on the programme stemmed from Brezhnev's notorious thirst for official honours.³⁷ He brought two high Soviet honours for his hosts, presenting them at the Coronation Hall immediately after the end of the ceremonial gathering. The gensek presented Gustáv Husák with the Order of the October Revolution before bestowing on Vasil Bilak - who for many had become the personification of collaboration with the Soviet leader-*

Gustáv Husák's notes for negotiations with Brezhnev.

Source: National Archive

that period. The next event began at 5 p.m. when the first negotiations between the delegations took place at Prague Castle's White Dining Room. They did not last long, with only Brezhnev³¹ and Husák³² speaking. Two hours later a ceremony traditional during the official visits of representatives got under way in Žižkov: the laying of a wreath at the tomb of the unknown soldier and bouquets at the tomb of Klement Gottwald and in the Soviet Army Hall. The laying of bouquets continued at a memorial to Soviet soldiers at the Olšany Cemetery. According to the programme, that was to be followed by a private dinner and the screening of films, though the titles are not recorded.³³

The main point of the second day of the visit was a ceremonial gathering at the Spanish Hall at Prague Castle. It was preceded by a private breakfast and began at 10 a.m. The two-hour programme consisted primarily of formal speeches full of phrases about Czechoslovak-Soviet friendship. The meeting got underway with national anthems and a speech by Lubomír Štrougal, a member of the leadership of the ÚV KSČ and prime minister of the ČSSR. This was followed by pre-prepared speeches from a worker, a farmer, a scientist and a student, the approved schedule records. In addition, cosmonaut Vladimír Remek, whose space flight was frequently re-



Official photo from a meeting at Prague Castle, 30 March 1978.

Source: Czech News Agency



Mikhail Sergeyevich Gorbachev's visit to Czechoslovakia differed from previous events of that kind. The Soviet leader went on a walkabout in the centre of the capital with a smile, speaking with Prague citizens. In a photograph from 9 April 1987 he is seen in a pedestrian zone near Jungmann square.

Source: Czech News Agency

ship after August 1968 – the Order of Lenin³⁸.

Ordinary citizens were denied the opportunity to experience this live. The Prague Castle gathering was to have been broadcast by Czechoslovak Television on its first channel but a technical glitch put paid to that. This led the leadership of the KSČ to subsequently order an extensive investigation into whether sabotage had been carried out; the concluding report of

a commission set up expressly for that purpose said that the failure had been due to weak fuses at a substation at Prague Castle, which had not been detected during a test run: *During the broadcast itself a disproportionate burden was placed on the substation, which was confirmed by the overheating of the circuit and an electricity blackout.* Czechoslovak Television staff were identified as the main culprits, for not properly checking distribution equip-

ment or ensuring the broadcast by means of a direct telephone connection. Nevertheless, the commission indicated that there may have been political motives for the breakdown. It emphasised in its report that the department investigated had the lowest level of party organisation at Czechoslovak Television, suggesting that as well as buying two new units the station should carry out suitable "personnel measures".³⁹

LENIN'S PORTRAIT AND TWO GOBELINS

Following the presentation of honours to the Czechoslovak comrades, a final lunch was held, after which the Soviet leader took a rest. At 5 p.m. the Soviet delegation, accompanied by members of the presidium of the ÚV KSČ and the chief secretary of the municipal KSČ organisation in Prague Antonín Kapek, were given a tour of the newly open Gottwaldova metro station⁴⁰. From there they went on a special train to the Muzeum station, where after a tour Brezhnev signed the visitors' book. On exiting the metro, the delegation boarded waiting cars and set off for Hybernská St. and a short visit to the V.I. Lenin Museum. There Brezhnev handed over a Soviet gift (a large painting of Lenin) and received two gobelin tapestries, *depicting the friendship of the Soviet and Czechoslovak peoples and the V.I. Lenin Museum building*.⁴¹ After the visit to the museum of the founder of the Bolshevik empire, the Soviet delegation travelled to the airport where, accompanied by Gustáv Husák, Vasil Biľak and several other local comrades, they flew to Bratislava. On landing they experienced a similar welcome to in Prague, the only difference being that the pioneers bore red carnations rather than lilacs.⁴²

A closed meeting with selected Soviet party and government representatives was held in their honour at Bratislava Castle the following day at 10 a.m. The Soviet leader was welcomed by Jozef Lenárt, first secretary of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Slovakia. Brezhnev delivered the main speech, highlighting the rise in living standards in Slovakia in recent decades. As in his address at the Spanish Hall, he paid tribute to economic cooperation and recalled the events of 1968: *Around the world at present, friends and*

enemies of Czechoslovakia, each in their own way, are approaching the tenth anniversary of the events of 1968. Czechoslovak émigrés, right wingers, and their imperialist paymasters are, as they say, crawling out of their skins in order to denigrate the present, to disparage the all-round successes of the ČSSR, inflating any shortcomings whatever.⁴³

After the meeting wreathes were laid from 11 a.m. at a tomb of Soviet soldiers at the city's Slavín pantheon, accompanied by the playing of the March of the Fallen Revolutionaries, and later at a memorial to the Slovak National Uprising. At 4:30 p.m. a late lunch was held, beginning with toasts from Brezhnev and Lenárt.⁴⁴ At 6:30 p.m. the Soviet delegation flew back to Prague. There they had a private evening, listed as free time in the programme.⁴⁵ The last day of the visit began at the Coronation Hall, where Husák presented his guest with the Order of Klement Gottwald.⁴⁶ Brezhnev's boorishness was again apparent during this ceremony. Before making another speech honouring his hosts he tested whether the microphone was

working in an unusual manner, approaching it and banging it roughly with his fist. While he was thanking Husák for the bestowal of the honour he began to have trouble expressing himself and his speech became an incomprehensible roar.⁴⁷ From 10:30 a.m. negotiations involving selected members of the delegations took place, concluding with the signing of declaration on cooperation at Prague Castle's Music Room.⁴⁸ Brezhnev then met the heads of Czechoslovak diplomatic missions, with whom he had a glass of wine, at the Brožík Room.⁴⁹ At 1 p.m. a final reception was held at Prague Castle's Spanish Hall. Around 500 people attended and Husák and Brezhnev made ceremonial toasts.⁵⁰ According to the prepared scenario, at 2:45 p.m. *staff were to take their places at the old [Ruzyně] airport.*⁵¹ The Soviet delegation left for there after a ceremonial farewell with a guard of honour in the first courtyard of Prague Castle. A final ceremony was held there with military honours and broadcast live on the main TV channel. On 2 June 1978 at 3:45 p.m. Brezhnev and his delegation returned home.⁵²

CONCLUSION

Brezhnev's visit at the turn of May and June 1978 spoke volumes about the total deference of the domestic regime to Moscow. For the general secretary of the ÚV KSČ, Gustáv Husák, who had been for several years after his accession under pressure from conservatives⁵³, it meant a symbolic affirmation of his post. He remained party leader until December 1987 (and was president of the ČSSR for two years longer).

In connection with Brezhnev's 1978 visit, a number of open critics of the "normalisation" regime, chief among them Charter 77 signatories, were repeatedly arrested for 48 hours. Other aspects of the gensek's stay in Czechoslovakia were at least in part reminiscent of the totalitarian period of the early 1950s, which has been imprecisely referred to as a period of cult of personality. In Brezhnev's case, it also contained elements that pointed to the deep crisis and subsequent collapse of the Soviet Bloc.

NOTES

- 1 The article is based on a paper that the author delivered at the international conference *Žycie codzienne w państwach bloku wschodniego* organised in Warsaw by the Institute of National Remembrance and the cultural centres of former Soviet bloc countries.
- 2 The acronym gensek derives from the term *generalnyj sekretar* (general secretary).
- 3 Lenin's best-known visit to Prague was in connection with the 4th All-Russian Conference of the Social Democratic Party, which took place in the second half of January 1912 at the Lidový Dům. It housed the Vladimir Ilyich Lenin Museum in the communist period. After 1989 it was closed and the building returned to the Social Democratic Party.
- 4 CPSU delegation lays wreath at mausoleum of Klement Gottwald. *Rudé právo*, year 34, no. 160, 11. 6. 1954, p. 1.
- 5 Compare KAPLAN, Karel: *Kronika komunistického Československa. Kořeny reformy 1956-1968. Společnost a moc*. Společnost pro odbornou literaturu - Barrister & Principal, Brno 2008, pp. 696-702.
- 6 VONDROVÁ, Jitka - NAVRÁTIL, Jaromír and coll.: *Mezinárodní souvislosti československé krize 1967-1970. Prosinec 1967 - červenec 1968. Prameny k dějinám československé krize v letech 1967-1970*, Part 4, Volume 1. Institute for Contemporary History of the Academy of Sciences of the Czech Republic - Supplement, Prague - Brno 1995, p. 52.
- 7 For more on the negotiations see PAUER, Jan: *Praha 1968. Vpád Varšavské smlouvy. Pozadí - plánování - provedení*. Argo, Prague 2004, pp. 121-159.
- 8 Compare PECKA, Jindřich: *Spontánní projevy Pražského jara 1968-1969. Prameny k dějinám československé krize v letech 1967-1970*, Vol 1. Institute for Contemporary History of the Academy of Sciences of the Czech Republic - Supplement, Prague - Brno 1993.
- 9 New alliance treaty signed with Soviet Union. *Rudé právo*, year. 50, no. 107 (7. 5. 1970), p. 1. Compare WANNER, Jan: *Brežněv a východní Evropa 1968-1982*. Karolinum, Prague 1995, p. 96.
- 10 Title hero of ČSSR bestowed on L.I. Brezhnev. *Rudé právo*, year. 58, no. 106, 6. 5. 1978, p. 1.
- 11 L.I. Brezhnev welcomed in Prague. *Rudé právo*, year 53, no. 46, 23. 2. 1973, p. 1.
- 12 Compare. VYKOUKAL, Jiří - LITERA, Bohuslav - TEJCHMAN, Miroslav: *Východ. Vznik, vývoj a rozpad sovětského bloku 1944-1989*. Nakladatelství Libri, Prague 2000, pp. 588-593.
- 13 *National Archive* (hereinafter only NA), collection (hereinafter only f.) Archive of the ÚV KSČ, leadership of the ÚV KSČ 1976-1981 (02/1), volume 73, archival unit 78, point 20, Visit of USSR party and government delegation to the ČSSR.
- 14 Ibid.
- 15 This was carried out by a secret police unit with the telling name of Directorate of Defence of Party and Constitutional Officials (codename 5th Directorate of the Federal Ministry of the Interior).
- 16 Almost 10 years after the 1968 occupation, opposition activists found themselves in a difficult position. While the creation of Charter 77 at the start of 1977 did return the Czechoslovak question to foreign front pages, the signatories found themselves under pressure from the secret police as open opponents of the regime (for some this was nothing new). The foundation of the Committee for the Defence of the Unjustly Prosecuted (VONS), set up by a group of Charter 77 signatories in April 1978 chiefly to document cases of police and judicial repression, sparked fresh interest from the State Security (StB). The reaction of the secret police was a sharp rise in cases of physical violence, including beatings and hauling people off to forests, with the aim of intimidating opponents of the regime and forcing them into exile. *Libri prohibiti*, Charter 77 Collection, box (hereinafter only k.) 2, Letter of Charter 77 and VONS to the leadership of the ÚV KSČ, the leadership of the government of the ČSSR and the leadership of the Federal Assembly of the ČSSR on the illegal treatment of Charter 77 signatories and supporters.
- 17 Ibid. Charter 77 statement on National Security Corps measures linked to the visit of Leonid Brezhnev to Czechoslovakia, 3. 6. 1978.
- 18 According to opposition estimates, the StB detained around 60 Charter 77 signatories. Two of them, Pavel Roubal and Jiří Gruša, were not released from preliminary custody and on 2 July 1978 were remanded in connection with the writing and dissemination of a samizdat edition of Gruša's novel *Dotazník* (*The Questionnaire*). Ibid Charter 77 request for the release from custody of Jiří Gruša and Pavel Roubal, addressed to the general prosecutor of the ČSSR, Dr. Ján Feješ, 4. 6. 1978. Simultaneously at least nine searches were conducted of the homes of Charter 77 signatories between 30 May and 1 June 1978. *Libri prohibiti*, VONS collection, inventory number (hereinafter only inv. č.) 4, signature (hereinafter only sign.) III/1, VONS statement no. 13, 9. 6. 1978.
- 19 *Libri prohibiti*, Charter 77 Collection, k. 2, Charter 77 statement on National Security Corps measures linked to the visit of Leonid Brezhnev to Czechoslovakia,

3. 6. 1978. Compare *ibid*, VONS Collection, inv. č. 4, sign. III/1, Letter from Zdena Tominová to ČSSR Health Minister Jaroslav Prokopec on the case of Otta Bednářová, 19. 6. 1978.
- 20 *Libri prohibiti*, Charter 77 Collection, k. 2, Letter from Ladislav Hejdiček to ČSSR Minister of the Interior Jaromír Obzin, Ruzyně, Prague 2. 6. 1978. Several days later the VONS also protested against the groundless repeated arrest of persons in connection with the Brezhnev visit. *Ibid*, VONS Collection, inv. č. 4, sign. III/1, VONS Statement no. 13, 9. 6. 1978.
- 21 PEČINKA, Bohumil – TIGRID, Pavel: *Marx na Hradčanech*. Barrister & Principal, Brno 2001, p. 22. Compare TIGRID, Pavel: Leonid na cestách. *Švédectví*, no. 42 (1971), pp. 187–188.
- 22 Compare *Rudé právo*, year 58, no. 125, 30. 5. 1978, p. 1.
- 23 DURMAN, Karel: *Útek od praporů. Kreml a krize impéria 1964–1991*, p. 169–170. Compare VOLKOGONOV, Dmitri Antonovich: *V 2-kh knigach*, kniha 2. Novosti, Moscow 1995, pp. 66–79.
- 24 DURMAN, Karel: *Útek od praporů. Kreml a krize impéria 1964–1991*, pp. 169–170.
- 25 The main members of the Soviet delegation were according to the official programme politburo member and first secretary of the CC of the Communist Party of Ukraine, Volodymyr Vasylyovych Shcherbitysky, secretary of the CC CPSU Konstantin Viktorovich Rusakov and deputy chairman of the Council of Ministers of the USSR Ivan Vasilyevich Arkhipov, member of the CC CPSU and USSR ambassador to the ČSSR Vladimir Vladimirovich Mackevich. The delegation was to include 48 persons, of whom 23 were listed under “security”. NA, f. Archiv ÚV KSČ, Secretariat of the general secretary of the ÚV KSČ Gustáv Husák (hereinafter only SGH), k. 452 (USSR no. 5), inventory unit (hereinafter only inv. j.) 1391, Official cordial visit of party and government delegation of the USSR in the ČSSR from 30. 5. – 2. 6. 1978 (hereinafter only Visit of the Soviet Delegation), Programme of visit.
- 26 According to the approved plan, the Municipal Committee of the KSČ in Prague took care of airport decorations, the route to Prague Castle, staterooms, pioneers, a staff of 4,000, flowers, a rostrum and carpet. The Ministry of National Defence provided jet fighters to accompany the plane in, the guard of honour, salute and music. The refreshments were provided by Hotel Prague. *Ibid*.
- 27 Comrade L.I. Brezhnev’s triumphant journey through Prague, *Rudé právo*, year 58, no. 126, 31. 5. 1978, pp. 1–2.
- 28 *Ibid*.
- 29 The dozens of pages of preserved discussion documents are filled with data on economic cooperation but contain virtually no points of contention. One exception is a carefully worded criticism of cooperation in the field of “propaganda”. The document emphasises that all of the possibilities of TV broadcasting are not being made use of: *Films broadcast on TV are frequently of low standard and are shown with a marked delay. It is necessary also to consider the standard of publications and magazines propagating socialist society. For example, it is hard to view the magazine Svět socialismu, published in Czechoslovakia, as presentable today.* The solution is surprising – to establish one continually broadcasting joint television station. NA, f. Archiv ÚV KSČ, SGH, k. 452 (SSSR č. 5), inv. j. 1391, Visit of the Soviet Delegation 1978, Topics for the further deepening of Czechoslovak-Soviet cooperation in the fields of politics, education, science, culture and tourism.
- 30 Compare Collected authors: *Štrougal o Husákově a jiné vzpomínky na minulost*. Bondy, Prague 2009; PLEVZA, Viliam: *Vzostupy a pády. Gustáv Husák prehovoril*. Tatrapress, Bratislava 1991; ŠTROUGAL, Lubomír: *Paměti a úvahy (Memories and Considerations)*. Epocha, Praha 2009; ŠTROUGAL, Lubomír: *Ještě pár odpovědí*. Epocha, Prague 2011.
- 31 Brezhnev’s speech is preserved in Czech translation as part of the concluding report on the Soviet delegation’s visit prepared for the KSČ leadership by Vasil Biľak. The Soviet gensek merely complained about the high costs of armaments and problems surrounding the production of raw materials, both of which immediately concerned Czechoslovakia. He identified strengthening its position in the world economy and not permitting technical-economic and credit dependence on the West as the main task of the entire Soviet Bloc (the socialist community). He also devoted a lot of space to Soviet foreign policy. He was critical of the USA’s strategy in human rights negotiations and Romania and Yugoslavia’s closer relations with China. NA, f. Archiv ÚV KSČ, SGH, k. 452 (SSSR č. 5), inv. j. 1391, Visit of the Soviet Delegation 1978, Report on course and results of official cordial visit of party and government delegation of the USSR, 7. 6. 1978.
- 32 In his address, also preserved as part of the concluding report on the visit of the Soviet delegation, Husák also mentioned the domestic opposition. His speech clearly refutes the currently widespread thesis that the opposition’s activities made no impact on the KSČ’s leadership. This passage clearly illustrates Husák’s take on power: *We know there are individuals and groups who think differently. That’s documented by the so-called Charter and other pamphlets that these groups hand over to the West, thereby creating a sensation around themselves. The West tries to support them both financially and via its propaganda machinery. In your country, such people are isolated and have little influence on the youth or at factories. We also monitor them for security reasons. Those who have been too provocative have been put in prison. We are narrowing the others’ space and complicating their lives. We don’t underestimate this danger, though these elements do not have influence. They are multifarious groups from the religious to eurocommunists and Trotskyists. Many have given up and we have released some; we are waging a political battle with the rest.* *Ibid*.
- 33 NA, f. Archiv ÚV KSČ, SGH, k. 452 (USSR no. 5), inv. j. 1391, Visit of the Soviet Delegation 1978, Programme of visit.
- 34 Speech of comrade Gustáv Husák. *Rudé právo*, year 58, no. 127, 1. 6. 1978, p. 3.
- 35 *Ibid*.
- 36 Ceremonial gathering at Prague Castle. *Rudé právo*, year 58, no. 127, 1. 6. 1978, p. 1. It is worth mentioning in this connection a well-known scandal caused by Brezhnev at the 7th Congress of the Polish United Workers’ Party in Warsaw on 8 December 1975 when he literally conducted the entire hall singing the Internationale. For more see KOSTIKOV, Piotr – ROLIŃSKI, Bohdan: *Widziane z Kremla. Moskwa-Warszawa. Gra o Polskę*. Polska Oficyna Wydawnicza BWG, Warsaw 1992.
- 37 Compare VOLKOGONOV, Dmitrii Antonovič: *Sem vozhdai. Galereya liderov SSSR. V 2-kh knigach*, kniha 2, pp. 66–69; MLECHIN, Leonid Mikhajlovich: *Brezhnev. Molodaya gvardiya*, Moskva 2008, pp. 460–473.
- 38 L. Brezhnev presents honours to G. Husák and V. Biľak. *Rudé právo*, year 58, no. 127, 1. 6. 1978, p. 2.
- 39 NA, f. Archiv ÚV KSČ, SGH, k. 452 (USSR no. 5), inv. j. 1391, Visit of the Soviet Delegation 1978, Report on course and results of official cordial visit of party and government delegation of the USSR, 7. 6. 1978.
- 40 After 1989 the metro station was renamed Vyšehrad.
- 41 NA, f. Archiv ÚV KSČ, SGH, k. 452 (USSR no. 5), inv. j. 1391, Visit of the Soviet Delegation 1978, Report on course and results of official cordial visit of party and government delegation of the USSR, 7. 6. 1978.
- 42 A warm welcome in Bratislava. *Rudé právo*, year 58, no. 127, 1. 6. 1978, pp. 1–2.
- 43 NA, f. Archiv ÚV KSČ, SGH, k. 452 (SSSR č. 5), inv. j. 1391, Visit of the Soviet Delegation 1978, Report on course and results of official cordial visit of party and government delegation of the USSR, 7. 6. 1978.
- 44 Bratislava’s unforgettable day. *Rudé právo*, year 58, no. 128, 2. 6. 1978, pp. 1–2.
- 45 NA, f. Archiv ÚV KSČ, SGH, k. 452 (SSSR č. 5), inv. j. 1391, Visit of the Soviet Delegation 1978, Programme of visit.
- 46 According to a list posted on the internet site of the Archive of the Office of the President of the Czech Republic, the Order of Klement Gottwald was bestowed on a total of 181 persons and institutions. Brezhnev is listed as having received the honour three times, the first time evidently in 1976, the last time in 1981. This is apparently a mistake. What is certain is that Brezhnev did receive three times the honorary title Hero of the Czechoslovak Socialist Republic (1970, 1976 and 1981). Compare The Order of Klement Gottwald – for building a socialist homeland, see http://www.prazskyhradarchiv.cz/archivKPR/download.cfm?file=files/articles/00017/rkg_140812_144208.pdf (quoted as of 7. 2. 2013).
- 47 Excerpts from the ceremonial gathering at the Spanish Hall (31. 5 and 2. 6. 1978) can be viewed on YouTube. See <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=C2TzoBvkT3g> (quoted as of 7. 2. 2012). A period weekly news roundup on the visit of the Soviet delegation and accessible on Czech Television’s website naturally does not show Brezhnev’s weak moments. Compare Československý filmový týdeník č. 28/1978, see <http://www.ceskatelevize.cz/porady/10266819072-vypravej/-ve-stopach-doby/1978/ceskoslovensko-navstivila-sovetska-delegace-v-cele-leonidem-iljicem-breznevem/> (quoted as of 7. 2. 2013).
- 48 Visit of Soviet party and government delegation to Czechoslovakia concludes. *Rudé právo*, year 58, no. 129, 3. 6. 1978, p. 1.
- 49 NA, f. Archiv ÚV KSČ, SGH, k. 452 (USSR no. 5), inv. j. 1391, Visit of the Soviet Delegation 1978, Programme of visit.
- 50 Visit of Soviet party and government delegation to Czechoslovakia concludes. *Rudé právo*, year 58, no. 129, 3. 6. 1978, pp. 1–2.
- 51 NA, f. Archiv ÚV KSČ, SGH, k. 452 (USSR no. 5), inv. j. 1391, Visit of the Soviet Delegation 1978, Programme of visit.
- 52 A farewell to Prague. *Rudé právo*, year 58, no. 129, 3. 6. 1978, pp. 1–2.
- 53 WANNER, Jan: *Brežněv a východní Evropa 1968–1982*, pp. 94–105.



Leonid Brezhnev and Gustáv Husák in Moscow, June 1969.

Source: Czech News Agency





Fidel Castro speaking at a rally in Santiago de Cuba, 1960.

Source: Czech News Agency

Our Comrade in Havana

THE ESTABLISHMENT OF CZECHOSLOVAK RESIDENCY AND CO-OPERATION WITH THE CUBAN SECURITY SERVICE

In the second half of 1959, the policy of the Soviet Union and its satellites towards Cuba changed. An irreplaceable role in this process was played by the Soviet intelligence service, the 1st Chief Directorate of the KGB attached to the Council of Ministers of the USSR, headed by General Alexander Mikhailovich Sakharovsky¹, which also engaged the security services of Soviet satellites into the complicated foreign operation to obtain an important beachhead in the western hemisphere. However, the scope of Czechoslovak assistance in the area of security and the influence of the Czechoslovak State Security in Cuba have remained basically up to now on the edge of professional interest.²

PAVEL ŽÁČEK

On 25 January 1960, the Foreign Intelligence Service Directorate of the Ministry of the Interior submitted a proposal to Rudolf Barák, Minister of the Interior, Deputy Prime Minister, and a member of the Political Bureau of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia to establish a new residency in the capital city of Cuba. Col. Jaroslav Miller, Chief of the 1st Directorate of the Ministry of the Interior, pointed out normalization of mutual diplomatic relations after the fall of General Fulgencio Batista's dictatorial regime, extraordinary political and economic importance of Cuba, as well as a proposal of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to establish a Czechoslovak embassy in Havana. The development of the current economic and political situation in Cuba clearly indicates that Cuba is the most progressive and democratic state in Latin America and, in terms of our overall political interests, it has become one of the most important countries in this region.

One of the main tasks of the residency was detection of planned economic and political measures of the USA against Cuba. Using this knowledge, it was supposed to execute influence policy to discriminate (sic) against

activities of the USA and further contribute to the growth of nationalism and the growing efforts of Latin American states to achieve independence. The Czechoslovak intelligence service wanted to use both political and economic reports to take active measures, together with the 1st Chief Directorate of the KGB, with whose leadership the proposal to establish residency was naturally discussed.³

In the annex to the document, significant achievements of Cuban revolutionary forces were appreciated, in particular the consistent cleansing of the old state and military administration, confiscation of Batista supporters' property, and implementation of the land reform act. It can be stated that Cuba, based on its current attitude, has a great influence on the growing resistance to existing dictatorial governments in Latin America, which are supported by the USA. The development of events in Cuba also has an impact on the growth of the nationalist movement in Latin American states, which begin to act more resolutely against the economic domination of the USA in Latin America, and the struggle of the countries from this region for economic independence and autonomy is growing stronger.

Minister Barák approved both primary and secondary tasks of the residency in Havana. They included monitoring of the political situation in Cuba, economic and political relations in the region and in connection to European countries; informing on the influence of the USA and activities of pro-US "elements"; methods and forms of work of the US FBI in Cuba and its agents; accusations of the Cuban government of communism by the USA and the background and objectives of these campaigns; dictatorial regimes in the Dominican Republic, Haiti, and Nicaragua as tools of the USA in the preparation of the intervention against Cuba [...]; the Fifth Column in US government offices and institutions, revealing both individuals and groups; activities of Batista supporters in Florida. Appropriate attention was supposed to be paid to the US military bases in the region. Secondary tasks included monitoring of the economic and political situation in the Dominican Republic and Venezuela, as well as their relations with the USA and Cuba.

According to the preliminary systematization, the residency was supposed to consist of a resident (legalized as the 3rd ambassadorial secretary) and two members (a bookkeeper and a cipher

clerk of the embassy). For the second half of 1960, its operations were granted a budget of 6,500 pesos.⁴ Before the decision of the Politburo of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia concerning the proposal of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to appoint the ambassador Vladimír Pavlíček to the Czechoslovak embassy in Havana, the Czechoslovak intelligence service proposed to appoint, as the 3rd secretary, Cpt. Zdeněk Kvita (codenamed "Peterka"), an officer of the 1st Section of the 1st Directorate of the Ministry of the Interior, acting for the fourth year in the residency in Mexico. In addition, the 15th Section of the 1st Directorate of the Ministry of the Interior expects to have one officer at a non-diplomatic post at the Czechoslovak embassy in Havana. And it is natural that the cipher clerk will also be an officer of the 1st Directorate of the Ministry of the Interior.⁵

COMMENCEMENT OF ACTIVITIES

On 19 April 1960, Cpt. Kvita - "Peterka" was sent, based on an order of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the headquarters of the Czechoslovak intelligence service, to Cuba, with the task to talk with one of the leading representatives of the Cuban government about the proposals of Dominicana (Dominican Republic - author's note) to establish diplomatic relations, to inform Cuba of the Czechoslovak view, and to ascertain Cuba's official opinion. As part of his mission, he was to familiarize himself with the agent environment and help find the most suitable official building in Havana in terms of security aspects.

With the help of Flavio Bravo (comrade "Julio"), a member of the Central Committee of the Popular Socialist Party of Cuba, Cpt. Kvita - "Peterka" met the Defence Minister Raúl Castro Ruz at the General Staff of the Cuban (Revolutionary) Army on 26 April 1960 after midnight. In the presence of his adjutant, Cpt. Juan Escalona, Cpt. Kvita - "Peterka" informed him of the Dominicans' initiative and the opinion of the Czechoslovak government, and eventually asked him to communicate everything to his brother, Prime Minister Fidel Castro.

On the night of 3 May 1960, there was further negotiation at the General Staff. Cpt. Kvita - "Peterka" was accompa-

nied by Cpt. Eduard Fuchs (codenamed "Dominik"), a resident from Mexico who talked with R. Castro about the assistance during the operation GNOM - transport of Ramón Mercader, a Soviet agent codenamed "Raymond" and the murderer of Leon Trotsky, from the Mexican prison, through Havana, to Prague (and subsequently to the Soviet Union).⁶

On 8 May 1960, on the eve of the Czechoslovak National Day, after the termination of the operation "Gnom"⁷, the third meeting with R. Castro took place between 4 and 11 p.m., which was attended, among others, by Osvaldo Sanchez and Fabian Escalante, members of the Central Committee of the Communist Party responsible for political work in the Security Service and army, as well as by commanders of the intelligence service and the counterintelligence service. It has been confirmed again that Cuban officials have special affections for the USSR, Czechoslovak Republic, People's Republic of China, and the entire socialist camp, from which they expect mainly help in their difficult struggle. On the following day, the future resident, along with 1st Lt. Oldřich Novický (codenamed "Neužil") and Cpt. Fuchs - "Dominik", returned to Mexico.

In his report on Cuban officials, Cpt. Kvita - "Peterka" said: I have the opportunity to contact these persons when arriving in Cuba. I shall use it in order to monitor facts and events important for us and to obtain additional data for preparing a plan of intelligence work in Cuba with regard to all the circumstances and peculiarities of the development of the Cuban revolution. Within the analytical summary, he emphasized that the main effort of the residency in Havana should focus on the fight against the USA in order to deepen its disputes with Latin American countries. In addition, through agents (even based on collaboration with the officers of the Cuban intelligence and counterintelligence services), the residency should act against the US embassy and its allies in Havana (Latin American embassies and diplomats, embassies of England, West Germany, Yugoslavia, etc.), as well as independently of the Cuban authorities, by sending agents from Cuba to spy centres in the USA working against Cuba and other Latin American coun-

tries. Within Cuban subjects of interest, he recommended working mainly in the form of legal intelligence, using the screened members of the Communist Party. Agents were only supposed to be recruited to perform the tasks overtly directed against the USA in order to elaborate clearly US subjects so that no revelation could interrupt Czechoslovak-Cuban relations. From the intelligence perspective, the following subjects were considered as the most interesting: Instituto Nacional de Reforma Agraria (INRA), Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Ministry of National Defence, primarily the bodies of military intelligence and counterintelligence (Dirección de Investigaciones del Ejército Revolucionario), embassies of Latin American countries, and the news agency Prensa Latina.⁸

The residency was formally established on 17 May 1960, simultaneously with the commencement of the activity of the Czechoslovak embassy in Cuba. Cpt. Kvita - "Peterka" was assigned to Havana as of 1 June 1960.⁹ On 20 June 1960, the resident was warmly greeted by Major Václav Louda (codenamed "Linhart"), Chief of the 1st Section of the 1st Directorate of the Ministry of the Interior. We, as well as our friends, believe that our new residency in Havana is of great importance. Therefore, we expect that the residency will be gradually expanded. If we take into account that the co-operation between Cuba and the countries of the socialist camp displays an upward trend in economic, technical, and scientific areas, we conclude that Cuba appears to us to be a key country in Latin America in terms of political influence. This will have to be reflected in the work of our residency, for which I wish you good luck.¹⁰

The following day, Cpt. Kvita - "Peterka" was contacted by Cpt. O. Sanchez with the request of the Minister of Defence to enable Gen. Ramiro Valdés Menéndez, a young commander of the Cuban counterintelligence and intelligence services and the closest collaborator of Castro brothers, to undergo a specialist training. Sanchez recommends to perform this request and to focus the training on counterintelligence (how to deal with the US intelligence service, how to organize defence, conspiracy work with agents, use of technology and defence against

it, etc.). The Communist Party of Cuba assumes that intelligence activities will be co-ordinated with the Czechoslovak Republic, in the territory of Latin America, in the fight against the USA. [...] Cubans expect that the request will be performed.¹¹

Col. Miller, Chief of the 1st Directorate, informed Minister Barák about the request of training for Gen. Valdés on 28 June 1960, during a visit of the Cuban delegation to the Czechoslovak Republic. Comrade Minister, we have ensured that Comrade Peterka accompanies Raúl CASTRO and Ramiro VALDEZ in a special plane to Prague. We have also ensured that Comrade Peterka is included in the official entourage of the Cuban guests during their approximately three-week stay in Czechoslovakia.¹²

In his overview of intelligence work, Major Louda – “Linhart” also stressed that the main task of the residency was to assist in the defence of the Cuban Revolution, focusing on the use of legal intelligence and influence policy at the highest level possible; agent work was to be carried out by the residency exclusively within the elaboration of American subjects; active measures were to be taken in direct collaboration with the Cuban intelligence and counterintelligence services; and, with respect to future, conditions for sending agents from the Cuban territory to the USA were to be created. Col. Miller also reminded the Chief of the 1st Section not to forget about intelligence information exchange.¹³

TRAINING IN PRAGUE

In the evening of 7 July 1960, Col. Josef Kudrna, the 1st Deputy of the Minister of the Interior, had a meeting with the Chief of the Cuban State Security in the building of the Ministry of the Interior in Letná, Prague. Gen. Valdés said that he was charged by Defence Minister R. Castro to provide the Czechoslovak representatives with detailed information on the organizational structure of the subordinate apparatus operating under the Ministry of National Defence, as well as on methods of work, deployment, cadres, etc. Its officers, with the exception of arresting officers, do not wear uniforms. The Staff, headed by Ramiro Valdez as Chief, is the highest organizational unit. Individual sections, established to correspond to



Minister of the Interior Rudolf Barák.

Source: Czech News Agency

various sectors of political, economic, and public life in Cuba, come under the Staff. The sections are divided into departments. Both sections and departments are headed by chiefs who manage their work. One section has approximately 700 cadre officers, of which, however, only a small portion is paid directly by the Ministry of National Defence, while most work in the Security Service and also have different jobs. Each section has its own archive. The offices of the Staff, sections, and departments, as well as all other parts of the Cuban State Security are kept secret. In its activities, the Cuban State Security apparatus uses agents, mostly persons dedicated to the Revolution. They are aware that they make the most significant mistakes in building the agency and in the way they maintain contact with the agents.

Gen. Valdés also mentioned some successful operations of the Cuban counterintelligence service, including the liquidation of “counter-revolutionary conspiracy” at the end of the previous year, organized from the Dominican Republic, and the expulsion of two US diplomats (including the alleged head of the FBI for the Caribbean region), after they were caught in a meeting with counter-revolutionaries.

Based on this talk, Col. Kudrna suggested that Gen. Valdés was provided, in the form of discussions, with information not revealing the working methods of the Czechoslovak State Security, but showing the activities of the USA and Vatican in economics, church, and individual issues related to terror, assassinations, and sabotage. Last but



Cuban Defence Minister Raúl Castro Ruz.

Source: Czech News Agency

not least, the importance of conspiracy and the way of building a network of agents was supposed to be presented in this way.¹⁴

Minister Barák made a decision to grant the request, and charged his first deputy to perform the training. The first part took place from 11 to 17 July 1960, mostly in the safe house of the Chief of the 1st Directorate of the Ministry of the Interior in Barrandov, Prague. Col. Kudrna personally carried out four trainings focusing on the political approach to security work, cadre work in the armed forces (how to prevent enemy infiltration into the army and Security Service, selection and screening of officers, and training and education of cadres), organization of security work management (co-ordination of work of individual sections, co-operation of the headquarters with regional directorates, work of regional directorates, inspection tasks), archives and operative records (types of archives and operative records, their organization, and protection against enemy penetration).

Col. Miller, along with Major Louda – “Linhart” clarified to Gen. Valdés, in two parts, the role and significance of intelligence, selection and training of cadres, both good and bad experience from Czechoslovak post-revolutionary development, organization of intelligence in the enemy territory (the role of embassies abroad and their use to cover cadre agents), bases, selection and elaboration of types, recruitment meetings, management, education, and screening of agents, conspiracy, elaboration of subjects, connection with



Cpt. Zdeněk Kvita – "Peterka".

Source: Security Services Archive



1st Lt. Bedřich Kubeš – "Rogl".

Source: Security Services Archive

agents and residencies. In discussing this point, General Ramiro VALDEZ requested assistance in organizing the connection between their headquarters with residencies. He stated that their ways of communication are primitive. They do not have any secret cipher, and they know that what they have can be easily deciphered by the enemy. If they want to keep a piece of information or an instruction secret, they only use a personal connection, which is obviously very time consuming. Col. Miller explained to the Chief of the Cuban State Security Service that this issue requires a comprehensive approach, particularly obtaining reliable cadres for the headquarters and residencies, as well as developing perfect defence systems at embassies. Assistance in resolving this issue will be one of the tasks of our comrades who will work in Havana.¹⁵

On 13 July 1960, Raúl Castro invited Cpt. Kvita – "Peterka" and Cpt. Jan Stehno (codenamed "Skořepa"), Chief of the 2nd Department of the 1st Section of the 1st Directorate of the Ministry of the Interior, to his "residence", where Gen. Valdés was also present. He asked them to arrange a reception by Minister Barák on 16 July 1960. The Cuban officials were planning to go on a three-day trip to the Soviet Union in the morning of the following day to join the other members of the delegation who were supposed to arrive in Moscow on 15 July.¹⁶ Castro wanted to ask Barák to extend training to include two more members of the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Cuba and to send two legalized Czechoslovak advisers

for the issues of the Cuban intelligence and counterintelligence services.¹⁷ In an accompanying letter to the Minister of the Interior, Major Jan Příhoda (codenamed "Pražský"), Deputy Chief of the 1st Directorate of the Ministry of the Interior, also stated that Castro wanted to submit a proposal for co-operation between Czechoslovak and Cuban intelligence and counterintelligence services.¹⁸

On Saturday, 16 July 1960, a meeting of Minister Barák, Castro, his personal secretary Luis Mas Martin, and Gen. Valdés was held, where Castro really initiatively presented the plan of co-operation between Czechoslovak and Cuban security services. Comrade Minister Barák stressed that we are willing to provide Cuba with our best experience gained in the fight of our Security Service with the US intelligence service, pointing out that it is the experience of the fight under our Czechoslovak conditions, and that the application to the Cuban conditions depends on Cuban leaders. Cubans also learned that in relation to imperialism both countries have common interests and that helping them is considered an international obligation.

Barák responded to Castro's proposal as follows: It would be possible to start co-operating immediately, in the form of exchange of messages obtained by Czechoslovak and Cuban intelligence services about US policy. In order to support co-ordination, he generously offered to inform the Cuban friends of all Czechoslovak operations against the USA in Latin America. Castro said that Cuba would also inform the Czech-

slovak Republic of its operations encouraging revolutionary movements in other Latin American countries. At the same time, however, he said that there was no need to know of all Czechoslovak operations, only of those that were directly related to Cuban interests. The Minister also promised to help in other areas, including further training of officers, as well as to consider sending other Czechoslovak officers to Cuba. In connection with the departure to Moscow, Barák expressed his belief that they would be able to negotiate with responsible representatives of the Soviet State Security Service, and Castro expressed interest in meeting the President of the KGB attached to the Council of Ministers of the USSR. Comrade Minister Barák promised, and when asked by Minister CASTRO replied, that it would be quite natural if he informed Comrade Shelepin of the content of the negotiation with the Czechoslovak Ministry of the Interior.¹⁹

LIMITS OF CZECHOSLOVAK ASSISTANCE

On 18 July 1960, Minister Barák's command to send two officers of the 1st Directorate of the Ministry of the Interior on a fact-finding trip to Cuba was discussed at the level of Col. Miller and his deputy, Major Příhoda – "Pražský". The Directorate Chief selected Major Louda – "Linhart" and Cpt. Stehno – "Skořepa". As soon as possible, the Cuban residency was to be joined by 1st Lt. Bedřich Kubeš (codenamed "Rogl") from the residency in Mexico. At the command of Comrade Minister, several officers of the 1st Directorate have been proposed, five of whom will be selected to begin an intensive Spanish course on 1 August 1960, along with five counterintelligence officers in order to be able, if necessary, to immediately go to Cuba. At this point, the following officers have been proposed to attend to course: Cpt. Karel Brus (codenamed "Zelenka"), 1st Lt. Ferdinand Viduna ("Jaroš"), Lt. Josef Hegenbart ("Hruban"), Major Jaromír Kábrt ("Klička"), Cpt. Lubomír Valčík ("Vašata"), Cpt. Lubomír Šefrna ("Šumavský"), and Cpt. Milan Rybníkář ("Rabas"). Speedy replacement of 1st Lt. Kubeš – "Rogl" and his transfer to the legalization post of the 2nd ambassadorial secretary at the embassy in Havana was to be discussed with the leadership of the

6th Section of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (however, the August term certainly was not met).²⁰ From 21 to 29 July 1960, the second part of the training was held. Chiefs and their deputies from the 2nd Directorate of the Ministry of the Interior (counterintelligence), Col. Vladimír Matoušek and Major Jaroslav Saks, from the 3rd Directorate of the Ministry of the Interior (political counterintelligence), Col. Jaroslav Bartoň and Lt. Col. Bohumil Souček, and from the 4th Directorate of the Ministry of the Interior (economic counterintelligence), Col. Jiří Rybín, acquainted, in two parts, Gen. Valdés with the tasks and work organization of the counterintelligence units, including co-operation with the intelligence service. In both trainings, particular attention was paid to the “former people” and forms of fight against their enemy activities. Representatives of other central units of the State Security Service outlined the tasks of the military intelligence service, surveillance, security guards, and operative technology management. Gen. Valdés, as recorded by Cpt. Stehno – “Skořepa”, paid maximum attention to all the trainings provided. Finally, Gen. Valdés told Col. Kudrna that all the trainings provided were very useful, emphasizing that he would make every effort to implement all the experience gained within the work of the Cuban intelligence and counterintelligence services, and thereby to contribute to the defence of the Cuban Revolution and the fight against North American imperialism. He also promised to inform Fidel and Raúl Castro about the content of the training.²¹ From 28 July to 22 August 1960, Major Louda – “Linhart” and Cpt. Stehno – “Skořepa” stayed in Cuba, with the task to assess the internal political, economic, and foreign political situation, as well as the strength of the revolutionary government, and to prepare a summary report which would help identify a specific framework for co-operation in the security area. On 6 August 1960, on the eve of the public announcement that large US companies were nationalized, the secret service agents were received by R. Castro. The Defence Minister considered the situation in Cuba as the worst since the assumption of power. He said that they expected that the new gov-

ernment measures would cause further differentiation of hesitating elements, mainly from the ranks of the bourgeoisie, and their departure from the Revolution, as well as the resignation of some ministers and other senior government officials. They also expected activation of American and pro-American elements within the country, resulting in an increase in sabotage and espionage activities, possibly in the form of various minor uprisings organized by internal reactionaries, supported by the USA, or, possibly, by different saboteurs sent from abroad. Above all, however, they assumed that there would be a direct or indirect US intervention.

A week later, Gen. Valdés introduced his deputies, Gen. Manuel Piñeiro Losada, who shortly afterwards left, via Prague, for the Soviet Union in order to attend a training, and Wilkins del Rio, 29-year-old intelligence service chief, legalized as an ambassador and Head of the Latin American Section of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, to both Czechoslovak comrades.²² They also learned that Fidel Castro had been informed about the course of the training in Prague. He informed him (Castro – author’s note) about the part of the talks in which Comrade Rudolf Barák, Minister of the Interior, offered, within mutual co-operation, transmission of information related to Cuba, obtained by the Czechoslovak intelligence service in capitalist, particularly Latin American, countries. At the last meeting, on 16 August 1960, Gen. Valdés said that the Castro brothers and he were personally very happy to accept the offered help. It was pleasing to hear that General Valdez, along with Minister Raúl Castro, were beginning to apply experience gained in the Czechoslovak Socialist Republic in practice. The Chief of the Cuban State Security Service, among other things, asked for help in using secret inks and microdots. They would solve, at least partially, their most pressing problem – communication with agents working both abroad and in the US Guantanamo base, which is relatively far from Havana, and therefore they have difficulties receiving messages from agents quickly and reliably. He also requested that the sending of Czechoslovak officers to Cuba, as well as further co-operation in intelligence and counterin-

telligence, are consulted with the KGB to avoid duplication, which could be harmful both professionally and politically.

In his view, as well as in the view of Major Louda – “Linhart” and Cpt. Stehno – “Skořepa”, the fundamental condition of the successful collaboration (and mainly the correct political orientation of the work of Czechoslovak officers in Cuba) consisted in perfect work co-ordination and division of responsibilities between the Czechoslovak Ministry of the Interior and the Soviet friends. Based on the indications of Gen. Valdés, they understood that the issue of sending experts via intelligence and counterintelligence services was also discussed with the Soviet friends.

Col. Miller also acquainted Minister Barák with the intention to send three other officers of the 1st Directorate of the Ministry of the Interior to the residency in Havana: 1st Lt. Kubeš – “Rogl” (December 1960) and, after the completion of the language course, Cpt. Brus – “Zelenka” and Cpt. Kábrt – “Klička” (January 1961). The special Spanish language course was also attended by Lt. Col. Bohumil Šimáček, Chief of the 3rd Section of the 2nd Directorate of the Ministry of the Interior, Cpt. Emil Filip, Chief of the 1st Department of the 3rd Section of the 2nd Directorate of the Ministry of the Interior, Lt. Col. Jiří Syrovátka, Chief of the 4th Section of the 3rd Directorate of the Ministry of the Interior, Major Karel Cibulka, Chief of the 2nd Section of the 3rd Directorate of the Ministry of the Interior, and Cpt. Richard Hochman, Chief of the 1st Department of the 1st Section of the 4th Directorate of the Ministry of the Interior. Their prospective task was to provide consultations to assist in the development of the Cuban counterintelligence apparatus and operative work of the counterintelligence service. Further focus of their work was to be determined individually, based on the substantive decision specifying the number of sent officers and their powers after consultations with the Soviet friends.²³

Through the residency in Mexico, the resident Cpt. Kvita – “Peterka” received a report on the training of US officers in Chicago to be deployed against Cuba and, based on the instruction, he presented it to Gen. Valdés (alias “Din”) on

15 September 1960. He simultaneously informed me of the arrest of a group of US spies, managed most likely by the US diplomat ROBERT DONALD WIECHA, who were caught planting bugs in a building where the SINHUA news agency from the PRC was based.

On the following day, in the safe house, Gen. Valdés introduced the Czechoslovak resident to Section Chief Raynald Rodriguez (alias "Demetrio"), who represented Gen. Piñeiro in his absence in the office of counterintelligence chief. Shortly after the introduction, DIN left, saying that he was very busy before Fidel's departure to the UN, and promising that we would see each other after his return from the USA.

On 22 September 1960, Rodriguez requested a meeting with Cpt. Kvita - "Peterka". The deputy head of the Cuban counterintelligence service informed the resident of a subversive group, managed by the US diplomat Wilkins, dealing with the preparation of assassinations against the leaders of the Popular Socialist Party of Cuba and government officials. They apparently had irrefutable evidence of the diplomat's activities, including photographs and film footage, revealing his contacts with the group members, as well as weapons and explosives. The matter was complicated by the fact that the overwhelming majority of the "subversive group" members were ideological collaborators of the Cuban State Security Service. Gen. Valdés requested, from New York, realization of the diplomat, his expulsion, and political use of the case against the USA. DEMETRIO said that upon the realization of the group mainly Cuban Security Service agents would be revealed, who would then be useless for further work, and rather than monitoring Wilkins he preferred to follow him in order to reveal other relevant facts and find the real counter-revolutionaries.

Cpt. Kvita - "Peterka" said he did not know all the details and relevant facts of the case, and therefore he could not present final judgments. He stressed that consideration and decision were only up to them. At the same time, however, he said that the command of the superior should be carried out.²⁴

On the following day, Major Louda - "Linhart" instructed the resident in Havana: In this case, however, perform the contact with the utmost caution in

the safe house, and insist that your Cuban friends from the Security Service meet you in civilian clothes. With the exception of Comrade O. Sánchez, never contact the officials of the Popular Socialist Party of Cuba. If you come into contact with any of the officers of the Cuban Security Service, it is very important that you do not act as a consultant yet!²⁵

At the turn of September and October 1960, a five-member expert delegation was created in Prague, composed of Col. Miller (head), Lt. Col. Saksl, Deputy Chief of the 2nd Directorate of the Ministry of the Interior, Major Vratislav Podzemský, Deputy Chief of the 9th Directorate of the Ministry of the Interior, Lt. Col. Ján Majer, Deputy Chief of the Main Directorate of the Public Security in Prague, and Cpt. Stehno - "Skořepa", as a secretary and interpreter. Their first task was to transport the requested technical material and related documentation in diplomatic baggage (weighing 100-120 kg). Above all, the 1st Directorate of the Ministry of the Interior assumed that after their arrival in mid-October 1960 the residency status in Cuba would be fundamentally changed, and it would be oriented to consulting activities, i.e. to assistance in defending the Cuban Revolution against the major common enemy, the USA, and its allies, undermining US positions in other Latin American countries, discrediting US policy in the eyes of Latin American public, and helping in building the Cuban intelligence apparatus and intelligence operative work.

In addition to active assistance in the organization of counterintelligence activities, a detailed analysis of the situation in the use of operative equipment in Cuba (mainly residential eavesdropping, secret technical inspection ("výjem"), photo, and phone tapping) was to be conducted. To examine and show how to deal with enemy technology, especially that used by Americans. The length of stay of Col. Miller and Cpt. Stehno - "Skořepa" was estimated to be two to three weeks, while the stay of other comrades could be extended, if necessary, until the beginning of January 1961, until the arrival date of permanent consultants.²⁶

On 6 October 1960, Cpt. Kvita - "Peterka" reported the following: I talked to DIN, and he would welcome a visit

of our experts, provided that it is carried out on the basis of co-ordination with the Soviet friends. DIN said that they need help both from us and from friends, and that both forms are greatly appreciated. Minister Barák, who had already been informed of the intentions of the Soviet intelligence service, told the Chief of the 1st Directorate of the Ministry of the Interior: a/ that Soviet comrades would deal with the issues related to Cuba themselves, b/ that our delegation would not be sent there, c/ to send a personal letter to Valdés via our comrade, but I first want to read it!²⁷

A week later, Col. Miller presented a draft letter for Gen. Valdés to the Minister for comments, but it was all too clear why the Czechoslovak delegation had not gone to Cuba. After a thorough consultation with our Soviet friends, it has been decided that, within co-operation, they would provide you with all necessary assistance. We have come to this conclusion based on the belief that the most effective form of this co-operation and the resulting assistance, which we all wish to provide you with, will be co-ordinated based on one centre, i.e. it will be properly operative, fast, and, in our opinion, as efficient as possible. I believe that this decision will bring you the most effective assistance of comrades who also have the most extensive experience in this work. I am glad that it will be provided by Soviet comrades, because their sincere assistance is well known to us. With regard to our intelligence service, I assure you that we will still provide you with all information that is interesting and useful for you, which I shall send you via our comrade in Havana.²⁸ Minister Barák only approved the second version of the letter on 19 October 1960. There was no hint of collapse of Czechoslovak ambitions. On the contrary, Col. Miller tried to assure Gen. Valdés that all arrangements from Prague still held. We shall regularly provide you with all messages that are interesting and useful for you, which I shall send you via our comrade in Havana. [...] As regards the issue of consultants, by mutual agreement with the Soviet comrades, we would like you to consider using one party in this area - for example, we recommend using the Soviet comrades. However, this does not alter the agreed collaboration or,

more precisely, your requirements relating to other general assistance.²⁹ It was not until 24 October 1960 that the letter from “Comrade Mašek” to “Din” was sent by 1st Lt. Jiří Stejskal (codenamed “Borecký”), Deputy Chief of the 1st Section of the 1st Directorate of the Ministry of the Interior, by courier mail. This was a clear message to the resident in Havana: not to perform, in any form, any consulting or other operative activity unless given a special instruction. In contact with Gen. Valdés (“Din”), or R. Castro (“Raul”) and Cpt. O. Sanchez (“Rafael”), he was to act friendly and unobtrusively so as not to make them feel that we want to persuade them or push them into something; act completely spontaneously, present them our suggestions to be considered so that they themselves may decide eventual realization, etc. We do not want to give the impression that we impose ourselves on them; we want to help them in everything, if our Cuban friends are interested, and if they ask us for help or advice in the future.³⁰ The accompanying instruction also said the following: Let me add that the opinion contained in the letter is final and cannot be changed...³¹

INVASION OF CUBA

In the report of 6 October 1960, the headquarters asked the resident to immediately seek DIN and tell him that on the previous day the Czechoslovak embassy in Paris had been visited by Flora Diaz Pareado from the Cuban embassy, along with the agent Ramon Aja, and asked for an appointment with the head of the Soviet embassy. At the meeting, the Cubans announced that an American invasion of Cuba was being prepared and asked for advice. The claim is based on information from an Irishman who was recruited by Americans and is now in Paris, attending a training. It was apparently an airman who was informed by an American in Barcelona that he would be flying over Cuba where he would drop weapons and American instructors. After talking with another Irishman, who gave the impression that the Irish prefer Cubans over Americans, he decided to inform the Cuban embassy of the whole matter.³²

On 8 October 1960, Cpt. Kvita – “Peterka” informed Gen. Valdés. The whole case is new to him. Valdés did not ex-



Major Václav Louda – “Linhart”.
Source: Security Services Archive

clude American provocation, although he stated that they had information on the termination of preparation for the invasion. The centre is in Guatemala, but the invasion is to start from the British Isles area. Moreover, there was a military uprising in the Escambray area about 3 months ago, supported by weapons dropped from aircraft. This uprising is already completely crushed.³³ Two days later he added that on 5 October 1960 Cuban exiles from the USA landed on the eastern coast of Cuba, near Baracoa. The group was immediately dispersed. It also included three Americans. Some of them were arrested. A trial of 102 captured conspirators from Escambray and then of a group from the USA is being prepared for the coming days. Most of them will be sentenced to death by military tribunals.³⁴ DIN said, answering the resident’s question, that they had the main centre of the foreign opposition in Guatemala largely under control. The Cuban intelligence service obtained telegrams of anti-Castro groups from Central America and deciphered them. He showed me one of these telegrams (encrypted), written on the headed notepaper of the anti-Castro organization (Movimiento de Recuperación Revolucionaria) with slogans “Long live Eisenhower”, “Death to F. Castro”, etc. On 15 October 1960, the resident learned from Cpt. Sanchez about internal disagreements in the leadership of the security apparatus which, to a certain extent, adversely affected the work of the State Security Service. Wilkins del Rio, intelligence service chief, apparently behaved like an un-



Cpt. Jan Stehno – “Skořepa”.
Source: Security Services Archive

disciplined bourgeois element, abusing Sanchez’s personnel changes made during the “Din’s” stay in Czechoslovak Socialist Republic, and constantly mentioning his contacts with Major Louda – “Linhart” and Cpt. Stehno – “Skořepa” in asserting his proposals of the intelligence organization and cadre policy. He keeps reinforcing DIN’s objections to the Popular Socialist Party of Cuba, abusing DIN’s commander self-conceit. The Party is starting to believe that his actions are motivated by counter-revolutionary interests. WILKINS is of bourgeois origin, he does not enjoy full trust of the Party, and, in the Party’s opinion, he should not work in the Security Service.³⁵ Minister Barák described the situation as complicated and demanded that our comrades did not interfere in it.³⁶ On 19 October 1960, Gen. Valdés reported that the Cuban State Security Service was arresting members of commander Morsano’s counter-revolutionary group that had been apparently preparing an uprising in the province of Las Villas. He also charged Cpt. Sanchez to maintain contact with the Czechoslovak resident. The reason for DIN’s decision – as SANCHEZ later confirmed to me – was his overload of work along the counter-revolutionary line. By the end of the month, Cpt. Kvita – “Peterka” had acquainted him with the contents of eleven telegrams.³⁷ In contact with Sanchez, I use the code-name ANTONIO. Sanchez uses the codename RAFAEL. His rank in the Security Service, where he was sent by the Central Committee of the Popular Socialist Party of Cuba, is captain, and



Fidel Castro embraced by Nikita Khrushchev at the UN meeting, 20 September 1960.

Source: Czech News Agency

he is also a member of the General Staff of the Cuban Security Service, headed by Minister Raul Castro. Within the Security Service, he works, as DIN's adjutant, at the post of co-ordinator.³⁸

On 2 November 1960, the resident initiated a meeting with Cpt. Sanchez to give him a message from the headquarters. It was a telegraphic message from Mexican nationalist circles about the preparation for an invasion of Cuba before the US election and on Peru's efforts to achieve a postponement of the Pan-American Conference, planned for March 1961 in Quito. Two days later, Sanchez visited Cpt. Kvita – "Peterka" unexpectedly in his flat to tell him that he was going on an inspection tour of local Security authorities in the province. He also conveyed a very positive assessment of the Czechoslovak intelligence service's reports by the leadership of the Party. He said, answering my question, that FIDEL is given our reports together with the sources...³⁹

At noon on 5 November 1960, the resident initiated a meeting with Gen. Valdés. At the meeting, I told DIN that I had received a very serious, important, and fast message that, at Comrade Rudolf's command, I had to immediately pass directly to RAUL as minister of the armed forces. DIN told me that RAUL was in Sierra Maestra,

and found out that in about 1 hour there was a flight to Santiago de Cuba... Cpt. Kvita – "Peterka" decided to ask for an appointment with Fidel Castro. DIN explained to me that FIDEL would be difficult to find at night, as he was inspecting militia camps...⁴⁰

The meeting with Prime Minister Castro was held at midnight of 9/10 November 1960 in the INRA building. He listened to the contents of the telegrams No. 26 and 32 sent by the headquarters, relating to the activities of the Brazilian ambassador and interests of the Brazilian Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Havana, with great attention.⁴¹ He promised to immediately make the necessary arrangements to interrogate the head of the Brazilian embassy and to identify his informant based on our information.⁴² Castro wondered about the Brazilian interest in the executions of counter-revolutionaries and the status of political prisoners, because he considered it as nothing secret, as something everyone could read about in newspapers. The only things in Cuba that he considered secret were weapons and army training. In this context, he said that the issue of weapons is concealed to such an extent that even if one of his ministers was an agent, he could not provide the enemy with relevant information. The resident

described the meeting as friendly, happening in cordial atmosphere. Fidel's entire behaviour shows that he highly respects Czechoslovakia.⁴³ The assessment of the 1st Directorate of the Ministry of the Interior for Minister Barák was clear: ... the meeting between our resident and FIDEL helped further consolidate the position of our residency among the leaders of the Cuban Revolutionary Security Service.⁴⁴

Before the end of November 1960, the headquarters praised Cpt. Kvita – "Peterka" for the successful development of co-operation with the Cuban friends, in particular for the exchange of information. You have not achieved any concrete results yet in terms of the elaboration of the base of foreign nationals in the territory of Cuba, particularly foreign diplomats. [...] I stress again, avoid any discussion of specific cases elaborated by the Cuban Security Service without a command from the headquarters. Tell the Cuban friends clearly that you are not authorized to discuss similar issues.⁴⁵

At the meeting on 28 November 1960, in Raul Castro's house, RAFAEL told the Czechoslovak resident, in the presence of DIN, that he was charged to acquaint him with some internal issues. After Din left, I was informed of how Raul very well solved the conflict emerging, due to Wilkins, between party cadres and Din, who renewed the right relationship to the Popular Socialist Party of Cuba after condemning Wilkins's intriguing activities [...]. He was very satisfied with Raul's steps to solve the internal crisis in the intelligence service, especially because they contributed to the rapprochement between him and Din and the fact that commander Piñeiro was appointed intelligence service chief, which, according to Rafael, would contribute to a substantial improvement of the overall work.⁴⁶

MANUEL PIÑEIRO IN PRAGUE

On 29 November 1960, after a three-month security training in Moscow, Gen. Piñeiro, the present Deputy Chief of the Cuban State Security Service, arrived in the Czechoslovak Socialist Republic. Even before the departure to the Soviet Union, he visited V. I. Lenin plant in Pilsen, Pilsen brewery, exemplary collective farm in Dušovice, and several museums, including the Petšchek Palace. On the day after his re-

turn, he was present at an ice-hockey match between Spartak Praha Sokolovo and Stalinovy závody Litvínov.⁴⁷ On 2 December 1960, Col. Miller invited Gen. Piñeiro to a French restaurant at the Intercontinental Hotel, to a party attended by Cpt. Jan Paclík (codenamed “Novák”), Chief of the 5th Section of the 1st Directorate of the Ministry of the Interior, 1st Lt. Kubeš – “Rogl”, a future resident in Havana, and 1st Lt. Novický – “Neužil”. The Chief of the 1st Directorate of the Ministry of the Interior informed the guest of the division of competences between the Czechoslovak Socialist Republic and the USSR in assisting revolutionary Cuba in security, in the spirit of his previous letter to DIN. Gen. PIÑEIRO received the information and said that he had been informed in a similar spirit by the Soviet friends in Moscow. He even spoke with the head of a group of Soviet consultants who had gone to Cuba to take up their posts. During the discussion of operative matters, he also agreed with the possibility to use Cuba as a platform to send agents-illegals (technicians) to Latin and North America and, if necessary, promised help of the Cuban Security Service. Gen. Piñeiro said that Gen. Valdés would also leave for Moscow in February or March 1961 to attend a three-month intelligence and counterintelligence training. The Czechoslovak representatives interpreted this that it would be him who would lead the Cuban Security Service during these several months and would, therefore, be in close contact with the new Czechoslovak resident.⁴⁸ From 3 to 8 December 1960, the Soviet friends from the 1st Chief Directorate of the KGB arranged for Gen. Piñeiro a visit to Berlin, where, at R. Castro's command, he was to meet representatives of the East German State Security Service. The aim of this meeting is to gain experience, especially from specific East German security issues concerning border security and Berlin, which in some ways resemble problems of GUANTANAMO, an American military base in the Cuban territory.⁴⁹ On 9 December 1960, after the return to Prague, there was a fifty-minute talk with Minister Barák. Cmd. PIÑEIRO expressed great satisfaction with all his stay, and he especially appreciated the course of training in the USSR.

He also stressed that the experience he had acquired during his week-long stay in Berlin would help both him and the Cuban counterintelligence service throughout the work. He said that during his stay in the USSR he had learned a number of interesting things that were completely new to him, and that it would be very important to properly apply the theoretical knowledge acquired at the training in the USSR to Cuban affairs.

The Minister of the Interior informed the Chief of the Cuban State Security Service that during his stay in Moscow he had regularly met a leading official of the Central Committee of the Popular Socialist Party of Cuba. During the talks, which took place with the participation of the Soviet friends, they came to the conclusion that the danger of direct military intervention was not as serious, but that it could be certainly expected that imperialists would primarily use such methods of fight against Cuba as economic sabotage, terrorism, and very active espionage activities, all in order to create chaos in Cuba and cause discontent, which they could then use to organize direct counter-revolutionary operations and, finally, to create a strong opposition movement against the current revolutionary government.

After the historical excursion into the early 1950s, Barák presented an important role of the intelligence service to inform of signals of the enemy operations preparation. Therefore, in his opinion, it was necessary for the Cuban friends to attach the utmost importance to intelligence. Gen. Piñeiro said that he was aware of future trouble, and complained that the Cuban intelligence service did not have enough prepared and trained cadres to work abroad. Comrade Minister admitted that the issue of personal preparedness is very important, but the development of the intelligence apparatus must be based primarily on the fact that the most important thing is, and always will be, that each agent is wholeheartedly committed to the Cuban Revolution. All other things must then be gradually acquired and learned.⁵⁰

INTENSIFICATION OF CO-OPERATION

In mid-December 1960, the headquarters conducted the assessment of the

residency's activities in Havana, summarizing all its positive and negative aspects. Until today, the resident has not reported to us any interesting and valuable contact among foreigners living in Cuba. Establishing contacts with leading Cuban representatives in the initial period of the residency's existence in Havana is one of the prerequisites of good co-operation with the Cuban friends in the area of security. In October, the resident joined the Association of Diplomats in Havana, establishing some initial contacts with Peruvian, Swedish, and English diplomats, the last of whom being the chairman of the Association.

Essentially, all planned active measures (SOPKA, DIPLOMAT, PLUTO, BISKUP, NEPTUN, and MACEO) have been assessed as unsuccessful. It will be necessary that the resident again discusses co-operation with the Cuban friends in the implementation of active measures, because their position implies that they do not attach due importance to these operations yet, and do not understand, to the full extent, their significance.

The resident has built a good personal position with senior representatives of the Cuban government and Security Service. He has successfully carried out the first part of the operation of revealing and detaining the emigrant Zdeněk MATOUŠEK.⁵¹ However, in co-operation with the Cuban Security Service, the cases of the Czechoslovak emigrants Maximilián Lom and Karel E. Golombek were elaborated unsuccessfully.⁵²

From September to 5 December 1960, the Cuban friends were sent 37 agent reports through the residency in Havana, mostly relating to the work of Cuban reactionary emigration and preparation of armed aggression of the USA and its allies. Conversely, the resident in Havana received 16 agent reports. The representatives of the Cuban Security Service received a Spanish translation of a brochure on criminology. The residency's activities were negatively affected by the insufficient staffing of the embassy in Havana. The resident was the only employee who, apart from the ambassador, had experience with running an office abroad. He accompanied R. Castro during his trip to the Czechoslovak Socialist Republic, and irregularly also travelled from Havana

ORGANIZATION OF INTELLIGENCE AND STATE SECURITY ACTIVITIES IN RELATION TO CUBA FROM 1960 TO 1961

| Name | Codename | Position | From | To |
|----------------------------|----------|--|-------------------|-------------------|
| Rudolf Barák | RUDOLF | Minster of Defence | 14 September 1953 | 23 June 1961 |
| Col. Josef Kudrna | | 1st Deputy of the Ministry of the Interior | 16 April 1956 | 25 April 1965 |
| Col. Jaroslav Miller | MAŠEK | Chief of the 1st Directorate of the Ministry of the Interior | 1 October 1953 | 21 November 1961 |
| Major Jan Příhoda | PRAŽSKÝ | Directorate Deputy Chief | 1 July 1960 | 30 September 1966 |
| Major Václav Louda | LINHART | Chief of the 1st Section | 1 February 1958 | 9 July 1962 |
| 1st Lt. Jiří Stejskal | BORECKÝ | Section Deputy Chief | 1 February 1958 | 31 December 1960 |
| Cpt. Jan Stehno | SKOŘEPA | Chief of the 2nd Department | 15 October 1958 | 30 April 1961 |
| Cpt. Zdeněk Kvita | PETERKA | Havana Residency Chief | 1 June 1960 | 29 March 1961 |
| 1st Lt./Cpt. Bedřich Kubeš | ROGL | Havana Residency Chief | 27 January 1961 | 2 July 1962 |
| Cpt. Stanislav Šroubek | ŠVARC | Havana Residency Cipher Clerk | 1 September 1960 | 5 August 1961 |

to Mexico to perform a variety of operative activities.

It wasn't until August 1960, after the arrival of Cpt. Stanislav Šroubek, a cipher clerk (codenamed "Švarc"), that the residency's own cipher connection was created. And it was only at the beginning of September that the mutual regular courier connection was established. All this has caused that the work of the residency in Havana is not sufficiently systematic and displays certain chaotic elements.⁵³

Until then no defence work, except minimum passive defence of the embassy, had been sufficiently performed; however, the headquarters still wasn't fully informed of the overall security. There was still no counterintelligence ("K") agent at the embassy. There were only an agent codenamed "König" at the economic department from July 1960 and an agent codenamed "Franta" working among short-term delegates, but they were not directed by anyone.⁵⁴

After the extension of the residency, the resident or (in his absence) his representative was to remain in contact with the leaders of the Cuban Security Service. Regular conspiratorial contacts with DIN, as head of the Security Service, AJA (Gen. Piñeiro – author's note), as his deputy and head of the intelligence service, and RAFAEL, as a Party worker in charge of work in the Security Service, will be continued. The most important information, reports, and proposals will be discussed directly with Raul CASTRO, as has been done up to now.

Co-operation with the Cuban Security Service was to be motivated, as in the

past, by efforts to support, to the maximum extent, the "Cuban Revolution", as well as by the intention to use its possibilities to provide the residency and the headquarters with a large amount of information, i.e. to acquire information that the Czechoslovak intelligence service could operatively use in other residencies, particularly in Latin America.⁵⁵

On 27 December 1960, the headquarters sent the resident a recommendation to establish a regular connection with Cuban Security Service officials. The contacts with DIN, DEMETRIO, and RAFAEL have reached a level where it is possible to ask them for regular, e.g. weekly, meetings and agree with them, based on their working conditions, on a suitable and quick way of arranging a meeting to communicate urgent messages. In terms of conspiracy, I also do not consider it appropriate to meet DIN in his private flat, because you said that his villa was, for some time, under the control of counter-revolutionaries preparing DIN's assassination.⁵⁶

Two days before the end of the year, Gen. Piñeiro said that RAFAEL had been charged with different tasks, both in the Security Service and in the Party, and that he himself would replace RAFAEL in maintaining contact with the Czechoslovak resident. PIÑEIRO explained that this change had been implemented due to the improvement of the organization and system of work of the Cuban Security Service, and introduced himself as the new head of the Cuban intelligence service. He indicated that he also maintained contact with the representative of friends along this line.

At the following meeting, on 1 January 1961, the resident assured himself that any negotiations between Fidel Castro and the future US President John F. Kennedy were absolutely out of the question. [...] Piñeiro also pointed out that at the time when there was again a risk of US aggression and when people were being mobilized to armed struggle the entire security apparatus was focused on the task of armed defence.⁵⁷

Five days later, Gen. Piñeiro ("Maxim") informed of the landing of a US mercenary group in the province of Pinar del Rio and of the obtaining of valuable material left by the group on the shore. The encirclement of the group is currently being completed; the group will be destructed in a few days. In addition, he contacted the Czechoslovak resident, asking for advice in connection with the current reorganization of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.⁵⁸

On 11 January 1961, the resident telegraphed to Prague that Cpt. O. Sanchez had died in a plane crash two days before. According to the preliminary report, his plane was apparently shot down by Cuba's own air defence.⁵⁹ Based on the headquarters' request, the resident asked Gen. Piñeiro for intercession with Fidel Castro regarding an interview with Jiří Hochman, a special correspondent of the daily *Rudé právo*, providing him with the proposed questions.⁶⁰

On 21 January 1961, in the safe house at the corner of the Linoa y Pasco street, Cpt. Kvita – "Peterka" was acquainted with the draft plan of work of the Cuban intelligence service. The plan was

not fully completed. Due to the fact that it could serve for our orientation in terms of obtaining messages important for Cuba, I asked AJA to provide me with one copy of the plan after its completion. After the meeting, he visited a nearby café with Gen. Piñeiro, where they were joined for a while by Fidel Castro and his personal secretary José Abrantes.⁶¹

At the end of the month, the resident received a message that 1st Lt. Kubeš – “Rogl” would come to the residency in February. You will remain at the post of resident until your departure, wrote 1st Lt. Stejskal – “Borecký”, authorized Chief of the 2nd Section of the 1st Directorate of the Ministry of the Interior. I expect that you will gradually provide Comrade Rogl with all your experience and personal contacts gained in Cuba and, based on co-operation, you will create the best conditions for the successful implementation of the difficult plan of the residency for this year.⁶²

The resident informed the headquarters that after 20 January 1961, when the general mobilization ended, life in Cuba returned to “normal”. However, he complained that despite all his efforts he still had not managed to remove the spasmodic and chaotic character of the co-operation with Gen. Piñeiro. There were several reasons: first of all, it was an abnormal situation that made Aja busy mainly in the area of counterintelligence. In the period, Aja was also involved in organizational and cadre problems associated with the development of the Cuban intelligence apparatus. He showed symptoms of fatigue and overwork.⁶³

Before the end of January 1961, the last meeting between Cpt. Kvita – “Peterka” and Fidel Castro was held; Fidel Castro personally directed the operation of 40,000 soldiers of Cuban army and militia armies against two large groups of insurgents (about 500 men), made up of former Batista soldiers and other “criminal elements” in the Escambray Mountains in the central part of Cuba. This is where our resident in Cuba contacted him and personally received information from him about the uprising and the plan for its destruction. The Prime Minister of the Cuban government informed the resident that in the spring of 1961 he was going to visit the Czechoslovak Socialist Republic and other countries of the communist bloc.



Cpt. Stanislav Šroubek – “Švarc”.
Source: Security Services Archive

He wanted to combine the visit with attending the celebration of our country liberation, connected with the military parade held on 9 May.⁶⁴

At the reception held on 8 February 1961 by the ambassador Pavlíček (alias “Marta”), Cpt. Kvita – “Peterka” introduced his successor, 1st Lt. Kubeš – “Rogl” to Raul Castro.⁶⁵ Four days later, the meeting at the Ministry of Defence was also attended by Lt. Col. Josef Lédl, Deputy Chief of the Investigation Directorate of the Ministry of the Interior, sent under the codename “Lukeš” to Havana with a personal letter from Minister Barák and a task to end the “Operation Matoušek”. Minister Raúl CASTRO carefully read the content of the letter and showed substantial agreement with our proposed solution [...], i.e. to investigate and sentence MATOUŠEK in Cuba. During the talk, Castro asked Lt. Col. Lédl to acquaint Cuban investigative authorities with some experience from his investigative practice.⁶⁶

MUCH CLOSER RELATIONS

At the last meetings, Gen. Piñeiro self-critically admitted that the Cuban intelligence service was still in the stage of infancy, obtaining information both via collaborators in the Cuban diplomatic corps and from Party sources. At the moment, the intelligence service has some collaborators among Cuban diplomats abroad. Cadres are being trained in two special schools to work abroad. The intelligence service has agents among counter-revolutionary emigrants abroad. They have been



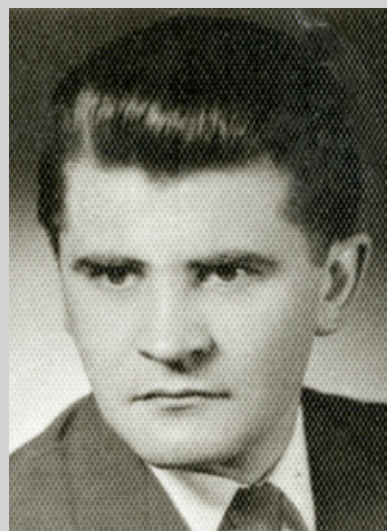
1st Lt. Jiří Stejskal – “Borecký”.
Source: Security Services Archive

sent there without specific tasks, and there is virtually no connection with them. He informed that government officials are considering the creation of a separate Ministry of the Interior, as in the Czechoslovak Socialist Republic. AJA asked for help, i.e. for basic information about the organization, objectives, and scope of activities of our Ministry of the Interior.

At the meeting with both residents on 17 February 1961, Gen. Valdés once again returned to the issue of professional inexperience of leading cadres, mentioning the idea that, for a transition period, he would consider it appropriate and beneficial for the Cuban security apparatus if some of the leading posts are temporarily held by selected experienced members from either the USSR or the Czechoslovak Socialist Republic, who would practically lead the relevant sections. According to Din, the objective is that, under the guidance of our staff, professionally proficient leading officials will be trained among Cubans in a short time. At the end of the meeting, Cpt. Kvita – “Peterka” said that it would be appropriate to respond to Miller’s (Comrade Mašek’s) letter from 16 January. Din said that the letter had been recently requested by Raul.⁶⁷

On 20 February 1961, Cpt. Stejskal – “Borecký” ordered the Havana resident to gradually hand over the leadership of the residency to 1st Lt. Kubeš – “Rogl”, including his valuable contacts. One of the new work forms of the residency was to be the elaboration of suitable persons from among progressive

Col. JUDr. Zdeněk Kvita (born on 17 April 1931), graduated from University of Political and Economic Sciences, from 1 September 1953 attended intelligence school of the 1st Directorate of the Ministry of the Interior, from 1 December 1954 desk officer at the Latin American Section (1st Department), October 1956 – April 1960 resident in Mexico, June 1960 – March 1961, resident in Cuba, later senior desk officer (SR) at the 2nd Department, in October 1962 member of a delegation to Cuba, December 1962 – March 1964 deputy resident in Brazil, later SR at the 1st Department, in 1965 served 2 months as a deputy resident in Cuba, 1 October 1965 relocated to the Secretariat of the Ministry of the Interior, at the end of March realized, with commander of the 1st Directorate of the Ministry of the Interior J. Houska, withdrawal of a member of the Intelligence Directorate of the General Staff from Washington in Havana, 1 July 1968 deputy commander (ZN) of the 1st Department for Latin America, 1 June 1969 ZN of the 4th Department of Directorate A (preparation to the position of the resident in Washington), 1 April 1971 ZN of the 52nd Department, 1 July 1971 ZN of the 47th (African-Asian) Department, 10 April 1978 – 7 July 1978 board study of the 6th run of a specialized course at the Intelligence School of the 1st Main Directorate of KGB USSR in Moscow, 25 February 1978 senior desk officer – specialist of the 17th Department, from 1 July 1980 commander of the 17th Department, from 1 June 1984 consultant at the Office of the Ministry of the Interior CSSR, from 22 July 1987 in active reserves, 31 July 1990 dismissed from service. Holder of a number of medals, incl. the badge Honorary Co-operator of the State Security of the USSR No. 0122/1960.



non-communist emigrants from other Latin American countries residing in Cuba (Guatemalan, Dominican, Nicaraguan, etc.). The aim of this measure is to obtain suitable persons with the prospect of working at leading positions in various Latin American countries after the successful anti-imperialist and anti-American democratic revolution. Probably the last task of Cpt. Kvita – “Peterka” was to ensure, through “Aja”, assistance in obtaining an overview of the groups of political emigration in Cuba.⁶⁸

At the turn of February and March 1961, as a result of overwork, Cpt. Šroubek – “Švarc”, the residency cipher clerk, had a nervous breakdown, and the doctor ordered him absolute rest. The headquarters lost radio contact with Havana for three days, organized until then in two daily sessions. For the expanding residency, which was, in terms of the amount of telegrams and cipher work, the fourth largest, after residencies in Vienna, Paris, and London, the situation was not acceptable. Cpt. Stejskal – “Borecký” proposed to send the second cipher clerk, namely 1st Lt. Ladislav Šūs – “Konečný”, originally intended for the residency in Buenos Aires. If approved, Comrade Konečný was supposed to go to Havana within a month.⁶⁹

On 6 March 1961, Gen. Castro sent a personal letter to R. Barák in which, in addition to greetings and thanks to Antonín Novotný, President of the Czechoslovak Socialist Republic, he sincerely thanked for twenty trained dogs with instructors (who were to be

employed in searching for insurgents), mentioning the meeting with Lt. Col. Lédl. Having accepted all this evidence of effective and immense solidarity and invaluable assistance that we receive from you, we wish you good health and personal achievements and your beloved people new victories in building socialism in the struggle for progress and peace among nations. Homeland or death! We shall win!⁷⁰

Before Cpt. Kvita – “Peterka” returned to the Czechoslovak Socialist Republic, the headquarters conducted an analysis of the situation in Cuba, concluding that the Cuban friends [...] were interested in a much closer relationship than established by the agreement between the two ministers. The Czechoslovak resident thus found himself in a difficult situation, because his refusals to provide expert consultations relating to fundamental issues of construction and organization of the Security Service and to solve specific, operationally complex, cases aroused an impression in the Cuban friends that he avoided active and sincere co-operation.

In contrast, the leaders, including R. Castro, showed sincere efforts to fully meet Czechoslovak requirements. Especially in recent weeks, they have provided us with valuable information about the counter-revolution and preparation made by the USA, offering us all materials of the Pan-American military junta, super-secret Pentagon materials left there after BATISTA’s escape ... Over the past two months, the Czechoslovak intelligence service pro-

vided the Cubans with over a hundred major current political-military pieces of information intended to inform the Prime Minister and the Central Committee of the Popular Socialist Party of Cuba.

The headquarters believed that also the 1st Chief Directorate of the KGB in Cuba probably only limited its activity to the exchange of information and did not fill the posts of consultants with their comrades, advisors at individual sections of the security apparatus, as originally proposed. Or the Soviet resident inadequately explained to the Cuban partners that the issues of building and organization of the Security Service fell exclusively within their competence. We have found that the entire collaboration between General PIÑERO and the Soviet residency lies in the fact that he meets the Soviet agent in the safe house on a case by case basis, as with us.

The analysis concluded that the Cuban friends have not moved forward in the organization and cadre building of its Security Service over the past year, and therefore continue to count on active, specific, and effective Czechoslovak assistance.⁷¹

On 17 March 1961, the headquarters told Cpt. Kvita – “Peterka” that the ambassador Pavlíček (“Marta”), along his line, informed the Ministry of Foreign Affairs that assassinations of him, head of the Soviet embassy, and Fidel Castro were being prepared. The headquarters requested information as to whether he knew anything about it, who informed MARTA about it, etc. The

report also said that the Czechoslovak ambassador complained to Jiří Hájek, the 1st Deputy of Foreign Affairs, about the resident, namely about his attendance, about the fact that he ignored him and the like. [...] We would like to add that communication with MARTA must be strict, fair, and uncompromising, so that he has no reason to complain, but in any case he must respect the resident.⁷²

On 30 March 1961, Cpt. Zdeněk Kvita – “Peterka” returned to Prague.⁷³ According to the final assessment, his stay abroad was influenced by fluctuation and changes in residencies. In Cuba, he was able to establish a residency, find out possibilities of intelligence work, from political and operative viewpoint, and crucially contribute to the establishment of collaboration with the Cuban friends at the highest level. He was less successful in terms

of elaborating the major enemy’s bases in Cuba. On the whole, his mission in Cuba was successful.⁷⁴ The first Czechoslovak resident in Havana was thus at the beginning of a long collaboration that the Czechoslovak State Security apparatus conducted under the control of the Soviet KGB, in favour of the “world revolution” and imminent threat to the territory of the major enemy – the USA.

NOTES

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- Ibid.* The current political and economic situation in Cuba. Planned primary and secondary tasks for residency in Havana.
- Ibid.* Cuba. The current situation as planned by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the 1st Directorate of the Ministry of the Interior.
- Cf. ŽÁČEK, Pavel: *Vzestupy a pády Bohumíra Molnára. Kariéra generála Státní bezpečnosti*. In: ČELOVSKÝ, Bořivoj (ed.): *Oči a uši strany. Sedm pohledů do života StB*. Nakladatelství Tilia, Šenov u Ostravy 2005, pp. 106–107.
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- ABS, collection “1st Directorate of the National Security Corps”, Reg. No. 38525, Cpt. Peterka – Assessment of his service activity in the period from November 1958 to June 1960, 5 September 1960; Personal letter on a trip abroad No. 2, 13 June 1961.
- ABS, collection “1st Directorate of the National Security Corps”, Reg. No. 80589, Courier from the headquarters, Linhart, 20 June 1960.
- Ibid.* Report from Mexico, No. 163, 27 June 1960.
- ABS, collection “1st Directorate of the National Security Corps”, Reg. No. 80589, Re: Gen. Ramiro VALDEZ – Request for professional security training in the Czechoslovak Republic, Ref. A/1-00438/12-60, 28 June 1960.
- Ibid.* Report on the situation and perspectives of intelligence work in Cuba, 29 June 1960.
- Ibid.* Record of the conversation between Comrade Col. Kudrna, 1st Deputy Minister of the Interior, and Gen. Ramiro Valdes, Chief of the Cuban counterintelligence service, Ref. No. A/1-00259/12-60, 8 July 1960.
- ABS, collection “1st Directorate of the National Security Corps”, Reg. No. 80589, General Ramiro VALDEZ – Comprehensive report on intelligence and counterintelligence training, led by Comrade Col. Kudrna, Deputy Minister of the Interior, 31 August 1960.
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- Ibid.* General Ramiro VALDEZ – Comprehensive report on intelligence and counterintelligence training, led by Comrade Col. Kudrna, Deputy Minister of the Interior, 31 August 1960.
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- ABS, collection “1st Directorate of the National Security Corps”, Reg. No. 80589, Report on a special trip of officers of the 1st Directorate of the Ministry of the Interior to Cuba and proposal of the form and content of co-operation between the Cuban and Czechoslovak intelligence and counterintelligence services, Ref. No. A/1-00608/12-60, 14 September 1960.
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- Ibid.* Report from Havana No. 18/LD, 1 November 1960.
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- ABS, collection “1st Directorate of the National Security Corps”, Reg. No. 80589/011, DIN – Records of meetings in October 1960, 4 November 1960.
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- Ibid.* O. Sanchez – Records of meetings held on 2 and 4 November 1960, 6 November 1960.
- Ibid.* DIN – Record of the meeting held on 5 November 1960, 6 November 1960.
- ABS, collection “1st Directorate of the National Security Corps”, Reg. No. 80589, Meeting with Fidel Castro on 9 November 1960, 30 November 1960.
- ABS, collection “1st Directorate of the National Security Corps”, Reg. No. 80589/011, From Havana No. 30, 14 November 1960.
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- ABS, collection “1st Directorate of the National Security Corps”, Reg. No. 80589/011, From Havana No. 30, 14 November 1960.
- Ibid.* Courier from the headquarters, Borecký, 25 November 1960.
- ABS, collection “1st Directorate of the National Security Corps”, Reg. No. 80589, Records of meetings with Rafael in November 1960, 3 December 1960.
- Ibid.* Re: PIÑEIRO Manuel, General, Deputy Chief of the Cuban State Security Service – information, Ref. No. A/1-0086/21-60, 2 December 1960.

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- 50 ABS, collection "1st Directorate of the National Security Corps", Reg. No. 80589/011, Record of the meeting between Comrade Minister Barák and M. PIÑEIRO, Chief of the Cuban Intelligence Service in the presence of Comrade Miller, Chief of the 1st Directorate of the Ministry of the Interior, 12 December 1960.
- 51 Zdeněk Matoušek, born 5 January 1923, according to a report from the headquarters: He left the Czechoslovak Republic for the FRG in March 1949, after a failed coup attempt, with three other companions. During the escape, he shot dead two officers of the National Security Corps. In July of the same year, he was sentenced in absentia to 18 years' imprisonment for treason. He was supposed to be arrested and escorted by the Soviet ship to the Czechoslovak Socialist Republic. ABS, collection "1st Directorate of the National Security Corps", Reg. No. 80589, Report No. 24 to Havana, 18 October 1960.
- 52 Cf. BORTLOVÁ, Hana: *Československo a Kuba*, pp. 143–146.
- 53 ABS, collection "1st Directorate of the National Security Corps", Reg. No. 80629, Assessment of the activity performed by the Havana residency in 1960.
- 54 ABS, collection "1st Directorate of the National Security Corps", Reg. No. 80582, Assessment of defence work at the Havana residency for the period from June to December 1960, 13 December 1960.
- 55 ABS, collection "1st Directorate of the National Security Corps", Reg. No. 80629, Assessment of the activity performed by the Havana residency in 1960.
- 56 ABS, collection "1st Directorate of the National Security Corps", Reg. No. 80589, Courier from the headquarters, 27 December 1960.
- 57 ABS, collection "1st Directorate of the National Security Corps", Reg. No. 80629, Courier mail dated 6 January 1961. Records of meetings with commander Piñeiro from 28 December 1960 to 3 January 1961.
- 58 Ibid. Record of the meeting with Piñeiro on 5 January 1961, Peterka, 6 January 1961.
- 59 ABS, collection "1st Directorate of the National Security Corps", Reg. No. 80647, Report from Havana No. 11, 11 January 1961.
- 60 ABS, collection "1st Directorate of the National Security Corps", Reg. No. 80629, Report of the meeting with AJA on 13 January 1961, Peterka, 15 January 1961.
- 61 Ibid. Record of the meeting with AJA on 21 January 1961, 25 January 1961.
- 62 Ibid. Courier from the headquarters, Borecký, 24 January 1961.
- 63 Ibid. Report from Havana, 4 February 1961.
- 64 ABS, collection "1st Directorate of the National Security Corps", Reg. No. 80589, Re: Last reports from Havana, information, 31 January 1961.
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- 69 Ibid. Re: Reinforcing the telegraphic-ciphering department in Havana by one worker, 14 March 1961.
- 70 Ibid. Translation of Gen. Raul Castro Ruz's personal letter, 6 March 1961.
- 71 Ibid. Record to inform Comrade Minister. Re: The current nature of co-operation of our residency in Havana with the Cuban friends in terms of security, 16 March 1961.
- 72 Ibid. Report to Havana No. 14/Bo dated 17 March 1961.
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An over-sized figure of Fidel Castro at a hill near Santiago de Cuba on the 22nd of February in 1974.

Source: Czech News Agency

DOCUMENTS



Karel Vaš in Žilina in 1945.

Source: Post Bellum

Karel Vaš in the USSR

A PRISONER AND COLLABORATOR OF THE PEOPLE'S COMMISSARIAT FOR INTERNAL AFFAIRS

Investigation file No. 29064 on Karel Vaš was preserved in the State Archives of the Transcarpathian Region. It contains a large amount of interesting information about his activities in the inter-war period as well as his internment in the USSR. The presented edition of documents from the file is supplemented by the transcription of an interview with Karel Vaš on this topic.

ADAM HRADILEK

In the early years of the Second World War thousands of people fled from occupied Czechoslovakia to the Soviet Union, hoping to be saved and to be able to join the resistance movement. Among the refugees were many Jews escaping the growing anti-Semitism. The largest group by far consisted of the inhabitants of Carpathian Ruthenia, which was occupied after 1938 by the Hungarian army. In most cases, the refugees were arrested and tried immediately after crossing the border, typically for illegal border crossing and "espionage". The length of sentences was usually 3 to 5 years, and in rare cases up to 8 years. The refugee wave from Czechoslovakia coincided with the launch of many new industrial and construction projects throughout the USSR. For example, there was an increase in mining of coal in the Vorkuta and Pechora region, oil on the Ukhta River, and precious metals in Norilsk and on the Kolyma River. In November 1939, in a letter to the Politburo, Lavrentiy Beria complained of a shortage of labour in the Gulag camps.¹ This was to be partly solved by refugees from the former Czechoslovakia, who were typically sent to slave labour in the above mentioned places.

In addition to archival materials documenting the Czechoslovak experience with the Gulag camps, a number of testimonies of former prisoners have been preserved. The Oral History Group of the Institute for the Study of Totalitarian Regimes has talked to dozens of witnesses and obtained dozens of other testimonies from collections around the world.

With respect to specific persons, the Oral History Group is currently seeking and finding materials of the NKVD from the period of their internment in the USSR. The survivors of Soviet labour camps whose files were found among the NKVD materials also include Karel Vaš.

Karel Vaš was born on 20 March 1916 in Uzhhorod, into the family of a Hungarian-speaking lawyer of Jewish descent. It was already during his studies at an Uzhhorod gymnasium in 1933 that he secretly joined the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia (KSČ). After completing secondary school he enrolled at the Faculty of Law of Charles University in Prague. During his studies he was actively involved in the activities of the communist movement, for which he was also punished. In 1936 he was sentenced to two weeks in prison for causing a disturbance during a demonstration. Shortly after graduation in February 1939, at the command of the Communist Party, he went to Uzhhorod, which was occupied by Hungarians from November 1938, and joined the Communist resistance movement. In 1940, fearing arrest, he decided to escape to the Soviet Union, where he experienced the same fate as thousands of other young people from Carpathian Ruthenia who sought refuge there from the Hungarian occupation. Shortly after crossing the border he was arrested by Soviet border guards and imprisoned. He spent over six months in prisons in Nadvirna, Stanyslaviv and Poltava. The preserved archival materials show that at that time, in an effort to be released,

he attempted to make contact with the leadership of the NKVD and the Communist International in Moscow. Although in his requests he referred to himself as "an iron Bolshevik" who had devoted his life to communism, for which he is always "ready to sacrifice his life", on 10 February 1941 he was sentenced to three years of forced labour in one of the labour camps in the autonomous region of Komi in northern Russia by the Special Tribunal of the NKVD. From the Poltava prison he was sent to the Kedrovyy Shor agricultural camp² which produced food for the nearby camps around Inta.³ He spent nearly two years there. While the camp experience eroded the faith of many prisoners in the Soviet Union, for Karel Vaš it was a place where he started collaborating with the NKVD, which he also later admitted: *Even in isolation in the USSR I didn't stop being a communist, not only that I thought as a communist, but I also proved that by my actions. Even in isolation I showed my love for the USSR by helping the Soviet security authorities identify enemy elements, subversive criminals.*⁴ On 4 January 1943, after two years in prison, he was released from the camp, based on the amnesty for Czechoslovak citizens, and went along with several other liberated Czechoslovaks⁵ to the Czechoslovak military unit in Buzuluk. Thanks to the collaboration with the NKVD after his release from the camp and during his service in the Czechoslovak army, he was assigned to the 2nd (Intelligence) Department of the Staff of the 1st Czechoslovak Separate Brigade



Title page of Karel Vaš's investigation file kept by the NKVD. Source: DAZO

in the USSR. In January 1945 he became the deputy of Bedřich Reicin in the newly created Defence Intelligence (OBZ). He continued to collaborate with the NKGB even after the war and participated in a number of illegal activities related to the preparation of the seizure of power by the Communist Party in Czechoslovakia after 1945 and its consolidation after 1948. In February 1948 he was appointed deputy of the Chief Military Prosecutor in Prague. Based on the instructions of the Soviet intelligence service, he applied to be transferred to the military department of the State Prosecutor's Office in order to influence the investigation of General Heliodor Píka. General Píka, who as the leader of the Czechoslovak military mission in the Soviet Union contributed to the release of Czechoslovaks from Soviet camps, was sentenced to death in 1949 – with a contribution from Karel Vaš. Karel Vaš himself was arrested on 11 August 1951, as a result of a power struggle within the ruling party. On 31 July 1953, after two years in custody, he was sentenced to life imprisonment for high treason, espionage and complicity to murder. In 1955, based on the amnesty, his sentence was reduced to 25 years. In 1956 he was acquitted and released. After his release he studied history at the Faculty of Arts of Charles University and worked for the Klement Gottwald Military Political Academy. In 1963 his membership in the Communist Party was restored. Before he retired, he was an editor of the Central Council of Trade Unions.

After the fall of the communist regime, Vaš applied for judicial rehabilitation, but his application was rejected by the Higher Military Court. On 10 June 1991 he was rehabilitated by the Regional Court of the Transcarpathian Region in the case of illegal border crossing in 1940. In 1998 he was accused of misconduct that led to the death penalty of General Heliodor Píka. In February 2001 he was charged with murder and on 15 June 2001 sentenced to seven years' unconditional imprisonment. On 15 January 2002 the High Court reversed the judgment and the prosecution was discontinued due to limitation.⁶ As a result of increased interest in Karel Vaš and his prosecution, a comprehensive set of documents relating to him titled *Sluha dvou pánů* (A Servant of Two Masters) was published in 1999.⁷ An interview with Karel Vaš and a set of documents are presented here as a supplement to this publication, which touches on the period of Karel Vaš's internment in the Soviet Union only tangentially. The documents come from the investigation file of the NKVD preserved in the State Archives of the Transcarpathian Region in Uzhhorod, Ukraine.⁸ The original file has a total of 43 pages. It covers the period from the arrest and imprisonment in Nadvirna, Stanyslaviv and Poltava, and includes a release report from the labour camp and materials related to the rehabilitation from 1991. In addition to the documents related to the persecution of Karel Vaš in the USSR (report on detention for illegal crossing of the USSR state border, description of the things seized during the search, extract from the report of the Special Tribunal of the NKVD based on which Karel Vaš was sentenced, and prison release report), we also present materials that are related to Karel Vaš's activity before escaping to the Soviet Union or that show his views and actions (interrogation report of the NKVD prison in Stanyslaviv of 1 October 1940 and Karel Vaš's application for release sent to the Moscow leadership of the NKVD and the Communist International in Moscow from the NKVD prison in Poltava, Ukraine, on 2 January 1941). A copy of the file and its translation are deposited in the archive of the Oral History Group of the Institute for the Study of Totalitarian Regimes. The published documents are supplemented with the transcription of an interview with Karel Vaš from January 2012.

Karel Vaš died on 8 December 2012.



Source: Post Bellum

KAREL VAŠ

* 20 March 1916 in Uzhhorod

† 8 December 2012 in Prague

- Since 1933 a member of the Communist Party
- Graduated from the Faculty of Law of Charles University
- From 1938 to 1940 he worked in the communist resistance movement in Carpathian Ruthenia
- In 1940 he fled to the USSR, where he was arrested and sentenced to three years for illegal border crossing
- In 1943 released from the Gulag, as an active collaborator of the NKVD
- Joined the Czechoslovak military units in the USSR, assigned to the 2nd Department of the Staff of the 1st Czechoslovak Separate Brigade in the USSR
- From January 1945 deputy of Bedřich Reicin at the Defence Intelligence (OBZ)
- After the war he joined the military department of the State Prosecutor's Office, where he was involved in the condemnation and judicial murder of General Heliodor Píka
- In 1951 arrested, sentenced to life imprisonment, expelled from the KSČ, released in 1956
- Since 1963 a member of the Communist Party again
- In 2001 sentenced to seven years for murder; in 2002 the judgment was reversed by the High Court and the prosecution discontinued due to limitation

Report on detention for illegal crossing of the state border of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics

Done on 26 August 1940 at border base No. 1 of NKVD headquarters 95 of border district 30

| | |
|--|---|
| 1. Surname, first name, father's name | <i>Vash Karol Ignatevich</i> |
| 2. Year, month and place of birth | <i>1916, 20 March, Uzhhorod, Uzhhorod district /Hungary/</i> |
| 3. Nationality | <i>Hungarian</i> |
| 4. Citizenship | <i>Hungarian</i> |
| 5. Permanent residence address | <i>Uzhhorod, Uzhhorod district, Tyeleki (?) 5</i> |
| 6. Education | <i>university, graduated from university</i> |
| 7. Profession and specialisation | <i>articled clerk</i> |
| 8. Last place of employment and position or field | <i>Uzhhorod, Uzhhorod district, articled clerk</i> |
| 9. Social origin | <i>officials</i> |
| 10. Property | <i>has nothing</i> |
| 11. Marital status | <i>single</i> |
| 12. Relation to military service (where and when he served, rank, position) | <i>has not served in the army</i> |
| 13. Criminal record (whether he was sentenced and investigated, where, when, what for, judgment) | <i>tried for participation in a political demonstration, 14 days</i> <i>Signature: Karol Vash</i> |
| 14. Membership in the party | <i>member of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia since 1933 to this day</i> |
| 15. Time and place of detention (hour, minute, day, month, year, place of detention, territory of the municipal committee and district, distance from the border where detention was conducted) | <i>26 August 1940, 1:30 p.m., coordinate 8802, in the territory of Rozhnyativ district, Stanyslaviv region</i> |
| 16. Time and place of border crossing | <i>border crossed on 26 August 1940 at 9:30 a.m. at coordinate 8606, base 15</i> |
| 17. How and under what circumstances the person was detained | <i>detained by border guard</i> |
| 18. Reason for illegal border crossing | <i>border crossed due to persecution by Hungarian authorities</i> |
| 19. Who helped the person cross the border and why | <i>border crossed without anyone helping him</i> |
| 20. Accompanying person(s) when crossing the border | |
| 21. Manner of crossing the border (using artifice, resistance, attempts to hide from border guards) | <i>border crossed without using any artifice</i> |
| 22. What was found during body search of the detainee | <i>Hungarian money – 221, 3 documents, 1 photograph, 1 gold watch, 1 wrist watch, 2 folding knives, 1 ballpoint pen, 1 shaving razor, 1 pair of scissors, 5 topographic maps, 1 torch, hiking boots</i> |
| 23. Detained by (surnames, first names, father's names) | <i>Aboimov Fyodor, Mikulchik Vladimir Yakovlevich, Bebchiya Mikhail</i> |
| 24. Special statement of the detainee | <i>the detainee lived under three names in Hungary: 1. Akerman, 2. Hardstein, 3. Steiner</i> |
| 25. Documents confirming identity of the detainee | <i>none</i> |

Detainee's signature *Karol Vash*

Signature of the person who drew up the report signature

Translator's signature

Document No. 2

[USSR], 1940, 26 August – List of things seized in the body search of Karel Vaš

List of things seized in the body search

At the command of the 95th NKVD border guard No. of 194...,
we, the employees of the 95th border guard Grek (?) in the presence of the recorder Gobko (?),
have made a list of things that were seized from Vash Karol Ignatevich residing at:

| Name of seized thing | Quantity (pcs), weight and metres | Quality |
|----------------------------------|---|---------|
| 1 Hungarian money | 221 (two hundred and twenty-one and 00 fillers) | |
| 2 Yellow metal watch No. 1543178 | 1 | |
| 3 Wristwatch | 1 | |
| 4 Compass | 1 | |
| 5 Photograph | 1 | |
| 6 Folding knife | 2 | |
| 7 Shaving razor | 2 | |
| 8 Scissors | 1 | (small) |
| 9 Topographic maps | 4 | |
| 10 Torch | 1 | |
| 11 Glasses | 2 | |
| 12 Wallets | 2 | |
| 13 Keys | 1 | |
| 14 Ballpoint pen | 1 | (old) |
| 15 Documents | 3 | |

Signature of the searched person Karol Vash

Witnesses signature

Search conducted by the NKVD officer signature

Copy received by

.....194...

Document No. 3

Stanyslaviv, 1940, 1 October 1940 – Transcription of the interrogation of Karel Vaš in the NKVD prison

Interrogation Report

of the Accused Karol Ignatevich Vash Town of Stanyslaviv, 1 October 1940

Interrogation commenced at 8:35 p.m. Ended at 12:40 a.m. (sic)

Question: Tell us briefly about your life.

Answer: I was born in Uzhhorod in 1916, father Ignaty Karlovich, a lawyer, died in 1938, mother Hedviga, 54 years old, housewife, sister Katerina, 28 years old, housewife, her husband Martin Silberstein – salesman, lives somewhere in America. Until 1922 I was at home, from 1922 to 1927 I attended national school and completed 5 years, from 1927 to 1934 I studied at a gymnasium in Uzhhorod and completed 8 years, from 1934 to 1939 I studied at the University of Law, which I completed and was given the degree of Doctor of Law and Political Science. After completing university in Prague I returned home to Uzhhorod, I did not have a job, because the Hungarians who came didn't employ Jews as lawyers; moreover, they knew me as a communist, so nobody employed me.

Question: Do you have any relatives or friends in the territory of the USSR?

Answer: I don't have any relatives in the territory of the USSR. I have an acquaintance, Leikfelder, who lives in Kamyane-Podolsky, Kirova 11. He left Uzhhorod for Poland and then moved to the USSR.

Question: Do you have any relatives abroad?

Answer: No, I don't.

Question: Have you ever been a member of any party or organisation?

Answer:

From 1933 to 1938 I was a member of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia, after the arrival of the Hungarians the Party went underground, and until the last moment I was a member of the illegal Communist Party of Hungary. In 1933, when I was still a gymnasium student, I became a member of the Communist Party. I had read Marxist literature before, and the Party charged me with conducting agitation among students, and we distributed communist leaflets twice or three times at night. After completing the gymnasium in 1934 I went to Prague, where I joined the student organisation of "poor, but progressive students", I went to meetings and demonstrations. I joined that organisation with the permission of the Party. At one of the demonstrations in 1934, which was a demonstration organised by the Communist Party against war and fascism, for a united work front, I was charged with shouting slogans in the crowd, which I did, and therefore I was arrested by the Czechoslovak police and then spent 14 days in prison. After leaving Prague I was tasked with establishing the "Union of Friends of the Soviet Union" in Uzhhorod and other major towns in the Transcarpathian Ukraine, and I was in contact with the central organisation in Prague. I managed to establish organisations in Uzhhorod, Mukachevo, Berehovo and Khust. As I am from the family of a lawyer and as I myself studied at university and had acquaintances among intellectuals, I collected money for the organisation. At the meetings of the Communist Party I (*illegible - translator's note*) for the work for the "Union of Friends of the Soviet Union" and received orders regarding ... more work. We managed to build a strong organisation, there were gatherings at which we talked about the Soviet Union, and we also sent delegations to the Soviet Union, which after arrival in their hometowns provided information about what they had seen in the Soviet Union. In 1934 I was a delegate of Carpathian Ruthenia at a conference in Prague. Before the Hungarians came, I worked as a secretary of the "Union of Friends of the Soviet Union". We published a newspaper entitled "Svět sovětů" (The World of Soviets) in English and in Hungarian. I was also a correspondent for other newspapers, I wrote international reports and articles about the Soviet Union. During the events in Spain I was tasked with founding the "Society of Friends of Democratic Spain"; we collected money, food and clothes and sent them to Spain, and we also organised rallies of solidarity with Spain and published the newspaper "Španělsko" (Spain), which I edited. When I studied at university in Prague, I didn't have to work for the Party, but then suddenly I received a letter in which I was asked to contact the Central Committee in relation to various issues, which I did. After the arrival of the Hungarians, our Communist Party didn't break up, but went underground. The organisation has the structure of five-member groups, I was in Yura Steiner's five-member group, I led my three-member group, we did illegal work the whole time, I collected money from the supporters of the Communist Party and passed it to Yura Steiner, and based on his authorisation I wrote articles for illegal newspapers published by the organisation. In April 1940 members of the illegal Communist Party began to be arrested. In Uzhhorod and even in Hungary mass arrests of the members and supporters of the organisation started. The leader of the five-member group to which I belonged was arrested, and as I feared arrest I had to flee from Uzhhorod, went to Budapest, where I spent 14 days underground, but then I heard that people were also arrested in Budapest. In Budapest I met a member of our organisation, whose name I can't remember and who was released for ransom even before the court started, and he informed me about who was arrested and what they said, and he also told me that the organisation had been revealed by somebody called Turan, who was one of the leaders of the Budapest organisation.

Question:

Whose is the document that we seized from you in the search?

Answer:

I stayed underground, hiding from the police, from April 1940. From Budapest I went to Miskolc, spent a few days there, and from there I went to Mukachevo, where I stayed under the name of my friend who a long time before that went to London - Akerman, I spent three weeks there and then I went back to Miskolc, where I changed my surname to Hardstein. I stayed there until 23 August 1940, hiding from the police. They wanted to recruit me into the Hungarian army and there was a danger that I might be revealed, so I decided to go to the Soviet Union.

Question:

Tell us how you got to the border.

Answer:

In Miskolc, with the help of my colleagues, I got a false ID in the name of D. Steiner, and thanks to this document I could get to the mountains as a tourist, that is to the border. On 23 August 1940 I left Miskolc and went to Khust, and from Khust I took a coach to get to Synevyrská Polyana, I spent the night there, in the morning registered as a tourist and got permission to go to the tourist hostel in the village of Cherna-Ryka, and because I didn't know the way, they gave me a guide who took me to the (*illegible name - translator's note*) mountain and then went back. On the mountain I met a shepherd who took me to the border, for which I paid him 15 pengő. I crossed the border and went further into the territory of the Soviet Union, where I was detained by border guards near the border village of Piskovo and sent to their workplace.

Question:

Why did you come to the USSR?

Answer:

I came to the USSR to hide from the police and to work and live in the Soviet Union.

Question:

You are charged with illegal crossing of the state border from Hungary to the USSR. Do you admit your guilt?

Answer:

Yes, I admit my guilt that I illegally crossed the state border from Hungary to the Soviet Union.

Question:

What can you add to your testimony?

Answer:

I have nothing to add to my testimony.

The report correctly records my words; it has been read to me aloud in a language which I understand,
in witness whereof I affix my signature.

Karol Vash

Interrogation led by the investigator signature

Karel Vaš's personal application for release from prison

НАРОДНЫЙ КОМИССАРИАТ ВНУТРЕННИХ ДЕЛ МОСКВА PEOPLE'S COMMISSARIAT FOR INTERNAL AFFAIRS, MOSCOW

Application of Karel Vaš for examination of his past and immediate release

Name: Vaš Ignatevich Karel, born: Uzhhorod, Transcarpathian Ukraine (currently Hungary), 1916, Jewish national
My whole life and my whole communist work are detailed in the reports in my files.

I have devoted my life to the communist movement. I came to the Soviet Union because my work for the communist movement in Hungary was no longer possible, as the police had issued a warrant against me, and if caught I would have been sentenced to death. I came to the USSR not only to save my life and to work for communism, but also, based on the instruction from my arrested comrades-colleagues, to inform the competent authorities of mass arrests of leading officials and of the reason for such arrests, namely that one of Hungary's leading officials from the mother country, comrade Turay, is an agent of the police and that he informed the Hungarian police of our comrades and organisations. These mass arrests were conducted in April 1940 in the whole Hungary, mainly in Transcarpathian Ukraine. I came to the Soviet Union as a member of the Communist Party who was unable to conduct work within the communist movement in Hungary, because I was facing the death penalty, and being aware of the fact that the Communist International ensures the right of asylum in the territory of the USSR for such a meritorious communist. I have been arrested for six months and cannot be released before my whole political past is entirely clear. I know that many thousands of people have crossed the borders of the USSR without permission and that it is necessary to investigate their past. However, I also know that you are not indifferent to my fate, because I am an iron Bolshevik who has devoted his life to communism, for which I am ready to sacrifice my life. I came to the USSR, because I followed the directives of the Comintern.

With respect to my interrogation report, I would like to add that there are the following comrades currently living in the USSR who know me personally or at least by hearsay: Engineer Langfelder, address: Kamanec-Podolsk, Elektrostantsiya, Kirov Street 11 (he knows me personally and he also knows my work in the Union of Friends of the USSR and in the Society of Friends of Democratic Spain). Wasserman Samuel Karolovich, art critic at the museum in Lviv, address: Lviv (Lemberg), Museum, who is my uncle and who is married to the sister of Béla Kun⁹, a leading Hungarian communist. Deputy Borkanyuk¹⁰, a former deputy of the Prague Parliament for Carpathian Ruthenia. Comrade Turyanitsa¹¹, former secretary of the Red Unions in Transcarpathian Ukraine, a personal acquaintance from Uzhhorod. Comrade Varga, secretary of the Communist Party in Transcarpathian Ukraine, a personal acquaintance from Uzhhorod. Comrade Václav Sinkule¹², editor of Rudé právo, a prominent newspaper of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia in Prague, a personal acquaintance from Prague. Comrade Klement Gottwald¹³, the leader of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia, a personal acquaintance from 1937, when he was flying by aeroplane from Prague to Moscow via Uzhhorod, his plane had a puncture over Uzhhorod, he was forced to land, slept one night in Uzhhorod, at the "Berzheni" hotel, I took him from the café to the communist Workers' House, where I had a long conversation with him about the result and causes of the Spanish civil war.

I hope that the People's Commissariat for Internal Affairs of the USSR will not be indifferent to my fate. I request that my political past be investigated as quickly as possible and, consequently, that I be immediately released so that I can work again for communism, to which I have devoted my life and for which I am always ready to sacrifice my life.

I did cross the border illegally, but in accordance with the directives of the Comintern, which is obliged to have me at its disposal and to investigate my political past. I request that the People's Commissariat for Internal Affairs of the USSR turn to the Czechoslovak and Hungarian branches of the Comintern.

I hope that my request will be immediately granted, and I will be immediately released to be at the Comintern's disposal.

With Bolshevik regards,

Vaš Karel Ignatěvič
Poltava, prison
2 January 1941

FOR THE ATTENTION OF THE COMMUNIST INTERNATIONAL – THE CZECHOSLOVAK SECTION, MOSCOW

Application of Karel Vaš to investigate his past.

My name: Vaš Karel Ignatěvič

Born: in Uzhhorod (Czechoslovakia, Carpathian Ruthenia) on 20 March 1916. Jewish nationality.

Job: artistic clerk.

My life: Having completed primary school in Uzhhorod, I attended the Czech gymnasium in Uzhhorod. I passed the school leaving examination in 1934. As the seventh gymnasium student, based on my political maturity, I was accepted as a full member of the Czechoslovak Communist Party in Uzhhorod. My membership began in 1933. In 1934 I enrolled at the Faculty of Law of Charles University in Prague. I was awarded a doctorate in February 1939. All that time I lived in Uzhhorod and just before my examinations I stayed in Prague for 3–6 months. As a university student, I was a member of the "Unity of Poor and Progressive Students" in Prague. As such, I conducted communist agitation at my university and actively participated in the activity of the Prague communist movement. Since my permanent residence was the town of Uzhhorod, I continued to be a member of the Communist Party in Uzhhorod, and when I stayed in Prague for the purpose of passing examinations, I always had permission from my Party. In 1934 I received an order from the Party to organise branches of the "Union of Friends of the USSR"¹⁴ in Uzhhorod and in Carpathian Ruthenia. I managed to organise branches in Uzhhorod, Mukachevo, Berehovo and Sev... (*illegible*). I was secretary of the Uzhhorod branch and regional secretary of all branches of the "Union of Friends of the USSR" in Carpathian Ruthenia. As a result of my activity, the Uzhhorod branch became the best performing branch in the entire Czechoslovak Republic. In 1936 (1935), at the national conference of the branches of the "Union of Friends of the USSR" in Prague, I represented Carpathian Ruthenia as its regional secretary. I was also a correspondent and distributor of "Svět sovětů" (The World of Soviets)¹⁵. There was successful propaganda of the USSR in Uzhhorod and in Carpathian Ruthenia, mainly thanks to my personal effort, because I devoted all my time to this (*struck through*) matter.

At the outbreak of the Spanish Civil War, I was charged by the Party with establishing a branch of the "Society of Friends of Democratic Spain" in Carpathian Ruthenia.

I established branches in Uzhhorod, Mukachevo and Berehovo. I successfully organised propaganda of democratic Spain. I also organised material aid for the republican government. I was a correspondent and distributor of the magazine "Španělsko" (Spain). In 1936 I represented Carpathian Ruthenia at the national congress of branch secretaries as the Uzhhorod branch secretary and also as the regional secretary in Carpathian Ruthenia.

After the split of the Czechoslovak Republic I stayed in Uzhhorod, which passed to Hungary. The organisation was reorganised, because the Party became illegal. A thorough purge of unreliable members was conducted. I continued to stay in the Party in Uzhhorod. I was the head of one unit and I was tasked with conducting specifically heavy tasks such as distribution of leaflets, immediate agitation in villages, agitational work among intellectuals, organisation of financial aid for ... among the progressive intelligentsia. In addition, I became an editor of the illegal Hungarian newspaper "Munkás Újság" (Workers' Newspaper), which was the successor of our official institution in Carpathian Ruthenia.

In April 1940 mass arrests of our members in Uzhhorod, Mukachevo, Berehovo, Khust, Košice and all of Carpathian Ruthenia as well as in the Hungarian homeland were conducted. Luckily, I managed to avoid arrest and I lived under false names until August 1940 in various locations in Hungary. The police issued a warrant against me and they also had my photograph. My colleagues from Uzhhorod were arrested, taken to Budapest and brought before a military court, which according to Hungarian laws means a sentence of at least 10 years or life imprisonment, or even the death penalty, because they were all charged with high treason, connection to a foreign power, espionage, illegal communist propaganda and organisation, etc. As even my "participation" in this activity was proved (the comrades were tortured for so long that they finally confessed), I faced a sentence of at least 10 years. In August, Hungary mobilised its army against Romania, introduced a statarium, i.e. martial law status, and I was also inducted into the army. My comrades-colleagues who were arrested sent me a message, through one comrade released on bail, to keep hiding, and since it became impossible for me to continue to work in the communist movement, to resort to the Soviet Union and inform the competent authorities of these mass arrests of leading officials and of the reason for the arrests, namely that one of Hungary's leading officials from the mother country, Turay, is an agent of the police and that he informed the Hungarian police of our comrades and organisations. When I considered the fact that I could not do more for the Party in Hungary and that I was facing arrest and a sentence of at least 10 years and, after the commencement of the state of emergency, a death penalty if I failed to report to the army, and then especially after receipt of the message from my arrested colleagues I illegally crossed the border of the USSR, disguised as a tourist, under a false name and holding a false tourist ID. I was arrested by a Soviet military patrol on 20 August 1940, and I have been in custody since then.

I came to the Soviet Union as a member of the Communist Party who was unable to conduct work for communism, because I was facing the death penalty, and being aware of the fact that the Communist International ensures the right of asylum in the territory of the USSR for such a meritorious communist. I have been arrested for 6 months and cannot be released before my whole political past is entirely clear.

I would like to add that there are the following comrades currently living in the USSR who know me personally or at least by hearsay: Engineer Langfelder, his address: Kamanec-Podolsk, Elektrostantsiya, Kyrlov Street 11 (he knows me personally and he also knows my work in the Union of Friends of the USSR and the Society of Friends of Democratic Spain¹⁶). Wasserman Samuel, art critic at the museum in Lviv, address: Lviv (Lemberg), Museum, who is my uncle and who is married to the sister of Béla Kun, a leading Hungarian communist. Comrade deputy Borkanyuk, a former deputy of the Prague Parliament for Carpathian Ruthenia. Comrade Turyanitsa, former secretary of the Red Unions in Transcarpathian Ukraine. Comrade Varga, secretary of the Party in Transcarpathian Ukraine. Comrade Václav Sinkule, editor of "Rudé právo", a personal acquaintance from Prague. Comrade Klement Gottwald, the leader of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia, a former deputy; a personal acquaintance from 1937, when he was flying by aeroplane from Prague to Moscow via Uzhhorod, his plane had a puncture over Uzhhorod, he was forced to land, slept one night in Uzhhorod, at the "Berzheni" hotel, I (we) took him from the café to the Workers' House, where I had a long conversation with him about the result and causes of the Spanish civil war. I hope he remembers me: I am short and I wear glasses. He complained to me in the Workers' House that he did not feel well due to the puncture and the aeroplane crash. etc.

Dear comrades!

I hope that you are not indifferent to my fate. I appeal to you to as quickly as possible provide the competent Soviet authorities with information about my past to help me be released in order to be able to work again for communism, to which I have devoted my life and for which I am ready to sacrifice my life at any time. Thank you.

Poltava,
1 February 1940¹⁷

With Bolshevik regards
Vaš Karel Ignatěvič

Postscript: In the November or December issue of the magazine "Španělsko", year 1936, there is a photograph of the aforementioned congress of the "Society of Democratic Spain", which was held at the Trade Unions' House in Perštýn, Prague. In the photograph I am in the corner, far right, I have glasses and a moustache.¹⁸ I also gave a presentation at the congress. I hope comrade Prof. Nejedlý remembers me.

Turn!!!

Additional request: Since I do not have more paper and time, I appeal to you, dear comrades, to convey and submit this request to the Hungarian section of the Communist International or, as the case may be, to other bodies of the Comintern in charge of the territory of Transcarpathian Ukraine (former Carpathian Ruthenia).

I do not ask for a favour or for favouritism. It is your Bolshevik obligation to investigate and clarify my political past so that I will be released as soon as possible and, as before, I will fight with you for the victory of communism throughout the world. Thank you.

Poltava prison,
2 January 1941

Honour work.
Vaš Karel Ignatěvič

Extract from Report No. 18
of the Special Tribunal of the People's Commissariat for Internal Affairs of the USSR
of 10 February 1941

| PERSON INTERROGATED | DECISION |
|--|--|
| Case No. 29046/UNKVD of the Stanyslaviv region regarding the charge of VASH Karol Ignatovich, born 1916 in Uzhhorod /Hungary/, Jewish, Hungarian citizen, from the family of a lawyer, doctor of law and political science | Karol Ignatovich VASH shall be imprisoned for illegal crossing of the state border in a labour camp for THREE years, commencing on 26 August 1940. USSR - 7/13, 12034 of 21 February 1941 Vorkuta-Pechora labour camp Stamp |

Chief of the Special Tribunal Secretariat
of the People's Commissariat for Internal Affairs of the USSR
Signature

NKVD-USSR
Main Directorate of Railway Construction Camps
INTA LABOUR CAMP AND CONSTRUCTION
2nd department
4 January 1943
No. 521160

CERTIFICATE

The applicant, Karol Ignatovich Vash, born 1916 in Uzhhorod, Hungary, as a Czechoslovak citizen, shall be granted amnesty, based on the regulation of the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR of 19 November 1942. He may live freely within the territory of the USSR, with the exception of border zones, restricted areas, military areas and towns with a special regime of the first and second categories. The citizen K. I. Vash shall be sent to the selected place of residence in Buzuluk, Chkalovsk region.

The certificate shall be valid for THREE months and it shall be issued in exchange for a passport.

The above has been confirmed by a signature and stamp.
Deputy Commander of the Intinstroy NKVD Directorate
First Lieutenant of State Security Service /Satyukov/
Commander of the Department for Records and Dislocation of Prisoners of Intinstroy NKVD /Fedorenko/ signature



Certificate of Karel Vaš's release from the Gulag of 4 January 1943. Source: DAZO

You come from Uzhhorod. What has stuck in your mind about the town?

The town is beautiful, with the Uzh River going through its centre. There is a bridge in the centre across the river and an artificial left bank underneath. During the Hungarian occupation, I and another boy went there on the boat at night, we had red paint and a brush, and we wrote a slogan on the bank: There will be the first of May! The following day they made a fuss about it in town, a big one. But nobody was caught. There were military vehicles passing around, so we would put nails on the main roads. Or we would cut telephone wires. We would do all sorts of things like that.

What do you remember about your parents?

We lived at the Masaryk Square in the centre of Uzhhorod. My father was a lawyer. He defended insignificant people. He died of a heart attack before the war. He didn't care about politics. He was a petty bourgeois. As for my mother, I only know vaguely that she came from somewhere near Brno. She was taken to Auschwitz in 1944 together with my sister Kateřina and they both died there.

Did you celebrate Jewish holidays at home?

No, we didn't. My father was progressive. We didn't even keep kosher.

When did you decide to go to the Soviet Union?

The resistance against the occupying Hungarian regime was so strong that the Hungarian authorities moved on to repression. They arrested my comrades in arms who participated in the illegal resistance. I was in danger of being arrested too. So I ran away through the Carpathians. I knew something about the mountains. I was careful, and I knew the alphabet of illegal activity. I crossed the border into Poland, occupied by the Soviet army.

How were you received by the Soviets?

They arrested me in the woods. Then they took me to a small town. I de-



Karel Vaš's photograph taken in the NKVD prison in Nadvirna shortly after his arrest in 1940.

Source: DAZO

scribed to the Soviet authorities fairly and honestly everything I did. And, honestly, they didn't touch me. They were polite to me, following their rules. But I had to be a good boy and do what they wanted.

Did they question you for a long time?

I don't know, it wasn't that long. They were inexperienced young people. In training.

How long were you in prison?

Please, don't forget that I have Parkinson's disease. I just forget some things. I know I was briefly in Kiev. I was standing in the cold in the courtyard all night, wearing only summer clothes and low shoes. Then they took me through Kiev to the north tip of Komi. When we got off the train, we walked in the snow to the camp. We went for a day or two, I don't know. I walked in the snow just in low shoes. I didn't have anything else. But we got Soviet boots in the camp after some time. Felt boots.

What did the camp look like?

It was what they called an experimental agricultural cooperative. There were no fences. We lived in dugouts. I remember that the sun didn't go down there. It was always kind of dark, night and day.

How many people lived in a dugout?

That varied. A hundred, a hundred and fifty, fifty, depending on the size.

Can you describe what such a dug-out looked like inside?

There was a stove and bunk beds, kind of wooden structures. That was bad.

Why was it bad?

Because if you didn't have a coat or clothing, you had nothing underneath but boards.

You didn't have mattresses or at least hay?

You have to realize one thing. Everything was just being created and made, and it was in a state of war. After all, the Soviet Union was attacked. Everything was first for the army and only then for the people. They suffered too. And we were only prisoners.

How many prisoners approximately were in the camp?

Where I was, there were about nine hundred to a thousand prisoners, including about a hundred women. Some were there for several months, several years, and there were also people who got ten years. I remember that the hardest punishments were ten, fifteen years.

Did you talk to each other about why you were imprisoned?

Well, no. But sometimes we heard that it was for political reasons.

Did women live together with men or did they have a separate department?

No, but there were separate male and female dugouts. And contact between them wasn't prohibited.

Did interrogations continue in the camp?

No. At least not where I was. But the situation there was interesting. The camp was partially controlled by the prisoners. And there was a state authority above them. The highest economic body, the team leader, was a Ukrainian nationalist. But state power in the camp was represented by an NKVD lieutenant.

What was the daily routine in the camp?

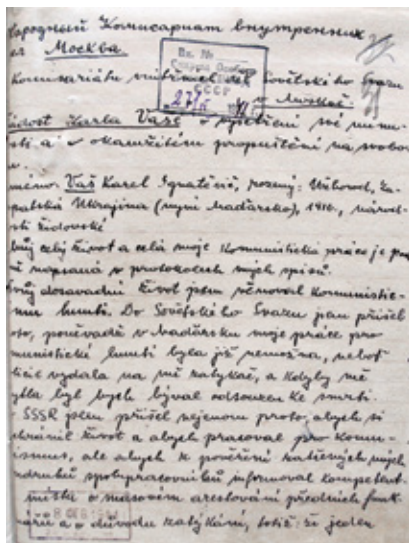
We worked ten to twelve hours. It depended on the season. You have to realize that where I was winter was long. Actually, there was no spring and autumn. We grew potatoes and miscellaneous crops. They tried agricultural production in heavy weather conditions. They even grew tobacco. The transition between summer and winter was really fast. In the afternoon, at six or seven it was still warm, and at nine it suddenly started freezing. And when the winter period began, it wasn't dark, but gloomy. We went to work either individually or in groups. Every group was always guarded by a sentry. I was never physically insulted or tortured. But I know that there was a solitary confinement unit in the camp.

What did the solitary confinement unit look like in the camp?

I have no idea. But I know what it looked like in Czechoslovakia. I experienced it at Ružyně, where I lost eighteen kilos.

What kind of work did you do in winter?

We cut down trees and then prepared agricultural products for the warmer period. It was still cold, and we already started to grow seedlings in the dugouts. And as the weather began to change, we planted them outside.



The first page of Karel Vaš's application for release addressed to the Moscow leadership of the NKVD.
Source: DAZO

What did hygiene look like in the camp?

There was what was called a banya. We had no running water, of course. When a bath was ordered, everybody received a wooden bucket of hot and cold water. We were very careful about every deciliter of water. This was done three times a month.

What did you wear?

It depended on the season, whether it was summer or winter. In winter we wore quilted jackets and trousers. Women had exactly the same clothes. There were no buttons, just laces instead of buttons.

Was there a hospital in the camp?

There was a "vratch", a person that was something between a nurse and a doctor who practiced medicine.

Were there also children of the prisoners in the camp?

There were some children, but I don't know whether they were the children of the prisoners or of the free citizens. Someone was, for example, sentenced to a year and a half. Then he was freed, but had to remain in the place and mostly did the same job. It wasn't like now when you can go wherever you want. You couldn't just leave the place where you had your permanent residence and move away. You needed a permit. It just wasn't possible.



The first page of Karel Vaš's indictment for illegal crossing of the border of the Soviet Union prepared on 2 October 1940 in Stanyslaviv.
Source: DAZO

Was it difficult to obtain such a permit?

Yes. It was hard to get the documents. But can you live without them today?

I have a passport and can travel freely anywhere in the world, maybe with the exception of North Korea.

Well, you mention North Korea. But please go on. There was Tsarist Russia. And was it possible in Tsarist Russia? There was a district administrator. He went around his area day and night and kept watch over every whisper. This is how one can tell if you have read some literature. Gorky describes it absolutely masterfully.

You want to justify repressions in the Soviet Union by the situation in Tsarist Russia?

No, I don't. But you have to know the history, the local traditions and, especially, the practice.

Did you make friends with anyone?

I slept on the bunk bed next to a Polish colonel. He was a decent, educated, intelligent man of a certain standard. I also had a girlfriend there, she got ten years. Because she was married to an accountant who was convicted of embezzlement. And her conviction was justified by the fact that it was for her personal benefit. So ten years for personal benefit. She was pretty,

very decent, intelligent, understanding.

What was her name?

I can't remember.

Was she from Czechoslovakia?

No. Russian or Ukrainian, I don't know exactly. This was the time when the Ukrainian language was already, so to speak, wiped out by Russian. So only a few Ukrainian intellectuals could speak correct Ukrainian.

Do you know the name of that Polish officer? Do you remember his name?

I don't know. I only remember his interesting square hat.

Why was he in the camp?

I don't know. But in my opinion and judging from my experience he got there by accident, simply a blunder, mistake, oversight by the NKVD bodies deciding his fate. What happened to the cream of the Polish Army? You know that, I don't have to tell, because that's an open secret.

Do you know what happened to your girlfriend from the camp?

I don't know. I was released and I was happy that I got to Buzuluk, and I didn't think about it. She was neither the first nor the last woman I had a relationship with in my life. Life went on.

When did you find time for each other? You worked ten to twelve hours every day ...

She was assigned to agricultural work. She did hoeing, planting. In winter she prepared sowing. But we didn't work on Sundays. Later we had Saturday afternoons off. And this is when we could socialize.

Did it happen that some of the women gave birth in the camp?

There were such cases, but they were isolated in hospitals, and they got special food, milk, etc. Milk and fine food. We got brown bread, and they got white bread. They had a special allocation of milk. Our camp had stables for horses and cows.

Your girlfriend didn't become pregnant in the camp?

I'm sorry, but your question suggests that you don't know basic things. The



Karel Vaš's KSČ membership card signed by KSČ Chairman Klement Gottwald and Central Secretary Rudolf Slánský.

Source: Post Bellum

way of life in the camp didn't provide the conditions for a woman to become pregnant.

Why?

Well, ask a doctor. I'm not a doctor. The women in the camp didn't menstruate.

For many people the experience of labour camps challenged the belief in the Soviet regime. When they saw that there were thousands of people imprisoned for no reason. Did you have any doubt?

No.

I have spoken with a number of Ruthenians who fled to the Soviet Union as communists ...

People who fled to the Soviet Union from Carpathian Ruthenia were mostly non-political. The Soviet experience, the Soviet reality turned them into thinking people. Some opted for it, that was the majority, and the others were against.

For a lot of people it was shocking to discover that the Soviet regime was able to build such a repressive system that imprisoned innocent people.

Innocent people? How do you know that they were innocent people? The question is whether they wanted a real democracy or they wanted to achieve it using violence.

Wasn't it the Soviet Union that reshaped society by violent means? It imprisoned millions of people in the camps. You weren't shocked by that experience?

No. I found some things positive and some not. But I always looked for the ultimate goal. And what was the ultimate goal? Drive the Nazis out of democratic Czechoslovakia. Do you believe that Masaryk's Czechoslovakia worked absolutely correctly? Do you believe that no one was shot at various political events, demonstrations and strikes?

You got to one of the camps that was part of an extensive system throughout the Soviet Union where a huge number of innocent people were imprisoned. Some were there for political reasons, but a considerable number of them were completely innocent.

And how do you know that? Do you know it because you experienced it yourself?

This phenomenon is also described by official historians in today's Russia.

I don't know what phenomenon you're talking about. But you have to know the Soviet past, the situation in Tsarist Russia, read the classics of Tsarist Russia. Every period requires explanation. It requires an analysis from different



Meeting of the Society of Friends of Democratic Spain in Perštýn, Prague. Karel Vaš sitting far right, with moustache. This is the photograph Karel Vaš refers to in his letters from prison to the NKVD, see Document No. 4. Source: Španělsko, No. 8, 1937

aspects. But you can't predict the outcome of the findings. You need to have perfect knowledge of the essence.

That's why I talk to people who experienced that period.

You have to realize that there were about fifteen to twenty thousand people who left Ruthenia for the Soviet Union. You know the opinions of several hundred. I grew up among them, and I carried the same burden. And I'll tell you one thing. When I came to Buzuluk, I had to register in the Party organization. Do you know who voted for me? The Ruthenians who judged me by my work. And they outvoted those who then pretended to be the representatives of the majority.

How did you get to Buzuluk?

When I expressed the wish to join the army, the Soviet authorities released me. So I didn't serve my three years, because I was released to the Czechoslovak army before the end of the sentence. There was a group of us from the sovkhos going by a normal train. We got bread, salt, salted fish and a little sugar

for the journey. And the Soviet stations provided anyone who wanted with "kypatok", boiling water, for free. You could make tea if you wanted to.

Some people, such as František Polák and Karel Goliath, went back to camps after being released to Buzuluk. Do you remember these people?

Of course, I do.

There are archival materials signed by Ludvík Svoboda, who handed these people over to the NKVD. Why were they handed over to the NKVD?

Everyone has to form his own opinion. If I tell you that they were like this or like that, someone will misuse it. Obviously, I have my own opinion. I'm also a historian.

You said in the past that you collaborated with the NKVD in the camp in detecting enemy elements. What form did the collaboration take?

No, please, I don't know what you mean, but I assume what you mean.

How many years was your girlfriend in the camp sentenced to?

Ten years, because her husband – according to the court that tried and convicted him – committed embezzlement at work and she benefited from that. Ten years. As a lawyer, I must say that there's something wrong about it.

This information didn't raise doubts in you about the Soviet system?

No, not at all.

There were millions of such people. You didn't find it strange?

You have to realize that different countries, different nations have different traditions.

After 1948 this tradition and this practice were transferred to Czechoslovakia. Thousands of innocent people were affected. You were involved in it too and you were also imprisoned. That's why I'm wondering why you have that unshakeable conviction that the regime was good. And was tsarism good or not? When you gain more experience, when you get

a broader view of things, your opinion of everything will change accordingly. Nothing is permanent. Nothing is here forever. People and opinions change. I've told you many things that you definitely don't like. I'm not used to saying something different from what I think. If I find new facts, I might change those views. I'm convinced of my views. And if you give me another fact, a major one, I'm always willing to change my views.

I haven't come to convince you of some other truth. On the contrary, I've come to hear your experience with Soviet camps and find out what kind of impact it had on you.

But don't forget that I'm trained, relatively trained, maybe not at everything, but a relatively trained intellectual. A thinking creature. And I'm always willing to change my views. What result do you think your work will lead to? Do you think you'll change the situation?

I'm not here to do that, to change the situation.

You've set yourself some impossible goals, impossible hopes?

No, my goal is to find people who have experience of the Soviet labour camps.

To get experience ...

And to convey it to others. I have no other ambition.

I don't think about that any more. That's passé. Sir, have a nice day, I wish you all the best.

NOTES

- 1 CHLEVNŮK, Oleg Vital'jevič: *Historie gulagu: od kolektivizace do „velkého teroru“*. BB art, Prague 2008, pp. 288–291.
- 2 The Kedrovyy Shor Agricultural Labour Camp (“selskokhozyastvenny lager” in Russian) of the NKVD first came under the Vorkuta-Pechora Corrective Labour Camp, also called the Vorkuta Corrective Labour Camp or Vorkutpechlag, situated near the villages of Vorkuta and Pechora. After 17 November 1941 Kedrovyy Shor came under the Inta Corrective Labour Camp, also known as Intinlag, Intlag, Intastroy, which was separated from Vorkutpechlag. It was named after the town of Inta, located 200 kilometres south of Vorkuta. According to official data, there were 6,500 prisoners in the Inta camp in 1943, including 400 women.
- 3 BYSTROV, Vladimír: *Právodce říší zla*. Academia, Prague 2006, p. 234.
- 4 HANZLÍK, František – POSPÍŠIL, Jan – POSPÍŠIL, Jaroslav: *Sluha dvou pánů*. Lída, Vizovice 1999, p. 339.
- 5 Cf. the Collection of Interviews of the Documentation Department of the Institute for the Study of Totalitarian Regimes, interview with Michal Izaj, recorded by Jan Dvořák. M. Izaj was imprisoned in the same camp as K. Vaš, and they were also transported to Buzuluk together.
- 6 VALIŠ, Zdeněk: Podplukovník v záloze JUDr. a PhDr. Karel Vaš, <http://virtually.cz/archiv.php/a.map?art=9342> (quoted as of 8 September 2012).
- 7 HANZLÍK, František – POSPÍŠIL, Jan – POSPÍŠIL, Jaroslav: *Sluha dvou pánů*.
- 8 State Archives of the Transcarpathian Region (Derzhavnyi archiv Zakarpatskoy oblasti, DAZO), collection 2558 (1939–1994).
- 9 Béla Kun (1886–1938), a leading Hungarian communist, a prominent representative of the Hungarian Soviet Republic. From 1928 he lived in exile in the USSR. At the end of the 1930s he was accused of Trotskyism and during Stalin's purges in 1938 executed at an undisclosed location.
- 10 Olexa Borkanyuk (1901–1942), a Czechoslovak politician and communist deputy of the National Assembly of the Czechoslovak Republic, originally a farmer from Mukachevo. Following the ban on the Communist Party after 1938, he was forced to leave the National Assembly. During the Second World War he was executed for his resistance activities.
- 11 Ivan Turyanitsa (1901–1954), originally a chimney sweep from the village of Ryapid, Carpathian Ruthenia. In 1924 he joined the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia. From the early 1930s he was a collaborator of the NKVD. In 1939 he fled to the Soviet Union. From 1942 he worked as an educational officer of the Czechoslovak military unit in the USSR, where he began separatist propaganda among the Ruthenians. After the unit entered the territory of Carpathian Ruthenia he led an anti-Czechoslovak campaign under the baton of the USSR. In 1944 he became the head of the “National Council of the Self-Proclaimed State of Transcarpathian Ukraine”. After the war he held the positions of the First Secretary of the Regional Committee of the All-Union Communist Party (Bolsheviks) of the USSR, member of the Central Committee of the Communist Party (Bolsheviks) of Ukraine and deputy of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR. In early 1948 he was dismissed from the post of the First Secretary of the Regional Party Committee and transferred to the position of Chairman of the Regional Soviet without any significant powers.
- 12 Václav Sinkule (1905–1942), a Czech communist journalist and activist. From 1935 to 1938 he worked as an editor of the newspaper *Rudé právo*. In 1936 he was a *Rudé právo* reporter in Spain. After 1938 he was an active representative of the first illegal central leadership of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia. He was arrested by the Gestapo for his resistance activities in 1941 and executed in 1942.
- 13 Klement Gottwald (1896–1953), a Czechoslovak communist politician, from 1948 to 1953 President of Czechoslovakia. After the ban on the Communist Party in 1938 he emigrated to the Soviet Union. He returned to Czechoslovakia on 10 May 1945.
- 14 The Union was founded on 29 April 1931 in Prague. One of the initiators was the journalist Julius Fučík. In addition to publishing the magazine *Svět sovětů* (The World of Soviets), the activities of the Union focused on organizing exhibitions and lectures about the Soviet Union. The Union was on the edge of legality during the First Republic period and it was banned in the Protectorate. From 1948 it continued its activity under the name of the Union of Czechoslovak-Soviet Friendship (SČSP).
- 15 The magazine of the Union of Friends of the USSR was published from 1932 to 1938 and from 1945 to 1948. In the period 1948–1968 it was published as *Týdeník Svazu československo-sovětského přátelství*, and from 1968 as *Svět socialismu*.
- 16 The Society of Friends of Democratic Spain was established in 1937 from the former Committee for Assistance to Democratic Spain. Its aim was to support the Spanish Republicans and to inform about the situation in Spain. The Society was dissolved in 1939 after the occupation of Czechoslovakia.
- 17 The date stated by the author of the letter is incorrect. The correct date is 2 January 1941.
- 18 See the photograph on p. 102, published in: *Španělsko*, No. 8, 1 December 1937, p. 14.

INTERVIEW



Vladimír Bukovský in 1983.

Source: Czech News Agency

We Are Where We Were

AN INTERVIEW WITH THE HUMAN RIGHTS ACTIVIST AND FORMER SOVIET DISSIDENT VLADIMIR BUKOVSKY.

The Volvox Globator publishing house together with the Institute for the Study of Totalitarian Regimes have published memoirs of Vladimir Bukovsky (*1942), in which he describes his experience as a dissident in the Soviet regime in the 1960s and 1970s, including his stays in camps and psychiatric clinics. In 1976, the Kremlin exchanged him with the West for the Chilean communist Luis Corvolán. On the occasion of the publishing of his book, Vladimir Bukovsky visited Prague in March 2013 and we asked him a few questions.

PETR PLACÁK and ADAM HRADILEK

Which event, which moment was decisive for you getting involved in politics and the dissident movement?

For my generation, the turning point was the year 1956. First Khrushchev's speech about Stalin's crimes came and then the Hungarian revolution and the way they crushed it – they crushed it exactly the same way Stalin would have done it. We suddenly realized that Stalin's era had not finished, that it persisted. This realization was truly something that woke up our whole generation.

What defined your relationship to the regime – Khrushchev's condemnation of Stalin's cult or the events in Hungary?

The Hungarian uprising, for sure. We slowly realized that Stalin was a criminal because a huge amnesty had been granted in 1955. Khrushchev released hundreds of thousands of political prisoners who described in detail what had been happening in prisons and in the camps. So we knew that millions of people had been imprisoned for no reason at all and many had been executed.

How did you feel about Stalin's death?
I was 10 and it was the biggest shock of my life because he was not supposed to die! They had been telling us that he

was a god and when a god suddenly dies, you realize that something is not quite right. At his funeral I was sitting on the roof of the National hotel and saw the whole panorama. I realized it was all wrong – people trampling over each other and fighting in the streets to see the dead god! It was nonsense. At that moment I realized that the majority could be wrong.

How did the older generation cope with it?

The whole older generation lied to us when they had been telling us that he was a god. It caused an intergenerational rift. Sons stood against their fathers. After that we did not believe the older generation anymore.

How was the society affected by the return of a huge mass of people from the Soviet camps?

It made people look reality in the face. I haven't studied it in more depth but I believe that my parents and their generation did consciously lie to themselves; they got disconnected from it and simply did not pay any notice to millions of people being executed because it was impossible to live with something like this. They had to suppress it completely, not admit that such things were actually happening. But it did not help.

Because when these people returned it was not possible to say that it had not happened anymore – these people were suddenly there. It was an apparition; it was a shock. The society could not go on denying that it had happened. And that was important.

Stalin's death, the return of hundreds of thousands of people from the Gulag and the year 1956 were important milestones. But when did you personally decide to openly stand up against the system?

It happened a little later. The year 1956 was a turning point, at that very moment a certain mental limit was crossed but we still did not know what to do and how to do it. We put together some kind of resistance groups. We were ready to use violence if necessary but we had no arms. Then my friends and I had the idea to start reading poetry on a square somewhere in Moscow. Why? It was a way to find people who shared our opinions. Today it is not a problem, you have the Internet, you create a website and anyone can join you. We did not have any such thing. How could we look for people with similar opinions when nobody was allowed to speak openly? So we took up reading poetry.



Bukovsky in Prague, spring 2013.

Source: Přemysl Fialka

How did the power respond?

It was absolutely legal, they could not ban it but they did not like what we read at all. It was mostly poems by authors who had been executed or imprisoned so they tried to stop us at all costs. They sent Komsomol members at us and we had to fight them. It led to an open confrontation. Then mass arrests started. In 1961, five of our friends were tried at court and sent to prison. Others were arrested and expelled from schools. And that is how it ended.

What happened to you?

I fled from Moscow – why should I wait for them to come and arrest me? I had friends who were geologists so I headed for Siberia. I expected they would not go on looking for me there. I spent half a year making my way there. That was 1962, I was 19.

Had an arrest warrant been issued in your name?

Yes.

How did it all end?

It ended when after half a year of travelling in Siberia I said to myself that

I did not want to run away from them for the rest of my life. I decided to go back to Moscow and I was quite sure I would be arrested. They did not bust me immediately, they first shadowed me to see who I was connected to. But I knew about them. It was like a game of hide and seek. In the end they arrested me. Officially I was accused of keeping a prohibited book. That was enough to arrest and imprison me. They probably hoped they would break me and turn me into an informer and when I refused to answer their questions they did not know what to do – to take me to court for one prohibited book was a little too much in Khrushchev's times. They held me in a solitary cell for three days in Lubyanka. After that the head of the Moscow KGB sent for me. He quite openly tried to recruit me. He showed me the arrest warrant and said that if I would tell him everything, he would simply tear it to pieces and let me go. And if I were to refuse, he would sign it and I would go to prison. It was that easy, he said. I answered in quite a rude way saying he was a motherfucker and so on. He did not say a word and simply signed. I was sent for a psychiatric examination in the Serbski

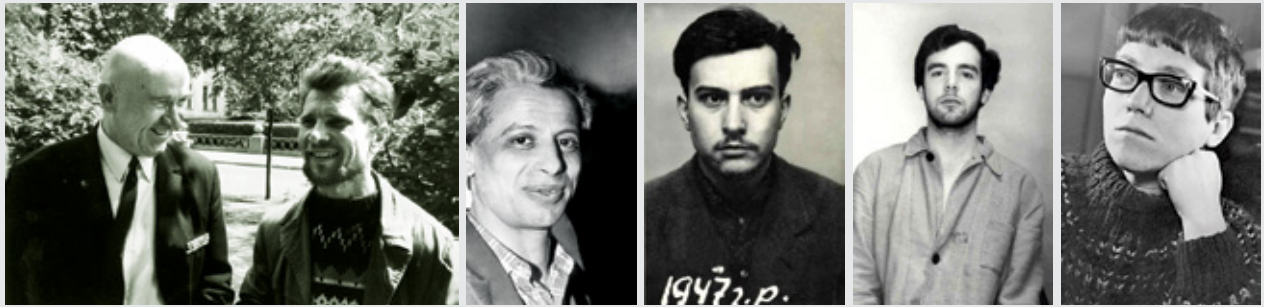
Institute. They had mastered psychiatry so I was pronounced a madman and sent to a special psychiatric ward which was part of the prison hospital in what was then Leningrad. I was there for about a year and a half.

Did you meet people there who had been abused by the regime in the same way?

Well, of course, there were many. At that time they had changed their tactics and started sending political prisoners to madhouses. Once they asked Khrushchev while he was on a visit abroad whether there were still any political prisoners in the Soviet Union and he said, of course not – that maybe a few people could be found who did not understand the Soviet political system, but those people were mentally ill. And that was it. Of course the authorities took it as an order and started to send people arrested for political offences to closed psychiatric wards.

How was the madhouse different from a camp?

There was a huge difference; special madhouses were much worse. You



Piotr Grigorenko, Ivan Iakhimovich, Viktor Fainberg, Elijah Rips, Aldis Cilinskis and Natalia Gorbanevskaya were imprisoned in "psykhuskas" for involvement in protests against the occupation of Czechoslovakia in 1968. Vladimir Bukovsky informed about their fates at the International Psychiatry Congress in 1971.

Source: Latvian State Archive, the Memorial association – Moscow, and Sakharov's Archive

Vladimir Bukovsky grew up in turbulent times at the turn of the 1950s and 1960s when, under the rule of Nikita Khrushchev, Stalinism was rejected, and political prisoners were released from the Gulag labour camps and rehabilitated. The liberation process started, part of which was discussion about economic changes, political repressions and further development of the Soviet Union. While the older generation approached the liberation of the circumstances cautiously, the young, adolescent generation was electrified. Many illegal societies of the youth of different political and philosophical orientation emerged around the whole Soviet Union. People met in secret, led discussions, published papers. Different ethnic minorities, dissolved by Stalin's genocidal policy into one "soviet nation" also contributed to the seed of opposition thinking. Ukrainians, Latvians, Crimean Tatars and others started to become aware of their identity and demanded the right of self-determination. Like everyone else in the Soviet Union, Bukovsky also had a clearly determined central line of life starting with the pioneer organization, Komsomol and the communist party, which were supposed to make him into a full-fledged Soviet citizen. Thanks to the atmosphere of the times and his own judgement, the plan floundered at the very beginning. Something emerged in him, which was later diagnosed by forensic psychologists as one of the symptoms of "slowly developing schizophrenia". After he had been forced as a pioneer to publicly submit one of his less conscious classmates to criticism, he realized the monstrosity of his conduct and his classmate's mortification. He was flooded with a sense of shame and decided never to tie the pioneer scarf around his neck again. He started to "thirst for truth". He read everything that he came across. In 10th grade he established a satirical magazine with his classmates and was consequently forced to leave school. Thanks to his interest in poetry and literature he soon became a member of a circle of intellectuals that decided to renew unofficial readings of poetry by the statue of Vladimir Mayakovsky in the centre of Moscow. This tradition had started already in 1958 but was later banned by the authorities. In 1963, Bukovsky was arrested for the first time for organizing recitation meetings. But instead of prison he was sent to a psy-

chiatric clinic. At the time of Stalinist purges, being pronounced insane and placed in a psychiatric ward might have been a welcomed alternative to the Gulag camps. But in the 1960s the situation changed. The Soviet power started new tactics against the increasing number of dissidents, public trials and interest of the West – pronouncing inconvenient persons mentally ill. Daniil Linc, a psychiatrist at the Serbski Institute in Moscow, played an infamous role in this. It was him who diagnosed dissidents with "slowly evolving schizophrenia" and did not hesitate to use it on a large scale. He decided on hundreds of cases of arrested people whether they should face a trial or be placed for an undetermined period of time in a special psychiatric hospital, generally known as "psykushka" where enemies of the regime could be held without trial until they "recovered." Linc also pronounced Bukovsky mentally ill. After half a year of observations in a psykushka in Moscow he was transported to the Leningrad clinic of special psychology. Here, like in other psykushkas, the treatment consisted of different psychiatric medication and patients being tied to the bed, put in a solitary cell, put in a straight jacket and various other methods, depending on the imagination of the "attending" doctor.

Many brave men and women who chose different ways of protest against the occupation of Czechoslovakia in 1968 suffered a similar fate to Bukovsky's. Two participants in the best known protest – the demonstration at Red Square on 25 August 1968 – Viktor Fainberg and Natalia Gorbanevskaya, were also held in psykushkas. Viktor Fainberg spent a total of five years in the Leningrad clinic of special psychology. During this time he spent a lot of time in a solitary cell, was tied to the bed and when on hunger strike they fed him forcibly through the nose. Natalia Gorbanevskaya spent two years in a prison psychiatric hospital in Moscow and later in Kazan where she was treated with strong psychiatric medication. General Piotr Grigorenko, who together with a teacher Ivan Iakhimovich issued a statement criticizing the occupation of Czechoslovakia, was sentenced to stay in Chernyakhovsk special psychiatric hospital. His colleague Ivan Iakhimovich spent several months in prison and in the psychiatric clinic in Riga

where he met Elijah Rips. This young student of maths decided, following the model of Jan Palach, to self-immolate on 13 April 1969 in order to protest against the invasion to Czechoslovakia. He survived the protest and was consequently sent to a psychiatric clinic. He was released in 1971 following international protests. Aldis Cilinskis, a printer from Latvia who wrote many protest inscriptions in public places in Riga in a protest against the occupation of Czechoslovakia and Latvia in 1968, spent four years in a psychiatric clinic.

Bukovsky personally knew or met in prison many of these people, who were punished for expressing solidarity with occupied Czechoslovakia. After having served his first sentence in 1965, he was arrested again at the end of the year for organizing protests against imprisonment of the writers Andrey Sinyavsky and Iuliy Daniel. Consequently, he spent several months in two psykushkas in Moscow. Half a year later he was arrested for a protest against imprisonment of the poet Yuri Galanskov, which he organized together with the future participant in the demonstration on Red Square, Vadim Delon. The minutes of the subsequent trial in which Bukovsky was sentenced to three years in prison were taken and circulated in samizdat by Pavel Litvinov, another organizer of the protest on Red Square. After he was released in 1970, Bukovsky decided to inform the West about the abuse of psychiatry in the USSR. He gave several interviews and provided many documents concerning this topic which proved that the Soviet judiciary abused psychiatry. This was the last straw for the Soviet authorities. He was arrested again in 1971. In 1972, he was sentenced to two years in prison, five years in camps and five years of banishment. In the labour camp Potma he met Yakov Suslenskiy and Iosif Meshener, teachers from Moldova who were sentenced to seven and six years, respectively, for circulating an open protest letter against suppression of the Prague Spring. In the camps, a merry-go-round of hunger strikes, punishments, protests and threats followed, which resulted in Bukovsky's emigration to Great Britain in 1976.

Adam Hradilek

Extract from the afterword to the Czech publication of the book A vltř se vrací

could not protest, you could not defend yourself – you were mentally ill. So if you were for example on a hunger strike, they said it was another symptom of your mental illness. And they treated you with some neuroleptics and again you could not complain because you were mentally ill. When they beat you it was of course because you had been behaving badly. Nothing could happen to them even if they killed you, because you had been officially, “medically” labelled as aggressive and dangerous. That’s how they used to put it down. A man was totally helpless there. And on top of that the “treatment” with medicaments. Luckily, there was not much choice at that time. They only had a few drugs which made you really sick but otherwise did not have any other effect. But later on they developed other medicines with really nasty side effects. They gave these to Gorbanevskaya, haloperidol and such. I did not get it; they did not have it at that time. But she did.

Does the Serbski Institute still exist?

Yes, it does but they do not deal with political cases any more. But back in 2007 they still had a few political cases. I was informed about them and we then revived our campaign from the 1970s. It went through the same connections, i.e. through psychiatric organizations in Britain and the United States, which raised protests immediately. Authorities in Moscow got scared and released them, five or six cases, and stopped it.

Was anyone held responsible for all that?

No, no, no. They did not even dismiss them. I am not bloodthirsty. I do not want them to get arrested but at least they could have taken their diplomas away. What sort of doctors are they?! They are still professors, academics now. They should have taken all that from them. No one has been taken to court, no one has been punished.

During Yeltsin’s era you managed to acquire a lot of documents which proved that psychiatry had been abused in the Soviet Union.

Yes. A lot of them. A whole archive. I used most of the documents I got hold of in the book *Judgement in Moscow* from 1994. And it did not concern only psychiatry, but also international

relations and international terrorism. I published it all.

You were able to obtain some of the documents concerning abuse of psychiatry already at the beginning of the 1970s. How did you manage it?

It was a huge variety of different documents. Firstly, opinions of medical committees. I received them from barristers, advocates, who always made a copy which they gave me. That was one possibility. Then there were testimonies given by the aggrieved persons. I found several people who had been sentenced to different institutions in different times and persuaded them to write down their experience – where they were, what it was like, who was involved and so on.

Was the abuse of psychiatry in the Soviet Union something that evolved spontaneously as part of violation of human rights on a massive scale or was it decided in the highest places?

From the very beginning we knew that it had been decided in the highest places in the state hierarchy even though we of course did not have access to the secret documents; that was not possible. But in the 1990s I found a bunch of documents which confirmed our assumptions – the order really did exist. A decision had been issued that psychiatry should be used in political cases. The preserved documents clearly confirm this.

How did you manage to transport the gathered documents to the West?

Through foreign journalists. I was a sort of spokesman for the dissident movement because I could speak a little English and my task was to speak to foreign journalists, pass on documents to them, samizdat, *The Chronicle of Current Events* by Gorbanevskaya and so on. My English was not as good as today but it was enough. So it was through journalists that I also sent the collection of documents I had gathered abroad.

How did the international psychiatric public react to your report?

Very well. They started organizing committees which were supposed to lead campaigns against the abuse of psychiatry in the Soviet Union. It was their profession, they had to defend it. A working group was created in every

country in the West, and the groups led a campaign against the Soviets. The Soviets were members of the World Psychiatric Association and psychiatric associations from the western countries asked for them to be expelled. First, they were officially reprimanded for abusing their profession and when they were supposed to be expelled in 1983, they rather decided to leave. So it was our complete victory. Psychiatrists in the West were wonderful, they took it seriously. And not only them. Other people were also very helpful. Western intellectuals adopted the issue, which really surprised me. When I started to organize this campaign I thought it was futile, that no one would believe that somewhere in a faraway country some people were mentally healthy while psychiatrists claimed they were mentally ill. But the West took it really seriously. Leading intellectuals of the time joined the campaign. When I arrived in the West in 1976, the British committee which fought against abuse of psychiatry had the most celebrated intellectuals in the country – Tom Stoppard, Iris Murdoch, Yehudi Menuhin. Simply, the people with the greatest fame, for instance also Vanessa Redgrave, etc. And they were very efficient, they did a lot. So I have to say that in this respect western society showed itself in the best possible light. It was a complete victory.

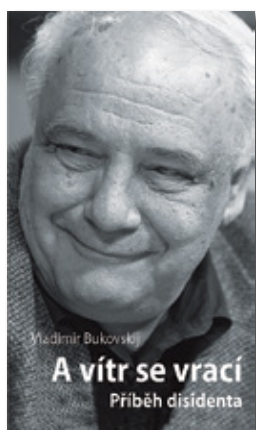
Did the situation in the psychiatric hospitals improve after that?

Yes, it did. Some things changed immediately. For example, I described one of the punishments, so called “ukrutka”. They wrapped you in wet sheets which then started to dry up and contract. It is really very painful. Thanks to our campaign, “ukrutka” was banned around the world. They simply stopped doing it. I was really amazed by how effective the protests were.

In your book you state that you were imprisoned with Suslenskiy and Meshener, who wrote a letter in Moldova protesting against the occupation of Czechoslovakia in 1968.

Could you tell us something about it?

The protest of eight demonstrators in Red Square was aimed at the public and was led in order to show the world that not all Soviet citizens supported the invasion. Yakov Suslenskiy and Iosif



To Build a Castle- My Life as a Dissenter **Vladimir Bukovsky**



Books by Vladimir Bukovsky were published in many languages, in Russian officially only in the early 1990s.

Meshener were ordinary Soviet teachers who protested by sending a personal letter to the government. Consequently, I only learned about their deed after they had been imprisoned. They did not ask for public appreciation, they only wanted to show their personal outrage and disapproval. There were maybe thousands of people like them but no one knew about them. It was only in camps and prisons that the information about who had been imprisoned for such protests began to spread.

What was the worst thing about the camps, as you see it?

The camps were alright; I did not do so badly in them. The worst I had seen was a prison in Vladimir which at that time had the strictest regime in the Soviet Union. And then, of course, psychiatric hospitals. They were much worse. Because in prison you can defend yourself, you can go on hunger strike, you can write complaints; simply, you can still defend yourself. In psychiatric institutions you are totally defenceless.

You have mentioned western journalists in Moscow. Were they willing to cooperate with the dissident movement, or did they worry about their position in Moscow and the fact that they might be banished from the country?

They were worried about being banished. They were in a very difficult position because their superiors, their bosses, did not want them to get involved with us. So they did not only risk being banished from the country but also losing their jobs. They realized this very well and only some of them were willing to coop-

erate with us, most of them preferred to hold back. When they learnt about something, they wrote about it but they did not want to go further, they were afraid. And those who cooperated with us were later punished.

Can you name any of them?

Janson, the first man who did an interview with me when I got back from the camp in 1970. He was with the Associated Press. When the Soviets fired him later, his bosses sent him to Vietnam – to the “exile” of the war in Vietnam. But he was a strong guy, he spent the time in Vietnam, he survived it all. I met him after many years in America. But he never built a career; he never got the chance... And many others lost their jobs. The best of them was another friend of mine, Roger Redington, also with AP, a young boy, a sort of an adventurer, American. He simply quit journalism. I met him in 1977 in New York, he was married, had three kids. He ran a health-food shop and had nothing to do with newspapers anymore. Some journalists helped secretly. They reacted in the same way as Soviet people – it must be done discreetly, so that no one knows about, other people will join in... That’s human reaction.

Could you compare Khrushchev’s era and Brezhnev’s era?

Of course they were very different. Under Khrushchev the situation was rather unstable. In 1961 and 1962, there was huge unrest in Novocherkassk, Rostov and Krasnodar. There was unrest all around the country, even close to Moscow, in Alexandrov and Murom.

These were the famous uprisings of the year 1962 when the premises of the local party committees and police stations were vandalized. So the country was truly unstable. People wanted to get rid of communism. After Brezhnev took over, the situation calmed down, people started being apathetic. They realized they would not get rid of communism, they would be living under it for the rest of their lives. And they started drinking. In a terrible manner, I have never seen anything like it. Huge epidemics of alcoholism. Such was the popular reaction to Brezhnev.

What do you think about Gorbachev?

Gorbachev was a communist who wanted to save the system. The West did not understand him at all. Even my good friend Margaret Thatcher believed he was a nice man. For seven years I argued with her that he was just a communist who was trying to save the system, that he was by no means a nice man. She was not able to understand, she really liked him. He was a liar, a typical bluffer, very much like Gogol’s Chichikov.

How do you see the situation in today’s Russia?

What has happened in Russia is a tragedy. We could have started reconstruction of the country but they did not even try to get rid of the old regime. In 1990-1992 I would go to Moscow to see the people around Yeltsin and try to persuade them that we needed a process against the representatives of the communist regime, that unless we do it, it will come back. That we must show to people that the whole system was criminal. That we must prove it and render a judgement otherwise people will be confused. They did not listen to me. Yeltsin used to say that we should not make waves, that the communists would never come back and nothing like that was necessary. And that was it. That time, Yeltsin had absolute power. Nothing happened unless you were able to persuade him. Today, eighty percent of all power positions in Russia are held either by former or current members of the KGB and its successor, the Federal Service. They have concentrated economy, money, power in their hands. They control everything now. So it is a rather sad story. We are where we were.





Wladimir Bukowski on his desk in Bonn, 1978.

Source: Czech News Agency



Major Ladislav Bittman in Černé lake during the "Neptun" operation, 1964.
Source: Archive of L. Martin

Defector in the Free World

Ladislav Bittman, a member of the Czechoslovak communist intelligence service (1st Directorate of the Ministry of the Interior) before August 1968, a specialist in disinformation, author of the autobiography *The Deception Game* and *Špionážní oprátky* (*Espionage Nooses*), settled in the United States under the name of Lawrence Martin after defecting following the occupation of Czechoslovakia; in the US he taught at Boston University. In his few published testimonies he did not speak much about what had happened to him after his arrival in the US. So we asked him:

PAVEL ŽÁČEK

Could you explain how you managed to escape from Vienna?

I appeared on Austrian TV a few days after the occupation, which of course alarmed both Czechoslovak and Soviet intelligence services so I soon found out that I was being followed. I approached a German journalist in Vienna who I knew was not one of our agents. I think his name was Hochman. I told him that I had decided to flee and that I would need to arrange a contact. He refused. He was worried that it might affect his career as a journalist and, if it leaked, it could prevent him from travelling to the East. I did not expect that any western intelligence service was following me and I knew all Czechoslovak tracking agents acting in Vienna. It was probably then when our resident turned to his Soviet colleagues. My wife and I discussed our future and she insisted we should go to Sweden, which was totally unrealistic as we would not be able to survive there very long with my past. I also received a postcard from my daughter from my first marriage, who was on holidays with her mother and brother in Romania, saying that they were leaving for Israel. After a few days I was able to persuade my wife that the only country where we could go was the United States. We set off on 3 September. Unfortunately, her car, a small Fiat, had just broken down, so we had to use a company car. I did not like that because I knew they would say I had stolen it. Nevertheless, we set off

at night, crossed the German border and continued to Munich. From Munich I called the US embassy and established contact with the Americans.

Where did the contact happen?

Somewhere near Munich in a hotel?

Yes, in a motel near Munich. It took several days; it was not an immediate contact. They explained to me that it would take a while as the decision would have to come from Washington. Of course they knew straight away who I was. The whole time I paid for the motel with my own money.

How long did it take before you moved to the United States?

A couple of weeks passed. When the decision had come and they communicated the date of our departure to us, I contacted a CIA contact man and asked him to find a suitable family in Germany for our dog Tomáš, which my wife had got about three months before and of course had fallen in love with. I can still see him taking the dog away, Tomáš pattering after him. I thought we would never see him again. About a week after we arrived in New York, a CIA chief operative came and said: *Something has arrived in the post for you.* Which was complete nonsense, by post to a secret house! I went to the room where a huge box stood. I opened it and there was Tomáš! They had sent him from Germany so that we would feel good in America. It was an impor-

tant psychological move, especially for my wife, who doted on him.

How did you communicate? In Czech?

Among those Americans who spoke German well there was only one CIA operative who spoke Czech. He also flew with us on a civil flight to New York and then to Washington. Members of the debriefing team spoke German very well. Mainly the chief debriefing officer, he was fluent in German, but none of them spoke Czech.

Where did the debriefing take place, in some house in Washington?

Not exactly in Washington but outside Washington. The town is called Vienna. It was a rented house under surveillance, there was a cook and several other assistants who took care of everything. The debriefing was professional and very intensive. In the first months it took about 8 to 9 hours a day. Very intensive. As I did not speak English at all, we also had an English teacher. Every day, after the interrogations finished, we had a lesson with her, usually 2 hours. Gradually, after several months, the intensity of debriefings decreased, we only talked for about 4 to 6 hours. We left the house after about 6 months and lived in motels. The whole process finished after about a year and then we were responsible for our fate.

What did the Americans want to know about the Czechoslovak intelligence service? Could you deduce what they knew about it and whether they took it seriously as a professional rival?

It was of course a typical debriefing, they were interested in how the intelligence service worked, how it looked for new candidates, the school of espionage, agents, their quality.

Did they show you photographs of officers of the 1st Directorate, for example?

Yes, yes. When I am thinking about it now, after 40 years, one thing was really surprising – they knew very little about disinformation and active measures. Not only in Czechoslovakia, but generally about disinformation by the communist bloc. And I think that in the first months they were surprised by its extent and quality.

Were you able to tell, for example, if they knew about Czechoslovak residencies and supervision of agents?

I was not able to say how much they knew, for example about the residency in Vienna. Naturally, they did not want me to learn what they knew and what they did not because in that way they would lose control over what you tell them. You must never know whether they know more. It is one of the methods for checking whether the accounts are true. For example, after a month they would come back to the same subject from a different perspective and ask horizontally, vertically in order to control the quality and veracity of the given information. But it was hard to judge from that how well informed they were.

Were you asked to describe the internal structure of the Czechoslovak intelligence service and the different working sections?

Yes. Debriefing was carried out by the same workers, they did not change. Although it concerned a totally different part of security service work, the questions were asked by the same workers, not other experts.

Did they also ask about the illegals, the illegal security service, for example?

I knew very little about it, of course. My only source of information was

a former illegal Karel Petr, who was in Berlin in the early 1960s and then worked as an illegal in Germany and France and who was later withdrawn, for some reason or other, and later worked from Berlin. He was in touch with several illegals, Czechoslovak illegals. And Karel, we called him Charlie, talked very openly about the work of the illegals. From time to time he disclosed things he should not have talked about while other agents were present. So he was my only source of information about the illegals.

Did they ask about Soviet advisors?

Well, of course they did. They asked about Soviet advisors and the system that was used. For instance, in the 1950s any operation had to be discussed with an advisor. So for example when an operative wrote a proposal for an operation, he first had to go to the advisor of the German department, discuss it with him, incorporate all his comments into the new revamped proposal and only then he was able to submit the proposal to the senior officer of the German department. If he approved it, the document was sent to the head of the intelligence service who again had his own advisor. There the process was repeated and if it was a very sensitive operation, it of course had to be presented to the minister of the interior, who again had his own advisor. So the Soviets had a three-level control. It changed a little at the beginning of the 1960s, when the number of Soviet advisors was reduced and they stopped paying attention to such banal daily operations. But the control and the system remained the same. And naturally, Americans were interested in the procedure.

Can I go back to the work of the former department of active measures? Was it a Czechoslovak school, or was there some strong Soviet influence?

Each department, including the disinformation department, had to have a long-term plan. When the 8th Department was established in February 1964, one of the first documents which had to be prepared was, I think, a 5-year plan of active measures. Describe the main tasks in each region – in Europe, i.e. in Germany, Britain, France – describe the situation and

decide what the intelligence service should do there. In the case of West Germany, for instance, to deepen the problems with western allies, primarily with Americans, the British, the French as well as the Belgians and the Dutch. To create an image of West Germany as a country with a real threat of neo-Nazism. To compromise the leaders of the country, primarily with respect to the United States, which were considered the enemy number one. In this way a plan was created which set up the general direction. And then each operative – also from residencies – was supposed to prepare a proposal for a special operation. This was one of the least popular things in the intelligence service. No one was eager to do it as it required the use of an agency, which meant the possible risk of putting an agent in danger if the action was carried out unprofessionally. But it was one of the duties and each operative was also regularly assessed based on how many proposals for active measures he had submitted. The disinformation department then analysed and prepared actual plans for carrying out the operations; they were not responsible for realizing the operations but only for the preparation, control and assessment. It was the operative departments that were responsible for the realization. This double responsibility caused a certain tension between the disinformation department and the operative departments.

Were your plans approved or pre-negotiated with your partners in the Soviet intelligence service?

In the majority of cases, proposals of active measures went all the way to the minister as these were extremely sensitive issues. In the case of a failure someone had to sign them. So in the majority of cases, proposals of active measures, such as “Neptun” or others, were sent to the minister. To approve anything that went against Soviet interests was totally out of the question. Totally out of the question.

Was there any other operation more important than the “Neptun” action? With a larger impact?

The operation which had an enormous impact and finally ended up as a total disaster was Indonesia, which the intel-



In his flat on the Atlantic Coast, Lawrence Martin dedicates himself to painting, 2012.

Source: Pavel Žáček

ligence service organized with the assistance of several agents from among the journalists as well as the minister – an ex-ambassador from Prague or somewhere in Western Europe. In the mid 1960s, strong anti-American sentiments existed in Indonesia, which the disinformation department used to escalate the situation to a state of hysteria. Phase one focused on the American resident, who was a director of US film companies, and an import-export businessman in Indonesia. He was one of the prominent CIA operatives. The situation escalated to such an extent that his life was in danger and he had to leave the country. In the next phase, the disinformation campaign claimed that the Americans together with the British were preparing to invade from Malaysia and overthrow the regime in Indonesia. Naturally, the Soviet intelligence was also involved in the operation but we were not aware of its extent. In those days, the communist party with an orientation towards China decided that the time was ripe for a revolution. And what happened?

Communists murdered four or five generals of the Indonesian army, and the army struck back and massacred the communist party. It is understood that after that nobody was interested in this action and the role of the Czechoslovak intelligence in it.

How did you select collaborators for disinformation actions? How did you, for example, get in touch with the journalist and teacher Miroslav Hladký?

Through my second wife. She was a journalist and at the same time studied journalism and later worked in TV for several years. Hladký was her boss. That is what brought us together and when we decided to go public with some information in connection with the “Neptun” operation, I was naturally thinking about the people I knew that could be used for that purpose. And we came to the conclusion that Hladký was the one. It was with Hladký that we wrote the first book *Dirigent zákulisí* (*Backstage Conductor*) about American operations in Czechoslovakia.

Or rather about Charles Katek.

What was the reason for writing this brochure? Was it part of broader activities against Americans?

Yes, to undermine the image of the US intelligence service and influence in Czechoslovakia. I borrowed some files from the archives, for example the investigation of Jaromír Nechanský, and prepared the materials. I wrote the first version of the most sensitive passages and I then gave it to Hladký to edit it as a journalist. And later a second book was written, *První zemřel kancléř* (*The Chancellor Died First*), which directly concerned the alleged documents from the Černé lake.

How many people worked at the department?

The disinformation department had around 25 to 28 people including the assistants. We did not have operatives only for Germany or for Austria. One person was responsible for whole territories. The head of the disinformation department Jiří Stejskal, alias “Borecký”, was a brilliant operative

when it came to creating compromising situation and disinformation conspiracies. I suspected him of living, existing and sleeping in the world of conspiracies. All the time he was thinking about what could be abused and used and he was very successful at it. He was of course well aware of everything that was happening at the department and I as his deputy also knew practically about all the main operations.

Did you get hold of the file of Herman Rauscher, a top agent, who was involved in the abduction of the former chairman of the Czechoslovak Social democracy, Bohumil Laušman from Salzburg?

Rauscher's cover names were "Maret" and "Leitner", maybe some others too. For sure I had the possibility to see his file before my departure for the residency. Originally, he was a senior official in one of the ministries. When I was in touch with him in Vienna, he celebrated, I don't know, not the 20th, but maybe the 18th anniversary of cooperation with the Czechoslovak intelligence service. He worked for the intelligence service for a very long time.

Rauscher was recruited practically already in 1946 or 1947.

So, if I remember correctly, in those days he celebrated his 20th anniversary of cooperation with the intelligence service.

And do you not remember the "Alex" operation, Laušman's abduction in December 1953, from his file?

I know that he was involved in it but he was not the person who transported him physically to Czechoslovakia. He only lured him out.

Rauscher brought doped Laušman to Vienna; he was brought to Prague by resident Miroslav Nacvalač with the assistance of KGB members. In autumn 1968, after your defection, he was withdrawn to CSSR where he lived for ten years until his death in a conspirative flat near the intelligence HQ in Prague-Ládví. Did the fact that he cooperated for such a long time mean that he was an asset for the intelligence service?

If I remember well, his reports were very well evaluated. In any case, he received money. I think he was one of the best paid agents. He received a regular salary. In cash.

Wasn't it dangerous to meet him in person?

I always met him outside Vienna. Usually some 20, 30, 40 kilometres from Vienna in small pubs. That time, the Czechoslovak intelligence was sure about the situation in Austrian politics, intelligence service, counter-intelligence, mainly thanks to the agent "Sedmička". Austrians did not have enough resources and were not interested enough to deal with it.

Did you also participate in controlling the agent "Sedmička"?

No, I only heard of him. The contact was carried out by the resident exclusively.

Were you in touch with the Soviets in the residency in Vienna?

The resident was in regular contact with the Soviet resident. That was a rule. For example, in Berlin I got in touch with the Soviet press attaché Alexandr Bogomolov, who of course was an agent; we both liked diving and became friends. He was probably one of the cleverest people in the Soviet embassy. He came

from a diplomatic family, his German was excellent. You could not tell he was not a German. He was a WWII veteran, some 8 to 10 years older than me. A very liberally thinking operative, very liberal politically. As I remember, his father was imprisoned under Stalin. Why do I mention this? The resident in Berlin was not very happy about my close, relatively friendly relationship with Bogomolov. At one of the receptions in the Soviet embassy, the resident Stanislav Tomeš got drunk, came to Bogomolov, and said: *You can always rely on us, we are your best friends*, blah, blah, and started to babble about the intelligence. Bogomolov was totally fed up and did not react in any way, of course. He wrote a report about it to the headquarters, they wrote to Prague, and from Prague they scolded Tomeš terribly for how he had behaved. He had trespassed the basic rules of professional conduct.

How do you remember the senior officers in the intelligence service? For instance the deputy head Bohumír Molnár?

Well, O.K. Molnár was a living example of a police officer, who was aware of his power, a brutal, ruthless man. Totally ruthless.

Why do you say "police"? Was he a bad intelligence officer?

He had long term practical experience. He knew the work, professional espionage work. But he was not brilliant, for example when compared to the head of the German department Milan Michel, alias "Moser". He was not able to do the operative work, the everyday operative work with the agency. He did not have the skills of close communication with people outside the intelligence service. He knew his work and he knew he was perfect in theoretical prepa-



MAJOR LADISLAV BITTMAN (born 12/1/1931) was accepted at the Ministry of the Interior CSR (Ministerstvo vnitra, MV) on 1/9/1954 as a student of the school of Intelligence administration of the Ministry of the Interior, 9/3/1955 desk officer of the 8th Department, 1st Directorate MV, 1. 2. 1958 desk officer (from 1/4/1959 senior desk officer) of the 4th Department, 1st Directorate MV, 1/7/1961 – 31/1/1963 desk officer at the residency in Berlin (GDR), 1/2/1964 deputy-head, 1/8/1966 deputy-head of 2nd Department, 1st Directorate MV, 1/12/1966 – 2/9/1968 senior desk officer of the residency in Vienna, 3/9/1968 divested of rank and medals "For Services to the Homeland" and "For Merits and Defence of Homeland".

rations of operations. But at a diplomatic reception, for example, he was totally lost. He knew espionage and that was it. That was his world but he could not talk about it with strangers who did not belong to it. But when it came to preparation of operations, different conspiracies, he had a brilliant mind. Unlike Molnár, who did not have such skills and therefore was a hard, police-type operative. I got in touch with Molnár a few times in connection with uncovering of Alfred Frenzel. I was his control officer responsible for the case in the headquarters, I was responsible for the file "Anna" and of course, when the bumper happened, after his arrest, I participated in meetings at the head of the Directorate. And Molnár was one of the actors in the drama. A totally ruthless man. In 1961, he was demoted due to some financial machinations and became a head of the State Security in Prague.

Did Soviet advisors participate in the meeting at the head of the Directorate concerning the uncovering of a top agent in the Bundestag?

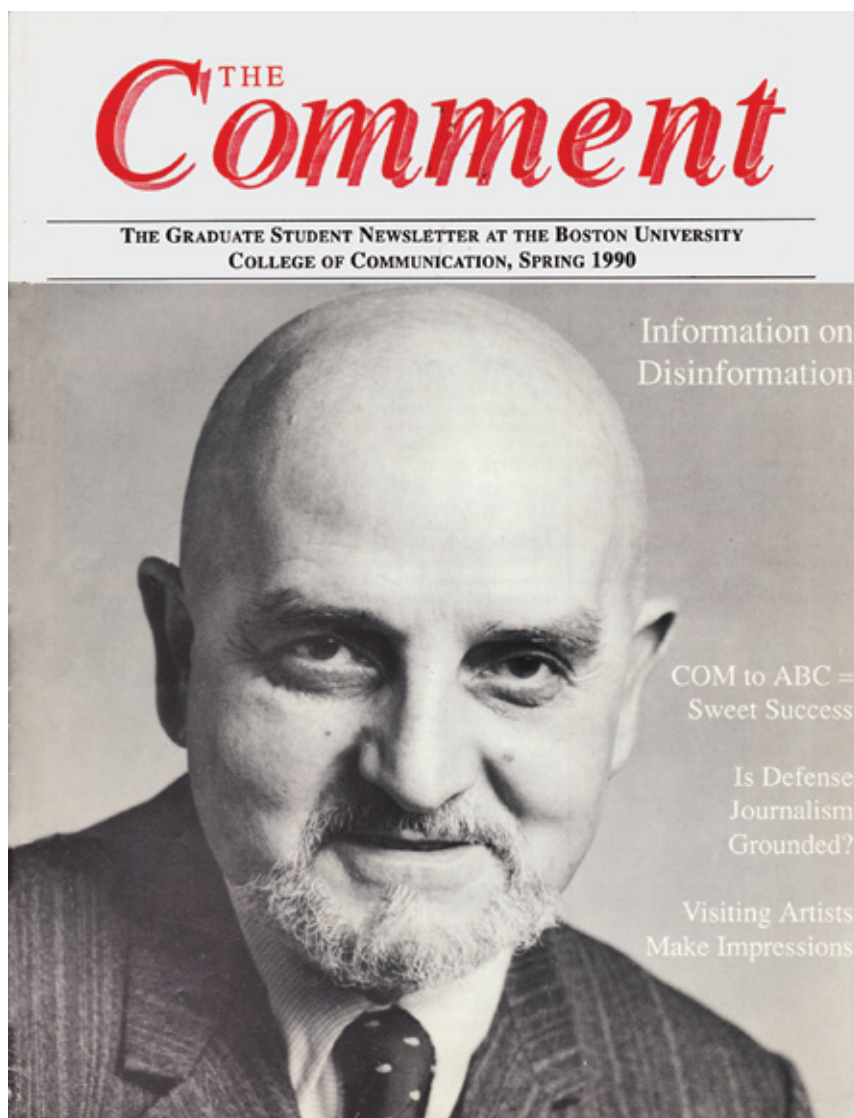
Yes, they commented on it. The head advisor of the intelligence and the advisor of the German department were both in Müller's office. In the old building in Dejvice, in the "Dorm" as we used to call it.

Did they speak Czech?

A little. It was some kind of Slavic.

Could you compare Jaroslav Müller and Josef Houska as heads of the intelligence service? How did they differ? When I talked to people who knew him, they said he was not a real boss type.

During all the debates concerning "Anna", for example, Müller always asked Molnár like he was his only source of information for the final decision. What does Molnár think about it, what decision should be taken etc. In one of the meetings about "Anna" we were sitting in his office, the advisors, Müller, Molnár, Moser, me and all of a sudden the telephone rang. Minister Barák was calling Müller, who was quite embarrassed, did not know what to reply, so he covered the receiver and asked his deputy. The minister had asked whether it was our agent, something like that.



Lawrence Martin, professor at Boston University, 1990.

Source: author's archive

Molnár said: *Well, tell him that we are just going through it and we will let him know.* Müller repeated it. It was clear to all of us that Barák scolded him for not knowing anything. An idiot, really.

How was it possible that such a person was head of the most important directorate of the ministry of the interior?

Because he survived the cleansings at the beginning of the 1950s. And he was one of the die-hard communists.

I think there must have been other reasons. Why didn't a "hawk" like for example Molnár become the head? Was Barák afraid of him?

I think Barák was a different category than Molnár. Molnár was a Stalinist, Barák was on a much higher

level politically. Both Müller and his successor Josef Houska belonged to the same category of people. They got their functions because they were die-hard communists at the ministry of the interior in times when certain changes and crises were going on. They had always been pillars of Stalinism. Houska belonged to the same category but was on a much higher intellectual level, he was also much more professionally efficient than Müller. He came from the position of the head of the regional directorate in Bratislava and before that he had been a head of the musical chorus of the ministry of the interior, not a band-master, but a political head, so he also knew damn all about it. But Müller was a true idiot.

Did you have any problems with Houska?

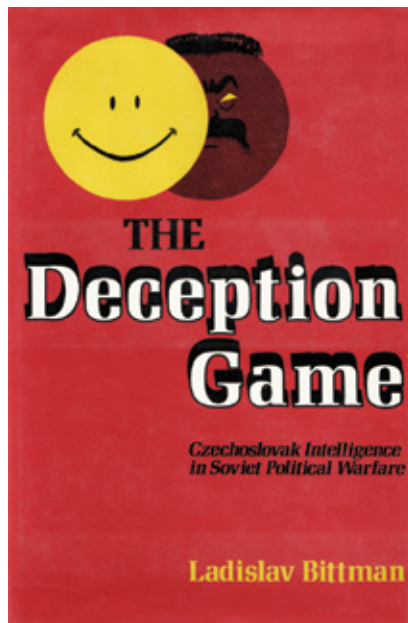
Yes. In the times when I worked as a deputy head of the disinformation department, it was agreed with the Soviets that every head, starting from the deputy head of a department, would need to study at the espionage school in Moscow. The leadership of the intelligence service wanted to send me there and I was protesting vehemently. When I accompanied Houska on a one-week inspection tour of the residencies in Paris and Rome, which was a reward for the "Neptun" operation, he tried to persuade me several times to go to Moscow – saying that it was my future. As I was talking him out of it, a certain tension arose between us, he took it for some kind of bad discipline. Luckily I started distance study of journalism. Nevertheless, I had to leave the post of the deputy head, also due to this. But for me it was much more interesting to go back to the German department.

Your birth name is Ladislav Bittman, in the years 1954–1968 you worked in the Czech intelligence service under the cover name "Brychta", the subcommittee in US Congress debriefed you under the name of Lawrence Britt and you live in the United States as Lawrence Martin. How does it feel to transfer from one identity to another?

During the debriefing, the CIA advised me to change my name for security reasons. I chose Lawrence as it is the American version of Ladislav, and Martin was a common Czech as well as American surname. Already at the first meeting with the CIA employees, when we talked about my motives, I explained to them why I had come to ask for asylum. I said I would tell them everything I knew about communist espionage and that I did not want to stay in the business and that, on the contrary, I wanted to be as far away from it as possible. It was a kind of gentleman's agreement so when it ended, they thanked me, wished me good luck and from that moment I was responsible for my own fate. In the first months, during debriefing, I was paid as a consultant of the US government, which helped me financially.

You didn't get any other money?

I already had experience of how intelligence services treat defectors so



Ladislav Bittman's book of memories *The Deception Game* was published by Syracuse University Research Corp. in 1972.

Source: author's archive

I wanted to avoid this from the very beginning. When western defectors came to communist countries, the intelligence service of course looked after them, gave them a salary, found them a flat. For example, I was for a short time in touch with an agent who had been withdrawn to Czechoslovakia. I think it was the agent who sent the package to the mayor of Strasburg and killed his wife. He lived in Prague under an assumed name, never learnt Czech, received money and was bored to death. I knew I would be getting some salary but that there would always be some suspicion that I was in touch with the communist intelligence. This is also why I wanted to get as far away as possible from espionage.

How did you plan to make a living in the United States?

I wanted to teach. That is what I originally did in Czechoslovakia. I was thinking about that but of course it was not possible to leave the intelligence service. I knew that New England was one of the main centres of education so I wanted to find some opportunity there. With respect to what was happening in Europe and in Czechoslovakia, they were interested in a study course about the Soviet invasion from the perspective of a member of the Czechoslovak intelligence. I spent 10 months at Fletcher School

of Law and Diplomacy, Tufts University in Medford and I wrote it. Sometime at the turn of 1969 and 1970 we discovered Rockport on the Atlantic coast and immediately fell in love with it. So we moved there, to a small flat downtown. We borrowed I think 3,000 dollars from a prominent journalist, Everet Martin, a Newsweek correspondent, in order to set up a business. I opened a shop and because I knew nothing about business, I failed. The only really successful products were lamps which I made from driftwood. I looked for wood on the beach and in forests and then made lamps from it. They sold well but it was not enough to make a living. After 8 or 10 months I went bankrupt. It took some 5 years before I was able to repay the loan.

Can I ask you whether the CIA wanted anything from you after the debriefing was over?

In 1971 I appeared before some subcommittee in the Congress under the name Britt. It concerned active measures. The CIA contacted me and asked me to testify. But I do not remember any details.

Was it the last contact?

They contacted me once or twice to warn me that an action was being prepared against me.

When was it?

Sometime in the mid 1970s. But they did not give any details – who, when, where, how, what.

Wasn't it connected to the trial in Příbram, at the High Military Court, where you were tried?

That's possible. This was a little later. I had been tried three times. At first I got 7 years, like any other émigré, then a military court sentenced me to 15 years and after an appeal by the military attorney in 1972, they changed the sentence to the death penalty. But the warning came later, a few years later.

How did you react? Where you scared or worried?

No, no. When I came here I thought I would survive one year. When I survived a year, I said to myself, I'd give myself one more year. Then 2 years... After about 7 years I said to myself, damn it,

I will not count it anymore. But from the very first day when I started work at Boston University I informed them about my past. All the students knew who I was.

When did you start work at the university?

In 1971. By chance I met the head of the chair of journalism, Dr. Whitt, and he offered me one lecture about the international press; after that they assessed it and after the first semester I started work as a full assistant professor. The first years were hard because the dean of the College of Communication, when we discussed my work at the university, wanted me to teach a course on the history of US journalism for undergraduates. When I started teaching them, I was one lesson ahead of my students. After 6 or 7 years they extended my courses, I gave courses in international communications, propaganda, methods of journalistic research, the methodology was of course very similar, spies did more or less the same things as journalists. So this was quite close to my heart.

Then you also started teaching disinformation...

After 10 years at university, the dean approached me and said the university would be very glad if I could teach a course on disinformation. I was not particularly eager to do it but in the end I realized it was an important subject, so sometime in 1980 or 1981 I started teaching it. And then in 1985 I founded the Center for Study of Disinformation. But I always remember the boy who raised his hand in one of my lectures and said: *That's all very nice, but why should I believe you when you are a professional liar?* But nevertheless, I can show you photographs of my students, some of them even received the Pulitzer price. For best investigative reporting...

I remember that when we did the first interview for *Studentské listy* on the phone in the spring of 1990, you still did not want to come back to Czechoslovakia. When did you stop being afraid? After the fall of the Soviet Union?

Only after I got a notice in 1994 that the military court had absolved me of the death penalty. Then I invited my students and other professors to celebrate my return to the society of ordinary decent people.

Until when did you work at the university?

Until 1996, when I turned 65. After that I worked part time for another 3 years before I had to quit.

To conclude, can you estimate how much you harmed the Czechoslovak or Soviet intelligence apparatus? What was the effect of your defec-tion?

That's hard for me to say. I do not want to exaggerate my role but nevertheless I believe it significantly paralysed the area of active measures and disinformation for about 10 years. It also had a significant impact on the work of the intelligence in the area of operations with respect to the agencies in the German speaking countries. Naturally, I knew nothing about Czechoslovak agents in America, Britain or France, but the German-Austrian department was paralysed to a great extent. And in my time, it was one of the most successful departments of the Czechoslovak intelligence.

Later, other colleagues followed – František August, Josef Frolík, to mention the best known names.

Have you ever been in contact with them, even indirectly?

I have never met them. I do not even remember Frolík from the headquarters. But he contacted me once. When I was at the university, I received a letter from him in which he suggested that we should write a book together. But I replied quite sharply that I was not interested.

Was it in reaction to his memories?

He invented things. He wanted to write a book with me about one of the prominent Nazi officials who fled to Latin America; unfortunately I do not remember who it was but it was one of the top prominent Nazis. And he wanted to write a book saying that

the Czechoslovak intelligence was in touch with him and withdrew him to Czechoslovakia.

Ex-minister Barták said in the mid 1990s that it was the head of the Gestapo, Müller.

I do not know now. I spent almost all my career in the German-Austrian area so I would have heard about it. Never, not a word. And in the case of Frolík I did not want to write rubbish; he made things up.

His book was quite popular.

Many things are true, but there are also many other biased, untrue statements. Sometimes he made things up. I did not want to get together with him.

In the case of your memories, did the CIA set any limits for you? Did they want you to be quiet about some things?

No. I must not forget to mention that I was in touch with the Jamestown Foundation, which was established sometime at the beginning of the 1980s. It was created in order to support defectors from communist countries, prominent defectors who came to the United States and wanted to find a job. Of course, the majority of them had huge problems finding work. When you write a resume and if it is to be true, everyone will be scared of the communist past. Anyway, it remained on a rather theoretical level as they had no financial and organizational abilities to help people find work. They mostly tried to do lobbying, to influence congressmen and in this way gain support for defectors. They asked me to give a lecture on the problems of defectors for the co-operators of the foundation and for prospective donors. Consequently, I was asked by one of the sub-committees in Congress to testify about defectors and their problems at one of its sessions. This was sometime in 1988. In this way I tried to help all "colleagues" from the Soviet bloc who were trying to solve their problems like I did 20 years before.

FOR TOTALITY



Gas chamber in the Pirna-Sonnenstein annihilation camp in Saxony in 1995.

Source: GS Pirna-Sonnenstein Archive

"There Was the Tailor from Bohemia"

THE NAZI "EUTHANASIA" PROGRAMME AND GERMANS FROM ČESKÝ KRUMLOV¹

English journalist Gitta Sereny's² book of interviews with Franz Paul Stangl³, a participant in the Nazi "euthanasia" programme and the commander of the annihilation camps in Treblinka and Sobibór in occupied Poland, *Into that Darkness: From Mercy Killing to Mass Murder*⁴, was published in the UK and the USA in 1974. The extensive tome brought a direct testimony from one of the prominent perpetrators of Nazi crimes while touching on the involvement of Germans from Bohemia in the Third Reich's annihilation programmes.

PAVEL ZEMAN

In the book, Dietrich Allers⁵, one of the Nazi "euthanasia" organisers speaks about a tailor from Bohemia who worked as a photographer for the "euthanasia" headquarters in Berlin. *Da war dieser Schneider aus Böhmen* (*There was the tailor from Bohemia*) is his brief mention.⁶ Gitta Sereny knew that the person was Franz Suchomel (3 December 1907 – 18 December 1979), a native of Český Krumlov and a tailor for ladies and gentlemen.⁷ His testimony about the annihilation of Jews in Poland was later also heard in the well-known documentary by French director Claude Lanzmann, *Shoa*, from 1985.⁸

Gitta Sereny most likely had no idea that Franz Suchomel was a member of a cohesive group of six Český Krumlov Germans closely connected by family, relation and friendly ties. They were all employed by the "euthanasia" headquarters in Berlin between 1940 and 1941.

The Law for the Prevention of Hereditary Diseased Offspring (Gesetz zur Verhütung erbkranken Nachwuchses) enacted on 14 July 1933 preceded the actual "euthanasia" programme in the Third Reich. Permitting the sterilisation of persons to whom children with hereditary defects could be born, this law was the first step towards the racial hygiene utopia of the National Socialists who dreamed of creating

a sound and racially pure German society.⁹

Social Darwinism and racial hygiene teachings on biological "enhancement" of mankind had also been developed in other countries since the end of the 19th century and attention was paid to determining the differences between a healthy ("good") and pathological ("bad") genetic background. The discourse about the utilisation of the racial hygiene ideas in the search for rational solutions to the period's social problems took on the most radical form in Germany in the throes of a strong social and political crisis after World War I.¹⁰

Seeking to get rid of the severely mentally disabled and those crippled by the war, the 1920 book by lawyer Karl Binding and psychiatrist Alfred E. Hoche *Autorization the Destruction of Life Unworthy of Life* (*Die Freigabe der Vernichtung lebensunwerten Lebens*. Meiner, Leipzig 1920) met with the warmest reception in the "euthanasia" discussions in Germany after WWI. Introducing notions such as "useless eaters" (unnütze Esser) and "ballast individuals" (Ballastexistenzen), which the Nazi propaganda later used extensively, the publication had a very negative impact across the German society.

Adolf Hitler shared Binding's and Hoche's views, speaking out against

the incurably ill in *Mein Kampf* in 1924¹¹, and in 1935 he notified the Reich Physician Leader (Reichsärzteführer) Gerhard Wagner that with the commencement of the war he would give the instruction to launch the "euthanasia".¹²

Adolf Hitler permitted "euthanasia" for children in 1939. Hitler's escort physician Karl Brandt¹³ and Philipp Bouhler¹⁴, Chief of the Chancellery of the Fuehrer of the National Socialist German Workers' Party (Kanzlei des Fuehrers der NSDAP, further KdF) founded the Reich Committee for the Scientific Registering of Serious Hereditary and Congenital Illnesses (Reichsausschuss zur wissenschaftlichen Erfassung von erb- und anlagebedingten schweren Leiden). For the sake of secrecy, everything was done under the auspices of the Reich Committee. However, the primary responsibility for child "euthanasia"¹⁵ was with the KdF that covered the Committee.

In August 1939 physicians and midwives were requested to register disabled newborns with local authorities. The duty of registration applied to German children suffering from *idiocy or mongolism (in particular combined with blindness or deafness), microcephalia or hydrocephalia, either severe or progressive, in particular missing limbs, head deformities, spondyloschi-*

sis, or physical defects caused e.g., by spasticity.¹⁶ It was also ordered that physicians overseeing children aged below three suffering from the above defects should report them to the local authorities. The Reich Committee prepared special forms for their registration; once completed and returned, they were pre-classified and then selected physicians would decide about the life or death of the disabled children registered. The child "euthanasia" was extended to cover children older than three years at the end of 1940 and from 1941 registration applied to all severely disabled minors.

Two years later, the project included Jewish children and children of other nationalities. The selected victims were killed with medication, injections, gas, starvation or hypothermia. Their parents were told causes of death that were fabricated. The number of victims of this wave of child "euthanasia" is estimated at 5,000.¹⁷ The KdF and the Reich Ministry of the Interior started organising the adult "euthanasia" in the summer of 1939. Adolf Hitler personally signed the mandate to proceed with it in October 1939, antedated as of 1 September 1939: *Reichsleiter Bouhler and Dr. Brandt, M. D., are charged with the responsibility of enlarging the authority of certain physicians to be designated by name in such a manner that persons who, according to human judgment, are incurable can, upon a most careful diagnosis of their condition of sickness, be accorded a mercy death.*¹⁸ The mandate had the nature of an order and was written on Hitler's personal letterhead to emphasise that it was a personal decision not intended for official publication and not of an adequate legal weight since it had no support in the existing Reich law. According to the law in force in Nazi Germany at the time, it was murder.¹⁹ The antedating as of 1 September 1939 underlined that the war had changed the international status of the Reich while also marking the beginning of Germany's internal purge. Many physicians, nurses, bureaucrats, technicians, policemen, photographers and other professionals were recruited to execute mass murders as efficiently as possible in a matter of months.²⁰ At the same time, a semi-governmental organisation was set up from three and later four institutions, working covertly under the KdF.²¹ The Reich leader-



Karl Brandt (1904–1948).

Source: author's archive

ship of the NSDAP (Reichsleitung der NSDAP) were in charge of financing the entire "euthanasia" system. The headquarters of the organisation resided in the centre of Berlin, in a former Jewish villa at Tiergartenstrasse 4, hence the code name T4.²²

The T4 headquarters decided on 9 October 1939 to murder the disabled using carbon monoxide instead of morphine and scopolamine injections. The killing procedure had been tested and recommended in early January 1940 during the first trial gassing at a former prison in Brandenburg, Brandenburg. Following a successful test, Karl Brandt concluded that the killing be done using carbon monoxide supplied in steel cylinders by the IG Farben plant in Ludwigshafen.²³ In accordance with Hitler's mandate, only physicians were authorised to kill the victims as part of the "euthanasia".

In parallel with these preparations, the first mass murders of the mentally ill, Jews and others using guns, medication, carbon monoxide from steel cylinders, and the first mobile gas van started in October 1939 in Eastern Prussia, Pomerania and Poznan.²⁴ While these killings were done under the direction of the SS with Hitler's and Himmler's approval and had been initiated by the leaders of the district authorities in Pomerania, Danzig-Western Prussia and the Wartheland,²⁵ the organisers of the "euthanasia" were well informed about their preparation and course and Karl Brandt and Heinrich Himmler attended the murders.²⁶



Philipp Bouhler (1899–1945).

Source: author's archive

A circular of the Reich Ministry of Interior requested the administrators of asylums, homes for the elderly and facilities for the disabled to complete questionnaires about the disabled in early October. In the forms, the future victims were divided into three categories. The first one included patients suffering from schizophrenia, epilepsy, senility, incurable paralysis, syphilis, all types of imbecility, encephalitis, Huntington's disease and other irreversible neurological conditions. The second one included patients who had been institutionalised for at least five years. The third group were foreign nationals, mentally ill convicts and people subject to the Nazi racial legislation.²⁷ T4 received the completed forms and sent them to the hired physicians – medical reviewers (Gutachter) who evaluated them cursorily then decided about the life and death of the patients. Their proposals were subject to the approval of the 'head experts' (Obergutachter).²⁸ The designated patients were killed at asylums or prisons transformed into annihilation centres with gas chambers (set up as mock showers) and crematoria. 70,273 victims were murdered in six annihilation institutions in Grafeneck in Baden-Württemberg, Brandenburg in Brandenburg, Hartheim near Linz, Sonnenstein in Saxony, Bernburg in Saxony-Anhalt and Hadamar in Hesse between January 1940 and August 1941.²⁹ The total number of victims is stated in the Hartheim Statistics, a T4 brochure containing the numbers of the murdered discovered by the Americans



The bus used by T4.

Source: OÖLA

lence had to be applied often. Once the golden teeth were extracted, the bodies were cremated in the crematorium and the remaining bones were crushed using a special bone crusher.⁴³ The relatives of the killed patients could receive urns with their remains but the urns contained the ashes of unknown victims since the cremators gathered everything that remained of the cremated bodies in a single heap.⁴⁴ Victims included children and purely Jewish transports were not exceptional.⁴⁵ The photographing of the victims had a special place in the process. It served for “scientific documentation” and to legitimise patient selection.⁴⁶ Three photographs of every person photographed – en face, profile and the entire stature – were sent to the Berlin headquarters for cataloguing. According to some post-war accounts, only medically interesting patients had been photographed; according to others, all had been. While some T4 photographers spoke about photographing about 35% of patients from every transport, others mentioned up to 85%.⁴⁷ To this day, only the photographs of two (sic) patients are known to have survived out of more than several tens of thousands of victim photographs, specifically from Vienna’s Am Steinhof institution and from Sonnenstein in Saxony. In both cases, the photographs are of the portrait format.⁴⁸ Out of more than 70,000 medical files of the “euthanasia” victims, only about 30,000 have

survived.⁴⁹ They are deposited in the Bundesarchiv in Berlin.⁵⁰ Why the photographic evidence is missing is not known.

Photographers were enlisted either via authorities in the towns where the annihilation centres operated or via the T4 headquarters in Berlin. The latter way was how Franz Suchomel and his cohorts from Český Krumlov and the surroundings, mentioned in the introduction to this study, got to do this job. Thanks to the depositions made by him and his compatriot Franz Wolf (9 April 1907 – ?) in the 1960s⁵¹, we know that they were both employed by the photography department of the T4 headquarters in Berlin as a result of the photographer Franz Wagner from Vyšné near Český Krumlov having put in a good word for them.

Native German Franz Wagner⁵² learned the photographer’s trade with Josef Wolf, a Český Krumlov photographer in the 1920s. Another native German, Franz Habada (24 June 1913 – ?) from Pernek near Horní Planá learned the photographer’s trade at another photo studio in Český Krumlov belonging to Josef Seidel⁵³ a few years later.⁵⁴

Franz Habada left for Germany in 1932 as a young Nazi official of the German National Socialist Workers’ Party (Deutsche Nationalsozialistische Arbeiterpartei – DNSAP) for fear of prosecution for his political activities in Czechoslovakia. He later joined the NSDAP in Germany.⁵⁵ Franz Wagner

left for Germany the same year. Prior to that, he had been a DNSAP member in Czechoslovakia from 1931. He joined the NSDAP in Germany in 1933.⁵⁶ Both young men shared the same political and professional focus as well as being compatriots and very likely friends too. From 1939 they resided together at Habada’s address in Berlin.⁵⁷ Both also worked as photographers in Berlin⁵⁸ and both were employed by T4 as photographers during World War II. Franz Wagner was released from the Wehrmacht on the basis of the ordinance on indispensability (being “unabkömmlich”)⁵⁹ and became the head of the photographic department of the “euthanasia” headquarters in February 1940.⁶⁰ Franz Habada was his deputy. The recruitment of new staff to the T4 usually depended on political reliability, contacts and relations.⁶¹ Due to the shortage of documentary evidence, we are forced to assume that the same factors played a role in the recruitment of Wagner and Habada. NSDAP documents indicate that they were proactive Nazis.⁶² Some testimonies assert that Franz Wagner was referred to as Karl Brandt’s personal photographer.⁶³ That both must have enjoyed confidence on the part of the T4 headquarters in Berlin is confirmed by their jobs – the head and deputy head of the photography department at the T4 headquarters, which photographed patients in the annihilation centres and copied many important official documents.⁶⁴ It is not surprising, then, that four more compatriots from Český Krumlov worked at the T4 photo department as photographers and lab workers from November 1940 to October 1941 on the basis of Franz Wagner and perhaps Franz Habada having put in a good word for them. The stories of two of them, Franz Suchomel and Franz Wolf, have already been described in part in literature abroad.⁶⁵ The stories of Thomas Steffl and Josef Wolf are less known. Thomas Steffl, born on 17 September 1909 in Rojov (Roiden), a German village in the Kaplice area that no longer exists, was the first to join the T4 headquarters. He registered for residence in Berlin on 17 November 1940,⁶⁶ having been recalled from the Wehrmacht.⁶⁷ Franz Wagner most likely recommended him to the T4 headquarters because Steffl had married his sister Aloysia in

1932.⁶⁸ Nepotism is also likely to have played a role because, while a decorator by vocation, he was employed by the photography department.⁶⁹ His tenure at T4 until 1943 is sparsely documented. It has been proven with certainty that he worked as a “photographer” at the annihilation centre in Hartheim in 1940 or 1941.⁷⁰

Photographer Franz Wolf⁷¹ whose father trained Franz Wagner in the 1920s⁷² registered for residence in Berlin on 5 January 1941. Having graduated from the forestry school in Aš, he also underwent training in his father's studio from 1926–1929, then served in the Czechoslovak Army between October 1929 and March 1931 and then worked at the family's photo studio in Český Krumlov until his Wehrmacht enlistment. He was a member of the Sudeten German Home Front (Sudetendeutsche Heimatfront, SHF; from 1935 Sudeten German Party, SDP) in Český Krumlov from 18 November 1934 and in charge of visual propaganda for the party's district unit.⁷³ He was also a member of the League of Germans in Bohemia (Bund der Deutschen in Böhmen) and the German Cultural Association (Deutscher Kulturverband). He joined the NSDAP late in January 1939.⁷⁴ Following his military deployment in Poland and France from 1939–1940, he was recalled from the army and joined the T4 headquarters in Berlin in early 1941.⁷⁵ He photographed the “euthanasia” victims for T4 at the annihilation centre in Hadamar. Late in 1941 he was back at the T4 headquarters and then he provided photographic evidence of mentally disabled patients of the psychiatric clinic in Heidelberg from late summer of 1942 to March 1943.⁷⁶ Following Franz Wolf, Franz Suchomel, a ladies' and gentlemen's tailor from Český Krumlov, registered for residence in Berlin on 5 March 1941.⁷⁷ Having graduated from the high school in Český Krumlov, he received training in tailoring from his father. Having served in the Czechoslovak army from the autumn of 1927 to the spring of 1929, he worked at the family-run tailor shop until his Wehrmacht enlistment in March 1940.⁷⁸ He was a member of the DNSAP from 1 June 1933 and, when the party was banned, an SHF member in Český Krumlov from 2 October 1933.⁷⁹ In addition, he was an active member of the Deutscher Turnverein in the



A photograph of Elsa Toni W. likely taken on 23 November 1940 immediately before her murder at Pirna-Sonnenstein.
Source: BArch

town.⁸⁰ According to Antonín Prokop, a German from Český Krumlov who deserted the Wehrmacht, he was one of the premier local Nazis in the latter half of the 1930s.⁸¹ He was released from the military in November 1940 in order to manage his family business, but in early March 1941 he applied at the T4 headquarters in Berlin where he went on to work as a photo lab worker despite his former vocation. He worked in the same position at the Hadamar annihilation centre in the first half of 1942, and then he was back at the T4 headquarters again.⁸² Franz Wolf's elder brother Josef (26 April 1900 – 14 October 1943) was the last to arrive at the T4 headquarters in Berlin. He too completed his photographer training at the family business and co-managed it from the latter half of the 1930s to his Wehrmacht enlistment. Having been released from the military (1941) he lived in Berlin from 29 October 1941.⁸³ According to Franz Suchomel's post-war testimony, he worked as a photographer on the committees that mapped the various psychiatric institutions.⁸⁴ While the involvement of all the six Bohemian Germans in T4 is very difficult to map (as their job files have not survived), the sparse evidence shows clearly that they were recruited by the organisation with the help of personal contacts and political reliability. The benefits associated with the job also

played a major role in their decision to accept it. Unlike others, they were not forced to go to the front and they were paid quite well too, as shown by the pay of Vinzenz Nohel, a cremator of the dead in Hartheim. As a qualified fitter, he had earned approximately 100 Reich marks a month prior to joining the T4, whereas in Hartheim his income including all bonuses was 290 marks a month.⁸⁵ In addition, he received a quarter litre of spirits per day as his cremator job was “difficult” and “depressing”.⁸⁶ For holidays, he was able to use T4's holiday house in Weissenbach near Lake Attersee in Austria.⁸⁷ For Franz and Josef Wolf, Thomas Steffl and Franz Suchomel, who were all fathers of three,⁸⁸ the job at T4 must have been a welcome source of income, as it must have been for Vinzenz Nohel, a father of four. Even though Franz Suchomel testified that he had only been told that it was a Reich secret upon his recruitment in Berlin and that he only learned about the true nature of T4 as he went, the exact opposite is most likely the truth.⁸⁹ This is confirmed by the pledge of non-disclosure signed by both Suchomel and Franz Wolf on joining T4,⁹⁰ binding them to remain tacit about everything concerning the “euthanasia”.⁹¹ Also, it is likely not true (contrary to what Franz Suchomel said⁹²) that upon recruitment to T4 the new employees were under threats of imprisonment in a concentration camp



The founder of the Wolf Photo Studio, Josef Wolf (first from right, standing) with his sons and co-workers, Franz Wolf standing third from left (?), 1930.

Source: Regional Museum in Český Krumlov

or capital punishment in the event of breaching the non-disclosure obligation.

Post-war investigation did not disclose any case of anyone being executed, imprisoned or otherwise prosecuted just for refusing a job at T4. Only cases of relocation to the front and relocation at one's own request are recorded.⁹³ Most employees accepted the tasks they were given and executed them without resisting.

It comes as no surprise that the annihilation centres where employees "processed" the bodies of murdered patients every day gradually took on an unrestrained atmosphere where everything was permitted. Reports from the centres mentioned alcoholic orgies, sexual affairs, fights, bullying and theft of the "euthanasia" victims' personal property.⁹⁴ Under such circumstances, primarily the male staff of the institutions solidified character traits that came in handy for the T4 leaders in view of the new tasks after August 1941. At the time, the leaders faced the issue of maintaining the trained murdering staff and the killing technology of the annihilation centres ready for the potential later re-launch of the "eutha-

nasia". "Action 14f13" offered only part utilisation. Conversely, greater opportunities were offered with the plan for annihilation of European Jews that was under preparation in 1941. It started taking on a more detailed form when Hermann Göring mandated Reinhard Heydrich with the *total solution of the Jewish question in the German sphere of influence in Europe*.⁹⁵ In terms of organisation, the plan was completed at the well-known conference in Wannsee on 20 January 1942.⁹⁶

On 15 August 1941 Heinrich Himmler saw a mass execution of Jews in Minsk and got sick.⁹⁷ Following this experience, he reportedly required that "more humane" methods be used for murdering.⁹⁸ The killing of patients using gas, gunfire and explosives was tested in Minsk and Mogilev in September 1941.⁹⁹ At the same time, the development of new gassing vehicles using the exhaust gas for killing started in order to "relieve" the murdering units at the command of Reinhard Heydrich; the plan was to replace the "expensive" and difficult-to-transport steel cylinders containing carbon monoxide.¹⁰⁰ The first time they were used was on 8 December 1941 in the Chełmno annihilation camp.¹⁰¹

Viktor Brack¹⁰² from the KdF tried to maintain the T4 organisation in parallel with the above preparations. One of the options was to provide the personnel and the killing technology for the annihilation of Jews. According to his testimony during the Nuremberg trial, he was orally ordered to stop the "euthanasia" and send the T4 personnel thus released to the SS and Police Leader for the Lublin, Odilo Globocnik, following an arrangement with Himmler.¹⁰³ In the latter half of October 1941, Globocnik's¹⁰⁴ subjects were already looking for a suitable location to build the annihilation camp in Bełżec.¹⁰⁵ At the same time, the Nazi authorities in occupied Poland and in the East knew that Brack's gassing devices were available for the elimination of Jews "incapable of work".¹⁰⁶ A meeting of physicians and the representatives of the technical staff of all T4 annihilation centres concerning the annihilation of Jews in occupied Poland took place at the Sonnenstein facility with Brack's participation one month later.¹⁰⁷ From that moment on, the preparation of Action "Reinhard"¹⁰⁸ went full steam ahead; between March 1942 and October 1943 the project

caused the death of at least 1,750,000 victims at the Bełżec, Sobibór and Treblinka annihilation camps.¹⁰⁹ Several hundred SS and police staff and 92 members of the T4 staff gathered in Lublin under Globocnik's command to build and operate the camps and pursue other activities connected with annihilation.¹¹⁰ The "specialists" from T4, still employed by the Berlin headquarters, were in charge of building and operating the camps. Most of them were SS members and many were in officer ranks. Those who were not SS members received at least the lance corporal rank and grey SS uniforms, only without the SS runes on the rank badges.¹¹¹ In the camps, they usually worked as commanders, deputy commanders, and commanders of camp sections, and they oversaw the operation of gas chambers and led the Jewish work and guard groups.¹¹² Along with a relatively low number of German wardens (35 to 40 people at Treblinka, about 30 at Bełżec and about 25 at Sobibór),¹¹³ there were 120 Ukrainian, Latvian and Lithuanian guards and work groups of several hundred Jews in each camp. Some of them buried the bodies of the murdered in the annihilation parts of the camps and cleaned the gas chambers. Others worked in the other parts of the camps. They were usually all murdered after several weeks as "inconvenient witnesses" and replaced by newcomers.¹¹⁴ The Bełżec annihilation camp was the destination of the deportations of Jews from the Cracow and Lvov districts; deportations from the Lublin district were directed to Sobibór; and Treblinka was the destination for deportations from Warsaw, Radom and Białystok. The denizens of Jewish ghettos and communities were, save for infrequent exceptions, transported in boxcars. Many of the deportees died along the way. Others were killed in the gas chambers except for those whom the camp staff selected for work at the camp. Those who were unable to walk to the gas chambers were shot in the "Lazarett", a pit referred to as the hospital. As with "euthanasia", they were told on arrival that they would take a shower before the next trip. In reality they were poisoned with exhaust gas from combustion engines after they had handed in their clothes and personal belongings including valuable items, and women's hair had

been cut.¹¹⁵ The annihilation was done in the same manner as during the centralised phase of the "euthanasia", except for the use of the combustion engine exhaust gas instead of the "costly" carbon monoxide from steel cylinders. Since the Action "Reinhard" camps were only intended for murdering Jews in occupied Poland, one can agree with Gitta Sereny that all personnel deployed there was selected carefully.¹¹⁶ The chief factor for selection from more than 400 men of T4 was at least several months of experience in murders in the annihilation centres. This is confirmed by the life of the group of T4 photographers from Český Krumlov after the centralised "euthanasia" had been discontinued in August 1941. After his tenure at Hartheim (May – July/August?), Franz Wagner was the head of the T4 photography department from August 1940 to August 1943. In August 1943 he came back to Hartheim where T4 had relocated from Berlin to avoid air raids. He worked as a photographer there until the end of the war. He was probably more valuable for the T4 headquarters in Berlin and Hartheim than in Poland. For his life after the war, all we know is that he was interrogated by the US military intelligence in Frymburk in the Šumava mountain range on 14 July 1945 on account of his activity in Hartheim and his role in T4.¹¹⁷ According to the findings of the former Federal Republic of Germany court authorities dated September 1969, he lived in Miesburg near Hannover¹¹⁸ after the war and he reportedly relocated to Canada later.¹¹⁹ Franz Habada likely worked only at the T4 headquarters in Berlin from 1940 to 1942. As a photographer, he also took part in various inspection visits to psychiatric institutions in Germany.¹²⁰ As a photographer, he was a member of the planning committee for "euthanasia" in the Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia in 1942.¹²¹ He enrolled in the Wehrmacht the same year. He lost his left arm in a grenade explosion in November 1943, was released from the army at the end of April 1944 and studied graphic design for one semester. At the end of the war he stayed with his sister in Český Krumlov¹²² and returned to Berlin in the summer of 1945.¹²³ His further post-war whereabouts are not known for the time being.

The remaining members of the T4 group of Český Krumlov photographers did not avoid the annihilation camps as part of "Action Reinhard" in occupied Poland. Franz Suchomel's experience from the Hadamar annihilation centre may have been the reason why he was reassigned to the Treblinka annihilation camp in July 1942. The remaining three, Franz and Josef Wolf and Thomas Steffl, arrived in Sobibór sometime in the latter half of March or early April 1943. This is proven by Franz Wolf's de-registration in Heidelberg on 1 April 1943¹²⁴ and the T4 official record of 11 March 1943 to the effect that he was assigned to the Wehrmacht.¹²⁵ Josef Wolf was the only one of the three who perhaps did not have direct experience in photographing "euthanasia" victims due to his later joining of the T4 in October 1941, and he may have relocated to Sobibór in connection with his brother. Josef Wolf and Thomas Steffl died during the uprising of the Sobibór prisoners on 14 October 1943.¹²⁶ The known facts about their involvement in Sobibór are that they were not deployed in the annihilation part of the camp, instead overseeing the working groups of prisoners and the sorting of the clothes and personal belongings of the Jewish victims. They also oversaw the cutting of women's hair before the women were led to the gas chambers. In addition, as a result of the low number of German wardens at Sobibór, they often assisted during the deportees' arrivals and selection and took the victims to the gas chambers and the "Lazarett". Considering the brutal conditions in all "Action Reinhard" annihilation camps,¹²⁷ the notion that Josef Wolf and Thomas Steffl did not participate in the murders is out of the question. This statement is also supported by the fact that Franz Wolf and Franz Suchomel, who survived the war, were tried for their crimes committed at Treblinka and Sobibór in the 1960s. As a result, we know more about their activity in the camps. Franz Wolf and his brother Josef were in charge of gathering the clothes taken from the victims and overseeing the Jewish prisoners who sorted them at the Sobibór camp. Franz also oversaw the "forest commando" that used to go to the forest to collect wood along with guards. He was eventually sentenced to



Franz Suchomel and Viktor Brack.



Source: author's archive, BArch

eight years in prison (the second highest sentence in the Sobibór trial) for his involvement in the murdering of an unknown number of persons not lower than 39,000¹²⁸ by the Regional Court in Hagen on 20 December 1966. The investigation resulted in an account of his activities in the camp. It was no different from the cynical and brutal behaviour of the other German wardens and his T4 colleagues. In the camp, he was known for his servility towards his seniors and cruelty towards the prisoners; he used to punish them with a whip. They also feared him because he would turn them in to his superiors. Most likely he also participated in the shooting of the Jewish forest commando members whose work he oversaw.¹²⁹ He escorted female victims to the gas chambers saying: *Quick, quick, my ladies; work makes life sweet.*¹³⁰

Franz Suchomel, sentenced to six years of imprisonment by the Regional Court in Düsseldorf on 3 September 1965 for complicity in the collective murder of at least 300,000 persons¹³¹, was reportedly known as a more benevolent warden among the prisoners in Treblinka. However, his activity in the camp was not free from cynicism and brutal crimes. As the superior to "Goldjuden" ("Golden Jews") he oversaw the gathering and sorting of valuables found with the Treblinka victims. He also had to assist on arrival of transports due to the low number of German wardens, and he also used a whip and shot at the prisoners, as the other wardens did. He accompanied Jewish women to gas

chambers saying *Ladies, quick, quick, quick, or the water will turn cold.*¹³² When not assisting at transport "reception" and out of sight of other German wardens, he reportedly treated prisoners more decently. As a result, they referred to him as a "good German" (*der gute Deutsche*).¹³³

This reference was not so surprising in a camp where hundreds and even thousands of people were killed within one day and where all kinds of crimes including murders, beating, torturing and rape took place. In an environment where everything works the opposite way from normal society and where being inhumane is the principal standard instead of humanity, any, albeit the smallest, display of a normal human behaviour is understood as good. Werner Dubois succinctly described the conditions in annihilation camps, saying in 1967 that in Sobibór *everyone from the T4 took these things as normal.*¹³⁴

When the "Action Reinhard" camps were discontinued, the personnel relocated to the north of Italy in the autumn of 1943, headed by Odilo Globocnik and the annihilation camp inspector Christian Wirth¹³⁵. Franz Suchomel and Franz Wolf along with the Ukrainian wardens and ninety other "euthanasia" and "Reinhard" veterans¹³⁶ reinforced the Nazi presence in the Operational Zone Adriatic Coast (Operationszone Adriatisches Küstenland) in the autumn of 1943. The Nazi authorities had formed the zone on 10 September 1943 in the area involving Trieste and the Is-

tria Peninsula after the Wehrmacht had entered Italian soil in response to the ceasefire between Italy and the Allies in the summer of 1943.¹³⁷ Trieste was the zone's centre and it was also where the murderous mission of the T4 and "Reinhard" veterans, under the designation "Special Action Unit R" (*Sonderabteilung Einsatz R*), was stationed. Their tasks included policing the area, combating the resistance and partisans, pursuit of the Third Reich's political opponents, transporting Jews to Auschwitz, and tracking and seizing Jewish property. Supervised by Odilo Globocnik, Higher SS and Police Leader in Trieste, and led directly by Christian Wirth (and Dietrich Allers after Wirth's death), they built a police detention camp in San Sabba on the outskirts of Trieste for the R1 unit to reside in, out of a former plant (rice mill) in October 1943. Two more units designated R2 and R3 resided in Fiume (Rijeka) and Udine, respectively.

Prisoners from Trieste and the adjacent parts of Northern Italy, Slovenia and Croatia were held at San Sabba from early February 1944. The prison was known for the immense brutality of the Nazi staff. It also served as a collection and transit camp for the transport of Jews to Auschwitz and Ravensbrück and as the barracks for the SS (*Einsatz R*) and the ancillary Ukrainian and Italian forces. In addition to executions by torture and shooting, a gas van was also used for killing there. A crematorium with the daily capacity of 8 to 12 bodies was tested there on 4 April 1944. It was built by the gas chamber builder for the T4 institutions and the Treblinka and Sobibór camps, Erwin Lambert.¹³⁸ It was operational until the end of April 1945. Approximately 15,000 people went through San Sabba, including 800 to 900 Jews. The number of victims tortured to death, executed and gassed in the prison is estimated to be three to four thousand. Group executions of 40 to 100 people were conducted twice a week, during the night and early in the morning. Loud music covered up the victims' screams. Individual executions took place every day. The ashes of the victims, cremated in the crematorium operated by the Ukrainian staff, were thrown into the sea.¹³⁹

The two remaining units, R2 and R3, operated in Fiume and Udine with the



Einsatz R personnel in Trieste. First from left is Erwin Lambert (1909–1976), the builder of the gas chambers in Hartheim, Pirna-Sonnenstein, Bernburg, Hadamar, Treblinka and Sobibór, and of the crematorium at San Sabba. Source: StA Munich

same tasks. While organising transports to Auschwitz, they selected the mentally and physically disabled and killed them directly at San Sabba. In addition, they sought disabled people outside of Trieste as well, as confirmed by the case of deporting twenty mentally disabled people from Venice to San Sabba on 11 October 1944.¹⁴⁰

Franz Suchomel was deployed as a member of the R3 unit in Udine and Turin.¹⁴¹ At the end of the war, he fled from Trieste; initially he was a captive of the Americans in Bad Gastein, then in Flossenbürg and finally in Waiden. He was released from Waiden in the summer of 1945; he reunited with his family who had been deported from Český Krumlov in 1946, and then lived in Altötting in Bavaria until his arrest

in 1963.¹⁴² Having reached Trieste, Franz Wolf served with the R2 unit in Fiume and was assigned to San Sabba at the turn of 1944 and 1945. Regarding his activity in the north of Italy, he said that the tasks of their unit were recording and seizing Jewish property, arresting Jews and other similar activities. He also confirmed the imprisonment of Jews and partisans. Allegedly, he only saw the annihilation facility in San Sabba from outside and it was not operational during his stay there (not later than early 1945).¹⁴³ At the end of the war, he retreated from Trieste to Austria, was captured by the Americans and imprisoned as a prisoner of war in Bad Aibling and Waiden. Released in August 1945, he reportedly worked as a photographer for the US

occupation forces until 1946. He also reunited with his family members who were deported to Bavaria in 1946 and lived with them in Upper Bavaria and later in Eppelheim near Heidelberg until his arrest in 1964.¹⁴⁴

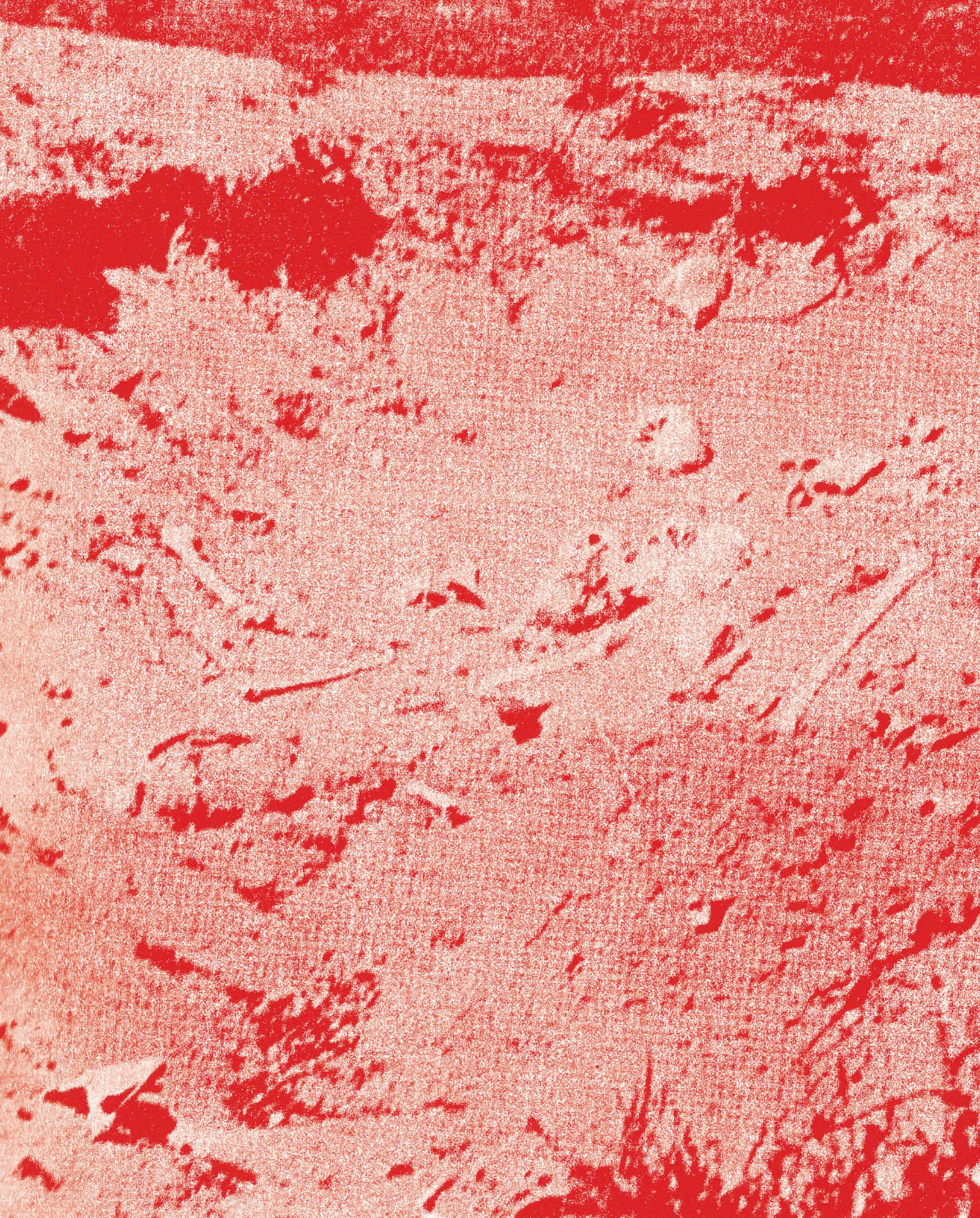
Regarding their activity in the north of Italy¹⁴⁵, both men's depositions to the investigation authorities were rather sparse and Franz Wolf expressly denied having known about the crimes committed in San Sabba. As with Sobibór and Treblinka, though, they lied in all probability. The crimes committed by the units with which they served there were extensive and intensive and it is unlikely that they did not take part in them.

NOTES

- 1 An abbreviated version of the paper was read at the “Euthanasie” – Aktion T4 und ihre Konsequenzen für die Ethik der Gegenwart international colloquium in Heidelberg organised by the Institut für Medizingeschichte der Universität Heidelberg and the Psychiatrische Universitätsklinik Heidelberg in 2006.
- 2 Gitta Sereny (13 March 1921 – 14 June 2012), a British journalist and historian of Hungarian origins with Jewish heritage; she was one of the best-known postwar journalists writing about the history and crimes of Nazism. Only her book about an interview with Adolf Hitler’s architect Albert Speer, was translated into Czech – SERENY, Gitta: *Albert Speer. Zápasy s pravdou*. BBart, Praha 1998.
- 3 Franz Paul Stangl (26 March 1908 – 28 June 1971), the commandant of the Hartheim Euthanasia Centre from November 1940 to the autumn of 1941; the first commandant of the Sobibór annihilation camp from March 1942 to September 1942; the commandant of the Treblinka annihilation camp from September 1942 to August 1943; commander of the Einsatz R3 commando in Udine and the Einsatz R2 commando in Rijeka from the autumn of 1943 to April 1945; an American prisoner of war from 1945–1947; in 1947 he was turned in to Austrian authorities based on an accusation of participation in the forced euthanasia programme; he escaped from police detention in Linz and lived in Syria (1948–1951; with his family from 1949) and then in Brazil between 1951–1967. He was extradited from Brazil to FRG in 1967 and sentenced to life imprisonment in 1970 for his part in the murder of more than 400,000 Jews. He died of heart failure in prison in 1971, 19 hours after his final conversation with Gitta Sereny.
- 4 The first UK edition of SERENY, Gitta: *Into That Darkness: From Mercy Killing To Mass Murder*. André Deutsch, London 1974. In my text I refer to the second German edition of 1995 SERENY, Gitta: *Am Abgrund. Gespräche mit dem Henker: Franz Stangl und die Morde von Treblinka*. Piper, München – Zürich 1995.
- 5 Dietrich Allers (17 May 1910 – 22 March 1975), a member of NSDAP and SA from 1932; joined T4 in 1940; from 1941 a senior official at T4; an Einsatz R inspector in northern Italy 1944–1945; sentenced for 8 years for providing assistance in murdering 34,549 people in 1968.
- 6 SERENY Gitta: *Am Abgrund*, p. 92.
- 7 The author would like to thank Mr Florian Schwaninger of Lern-und Gedenkort Schloss Hartheim for the information about the date of death of F. Suchomel. Lern-und Gedenkort Schloss Hartheim received the information from German film director and writer Thomas Harlan.
- 8 For a full transcript of the voice-over with film subtitles see LANZMANN, Claude: *Šóá, šóá, šóá. Zpráva o velikém neštěstí*. Nakladatelství Svoboda, Prague 1991.
- 9 Around 300,000 people had been sterilised in Germany alone by 1939. For the law refer to BENZENHÖFER, Udo: *Zur Genese des Gesetzes zur Verhütung erbkranken Nachwuchses*. Klemm & Oelschläger, Münster, 2006.
- 10 On the topic see e.g., BURLEIGH, Michael: *Třetí říše. Nové dějiny*. Argo, Prague 2008, pp. 293–301.
- 11 DWORK, Déborah – VAN PELT, Robert Jan: *Osvětim. 1270 až současnost*. Argo, Prague 2006, p. 65.
- 12 PROCTOR, Robert N.: *Rasová hygiena. Lékařství v době nacismu*. Academia, Prague 2009, p. 200.
- 13 Karl Brandt (8 January 1904 – 2 June 1948), Hitler’s personal physician from 1934; Hitler’s appointee for “euthanasia” from 1939; a member of NSDAP from 1932; a member of the SS from 1933; from 1941 the Reich Commissioner for Health and Sanitation; 1944 Oberguppenführer and Generalleutnant der Waffen-SS; 1947 sentenced to death in the Nuremberg medical trial, executed in 1948.
- 14 Philipp Bouhler (11 September 1899 – 19 May 1945), NSDAP member from 1920; participated in Hitler’s coup in Munich 1923; 1925 Reich Secretary of NSDAP; 1933 SS; 1934 Head of KdF; from 1939 a co-organiser of “euthanasia”; committed suicide after his arrest by the Americans in 1945.
- 15 See e.g., PROCTOR, Robert N.: *Rasová hygiena*, pp. 204–207 and VORMBAUM, Thomas (ed.): *„Euthanasie“ vor Gericht. Die Anklageschrift des Generalstaatsanwalts beim OLG Frankfurt/M. gegen Dr. Werner Heyde u. a. vom 22. Mai 1962*. Berliner Wissenschafts-Verlag, Berlin 2005, pp. 23–92.
- 16 PROCTOR, Robert N.: *Rasová hygiena*, p. 205.
- 17 MITSCHERLICH, Alexander – MIELKE, Fred: *Medizin ohne Menschlichkeit. Dokumente des Nürnberger Ärzteprozesses*. Fischer, Frankfurt am Main 1978, p. 191.
- 18 English translation eited as per GHDI-Documents-German Historical Institute Washington D. C. – http://germanhistorydocs.ghi-dc.org/sub_document.cfm?document_id=1528 (quoted as of 16. 1. 2015).
- 19 BURLEIGH, Michael: *Třetí říše*, p. 320.
- 20 For more see e.g., GREVE, Michael: *Die organisierte Vernichtung „lebensunwerten Lebens“ im Rahmen der „Aktion T4“*. Centaurus-Verlagsgesellschaft, Pfaffenweiler 1998, pp. 25–32.
- 21 Reich’s Work Group of Sanatoriums and Nursing Homes (Reichsarbeitsgemeinschaft Heil-und Pflegeanstalten), Welfare Foundation for Institutional Care (Gemeinnützige Stiftung für Anstaltspflege), Welfare Association for the Transport of Patients (Gemeinnützige Krankentransport GmbH) and Central Clearing Office for Sanatoriums and Nursing (Zentralverrechnungsstelle Heil-und Pflegeanstalten). For more see e.g., KLEE, Ernst: *„Euthanasie“ im Dritten Reich. Die „Vernichtung lebensunwerten Lebens“*. Fischer Taschenbuch Verlag, Frankfurt am Main 2010, pp. 120–121.
- 22 For the T4 headquarters in Berlin refer to ALY, Götz: *Aktion T4. 1939 – 1945. Die „Euthanasie“-Zentrale in der Tiergartenstrasse 4*. Ed. Hentrich, Berlin 1987.
- 23 KOGON, Eugen – LANGBEIN, Hermann – RÜCKERL, Adalbert (eds.): *Nationalsozialistische Massentötungen durch Giftgas. Eine Dokumentation*. Fischer Taschenbuch Verlag, Frankfurt am Main 1986, pp. 52–53 and KLEE, Ernst: *„Euthanasie“ im Dritten Reich*, pp. 84–85.
- 24 For more see RIESS, Volker: *Die Anfänge der Vernichtung „lebensunwerten Lebens“ in den Reichsgauen Danzig-Westpreußen und Wartheland 1939/40*. Lang, Frankfurt am Main – Berlin 1995; TOPP, Sascha – FUCHS, Petra – HOHENDORF, Gerrit – RICHTER, Paul – ROTZOLL, Maik: *Die Provinz Ostpreußen und die nationalsozialistische „Euthanasie“*. SS – „Aktion Lange“ und „Aktion T4“. *Medizin Historisches Journal*, 2008, Nr. 43, pp. 20–55.
- 25 BURLEIGH, Michael: *Tod und Erlösung. Euthanasie in Deutschland 1900–1945*. Pendo, Zürich – München 2002, pp. 154–155. Newly also see SASCHA, Topp – FUCHS, Petra – HOHENDORF, Gerrit – RICHTER, Paul – ROTZOLL, Maik: *Die Provinz Ostpreußen und die nationalsozialistische „Euthanasie“*. SS – „Aktion Lange“ und „Aktion T4“, pp. 20–55.
- 26 See e.g., KLEE, Ernst: *„Euthanasie“ im Dritten Reich*, pp. 94–101 and LONGERICH, Peter: *Heinrich Himmler. Biographie*. Pantheon, München 2010, p. 446.
- 27 KOGON, Eugen – LANGBEIN, Hermann – RÜCKERL, Adalbert (eds.): *Nationalsozialistische Massentötungen durch Giftgas*, p. 37.
- 28 For more see e.g., FRIEDLANDER, Henry: *Der Weg zum NS-Genozid. Von der Euthanasie zur Endlösung*. Berlin Verlag, Berlin 1997, pp. 136–151.
- 29 For a number of titles on the history of the annihilation centres, see e.g., FRIEDLANDER, Henry: *Der Weg zum NS-Genozid*, pp. 152–190.
- 30 Cf. KAMMERHOFER, Andrea: *Die „Hartheimer Statistik“*. Bis zum 1. September 1941 wurden desinfiziert: Personen: 70.273. In: KEPPLINGER, Brigitte (ed.): *Tötungsanstalt Hartheim*. Oberösterreichisches Landesarchiv und Lern-und Gedenkort Schloss Hartheim, Linz 2005, pp. 27–39.
- 31 National Archives and Records Administration (NARA, Washington), RG 549, Records of HQ, USAREUR, War Crimes Branch, War Crimes Case Files (“Cases not tried”), 1944–1948, Exhibit 39, Box 491, Case 000–12–463. The bisher geleistete Arbeit der Aktion.
- 32 Cf. FRIEDLANDER, Henry: *Der Weg zum NS-Genozid*, pp. 160 and 171.
- 33 For more cf. KLEE, Ernst: *„Euthanasie“ im Dritten Reich*, pp. 255–261.
- 34 Cf. e.g., SCHULZE, Dietmar: *Dezentrale „Euthanasie“ und „Aktion Brandt“ im Reichsgau Sudetenland und Protektorat Böhmen und Mähren 1942–1945*. In: ŠÍMÚNEK, Michal – SCHULZE, Dietmar (eds.): *Die Nationalsozialistische „Euthanasie“ im Reichsgau Sudetenland und Protektorat Böhmen und Mähren 1939–1945*. ÚSD AV ČR – Pavel Mervart, Prague – Červený Kostelec 2008, pp. 237–251.
- 35 FAULSTICH, Heinz: *Die Zahl der „Euthanasie“ – Opfer*. In: FREWER, Andreas – EICKHOFF, Clemens (eds.): *„Euthanasie“ und die aktuelle Sterbehilfe-Debatte. Die historischen Hintergründe medizinischer Ethik*. Campus Verlag, Frankfurt am Main – New York 2000, pp. 218–236.
- 36 Buchenwald, Auschwitz, Sachsenhausen, Mauthausen, Dachau, Ravensbrück, Flossenbürg und Neuengamme.
- 37 BURLEIGH, Michael: *Tod und Erlösung*, p. 257. The most detailed account of Action “14f13” in GRODE, Walter: *Die „Sonderbehandlung 14f13“ in den Konzentrationslagern des Dritten Reiches. Ein Beitrag zur Dynamik faschistischer Vernichtungspolitik*. Lang, Frankfurt am Main 1987.
- 38 E.g., the transport list from Buchenwald dated 15 July 1941 lists 94 prisoners taken to Sonnenstein, Saxony, including two prisoners of Jewish origins from Bohemia – Robert Klein from Poděbrady (born 14 July 1885) and Rudolf Klein from Police (born 23 March 1880). *Hessisches Hauptstaatsarchiv Wiesbaden* (HHStAW), Staatsanwaltschaft bei dem Oberlandesgericht Frankfurt a. M. (ab 1945), Heyde, Werner u. a., Abt. 631a, Nr. 532, Dr. Schumann. Sonderband IV. 14f13, fol. 138.
- 39 The transport of patients from the asylums in Dobřany, Opava and Šternberk na Moravě between 1940 and 1941 were the first Nazi annihilation transports from the territory of pre-Munich Czechoslovakia.
- 40 For more see ŠÍMÚNEK, Michal: *Planung der nationalsozialistischen „Euthanasie“ im Protektorat Böhmen und Mähren im Kontext der Gesundheits- und Bevölkerungspolitik der deutschen Besatzungsbehörden (1939–1942)*. In: ŠÍMÚNEK, Michal – SCHULZE, Dietmar (eds.): *Die nationalsozialistische „Euthanasie“ im Reichsgau Sudetenland...*, pp. 117–198.
- 41 See e.g., *Howard Gotlieb Archival Research Center – Boston University*, Inventory of Leo Alexander, Collection of documents from Nuremberg Medical Trials (Howard Gotlieb Archival Research Center, Inventory of Leo Alexander), Nr. 242, Box 57 (Envelope marked Euthanasia), information from the director of the Eglfing-Haar Institution Director Dr. H. Pfannmüller to the Reich Interior Ministry on patient relays dated 11 January 1941.
- 42 Patient labelling most likely served as an official certificate of death, or for later written communication with family members and authorities. WESSELS, Anette Hinz – FUCHS, Petra – HOHENDORF, Gerrit – ROTZOLL, Maik: *Zur bürokratischen Abwicklung eines Massenmords – die nationalsozialistische*

- „Euthanasie“-Aktion im Spiegel neuer Dokumente. *Vierteljahrshefte für Zeitgeschichte*, 2005, Nr. 1, p. 91n.
- 43 The entire process from the reception to the killing of the patients is described and analysed in detail e.g., in FRIEDLANDER, Henry: *Der Weg zum NS-Genozid*, pp. 164-169.
- 44 Ibid., p. 171.
- 45 See e.g., *Howard Gottlieb Archival Research Center*, Inventory of Leo Alexander, Nr. 242, Box 57 (Envelope marked Euthanasia), information from the Eglfing-Haar institution to the Mayor of Deidesheim regarding the transport of Jewish patients dated 20 September 1940.
- 46 MUCHE, Agnes: Gestempelt und fotografiert. Wiederentdeckte Fotografien des Sonnensteiner „Euthanasie“-Opfers Elsa Toni W. unmittelbar vor ihrer Ermordung. In: *Zurt Erinnerung an ein Menschheitsverbrechen. 1. September 2009. Einweihung der Namenstafeln für die Opfer der Tötungsanstalt Pirna-Sonnenstein und wissenschaftliches Symposium aus Anlass des Beginns der NS-Krankenmorde vor 70 Jahren*. Kuratorium Gedenkstätte Sonnenstein e. V., Pirna 2010, p. 100.
- 47 NARA II, RG 549, Records of HQ, USAREUR, War Crimes Branch, War Crimes Case Files (“Cases not tried”), Box 490, Case 000-12-463 Hartheim, Exhibit 24 – Franz Wagner, Frieberg, Czechoslovakia on 14 July 1945, p. 7 and KEPPLINGER, Brigitte: Die Tötungsanstalt Hartheim 1940-1945. In: KEPPLINGER, Brigitte (ed.): *Tötungsanstalt Hartheim*, p. 60.
- 48 MUCHE, Agnes: *Gestempelt und fotografiert*, p. 98.
- 49 Cf. SANDNER, Peter: Die „Euthanasie“-Akten im Bundesarchiv. Zur Geschichte eines lange verschollenen Bestandes. *Vierteljahrshefte für Zeitgeschichte*, 1999, Nr. 3, pp. 396-397.
- 50 *Bundesarchiv Berlin* (hereinafter *BArch*), Archiv-Bestand R 179.
- 51 HHStAW, Abt. 631a, Archivnummer 1723, Dokumentensammlung Euthanasie Ste-Sz, Vernehmungsprotokoll F. Suchomel, 21 September 1962, Altötting, p. 6 and ibid., Dokumentensammlung Euthanasie W-Wo, Vernehmungsprotokoll F. Wolf, 5 September 1963 Frankfurt am Main, p. 2.
- 52 Verfahren Lfd. Nr. 642. Tatkomplex: Massenvernichtungsverbrechen in Lagern, Kriegsverbrechen. Tatort: HS KL Sobibor. Tatzeit: 4203-4311. Gerichtsentscheidungen: LG Hagen 20 December 1966. In: RÜTER, Christiaan F. – MILDT, Dirk W. – BRACHER, Karl D. – BAUER, Fritz (eds.): *Sammlung deutscher Strafurteile wegen nationalsozialistischer Tötungsverbrechen 1945-1999*, B. XXV. Amsterdam University Press, Amsterdam 2001, p. 153.
- 53 For the history of both photo studios see e.g., JORDAN, Ingeborg: *Photographie im Böhmerwald 1880-1940*. W. Ennsthaler, Steyr 1983. *Fotoateliér Seidel. Poodhalené tajemství*. Českokrumlovský rozvojový fond, Český Krumlov 2012 and NEUMANN, Jiří: *Fotografové staré Šumavy – část II. Druhý nejznámější fotograf Šumavy. Obnovená tradice*, 2001, roč. XII, č. 23, pp. 27-29.
- 54 *Landesarchiv Berlin* (hereinafter *LA Berlin*), Bestand C, 375-01-08, Nr. 10096, Bericht F. Habada Berlin N4 Oranienburger Str. 37, 1947 (for the purposes of the denazification proces, /hereinafter *F. Habada Bericht*/).
- 55 BArch, BDC, NSDAP-Mitgliedskarteikarte Habada Franz, 24 June 1913.
- 56 Ibid., NSDAP-Mitgliedskarteikarte Wagner Franz, 18 September 1909.
- 57 *LA Berlin*, Bestand C, signature (hereinafter *sign.*) 375-01-08, Nr. 10096, *F. Habada Bericht* and BArch, BDC, NSDAP-Mitgliedskarteikarte Wagner Franz, 18 September 1909.
- 58 Ibid. and BArch, BDC, NSDAP-Mitgliedskarteikarte Habada Franz, 24 June 1913.
- 59 NARA, RG 549, Records of HQ, USAREUR, War Crimes Branch, War Crimes Case Files (“Cases not tried”), Box 490, Case 000-12-463 Hartheim, Exhibit 24 – Franz Wagner, Frieberg, Czechoslovakia on 14 July 1945, p. 1.
- 60 HHStAW, Abt. 631a, Archivnummer 1723, deposition by Franz Suchomel, 5 February 1963, Munich, p. 2.
- 61 For recruitment to the T4 see e.g., FRIEDLANDER, Henry: *Der Weg zum NS-Genozid*, pp. 349-392 and GREVE Michael: *Die organisierte Vernichtung...*, pp. 25-32.
- 62 BArch, BDC, NSDAP-Mitgliedskarteikarte Wagner Franz, 18 Sep. 1909 and ibid., NSDAP-Mitgliedskarteikarte Habada Franz, 24 Jun 1913.
- 63 KLEE, Ernst: „Euthanasie“ im Dritten Reich, p. 601.
- 64 Ibid., p. 121.
- 65 FRIEDLANDER, Henry: *Der Weg zum NS-Genozid*, pp. 384-385 and DE MILDT, Dick: *In the Name of the People. Perpetrators of Genocide in the Reflection of their Post-War Prosecution in West Germany. The “Euthanasia” and “Aktion Reinhard” Trial Cases*. Martinus Nijhoff Publishers, The Hague – London – Boston 1996, pp. 215-216, 224-225, 266, 269, 283-284, 324, 378, 395 and 399.
- 66 *State District Archive in Český Krumlov* (hereinafter *SOKA Český Krumlov*), Municipal Police Authority 1882-1936, records of the deceased, T. Steffl, 17 September 1909.
- 67 *Land Registry Authority for the South Bohemian Region*, Land Registry Office in Český Krumlov, purchase agreement between R. Moschkorz, J. Loukotka and T. Steffl's wife A. Steffl for house No. 28, development land parcel No. 246 and garden land parcel No. 342 in Český Krumlov, Český Krumlov 3 September 1940, p. 1.
- 68 *SOKA Český Krumlov*, f. Municipal Police Authority 1882-1936, records of the deceased, T. Steffl, 17 Sep 1909.
- 69 Ibid.
- 70 The US post-war investigation cites him in the list of Hartheim employees imprecisely as Mr. Steffens, Krumau, Czechoslovakia, Photographer. NARA II, RG 549, Records of HQ, USAREUR, War Crimes Branch, War Crimes Case Files (“Cases not tried”), Box 490, Case 000-12-463 Hartheim, Report of Investigating of War Crimes, 17 July 1945, p. 9.
- 71 *SOKA Český Krumlov*, f. Municipal Police Authority 1882-1936, male citizen records by year of birth, F. Wolf, 26 April 1907.
- 72 HHStAW, Abt. 631a, Archivnummer 1732, deposition by F. Wolf, Frankfurt am Main 5 September 1963, p. 2.
- 73 *National Archive* (hereinafter *NA*), f. Office of the Reich Protector – State Secretary of the Reich Protector, carton (“k.”) 172, sign. 109-12-329, List of SdP collaborators, 1938, Kreis IX. Franz Wolf, Böhm-Krummau (Český Krumlov), Parkgraben (Parkán).
- 74 BArch, NS 1, Reichsschatzmeister der NSDAP, Personal Fragebogen zum Antragschein auf Aufnahme in die Nationalsozialistische Deutsche Arbeiterpartei, Nr. 6473917, Franz Wolf (9 April 1907), photographer, Krummau, Parkgraben No. 112.
- 75 *Verfahren Lfd. Nr. 642*, p. 152-153.
- 76 HHStAW, Abt. 631a, Archivnummer 1732, deposition by F. Wolf, Frankfurt am Main 5 September 1963, pp. 2-3.
- 77 *SOKA Český Krumlov*, f. Municipal Police Authority 1882-1936, male citizen records by year of birth, F. Suchomel, 3 December 1907.
- 78 *Verfahren Lfd. Nr. 596*. Massenvernichtungsverbrechen in Lagern. KZ Treblinka. Juni 1942-November 1943. LG Düsseldorf vom 3 Sep 1965. In: *Sammlung deutscher Strafurteile wegen nationalsozialistischer Tötungsverbrechen 1945-1966*. Amsterdam University Press, Amsterdam 1981, pp. 137-138.
- 79 BArch, NS 1, Reichsschatzmeister der NSDAP, Personal Fragebogen zum Antragschein auf Aufnahme in die Nationalsozialistische Deutsche Arbeiterpartei, Nr. 6473833, Franz Suchomel (3 Dec 1907), Schneidergehilfe (assistant tailor), Krummau, Parkgraben Nr. 112.
- 80 *Unsere Heimat. Die Stadt Krummau an der Moldau im Böhmerwald*. Hoam, Waldkirchen 1992, p. 418.
- 81 NA, f. Ministry of the Interior in London, k. 320, sign. 2-90/9854/1, deposition by A. Prokop of 19 April 1944.
- 82 *Verfahren Lfd. Nr. 596*, p. 138 and HHStAW, Abt. 631a, Archivnummer 1723, deposition by F. Suchomel, Munich, 24 October 1960, pp. 2-4.
- 83 *SOKA Český Krumlov*, f. Municipal Police Authority 1882-1936, records of the deceased, Josef Wolf, 26 April 1900.
- 84 HHStAW, Abt. 631a, Archivnummer 1723, deposition by F. Suchomel, Altötting 21 September 1962, p. 4.
- 85 FRIEDLANDER, Henry: The T4 Killers: Berlin, Lublin, San Sabba. In: GRABITZ, Helge – BÄSTLEIN, Klaus – TUCHEL, Johannes (eds.): *Die Normalität des Verbrechens. Bilanz und Perspektiven der Forschung zu den nationalsozialistischen Gewaltverbrechen*. Edition Hentrich, Berlin 1994, p. 233.
- 86 FRIEDLANDER, Henry: *Der Weg zum NS-Genozid*, p. 375.
- 87 Cf. *T4 Erholungsheim* – http://www.deathcamps.org/euthanasia/t4resthome_d.html (quoted as of 13 March 2013).
- 88 *SOKA Český Krumlov*, f. Municipal Police Authority 1882-1936, records of the deceased, J. Wolf and T. Steffl; *Verfahren Lfd. Nr. 596*, p. 138 and *Verfahren Lfd. Nr. 642*, p. 153.
- 89 HHStAW, Abt. 631a, Archivnummer 1723, deposition by F. Suchomel, Munich 24 October 1960, p. 3
- 90 Ibid, p. 2-3 and ibid., Archivnummer 1723, deposition by F. Wolf, Frankfurt am Main 5 September 1963, p. 2.
- 91 BArch, R 178 (Euthanasie – EVZ I/Akte 1-11), k. Nr. 25, Akte 1, deposition by D. Allers, Frankfurt am Main 3 May 1949, p. 179.
- 92 HHStAW, Abt. 631a, Archivnummer 1723, deposition by F. Suchomel, Munich, 24 October 1960, p. 2.
- 93 FRIEDLANDER, Henry: *Der Weg zum NS-Genozid*, pp. 378-379.
- 94 Ibid., p. 380.
- 95 ALY, Götz: “Final Solution”: „Konečné řešení“. *Přesun národů a vyhlazení evropských židů*. Argo, Praha 2006, p. 177.
- 96 See e.g., ROSEMAN, Mark: *Setkání ve vile u jezera. Konference ve Wannsee a „konečné řešení židovské otázky“*. Dokořán, Praha 2003.
- 97 ARAD, Yitzhak: *Belzec. Sobibor. Treblinka. Vyhlašovaci tábory akce Reinhard*. BBart, Prague 2006, p. 16.
- 98 KLEE, Ernst: „Euthanasie“ im Dritten Reich, p. 310.

- 99 Ibid., p. 311.
- 100 Ibid.
- 101 Ibid., pp. 310-314.
- 102 Viktor Brack (9 Nov 1904 – 2 Jun 1948), an SA member from 1923, NSDAP and SS from 1929, 1934 an official of Hitler's party office, 1939-1945 co-organised the "euthanasia" programme and the annihilation of Jews in Poland. Sentenced to death in the Nuremberg Medical Trial in 1947, executed in 1948.
- 103 RETTLINGER, Gerald: *Die Endlösung. Hitlers Versuch der Ausrottung der Juden Europas 1939-1945*. Colloquium Verlag, Berlin 1956, p. 151.
- 104 Odilo Globocnik (21 Apr 1904 – 31 May 1945), NSDAP from 1931, SS from 1934, 1933 deputy head of the NSDAP district in Vienna, 1936 staff head of Austria's NSDAP country headquarters, 1938 district head of NSDAP in Vienna, 1939 SS and Policy Leader for the Lublin, 1941 entrusted by H. Himmler with the "final solution of the Jewish question" in Poland, 1941-1943 the head of Action "Reinhard" in charge of the Belzec, Sobibór and Treblinka annihilation camps, 1943 a Higher SS and Policy Leader in Operational Zina Adriatic Coast in the north of Italy, 1945 suicide in captivity in the UK.
- 105 ALY, Götz: „Konečné řešení“, p. 214.
- 106 KLEE, Ernst: „Euthanasie“ im Dritten Reich, pp. 314-315.
- 107 SCHILTER, Thomas: *Unmenschliches Ermessen. Die nationalsozialistische „Euthanasie“-Tötungsanstalt Pirna-Sonnenstein 1940/41*. Kiepenheuer, Leipzig 1999, pp. 166-167.
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- 109 For more on Action "Reinhard" cf. MUSIAL, Bogdan (ed.): „Aktion Reinhardt“. *Der Völkermord an den Juden im Generalgouvernement 1941-1944*. Fibre Verlag, Osnabrück 2004.
- 110 HEBERER, Patricia: Die Kontinuität der Tötungsoperationen T4-Täter und die „Aktion Reinhardt“. In: MUSIAL, Bogdan (ed.): „Aktion Reinhardt“, p. 294.
- 111 KLEE, Ernst: „Euthanasie“ im Dritten Reich, p. 323.
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- 113 HILBERG, Raul: *Die Vernichtung der europäischen Juden*, Bd. 2. Fischer Taschenbuch Verlag, Frankfurt am Main 1990, pp. 958-963.
- 114 BÖHM, Boris: *Die „Aktion T4“*, p. 22.
- 115 Female hair was considered to be of superior quality to male hair. Female hair was used for industrial purposes.
- 116 SERENY, Gitta: *Am Abgrund*, p. 268.
- 117 NARA II, RG 549, Records of HQ, USAREUR, War Crimes Branch, War Crimes Case Files ("Cases not tried"), Box 490, Case 000-12-463 Hartheim, Exhibit 24 – Franz Wagner. Frieberg, Czechoslovakia on 14 July 1945.
- 118 BArch, R 178, k. Nr. 25, EVZI/25, Akte 1, Personal der Zentrale „T 4“ und der „Kanzlei des Führers der NSDAP“, September 1969, fol. 51.
- 119 KLEE, Ernst: „Euthanasie“ im Dritten Reich, p. 601.
- 120 Cf. e.g., NARA, RG 549, Records of U. S. Army Europe, Judge Advocate Division, War Crimes Branch, Records Relating to Medical Experiments, Box Nr. 3, final report on the Lippe institution, 30-31 July 1942, Franz Habada as a member of the T4 headquarters inspection committee in his capacity as a photographer.
- 121 BEZENHÖFER, Udo – OELSCHLÄGER, Thomas – SCHULZE, Dietmar – ŠIMŮNEK, Michal: „Kinder – und jugendliche Euthanasie“ im Reichsgau Sudetenland und Protektorat Böhmen und Mähren. GWAB-Verlag, Wetzlar 2006, p. 42.
- 122 LA Berlin, Bestand C, 375-01-08, Nr. 10096, F. Habada's own handwritten CV dated 1947 for the purposes of the denazification process.
- 123 SOKA Český Krumlov, f. Český Krumlov District National Committee, 1945-1990, police registration of F. Habada – 24 July 1913, České Budějovice, Český Krumlov 27 July 1945.
- 124 According to Stadtarchiv Heidelberg information of 2006, F. Wolf de-registered from Schillerstrasse 19 in Heidelberg on 1 April 1943 and cited Parkgraben 12 in Český Krumlov as his new address.
- 125 BArch, Heidelberger Dokumente, Film Nr. 41149, Berlin 11 March 1943, Aktennotiz. Betr.: Wiesloch/Heidelberg, p. 3.
- 126 BLATT, Thomas „Toivi“: *Sobibór – der vergessene Aufstand*. UNRAST-Verlag, Hamburg – Münster 2004, pp. 111 and 124.
- 127 For more on the topic cf. RÜCKERL, Adalbert (ed.): *Nationalsozialistische Vernichtungslager im Spiegel deutscher Strafprozesse. Belzec, Sobibor, Treblinka, Chelmno*. Deutscher Taschenbuch Verlag, München 1979.
- 128 *Verfahren Lfd. Nr. 642*, p. 59.
- 129 Ibid., pp. 151-163.
- 130 SCHELVIS, Julius: *Vernichtungslager Sobibór*. Metropol, Berlin 1998, p. 315.
- 131 *Verfahren Lfd. Nr. 596*, p. 20.
- 132 Ibid., p. 140.
- 133 Ibid., p. 141.
- 134 Quoted as per BÖHM, Boris: *Die „Aktion T4“*, p. 23.
- 135 Christian Wirth (24 Nov 1885 – 26 May 1944), NSDAP from 1923, SA from 1933, a Criminal Police Commissioner in Stuttgart, SS from 1939, head of various T4 annihilation centres, 1941 the commander of the annihilation camp in Belzec, from 1942 the inspector of the Action "Reinhardt" camps, shot by Yugoslav partisans in 1944; he was nicknamed The Wild Christian for his brutality.
- 136 FRIEDMAN, Tuwiah (ed.): *Sobibór. Ein NS-Vernichtungslager im Rahmen der „Aktion Reinhardt“*. Eine dokumentarische Sammlung. Institute of Documentation in Israel for the Investigation of Nazi War Crimes, Haifa 1998, p. 7.
- 137 For more on the topic cf. e.g., WEDEKIND, Michael: *Nationalsozialistische Besatzungs – und Annexionspolitik in Norditalien 1943 bis 1945. Die Operationszonen „Alpenvorland“ und „Adriatisches Küstenland“*. Olenbourg, München 2003.
- 138 Erwin Lambert (7 Dec 1909 – 15 Oct 1976), NSDAP since 1933, a T4 employee from 1940, the builder of the gas chambers in Hartheim, Pirna-Sonnenstein, Bernburg, Hadamar, Treblinka and Sobibór, built the crematorium in San Sabba in 1944, from 1949 a shop owner in Stuttgart, in 1965 sentenced to 4 years in prison in the Treblinka trial for complicity in a collective murder of at least 300,000 people, and in 1966 to 3 years in the Sobibór trial for murdering at least 57,000 people.
- 139 For the history of San Sabba and Einsatz R in Northern Italy, cf. e.g., FÖLKEL, Ferruccio: *La Riviera di San Sabba*. RCS Libri, Milano 2000; FRIEDLANDER, Henry: *The T4 Killers*; KOSCHAT, Michael: Das Polizeihäftlager in der Risiera di San Sabba und die deutsche Besatzungspolitik in Triest 1943-1945. *Zeitschrift für Zeitgeschichte*, 1992, Nr. 5-6, pp. 157-171 and SCALPELLI, Adolfo: *San Sabba: istruttoria e processo per il Lager della Risiera*, Vol. 1 and 2. Monadori, Milano 1988.
- 140 KLEE, Ernst: „Euthanasie“ im Dritten Reich, p. 331.
- 141 HHStAW, Abt. 631a, Archivnummer 1723, F. Suchomel's deposition, Munich 24 Oct 1960, p. 5.
- 142 Ibid., pp. 5-6.
- 143 HHStAW, Abt. 631a, Archivnummer 1732, F. Wolf's deposition, Hagen 3 Aug 1967, pp. 1-3.
- 144 *Verfahren Lfd. Nr. 642*, p. 153.
- 145 For more on their involvement in Italy, cf. e.g., SCALPELLI, Adolfo: *San Sabba: istruttoria e processo per il Lager della Risiera*, Vol. 2, pp. 184-186 and 188-189.



Former death camp at Treblinka in the summer of 1945.

Source: J. Gunkowski, A. Rutkowski: Treblinka

AGAINST TOTALITY



Ctirad Mašín at the Jamboree in France, August 1947.

Source: AZM

From War to War

THE ADOLESCENCE OF BROTHERS CTIRAD AND JOSEF MAŠÍN IN RECOLLECTIONS AND PHOTOGRAPHS

In 2013 it was 60 years since the torturous journey of the Mašín brothers and their friends to West Berlin, which had been preceded by armed resistance operations. In this paper we would like to explore that preceding period, when the youths were coming of age. Somewhat overshadowed by those events, it nevertheless formed their values, opinions and attitudes.

PETR BLAŽEK and JAROSLAV ČVANČARA

You don't understand everything now, but when you're older you surely will.
Josef Mašín, June 1942¹

Our exploration of this subject is primarily based on interviews we have carried out in the past with the Mašín brothers and others, including their schoolmates and friends and members of the Poděbrady Scout troop.² We also had access to the personal archives of members of the Mašín family, from which come the majority of the by and large previously unseen photographs and documents. We also went through the written sources held at the Security Services Archive³ and the National Archive⁴. We compared those recollections with several publications written about the Mašíns in the past, although most touched on our chosen theme only in passing.⁵

YOUTH IN PRAGUE DISTRICT OF LIBOC

The Mašín brothers' parents were extraordinary people and their fates greatly influenced their sons' views. Lieut. Col. Josef Mašín, born in Lošany near Kolín on 26 August 1896, came from an old farming family and graduated from agriculture college. During the First World War he went over to the Russian side from the Austrian Army after being captured and was decorated several times in the Czechoslovak Legions. On 25 February 1919 he was promoted to captain. After return-

ing to his homeland he received the Czechoslovak War Cross with three Linden branches, the Czechoslovak Revolutionary Medal and the Allied Medal. From spring 1929 he was deployed to the Jan Žižka of Trocnov 1st artillery regiment at Ruzyně, Prague, where he later became deputy commander. The family first lived in Prague's Břevnov before later moving to a single family home in Litovická St. in the Horní Liboc district, where Josef was close to the Ruzyně barracks.

Zdena Mašínová (née Nováková) was born in Olomouc on 20 May 1907. After school she studied geometry (civil engineering) at the Czech Technical University, becoming the first Czech woman to obtain a diploma in the field. On 15 June 1929 she married Josef Mašín. Three children were born to them: Ctirad on 11 August 1930 in Olomouc, Josef on 8 March 1932 in Prague and Zdena on 7 November 1933 in Prague. Josef was promoted for the final time that year, reaching the rank of lieutenant colonel.⁶ Lieut. Col. Mašín was one of the most active members of the local Sokol patriotic sports organization. He also got his sons involved: *We started going to Sokol in Liboc. I remember it with fondness. We modelled ourselves on Brother Kučík. He always had great leggings and he was excellent on the gym apparatus. He had an air of complete discipline. When on 15 March 1939 German brigades rolled in from Ruzyně airport to Prague, we were banned from*

contact with them, but to no avail. On the Ruzyně road stood a convoy of cars and motorbikes as far as the eye could see. We were checking out a motorbike with a sidecar and crew. They were taking a break and drinking coffee. One of them cordially offered us coffee, saying: coff-y, coff-y. But we gave him a hostile look and ignored the offer. Then the Gestapo started to visit us. Every time they stole whatever they felt like taking from our flat... But back to the Sokol. Later in Poděbrady it was really broadly focused. An attractive programme for all levels and age categories. We went twice a week and one of our instructors was the father of Zbyněk Janata⁷. I liked using the trampoline. Milan Paumer⁸ also used to go. We were in the same year. The exercise sessions were according to age. Milan's father went too. To me he was an old man. He had a bit of a belly but his leggings were always tight...⁹ Josef Mašín Sr. refused to hand over the Ruzyně barracks to the enemy and to the horror of some "realistic" officers began preparing to destroy the building. However, orders from above put the kibosh on his plan. He was demoted. In November 1939 he was pensioned off. In spring 1940 he went completely underground, joining a legendary anti-Nazi resistance group that became known as the Three Kings¹⁰ (Josef Mašín, Josef Balabán¹¹ and Václav Morávek¹²). He saw his family sporadically and clandestinely. The children experienced nightly raids by the Gestapo,



The wedding of Josef Mašín and Zdena Nováková took place at Olomouc Town Hall on 15 June 1929.
Photo: AZM



Ctirad, Josef and Zdena – the Mašíns' children in Liboc, 1934.
Photo: AZM



Josef Mašín's certificate of right of domicile, Lošany
26 October 1939.
Photo: AZM

who tried unsuccessfully to capture him for a long time. Radek or Radka, as Ctirad was called in the family, spent a lot of his time reading, a pastime that led him to adventure stories: *At the start of the war I had a subscription to Young Reporter. Rapid Arrows, Rychlonožka, Štětínáč. I remember it all. The Boys from Beaver River, Stínadla. I later read Karel May books. I read like crazy. Jules Verne: Captain Nemo, Twenty Thousand Leagues Under the Sea, Two Years' Vacation. I liked reading about Hussite history. Jirásek's Brotherhood. All kinds of illustrated history books on the Czech nation or the legends of castles and manor houses. There were things we couldn't bring home on pain of death. Pulp paperbacks and penny dreadfuls. Grandmother Emma said: "Get them out of here!" Then I got scarlet fever. I was in Bulovka hospital and in the room there was a whole pile of pulp paperbacks. I read them all, though none since that time. But I remember some lines, like: "Stranger, your Colt's hanging damn low!" They were something else...*¹³

THE OCCUPATION IN PODĚBRADY

In April 1940 the Protectorate authorities cut off Zdeňka Mašínová's husband's pension and she and the children were given 42 hours to vacate their state flat. They moved to a house on Na Chmelnici St. in the spa town of Poděbrady, where a family friend took them in. The elementary and secondary schools were in Poděbrady Chateau.

Little Zdena, who suffered from a congenital disease of the joints and was reliant on assistance after a series of operations, was wheeled to school and carried up its steps by her two brothers. They later travelled with their sister to a grammar school in Nymburk.¹⁴ On 18 February 1941, Mašín's mother Marie died. He wanted to say a final farewell but an intensification of searches at the house in Poděbrady made that impossible. Participation in her funeral was also out of the question. He therefore did not see his wife and children again until shortly before his arrest. On 13 May 1941 Mašín, Morávek and Peltán¹⁵ were broadcasting to London from the fourth floor of an apartment building in Prague's Nusle at 1238/19 Pod Terebkou St. (after the war it became Mašínova before after February 1948 being renamed Čiklova, a name it still bears). At that moment the Gestapo laid siege to the flat. In a shootout Mašín hit criminal secretary Georg Mischek and criminal employee Alfred Jäger. An intense fire exchange allowed Morávek and Peltán to escape, but he himself was shot and overpowered. His friends' attempts to free him were in vain. Two days later the Gestapo searched the Poděbrady flat and interrogated his wife. She was placed under arrest on 6 January 1942 and imprisoned at Prague's Karlovo náměstí before alternating between the Terezín small fortress and Pankrác jail. The children were looked after by

their grandmother Emma Nováková and servant Marie Neubauerová. In prison Zdena Mašínová met Milada Horáková, who had been arrested on 2 August 1940 for her activities in the resistance organisation We Shall Remain Loyal Petition Committee. Zdena was released on 5 August 1942, though she was kept under constant surveillance until the end of the war. Though she faced further arrest she did not stop working underground. In April 1943 she joined the Alex – Čejka resistance group in the Kolín area.¹⁶ Grandmother Emma Nováková did her best to replace the children's missing parents. She had the boys learn Russian and English, as their father had wished. They were taught Russian by Cpt. Vogt, a former army officer and evidently one-time legionnaire. Their English teacher was a Mrs. Friedmannová; as a Jew, she and her husband were sent to a concentration camp in 1943 and never returned to Poděbrady. Zdena Mašínová remembered years later that her brothers had regularly exercised under the supervision of their grandmother. The former Sokol member showed her grandsons various exercises on rings hanging above the stairway: *Even more remarkable was that grandmother, who was almost 65, managed to put on boxing gloves and take part in this "masculine sport" with her grandsons. It was great fun for me, as a spectator. I was able to wind them all up. The boys especially liked an original game that for some*

unknown reason they called “at the plate shop”; this consisted of turning out the lights in a darkened room and the boys and granny looking for each other in pitch darkness.¹⁷

At that time the Poděbrady Spa (Bad Podiebrad in German) served as a convalescence centre for German soldiers and youths. German children, recruited within the Kinderlandverschickung (KLV) programme, and soldiers occupied most of the spa buildings. The Mašín boys viewed them with malice to say the least.

The best villas and some spa buildings had been confiscated for Nazis and their families. The Hitler Youth, in grey shirts with tin drums and waving black flags with a rune, marching everywhere in units with lots of flags and drumming, most often six or eight abreast, meaning they took up the entire street. The first row was for the smallest with those behind them arranged by size, with the biggest at the rear. They all kept step with the little ones in front who banged on drums. They also had whistles and trumpets.

We disturbed the peace of those Germans living in Poděbrady and conscientiously made sure they weren't bored. For example, doorbells: We pressed on doorbells and stuck a little piece of wood cut into a wedge into the hole beside the button. This blocked it so the bell rang until somebody came and pulled out the stick. This we later refined: We rubbed the wedge with excrement. At the park there was a multi-story modern apartment building and Germans lived somewhere at the very top. One time we “did” the bell there in the usual way but then we went further and placed in front of the front door, which was locked, a large turd which we poured petrol on and set alight. Somebody ran down to unblock the bell and when they saw the fire on the ground tried to stamp it out! This may not have brought the Third Reich to its knees but it was a kind of water torture. There was a great shortage of food-stuffs. We raised rabbits and hens. We often went by bike to Lošany for supplies and sometimes for grain for the animals. Those trips were rather dangerous as there were checks on the roads and whoever was caught with supplies could have ended up on the gallows. Trips with a cargo always took place at night. You had to ride slowly and carefully, there could have been patrols at crossroads.



Josef as a schoolboy in 1944.

Photo: AZM

The journey took most of the night. Once when I was with Mom in Lošany a plane flew above the village at a great height. After a long while leaflets – sheets of paper – started falling to the ground. They were intended for Germans. We gathered up as many as we could and took them to Poděbrady to deliver them to where they were intended. Getting caught with something like that would have been a very serious business indeed. In Poděbrady we distributed the leaflets to all the places Germans were to be found – the station, the post office, etc. We even left a lot of them in the corridor of the building where the Wehrmacht leadership was based when the guards were out of the room.¹⁸ Summer 1944. On the other side of Poděbrady the railway line ran along a “game reserve”. One day explosions got off there. The entire area was surrounded by troops. It was said that a munitions train had gone on fire. When things had died down, we went there and saw the remains of a wagon and evidently a military unit for prisoners, skinny guys in German uniforms without weapons, belts or patches. They were picking stuff up and cleaning up. When they'd finished and gone away we went to see if anything was left for us. In the bushes by the fence of the reserve we found a completely unexploded artillery shell. On its tip it had a time fuse. It was misshapen by the explosion, which had thrown it quite a far away from the track and there were cracks in its body. I knew that a damaged grenade like that was highly dangerous, so I found a long pole,



Ctirad in a photo from 1942.

Photo: AZM

lay on the ground and poked it. When nothing happened I took the shell and made off with it. I had more luck than sense.

One clear day the radio announced a “Kampfverbande” over Reich territory. Hundreds of planes with stripes were visible at a great height. We counted more than 500 four-engines machines. It seemed that entire Earth was shaking and moving in rhythm. Then explosions started in the direction of Kolín. We said to ourselves that the refinery in Kolín was going to get it. When the planes disappeared there was a quiet rain of silver strips which they'd discharged to interfere with the German radars. Over the next several days we found in faraway fields huge craters from bombs that had fallen far from their targets. Maybe they were emergency drops. We also found several holes, about half a metre on average, from bombs that hadn't gone off. We planned to dig them up and use the explosives for sabotage.¹⁹

Prior to the May 1945 uprising, the Mašín boys – according to their mother's recollections – went off on scouting missions at nights, monitoring the movements of military transports, and during Allied air raids carried out sabotage on new German planes transported to the Kbely airfield by local rail. They destroyed their accompanying papers, cables and instruments. The railway and the light signals for trains were just a few hundred metres from their garden. With friends they would gather coal to throw at Czech engine drivers. They cut the brake cables and



Milan Paumer (marked by X) was confirmed in the Poděbrady congregation of the Evangelical Church in 1946. The clergyman Josef B. Jeschke stands in the centre.

Source: Archive of Stanislav Kaplan

damaged the bogies of German trains.²⁰ On the railway and at the station, which were near our house, it was possible to see transports of soldiers bound for the Eastern Front. The soldiers made long mats from wooden sticks held together by wire, rolling them into large rolls. This was a preparation for the Russian mud, where their operations had repeatedly got bogged down. The adjacent tracks were full of bullet-ridden locomotives. Their number grew, as they couldn't repair them all. We got into them and smashed up whatever we could.²¹

One day they spied by the tracks the motionless bodies of prisoners hurled off a moving train. However, they were not all dead. In March 1945 the thirteen-year-old Josef brought home two emaciated and desolate Russian POWs. They stayed with the Mašíns for several weeks. They spent the days in the kitchen, the fogged window of which overlooked a field. Because the Gestapo "visits" took place at night they slept in a hiding place in the skylight. The younger and healthier of the two joined up with the partisans via former colonel

František Vaněk, a member of Defence of the Nation who had not been apprehended. Once he was well enough, the second, Lieut. Stepan Romanovich Sannikov, was also taken to the partisans. He was captured on the way by the German military police but managed to escape during a transfer to Pardubice and made it back to Poděbrady. When the war ended he was hiding out in a forest bunker near Sokoleč along with three Jews, most likely Auschwitz escapees, who survived. Lieut. Sannikov turned up at the Mašíns' again in May 1945. The boys were greatly surprised that he did not wish to return home after years of wartime suffering and did not want to contact the Red Army. In reality all signs were he was afraid he would be sent to the Gulag as an unreliable. His fears were apparently justified. After he left to report to the Soviet command the Mašíns never heard another thing about him.²²

At the end of the uprising, convoys of Germans fled. Among them were Russians on jeeps. The Germans didn't shoot at them. One side fled, the other side chased them.

It was quite something. Then most of the Germans had left and only the stragglers were on the run. Suddenly we heard a volley from the Catholic church. We ran there to see what was going on. Apparently there were SS men there! We kept hearing "SS". But that was nonsense. What really happened, I don't know. To cut it short, we got there and there were Germans standing by the church with their hands up. Quite a scene. There were Russians and several Germans. One of them called desperately for somebody to help him and give him water. I was right by him. He was unarmed. A Russian came and straffed him. Exactly "according to" the Geneva Convention. Then a horse-drawn trailer came out of the chateau onto the square. It was full of naked corpses. Like we had seen from concentration camps. Perhaps they shot those Germans at the chateau. Who they were, how it happened and why they were done away with I never found out. Not that I was interested. I was unconcerned because I wasn't going to feel sorry for Germans after what they'd done through the entire war here! I know they took

them to a graveyard, where they dumped them in a mass grave. But I didn't see that. I heard that the next day people came and saw that one who was shot the day before was sitting there, because he wasn't dead. So they finished him off and buried him.²³

Along with classmates and other friends, Ctirad underwent an Evangelical Church confirmation in March 1945. Clergyman Josef B. Jeschke, who led the Evangelical congregation in Poděbrady from 1931 to 1964, wrote a passage from Proverbs to Ctirad on his journey through life on the ceremony's commemorative page: *The righteous will never be removed, but the wicked will not dwell in the land.*²⁴ The following year Josef Mašín and Milan Paumer were confirmed in the same parish.

AFTER THE WAR

In the first days after the war the family was uncertain as to whether their father would return. They then learned for the first time, from distant relative Jaroslav Tajovský, that Nazis executed him (by firing squad) on 30 June 1942 in Prague district of Kobylisy. Hope and uncertainty gave way to harsh reality. In the following weeks and months they gradually learned about the extent of their father's resistance activities. They still hoped, however, he would turn up alive in the end. Sometimes they received reports what he had been spotted among partisans. However, when his secret note of farewell was found in cell no. 10 at Pankrác (on the information of the wife of Vojtěch Vřňata, who in 1942 had been a cellmate of Lieut. Col. Josef Mašín) everything was clear. Zdena Mašínová held in her hands a letter intended as a legacy for the children in particular and containing the following words: *Unfortunately I have to leave you. You don't understand everything now but when you're older you surely will. [...] I didn't want you too to become captive slaves but rather remain free citizens. Remember that defending the freedom of your homeland and nation are the first responsibility of every conscious Czech. You too will have to act one day.*²⁵

For the children their father's life and heroic death became a bond that they took to their hearts as a creed for life. Ctirad was then 15 and Josef close to 14. Their grandmother Emma Nováková (67) saw her son Ctibor,



A postcard Ctirad Mašín sent from Jamboree in France to his grandmother, August 1947.



Source: AZM

known as Borek²⁶, return from a Nazi prison, though her brother Leopold Novák had died at Mauthausen. The forlorn Emma lived in Jeseník where she looked after Ctibor. She occasionally travelled to Poděbrady to see the three children. Zdena lived with her grandmother from autumn 1946 and later attended grammar school in Jeseník. Nováková subsequently decided to move to Prague's Dejvice district. When she was moving in one of her neighbours helped carry her furniture. He was the Sokol functionary Kučík, who had trained Ctirad and Josef at the Liboc branch.

Their father was celebrated after the war. His widow, 38, joined the Union of Liberated Political Prisoners. Like most of society, the Mašíns sympathised with the Soviet Union, which they regarded as their liberator from Nazi repression. Gradually, however, doubts and fears arose.

There were screenings for Russian soldiers at the Sokol hall in Poděbrady. One time they showed the Soviet film *She Protects the Homeland*. We crept in among them and saw a Russian film for the first time. It was so incredibly idiotic and exaggeratedly patriotic, about a woman who starts a partisan brigade. What a wonder woman! I remember to this day what she looked like. Such primitive propaganda. But the Russian soldiers enjoyed it, roaring, shouting, whistling and stamping their feet. As

boys who looked up to our liberators, we were quite taken aback. We said: Such a patriotic film and the soldiers behave like that! It struck us as odd, but they were apparently well used to such stupid propaganda.²⁷

When they started to form brigades to help in the border areas a family friend, Col. František Vaněk, created the 1st Czechoslovak George of Poděbrady Battalion. The unit of around 800 to 1,000 men set off for Liberec to provide security for the border and property and to carry out guard duty. Among them was Ctirad Mašín, 15.

At Liberec barracks there were weapons all over the place, loaded with shells. Everywhere. In the rooms. In the corridors. Outside a pile of assault guns. First thing when we got there everybody grabbed those weapons. They stuck the shells in their pockets. Some idiot apparently stuck some not only shells but detonators in his pocket. And it went off! It injured him. I remember his trousers were ripped to shreds. I think they sent him to hospital. We were in Liberec for a month or two. Nothing much happened there.²⁸

Some of the volunteers were then redeployed to Šumava, where they were to guard strategic buildings. The youngest "volunteer" Ctirad Mašín served in the battalion for a number of weeks.

In August 1945 a bust of the first Czechoslovak president, T. G. Masaryk, was unveiled in Poděbrady. The ceremony



Certificate of awarding of Czechoslovak Medal for Valour to Ctirad Mašín, 17 September 1946. Source: AZM

was attended by the French military attaché General Julien Flipo. The Mašín brothers spotted General Heliodor Píka, who had known their father in the legions, at the unveiling. Alongside other soldiers who had fought in foreign armies, 1st Lieut. Václav Korda a pilot who had received Britain's Distinguished Flying Cross, would occasionally appear in Poděbrady. In England he had been an officer of the 311th Czechoslovak Bomber Squadron and a flying instructor. He had also been a member of a Czechoslovak-Canadian crew that had been the first to fly across the Atlantic.

We knew Korda. He was around 40. He was a boss at Czechoslovak Airlines. I later met him in 1954 in New York, during our basic training at Fort Dix, on a visit to the Studlars. He then worked at Idlewild airport (Kennedy airport) for I think Delta Airlines, sorting baggage. He was a good friend of Karel "Charlie" Hora, who'd been in the Foreign Legion. Hora was also a friend of our uncle Borek. After the war we went bathing in the Čidlin together. Hora had a pretty French girlfriend, Claudette. Opposite the Sokol hall lived Fuku, Charlie Hora's mother. She was Japanese and liked us a lot. After 1948, Charlie returned to France.²⁹ Karel Čihák, who'd been at the same grammar school as us, followed him. Čihák was in the Foreign Legion in Vietnam, where he injured his spine in a parachute jump. He became the master of a train station



Zdena Mašínová (centre) in Lošany, 1948. Source: AZM

in Nice. Many years ago I visited him at the station, where he was running about with a station master's paddle³⁰.

UNDER THE JUNÁK FLAG

Scouting was very popular in Czechoslovakia after the war, in part due to the anti-Nazi position of many members. The number of Scouts was approaching 200,000. Ctirad and his friend Vladimír Hradec³¹ joined the 37th troop of the Poděbrady Rovers, lead by Mirek Trajhan, known as Ouřada. They became keen Scouts and took the scout oath: *I promise on my honour to the best of my ability: to love my homeland, the Republic of Czechoslovakia and to serve her faithfully at all times, to fulfil my own duties and to observe the Junák [Czech scouts] laws, to be ready body and soul to help others.* They devoted a great deal of time to scouting.

The Poděbrady scouts experienced something extraordinary on 2 September 1946 when at 11 a.m. the World Chief Guide, Lady Olave Baden-Powell, the wife of the founder of Scouting, Lord Robert Baden-Powell, came to the town. She visited several Bohemian, Moravian and Slovak cities and towns during an eight-day stay during which she and the commander of the Czechoslovak Junák scouts, Rudolf Plajner, were received by the Czechoslovak president, Edvard Beneš. In Poděbrady she took part in a ceremonial inspection of the scouts and toured a mod-

el camp. At 15:30 she left for Hradec Králové.

As one of the organisers of the visit and a member of Lady Baden-Powell's entourage I experienced boisterous enthusiasm everywhere the convoy, headed by a jeep with a scout flag, went. Including on a packed Poděbrady square under the statue of King George, where the provincial leader Dr. Ladislav Filip reported to the world leader, and during a tour of exemplarily represented troops, where one after the other they called out their cheer. After the tour of the model camp, there was a scouts lunch in the pride of the Poděbrady scouts: in a traditional wood-lined cottage and in the adjacent barn with a wonderful big fireplace and oak panelling, several hundred years old, lying on the course of the Elbe, and carved with scenes from the writings of E. T. Seton. I also, albeit only once and briefly, met the Mašín brothers. In front of a roaring fire, Brother Filip introduced them to the world leader as the sons of the resistance hero Colonel Josef Mašín. I believe they also recited in English the Rudyard Kipling poem If...³²

At that time Josef Mašín was in the first year at a boarding grammar school at Poděbrady Chateau named the King George of Poděbrady Central Bohemian College, which had been set up by teacher František Jahoda on the model of British public schools. It was also attended by his brother Ctirad and many others who were to become



Photograph of fifth class at the King George of Poděbrady Central Bohemian College, 1946/1947 academic year (Ctirad Mašín is marked by an X).

Source: AZM

well-known figures, including the film directors Miloš Forman and Ivan Passer and the playwright Václav Havel.³³ Their mother hoped the school would instil discipline in boys growing up without a father.³⁴

At that time Zdena Mašínová was presented with the Czechoslovak Medal of Merit, 1st degree, for her part in the anti-Nazi resistance.³⁵ On 17 September 1946 the president awarded the Czechoslovak Medal of Valour to Ctirad and Josef.³⁶ References to their father's heroism began to appear in books³⁷ while a street was named after him and a plaque placed on the building where the Gestapo had captured him after the shootout. On 19 February 1947 he was promoted in memoriam to brigadier general. In July of that year, on the 30th anniversary of the Battle of Zborov, Gen. Mašín received a Zborov medal in memoriam. On 7 September 1947 a modest memorial was unveiled in his native Lošany.³⁸

As a committed Scout Ctirad took part in forest brigade work, helping during the harvest. In 1937 his 37th troop spent several weeks in the Šumava, felling trees and digging up stumps. They then undertook a week-long trip along the border. Several times they crossed it but there was never any sign of border guards. After the removal of the German population the villages and country areas were abandoned and derelict. When the troops supplies ran

out there was nowhere to buy anything and the youths experienced genuine hunger. However, it was on this trip that Ctirad received wonderful news: He had been selected as a member of the Czechoslovak group for the first post-war scouting Mondial Jamboree de la Paix in France. Junák commander Dr. Rudolf Plajner and Major General Heliodor Píka came to see them off at the station. The jamboree took place in Moisson, northern France, from 9 to 18 August 1947.

Our special train with an incredible number of scouts, 500, crawled across Germany, that was bombed to bits. Everything was in ruins. The track was hemmed by broken wagons and locomotives. There were virtually no roofs. Just a kind of forest of chimneys. Everything smashed up. It was fine in France, except for the food. Our camp was by a little river. We slept in big, quadrangular army tents. I went to wash at the river but the water was totally muddy. You couldn't see a centimetre into the water. Nothing but mud! As I hadn't washed in ages I got in, to wash all over. The water was only up to the waist. Suddenly I hit something disgustingly gooey and slimy. I pulled it out and it was packages of dried fish, bound in wire. The organisers were soaking it in this filthy water, evidently so as to cook it later. This is what they wanted to feed us with! Incredible! On the other hand, the war had impoverished the country. Everything

was rationed. There simply wasn't food. The only thing you could eat was their bread, similar to what they call baguettes today. That was good. But otherwise the food was awful and I remember it to this day. The meat almost always stank. Once they gave us smoke meat that really stank. We were as hungry as dogs so we went to discuss it with Harry. He was one of our leaders. He was an old guy with sharp features. To us the young boys he was old. Maybe he wasn't even 30. He was a butcher in civilian life, from somewhere in Ostrava, I think. He took a sniff of that stinking meat said: "Yeah, it's OK!" So we mixed it with potato puree but still we had to chuck it out in the end. I also remember that there was a big craze for badges. Everybody wanted to get as many as possible from the scouts from other countries. All kinds of swaps took place. Some of our scouts were quite the collectors! They had piles of them. But I don't know what they swapped for them. I didn't have anything!³⁹

Following the jamboree Ctirad and the others travelled to Normandy. On the way the boys took a tour of the port at Cherbourg and places linked to the invasion. The rusting wrecks of boats and various kinds of military hardware made a powerful impression on him. As did the scent of the sea, the unfamiliar taste of salt water, sand dunes... However, as he had travelled to France from Šumava at short notice he was

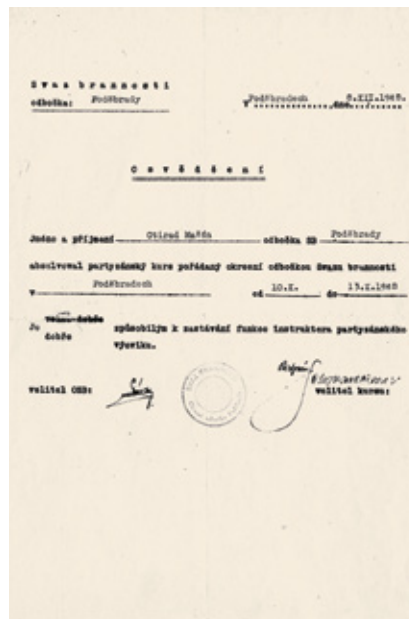


Results of a hunting exam test passed by Ctirad Mašín on 12 May 1949. Source: AZM

short of gear. He sewed an old German blanket into a sleeping bag but still he was cold at night. On top of that it rained the whole time, meaning all his stuff was wet. They then left for Paris, where the maritime museum made the biggest impression on Ctirad.

Josef also became a Junák member: *I also went to the scouts, but not as diligently as Radek. So I don't have so many memories of scouting. Just that we wore corduroy shorts and modified ex-Hitler Youth brown shirts. What was good was that I started learning Morse code in the scouts. I only managed to learn three letters - A, B, C - but I found that useful later in Communist prison. At the time I was down about not being able to go to the jamboree. They only took older boys. But the next year I was able to "serve" during the holiday in the 1st artillery regiment in Ruzyně. The commander was Colonel Svoboda. He had huge respect for our father. He was a former subordinate of General Studlar and both had served in Svoboda's eastern army. He offered to let me spend the summer with his regiment. I received a real uniform, travelled by jeep, slept in the barracks and even underwent field training. On our return, when we contacted Colonel Vaněk, we later considered beginning to cooperate with Colonel Svoboda, who under our plan would have played an important role in the case of an anti-communist uprising.⁴⁰*

The boys regularly exercised and went jogging. This is borne out not only by



Certificate of completion of sabotage course issued to Ctirad Mašín on 8 December 1948. Source: AZM

the well-known photo of them running by a water tower in the park in Poděbrady but also for instance a diploma Ctirad received in May 1947 for taking part in a Sokol festival for Czechoslovak school pupils; this involved a run from Poděbrady to Sadská.⁴¹ Josef also attended the Sokol competition and like Ctirad⁴² earned a Tyrš proficiency badge.⁴³ In this period Josef also spent a lot of time playing basketball with Milan Paumer and Zbyněk Janata.

Their mother, who was a great pianist, tried after the war to ensure that the boys got a musical education. Radek went to piano lessons and his brother Josef to violin. Milan Paumer accompanied him there. But like the rest of their friends, they were more interested in weapons and the Steyer car they'd put together from parts of three broken down cars from Germany. After school, when they weren't playing football, the Poděbrady boys were constantly playing with anti-tank and machine guns. Josef found a use for his empty violin case: When he wanted to practice shooting he carried a machine gun in it. He never developed the kind of relationship to classical music that his mother had hoped to instil in him.⁴⁴ The Mašíns' family album contains a picture of musclemen in wrestling tights and adorned with medals. One of them is Gustav Frištenský, multiple Czechoslovak champion and

professional champion of Europe in Greco-Roman wrestling. When it came out that he was financially supporting a resistance group in the Olomouc district he was arrested at Prague's Hotel Neptun and imprisoned for almost nine months. Almost 70, the strongman with the physique of an ancient statue later returned to the ring and defeated many younger opponents. In the same period he became a friend of Zdena Mašínová. The final years of his life were full of bitterness. After February 1948 a farmstead in Lužice that he had invested most of his money into became a state farm. The famous wrestler found himself virtually penniless and died completely forgotten in Litovel on 6 April 1957.

After the war Zdena Mašínová became a member of the National Front in Poděbrady representing a political prisoners organisation. At the call of the Communist Party, she joined the organisation soon afterwards. The step was not an expression of a defined political viewpoint but rather represented an effort to hold on to a certain position and influence in the Union of Liberated Political Prisoners and later the amalgamated Union of Freedom Fighters.

THE DIE IS CAST

After February 1948 representatives of the Communist regime launched a campaign against real and perceived opponents, carried out using brutal methods. The security forces employed any means whatsoever. They ruthlessly destroyed not only political but also other potential opponents. Democratic politicians and army and police officers were dismissed from their jobs, arrested forthwith and handed harsh sentences. Persecution of those who took part in the non-Communist anti-Nazi resistance grew, and whole families were thrown out of their homes.⁴⁵ The main aims of the new regime included ideological influence over children and advancing the policies of the governing party. Therefore, the largest physical exercise organisation, Sokol, and the Junák scouting organisation were a thorn in its side. Both had long traditions, tried and tested teaching methods and popularity among the public. The Communists regarded them as unwanted and dangerous competition. For that reason, purges of Sokol

and Junák began as early as during the events of February 1948. A conference was held at Prague's Radio Palace in 1949 at which youth organisations were amalgamated into the Czechoslovak Union of Youth (ČSM). A united children's organisation – the Pioneer organisation of the ČSM – was set up at the same time. The ČSM was a unit of the National Front and was run directly by the Communist Party. Other youth organisations were gradually destroyed. The official dissolution of Junák and the ceasing of its activities were officially announced in 1950.

*I was beside myself with rage when the Communists dissolved Junák, Sokol, the Catholic organisations YMCA and YWCA and other non-communist organisations. The only permitted youth organisation was the ČSM.*⁴⁶

The efforts of the Communists to discredit the national resistance also touched family friends of the Mašíns – their father's comrades from the Legions in Russia, the interwar army and the resistance. Many ended up in jail. Others, where possible, chose to leave their homeland. Nothing was said or written about the actions of Col. Josef Mašín and his friends. The official historiography began to exclusively credit resistance to members of the Communist Party. Their aim was not only to alter recent history to make the party the only positive force but also to severely discredit the non-communist resistance.

Under pressure from the National Committee, Zdena Mašínová had to move with her sons from the house on Na Chmelnici to an apartment building in the centre of town on a street renamed Gottwaldova. They later had to move to Činěves, about 20 km north of Poděbrady, where they lived in utterly unsuitable conditions.

The beginnings of the Mašín brothers' illegal activities can be dated to this period of intensifying repression at the turn of 1948 and 1949. In the early phase, their anti-regime actions comprised small acts of sabotage, breaking the windows of committed party types, writing slogans and flyers and destroying party agitprop notice boards.⁴⁷ They did so in a spontaneous, unplanned and random way. They were motivated by the glorious legacy of the anti-Nazi resistance. In the style of the Three Kings, they started to wrap



Ctirad and Josef Mašín and Milan Paumer in the Poděbrady park, around 1950.

Source: Karel Vacek

ammunition from rotary cannon in asphalt and soot and on their way home from school throw it, so disguised, into the coal tenders of steam engines. However, they lacked the know-how to carry out more ambitious operations. As a guerrilla activity, they regarded disrupting the enemy's infrastructure as the most effective and suitable tactic. This led Ctirad to sign up to a special course in sabotage organised by the Military Skills Union in Poděbrady. The course was run by a committed communist, evidently a former partisan. It was focused against "reactionaries": saboteurs and Western agents. In view of what followed, the course, though short (it ran from 10 to 13 October 1948) turned out to be very useful. Ctirad not only acquired a certificate that he is *well qualified for the position of sabotage instructor*⁴⁸ – his expertise and experience were valuable to himself and the others during their more intense operations later. It never occurred to the party faithful instructor whom he was actually training.

The Mašín brothers, along with brothers Vladimír and Jiří Hradec and Zdeněk Procházka, focused on acquiring various firearms and ammunition. The core of their arsenal was weapons they had found after the end of the war (they also had several guns left by their father): *Discarded weapons and the abandoned vehicles of the fleeing Wehrmacht were strewn about the whole country. Anti-aircraft projectiles lay in*

*fields and by roads. There were 30mm anti-aircraft machine guns at the railway station and large amounts of ammunition, just as the Germans had left them. It was like a supermarket.*⁴⁹ That is how Vladimír Hradec remembered it. They created a covert shooting range in the cellar of the Hradec family's house. They trained with live ammunition. An interest in weapons was also evidently the reason Ctirad Mašín took *with very good results* an exam in hunting in front of the commission of the Poděbrady District Hunting Association on 12 May 1949.⁵⁰

The family's dire experiences only deepened the two brothers' antipathy to the totalitarian regime and they gradually became more radical. Like a large part of the population, they expected a new military conflict to break out. Their position was also strongly influenced by the forced collectivisation of the countryside, which impacted numerous family friends and acquaintances, including their relatives the Švéda family from Lošany.⁵¹ In spring 1949, their family friend Brig. Gen. Jan Studlar⁵² was sentenced, though he managed to escape across the border shortly after his release. Brig. Gen. Josef Mrázek was not so fortunate. He received a long jail term in a show trial. Another acquaintance, Brigadier General Karel Kutlvašr, got life in a maximum security prison. Soon after February 1948, Milada Horáková, a friend and co-prisoner



Caricature of Ctirad Mašín from graduation tableau, June 1950.

Source: Archive of Vladimír Novotný

of Zdena Mašínová, was stripped of political and public office and forced to resign as an MP. In autumn 1949 she and a number of friends, political associates and acquaintances were arrested. Zdena Mašínová protested publicly against this step; as a result, she herself was added to the list of inconvenient persons. After a trial accompanied by a powerful propaganda campaign, Milada Horáková was hanged in the early hours of 27 June 1950 together with Jan Buchal, Závaš Kalandra and Oldřich Pecl. Their executions, like the liquidation of other members of the elite of the nation (army officers were gradually hanged, including Gen. Heliador Píka, Maj. Miloslav Jebavý, Col. Josef Gonic, Col. Vilém Sok, Cpt. Karel Sabela, Col. Květoslav Prokeš, Maj. Miroslav Plešmíd, General Staff Maj. Jaromír Nechanský, Lieut. Col. František Skokan and Maj. Claudius Šatana⁵³) and the trials of hundreds of scouts, many of whom were charged with espionage and sentenced as enemies of the nation to long years in maximum security prisons, made a deep impression on the outlook of the Mašín brothers. Their mother increasingly showed signs of protracted health problems. She underwent intestinal surgery several times between 1951 and 1954 but this did not cure her digestive problems (she later experienced them again in prison, when serious stomach problems recurred).⁵⁴

Ctírad Mašín graduated from secondary school in June 1950, when Milada Horáková's trial was still going on. In a caricature for a group tableau of his year, he is depicted as a lover of technology and weapons – in one hand he holds a wrench, in the other an anti-tank gun. Beside every caricature one sentence sums up the graduates. Ctírad's makes a joke about his frequent absences from class: *Guys, I'm going home... tell them... that I'm going to the office.*⁵⁵ Planning after graduating to follow the example of his father and uncle and become an officer in the Czechoslovak Army, he sent at an application to the military academy in Hranice. However, it was rejected. With the help of good family friends he at least got into the Faculty of Mechanical and Electrical Engineering at the Czechoslovak Technical University in Prague. On 10 October 1950 he was called before the People's Court in Poděbrady where he received a two-month suspended sentence for wilfully damaging a tractor during a summer work brigade.⁵⁶ He also had problems with the father of a Poděbrady youngster he had a fight with: *When we went dancing at the old bank, we were usually in the company of our classmates from the boarding school, which didn't go down well with a group of boys who didn't go to school (undeclared class war) and threatened us on our way home as individuals. This happened several times.*



Josef Mašín in his graduation photo, 1951.

Source: AZM

*One day, though, we were ready for this. We caught a few of those guys and beat them up on Jiřího square in front of the old bank on the other side of the road, by the chateau wall. I think that the father of one of those guys, a kind of local ruffian named Čulda, the leader of a gang who set upon people, later complained about Radek to the National Committee, saying his son had been beaten and that Radek had dragged him along by his feet. Apart from a few bruises, nothing happened to him, so nothing came of the whole thing. Later the problems died down.*⁵⁷

Josef graduated a year later. His chances of studying at the military academy were also slim. Offered only menial work, he decided to apply himself at the forestry authority in Jeseník. At this time Zbyněk Roušar⁵⁸, who had got to know Zdena Mašínová, began to appear increasingly often at the Mašín household and later took part in resistance activities.

The Mašín brothers and their friends engaged in resistance out of a deep-seated antipathy to the new regime, which they decided to do harm to by all means possible. They declared a tough and uncompromising fight against their enemies. From autumn 1951 this moved beyond destroying notice boards and writing slogans. They took their resistance with deadly seriousness. They replied to the terror of the governing regime with weapons. Their starting point was their experi-

ences of World War II and they planned numerous diversions and acts of sabotage, including terrorist acts. They planned to disrupt the economy, spread disquiet among communists and not only to attack small and isolated police stations: They also intended the physical liquidation of several high-ranking communists, as attested to not only by the interrogation reports of the State Security but also the recollections of both brothers.

However, their first operation to acquire weapons was not altogether successful. Weapons taken from the Poděbrady museum were not useable as they lacked breech blocks. It is not clear when that event took place.⁵⁹ The robbery of a Military Skills Union store had a similar outcome. To engage in meaningful resistance the Mašíns needed modern pistols and machine guns. Even though the group's chief aim was to overthrow the regime

from within, not to kill, its members soon found themselves in a situation where, as they put it, there was only one alternative: either us or them! On 13 September 1951 the Mašíns brothers, accompanied by their friend Milan Paumer, launched an armed assault on a communist National Security Corps station in Chlumec nad Cidlinou. The die was cast.

NOTES

- 1 Quote from a secret note from Josef Mašíns, written from his death cell as a final message to his children. NĚMEČEK, Jan: *Mašínové. Zpráva o dvou generacích*. Torst, Prague 1998, p. 131.
- 2 Articles based on these interviews have already been published, including BLAŽEK, Petr: "I ran as fast as the wind": The resistance activities of Ctirad Mašíns at the Jáchymov labour camp. In: VEBER, Václav – BUREŠ, Jan and Coll.: *Třetí odboj. Kapitoly z dějin protikomunistické rezistence v Československu v padesátých letech 20. století*. Institute for the Study of Totalitarian Regimes – Metropolitan University Prague – Vydavatelství a nakladatelství Aleš Čeněk, Prague – Pilsen 2010, pp. 222–241; ČVANČARA, Jaroslav: We serve our nation: The adventures of Ctirad and Josef Mašíns and Milan Paumer in the US Army. *Paměť a dějiny*, 2011, year 5, no. 1, pp. 100–117.
- 3 In particular the State Security (StB) investigation file – *Security Services Archive* (hereinafter only ABS), collection (hereinafter only f.) Investigation files – HQ (Ministry of the Interior MV-V) a. no. V-2452 MV, Ctibor Novák and Co.
- 4 In particular the court records of the trial of Ctibor Novák and Co. *National Archive* (hereinafter NA), f. Supreme Court in Prague, file number (hereinafter only sp. zn.) 1T1/55.
- 5 For more see on the hitherto literature on the Mašíns brothers group see the bibliography in the book MAŠÍN, Ctirad – MAŠÍN, Josef – PAUMER, Milan: *Cesta na severozápad*. Academia, Prague 2010, pp. 12–13. The hitherto discussion on this subject is interpreted, unfortunately very one-sidedly, in ŠVĚDA, Josef: *Mašínovský mýtus. Ideologie v české literatuře a kultuře*. Pistorius & Olšanská, Příbram 2012.
- 6 For more on the life of Lieut. Col. Josef Mašíns and his wife see for instance NĚMEČEK, Jan: *Mašínové. Zpráva o dvou generacích*.
- 7 Zbyněk Janata was born on 1 February 1933 in Bartoušov. He went to a technical high school. He first worked as a labourer at the Kladno steel mills before later becoming a technical official at the Kovolis national enterprise in Hedvikov. He took part in the raid on the National Security Corps station in Čelákovice. In Olomouc he planned an attack on National Security Corps officers. He provided Josef Mašíns with information on the Kovolis wages and took part in the theft of explosives from the Kaňk mine. He was caught after a shootout at the train station in the East German town of Uckro on 11 October 1953 and was extradited along with Václav ŠvĚda to Czechoslovakia. The Supreme Court in Prague sentenced him to death in a trial held from 25 to 28 January 1955. He was hanged at Prague's Pankrác prison on 2 May 1955.
- 8 Milan Paumer was born on 7 April 1931 in Kolín but grew up in Poděbrady. He studied to be a machine locksmith in Čelákovice and later graduated from the Kolín technical secondary school. He got to know the Mašíns brothers soon after their arrival from Prague: *Milan Paumer first came to our place in, I think, 1942. His father, who was a Sokol functionary in Poděbrady and director of the local economic cooperative, sent him. He brought us some food*. CHALUPOVÁ, Markéta: *Nebojovali švestkovými knedlíky. Odbojová skupina bratří Mašínsů v zrcadle dobového tisku*. Computer Press, Brno 2011, p. 163. In September 1951 he was the driver during attacks on the National Security Corps station in Chlumec nad Cidlinou and Čelákovice. From October 1952 he did his basic military service. Along with the Mašíns brothers he left in autumn 1953 for West Berlin and from there to the US. In 1954–1959 he served in the US Army (Korea 1956–1957). After his discharge he entered business, mainly in Florida, where he ran a taxi firm. In 2001 he returned to the Czech Republic for good. He died in Prague on 22 July 2010. At his funeral, representatives of the then government coalition said they would support a law on participants in the resistance and opposition to the communist regime; it was approved a year later.
- 9 Email correspondence between Josef Mašíns and Jaroslav Čvančara, 17 December 2010.
- 10 For more see KETTNER, Petr – JEDLIČKA, Ivan Milan: *Tři kontra Gestapo*. Albatros, Prague 2003.
- 11 Lieut. Col. Josef Balabán was born in June 1894 in Oboř-Suchdol. He served as an artilleryman in the Czechoslovak Legions in Russia. After the war he held several army posts and served in the 2nd intelligence department at the Ministry of National Defence. After the occupation he, Lieut. Col. Mašíns and Staff Cpt. Morávek set up a centre for other intelligence and sabotage groups. The Gestapo and Sicherheitsdienst were very keen to catch the Three Kings. Balabán was arrested with the help of the informer Nerad on 22 April 1941. On 3 October 1941 he was shot dead at Ruzyně barracks. For more on his life see KOURA, Petr: *Podplukovník Josef Balabán. Život a smrt velitele legendární odbojové skupiny „Tři králové“*. Rybka Publishers, Prague 2003.
- 12 Staff Cpt. Václav Morávek was born in Kolín on 8 August 1904. He studied at the Military Academy in Hranice na Moravě, where he passed out as an artillery lieutenant in 1925. He served in Olomouc at the 107th artillery regiment. After being demobbed in 1939, when he was employed at the office of labour in Kolín, he began working with Mašíns and Balabán. Following their capture he remained alone. He attempted to maintain contact with the important agent A-54. He shot his way out of a number of hopeless seeming situations. For instance, during a shootout with the Gestapo on 20 December 1941, that he managed to escape from, according to German investigators he fired 200 rounds! He died on 21 March 1942 in a shootout at Prague's Prašný most bridge, leaving the Gestapo with nothing but his corpse. For his life story see ČERMÁK, Vilém: *Muž proti okupaci. Portrét státního kapitána Václava Morávka*. Nava, Pilsen 2007.
- 13 Interview conducted with Ctirad Mašíns in Cleveland by Olga Bezděková, Petr Blažek and Jaroslav Čvančara, 2–13 September 2010 (hereinafter only Cleveland interview).
- 14 For more see MAŠÍNOVÁ, Zdena – MARTIN, Rudolf: *Čtyři české osudy. Tragický úděl rodiny Mašínovy*. Paseka, Prague – Litomyšl 2001, pp. 64–65.
- 15 Sergeant František Peltán was born in Jindřichův Hradec on 1 April 1913. He trained as an upholsterer. From 1933 he served in the army, where he received radiotelegraphy training. After March 1939 he became active in the Defence of the Nation resistance group, maintaining communications with the exile government in London. He worked officially as an assistant clerk at a mental institution in Prague's Kateřinky district. In spring 1941 he became a close collaborator of Lieut. Col. Josef Balabán and operated the Sparta II transmitter. He succeeded in escaping besiegement several times. However, on 11 June 1942 he was shot and arrested after a meeting that had been betrayed. He was taken to an SS military hospital in Podolí, where he succumbed to his wounds on 20 July 1942.
- 16 NĚMEČEK, Jan: *Mašínové. Zpráva o dvou generacích*, p. 156.
- 17 MAŠÍNOVÁ, Zdena – MARTIN, Rudolf: *Čtyři české osudy. Tragický úděl rodiny Mašínovy*, pp. 39–41
- 18 Cleveland interview.
- 19 Ibid.
- 20 MAŠÍNOVÁ, Zdena – MARTIN, Rudolf: *Čtyři české osudy. Tragický úděl rodiny Mašínovy*, p. 88.
- 21 Cleveland interview.
- 22 NĚMEČEK, Jan: *Mašínové. Zpráva o dvou generacích*, pp. 156–159.
- 23 Cleveland interview.
- 24 Archive of Zdena Mašínová (hereinafter only AZM), In memory of confirmation, 18 March 1945.
- 25 NĚMEČEK, Jan: *Mašínové. Zpráva o dvou generacích*, p. 131.
- 26 Major Ctibor ("Borek") Novák, intelligence officer, was born on 25 October 1902 in Prague. He was married and had a child. He introduced his sister Zdena Mašínová's husband to his friend from the Military Academy in Hranice, Cpt. Václav Morávek. He was said to have played a role in the bombing of the Berlin Ministry of Aviation on 15 September 1939 and of the police presidium half an hour later. He attempted to get abroad (via Yugoslavia) but was arrested by the Gestapo and imprisoned at Hameln near Hannover. His imprisonment left him with a serious nervous disease. He was a member of the Communist Party

- of Czechoslovakia from 1945–1950. After WWII he served in the Czechoslovak Army and organised the removal of Germans. He was accused in this regard of the brutal treatment of Germans interned in the Frývaldov area. On 27 July 1945 he ordered the execution of two minors, brothers Richard and Rudolf Hauk, who had escaped from an internment camp. In April 1950 he was discharged from the army. He was arrested on 26 November 1953. The Supreme Court in Prague sentenced him to death in the trial of collaborators and relatives of the Mašín brothers group, which ran from 25–28 January 1955. He was hanged at Prague's Pankrác prison on 2 May 1955. For more on the Mašín's fates, see MAŠINOVÁ, Zdena – MARTIN, Rudolf: *Čtyři české osudy. Tragický úděl rodiny Mašínovy*, pp. 155–245; CHOCHOLATÝ-GRÖGER, Franz: *Internční tábory na Frývaldovsku a činnost kpt. Ctibora Nováka*. See: <http://sudetenland.cz/internacni-tabory-na-frývaldovsku-a-činnost-kpt-ctibora-novaka/> (quoted as of 25 August 2013).
- 27 Cleveland interview.
- 28 Ibid.
- 29 Karel "Charlie" Hora was born on 2 December 1908 in Yokohama. His father was Czech while his mother was Japanese. He attended grammar schools in Nymburk, Hradec Králové and Prague. After graduating from reserve officer school in Košice he was promoted to sub-lieutenant. In 1933 he set up a company in Ecuador before in 1938 deciding to return to his homeland at the time of Munich. On 4 April 1939 he joined the French Foreign Legion. He served in Sidi Bel Abbas. After the assault on France he was caught up in fighting in retreat and injured. He was pensioned off as a 60-percent invalid. After the occupation of the rest of France by the Germans in November 1942 he crossed the Pyrenees into Spain, where he was arrested and imprisoned. He managed to escape and reached England in August 1943. As he was not accepted into the Czechoslovak Army he joined de Gaulle's Free French Forces. In spring 1944 he underwent parachute training in England and on 12 August 1944 was dropped into France, where he carried out guerrilla operations with the partisans. He received the French Legion of Honour and the US Silver Star. On 30 June 1945 he landed at Prague airport. He underwent a seven-month course at the École militaire in Paris and in 1947 completed his studies at military college in Prague. In autumn 1948 he again joined the Foreign Legion, serving in Vietnam, Korea, Morocco and Algeria. He was demobbed on 22 May 1961. He died on 8 August 1989. He is the author of the memoir *Moje matka cizinecká legie* (Sixty-Eight Publishers, Toronto 1977).
- 30 Email correspondence between Josef Mašín and Jaroslav Čvančara, 17 December 2010.
- 31 Vladimír Hradec was born on 30 May 1931 in Poděbrady. After graduating from grammar school he worked as a laboratory assistant at the company Koramo. From 1951 he studied at Prague's Institute of Chemical Technology. He became the armourer of the Mašín brothers group, hiding weapons acquired during holdups. He got chloroform for Ctirad, supplied potassium cyanide and took part in the robbery of the Kaňk mine. He created radio sets for communication that were in the end not used. He was arrested on 25 November 1953. He was sentenced to 22 years in prison for treason, espionage and theft of national property. He was released after 11 years.
- 32 Email correspondence between Jaroslav Čvančara and Jiří Navrátil, 22. 1. 2011. The current first deputy mayor of the Junák scouts Jiří Navrátil remembered that the director of the International Bureau, the coordinator of the scouting movement, Col. John Skinner "Belge" Wilson, a close colleague of the founder of scouting, Baden-Powell also took part in the visit to Czechoslovakia lasting from 25 April to 6 May 1947. During WWII he organised the training of Norwegian paratroopers in Scotland.
- 33 For the history of the school see MAREČEK, Jiří: The George of Poděbrady Central Bohemian College – the story of a "better school". In *Vlastivědný zpravodaj Polabí*, 1999, no. 33, pp. 130–136.
- 34 MASIN, Barbara: *Odkaz. Pravdivý příběh bratří Mašínů*. Mladá fronta, Prague 2005, p. 64–65.
- 35 See *Osobní věstník MNO*, no. 88 (1946), p. 921.
- 36 Ibid, p. 925. The document on the awarding of the medals was signed by the minister of national defence, Gen. Ludvík Svoboda. AZM, Certificate of awarding of Czechoslovak Medal for Valour, 17 September 1946.
- 37 Shortly after the end of the war the memoirs of the Lošany head teacher were published. Compare PROCHÁZKA, Jaroslav: *Sestupme ke kořenům. Příspěvek ke kronice rodu Mašínů*. MNV, Lošany u Kolína 1947.
- 38 See NĚMEČEK, Jan: *Mašínové. Zpráva o dvou generacích*, pp. 164–166.
- 39 Cleveland interview. On the jamboree in France in 1947 compare the recollections of Václav Veber: BLAŽEK, Petr – SVOBODA, Libor: I avoided collective work – a biographical interview with Václav Veber in *Soliter. Pocta historikovi Václavu Veberovi*. Institute for the Study of Totalitarian Regimes, Prague 2012, p. 10.
- 40 Email correspondence between Josef Mašín and Jaroslav Čvančara, 17 December 2010.
- 41 AZM, Diploma from a meeting ahead of a Czechoslovak schools festival of exercise in Prague, May 1947.
- 42 Ibid, Diploma on the presentation of the Tyrš proficiency badge to Ctirad Mašín, 31. May 1950.
- 43 MAŠINOVÁ, Zdena – MARTIN, Rudolf: *Čtyři české osudy. Tragický úděl rodiny Mašínovy*, p. 103.
- 44 MASIN, Barbara: *Odkaz. Pravdivý příběh bratří Mašínů*, p. 65–66.
- 45 For more see BLAŽEK, Petr: Political repression in communist Czechoslovakia 1948–1989. In: ŽÁČEK, Pavel – KOŠICKÝ, Patrik – GULDANOVÁ, Eva (eds.): *Moc versus občan. Úloha represie a politického násilí v komunizme. Zborník z medzinárodného seminára*. Nation's Memory Institute, Bratislava 2005, p. 8–22.
- 46 Cleveland interview.
- 47 Compare BURSÍK, Tomáš: The third resistance and the Mašín brothers group. In: MAŠÍN, Ctirad – MAŠÍN, Josef – PAUMER, Milan: *Cesta na severozápad*, p. 27; CHALUPOVÁ, Markéta: *Nebojovali švestkovými knedlíky. Odbojová skupina bratří Mašínů v zrcadle dobového tisku*, p. 32.
- 48 AZM, Certificate on completion of sabotage course, 8 December 1948.
- 49 MASIN, Barbara: *Odkaz. Pravdivý příběh bratří Mašínů*, p. 63.
- 50 AZM, Results of hunting exam, 12 May 1949.
- 51 Václav Švéda was born in Pivín on 26 April 1921. After the occupation he attempted to leave to join the nascent Czechoslovak overseas army. He was arrested but managed to escape. While crossing the German-Swiss border he was again arrested and sentenced by a People's Court in Berlin to 15 years in a maximum security jail in 1942. He was released from Brandenburg prison in April 1945. After undergoing basic military service he ran a farm in Lošany that was confiscated by the regime at the start of the 1950s. He and his wife Ludmila, the adopted daughter of relatives of Lieut. Col. Mašín, and their minor children were forcibly moved. He worked as a short-term labourer, an assistant labourer and driver's mate. He took part in the Mašín brothers' resistance activities, including the hold-up of the wages vehicle in Hedvíkov. He was responsible for the group's theft of donarite from the Kaňk mine and also took part in the burning of hayricks in the Kroměříž district. He was shot and wounded on 17 October 1953 during the escape to West Berlin and subsequently arrested. He was then extradited to Czechoslovakia. The Supreme Court in Prague sentenced him to death after a trial running from 25 to 28 January 1955. He was hanged at Prague's Pankrác prison on 2 May 1955. The communist regime also took revenge on his family. They were arrested on 25 November 1953. Later his father František was sentenced to 15 years in prison, while his brothers Vratislav and Zdeněk got 20 years and his wife 18 years.
- 52 Gen. Jan Studlar was born on 14 May 1896 in Čichtice near Bavorov. In the First Republic he served alongside Lieut. Col. Josef Mašín in the artillery in České Budějovice. In March 1939 he hid weapons and explosives and helped create the intelligence structure of Defence of the Nation. In December 1939 he went to the French consulate in Budapest and joined the secret, so-called export group. After it was exposed he escaped in time to France, where in Sigeau he took command of the 1st artillery brigade. After the fall of France he sailed to the UK on a transport. In 1943 he was transferred to the USSR as artillery commander of the 1st Czechoslovak independent brigade, which took part in the battles of Bila Tserkva and Zhashkov. Despite his previous achievements he was expelled from the USSR on the decision of the NKVD. He later served as an instructor at a British artillery training ground in Egypt and subsequently became commander of the Czechoslovak military mission at the main partisan staff in Slovenia, Yugoslavia. He returned to his homeland in May 1945. As politically unreliable he was pensioned off in 1949, before being arrested soon afterward. On 23 April 1949 the State Court in Prague sentenced him to 10 years in a maximum security prison while he was demoted to reserve soldier. After his release he managed through a stroke of good fortune to escape from Czechoslovakia with his wife. He worked as a surveyor in the USA. He died in New York on 17 July 1969.
- 53 For more PEJČOCH, Ivo: *Vojáci na popravišti. Vojenské osoby, popravené v Československu z politických důvodů v letech 1949–1966 a z kriminálních příčin v letech 1951–1985*. Svět křídel, Cheb 2011.
- 54 Zdena Mašínová was arrested on 26 November 1953. She was held in solitary confinement in a concrete cell. Accused of faking illness, she was repeatedly refused medical assistance. She was originally included in an arraignment with the others arrested in connection with the Mašín brothers' resistance group. She was accused of the crime of awareness of their activities and aiding them (in reality her sons had done everything possible to protect her and had on principle refused to tell her what they were doing). She was tried separately for health reasons. The Supreme Court in Prague sentenced her on 3 June 1955 to 25 years in prison and other sanctions (the death penalty had originally been proposed). Zdena Mašínová died on 12 June 1956 in Pankrác prison hospital of bowel cancer with metastasis to the liver and mesentery. For more on the life of MAŠINOVÁ, Zdena – MARTIN, Rudolf: *Čtyři české osudy. Tragický úděl rodiny Mašínovy*, pp. 55–153.
- 55 A copy of the tableau is preserved in the personal archive of Vladimír Novotný, Ctirad's classmate.

- 56 The People's Court in Poděbrady handed down the suspended sentence on 9 April 1953. NA, f. Corrections Directorate – unprocessed, Personal prison file of Ctirad Mašín, A07159, Decree of the People's Court in Poděbrady chaired by Dr. Pichl, sp. zn. T 137/50, 9 April 1953. For more see BLAŽEK, Petr: „*Proběhl jsem rychle oblakem*“. *Odbojové aktivity Ctirada Mašína v jáchymovském lágru*, pp. 222–241.
- 57 Email correspondence between Josef Mašín and Jaroslav Čvančara, 7 October 2011.
- 58 Zbyněk Roušar was born Panenský Týnec on 1 April 1908. He graduated from the Military Academy in Hranice na Moravě. In 1937 he was appointed to the International Commission for Spain. In May 1939 he crossed the border into Poland. He sailed on the ship Chrobry for France and joined the Foreign Legion. When war broke out he returned from Oran in Algeria to the Czechoslovak overseas units in France, with whom he took part in fighting in retreat. After the defeat of France he got to the UK on a boat transport and joined the Czechoslovak army there. After the war he became an intelligence officer. In March 1946 he was named consul to the Belgian Congo. Though he had been a member of the Czechoslovak Communist Party since 1945, he was dismissed from the post in 1950. He worked as an assistance maintenance man at the MEVA, a state-owned company in Chomutov. He may not have played a direct part in resistance activities but he did serve as treasurer and prepare the departure of the Mašín brothers and their cohorts to the US Army. He was arrested on 26 November 1953 and sentenced to life in prison for treason and espionage. He was amnestied in the mid 1960s.
- 59 An unsigned document in the archive of the Polabské Museum in Poděbrady records an attempted robbery at the start of October 1946. No weapons were stolen: *On the night of 3 and 4 October there was an attempted intrusion of the museum and an attempt to open closed weapons display case no. 118*. See *Polabské Museum, Poděbrady*, Report on the activities of archivists for the month of September for a committee meeting on 11. 10. 1946. According to the museum historian Dr. Helena Lipavská, who Petr Blažek personally spoke to at the Polabské Museum in the presence of Milan Paumer in August 2009, the entry was evidently written by then museum employee Jaromír Pícka. From the entry it is not clear what weapons were in the display case. However, the Mašín brothers and Milan Paumer ruled out the possibility that they had taken them from the museum before autumn 1948. Compare KAČOR, Miroslav: *Svědění hrdinů. Jiná tvář odbojové skupiny bratří Mašínů*. Rybka Publishers, Prague 2009, p. 19 and 196.

THE STORY OF THE 20TH CENTURY



A newlywed couple at the Colmar-Berg castle, 29 October 1930.

Source: SOA Treboň

You Want to Rob Me...

PROPERTY PERSECUTION OF ADOLF SCHWARZENBERG DURING AND AFTER THE WAR

The life story of Adolf Schwarzenberg reflects the complex fates of members of the Czech nobility in the 20th century. Their relationship to the Czechoslovak Republic, in which they lost their privileges and a substantial part of their property, developed gradually, but they did not hesitate to show their loyalty in the most dangerous times. During Nazi occupation Adolf Schwarzenberg was punished with confiscation of his property for his fidelity to the Czech state and nation and for his resistance to the Nazi regime. Therefore, he had a deep sense of grievance that his property was not returned to him after the Second World War. In 1947 the property of the Schwarzenberg primogeniture was expropriated for the second time, but this time by the state for which Adolf Schwarzenberg did so much in difficult times.

DITA JELÍNKOVÁ

He was born on 18 August 1890 in Hluboká nad Vltavou, as the first of eight children of Johann Nepomuk II, Prince of Schwarzenberg (1860–1938), and his wife Therese, née Trautmannsdorf-Weineberg (1870–1945).¹ From the beginning, as the eldest son, he was destined to take on the large family estates of the Schwarzenberg primogeniture, including valuable art collections. At the beginning of the 20th century the primogeniture branch of the Schwarzenberg family owned the estates of Chýnov at Tábor, Cítoliby in North Bohemia, Hluboká nad Vltavou, Jinonice at Prague, Mšec at Slaný, Český Krumlov, Dlouhá Ves at Sušice, Libějice at Prachatice, Lovosice, Netolice, Postoloprty, Protivín, Horní Planá, Vimperk and Třeboň.² It was about 176,000 hectares of land, twenty-two castles, ninety-six districts, a hundred and fifty farmsteads, as well as two sugar refineries, sixteen breweries, nineteen brickworks and other businesses.³ The future heir was raised in a traditional aristocratic style. After completion of home education Adolf attended the six-year Benedictine gymnasium in Vienna and then studied for two years in

Feldkirch, where he passed the final examinations in 1908. Until 1909 he studied philosophy at Stonyhurst, a British boarding school.⁴ After the secondary school leaving examination he enlisted as a one-year volunteer in the imperial army, and he was drafted in June 1910.⁵ Having completed military training, he began studying at the Law Faculty of the Charles University, where he received a Doctor of Law degree in July 1914.⁶ It was right at that time that the First World War started. Adolf Schwarzenberg fought in an Uhlan regiment on the Russian front, and later became the commander of a car convoy in Italy and then in the Middle East, where he fell into captivity and from which he only returned in 1919.⁷

AFTER THE FIRST WORLD WAR

After his return to Bohemia, Adolf Schwarzenberg joined the Czechoslovak army – in July 1919 he was admitted to the *Czechoslovak car troop class* in the rank of first lieutenant.⁸ However, most of the former imperial officers were demobilized in the early 1920s and later released from military service to become

reservists. This was also true of Adolf Schwarzenberg, who was *transferred into inactivity* in September 1920 and demobilized in February 1921.⁹ In 1924 he was even demoted to reserve private (with no indication of the reason), but in December the following year he was again recorded in the rank of reserve first lieutenant.¹⁰ In January 1932 he was promoted to reserve captain. In April 1939 it was concluded in the military medical examination that he was incapable of military service, and as of 1 May of the same year he was released from the armed forces.¹¹

The political representatives of the Czechoslovak Republic did not really trust the nobles who were closely connected with the Habsburg monarchy. For this reason, with a few exceptions, they did not use their services in the administration of the state and in diplomacy for a long time. As a result, most of the nobles withdrew from public life and only focused on the management of their property. This was also true of Adolf Schwarzenberg, who, along with his father, managed the extensive property of the primogeniture from 1921. Having

been authorized to do so by his father, he took over the management of all family property in 1923, i.e. at a time when the land and forests of the nobility were confiscated within the first land reform. Adolf sought by all means to preserve the integrity of the family property and often negotiated with the State Land Office. Before the First World War, the Schwarzenbergs' properties in South Bohemia included more than 127,000 hectares of forests and meadows, four free farms with 18,000 hectares of land, twelve castles, ninety-five cow houses with dairy manufacturing plants, twelve breweries, two sugar refineries, twenty-two sawmills and graphite mines. They also took care of ecclesiastical and cultural sights, and held patronage over more than seventy parishes and eighty-seven churches. Within the first land reform in 1922–1932, their landed estates were reduced by about one half.¹² The Schwarzenbergs then only had 47,000 hectares of forests, 2,250 hectares of agricultural land and 3,250 hectares of ponds left. The confiscated property included the Třeboň and Netolice farm estates, as well as the farm estates of Cítoliby and Vršovice, Dlouhá Ves, Borovany and Jinonice at Prague. The Schwarzenbergs also lost seventy farmsteads, twenty-seven districts, several ponds, two brickworks, a sugar refinery, a distillery, a brewery and a lime works.¹³

On 29 October 1930, Adolf Schwarzenberg married Princess Hilda of Luxembourg and Nassau (1897–1979) at the Colmar-Berg Castle. However, the marriage was childless. In summer and autumn, when the couple stayed in Bohemia, they spent most of their time at their hunting lodge Stará Obora near Hluboká nad Vltavou, while in spring and in winter they stayed on farms in Italy and Africa.¹⁴ In 1933 Adolf bought the Mpala farm with an area of 1,500 hectares in Nanyuki, near Nairobi, Kenya.¹⁵ The reason was not just the search for “paradise lost” and a passion for hunting wild game, but the acquisition also had a political motivation. As Adolf Schwarzenberg said: *Things are going very badly in Europe, everybody is afraid that sooner or later Europe might look like Russia, if they go on like that. In this case a farm in Kenya might be of great value. [...] Bolshevism might come to Kenya later than here.*¹⁶

It is significant that shortly before Hitler came to power Adolf Schwarzenberg primarily feared the spread of Bolshevism,



Children of Johann Nepomuk II Schwarzenberg and his wife Therese – from top left Anna, Adolf, Josefina, Karel, Felix, Edmund, Marie, Terezie and Ida.

Source: SOA Třeboň

which was a huge threat for representatives of the nobility. He expressed a similar opinion after Hitler was in power for more than four months.¹⁷ In 1934 he wrote that the situation in Europe was getting worse and so he was glad that he could take refuge on his farm in Kenya if the worst came to the worst. It seems that he saw danger in the left rather than in the right, although after Hitler's rise to power he clearly disassociated himself from the Nazi regime.

However, at that time his views were apparently still not quite clear to the state representatives. In the mid-thirties they became interested in *reliable* nobles who could serve the state because, for propaganda purposes, the Sudeten German Party (SdP) used several nobles¹⁸ who had not only respected names and money, but also significant contacts abroad. They were supposed to be counterweighted by the representatives of the aristocracy who were loyal to the Czechoslovak state and nation. Dr. Antonín Hajn, a deputy, presented such nobles to presidential Chancellor Přemysl Šámal, including Jan and Jaroslav Lobkowicz, František Xaver and Zdeněk Radslav Kinský, Hanuš Kollowrat, Josef Seilern, Alois Serenyi, Amadeus Silva Tarouca and Adolf Schwarzenberg. However, Šámal obviously disagreed, saying that *Adolf Schwarzenberg cannot be relied upon. He is a German who also signed, together with several other nobles (Harrach,*

*Lichtenstein, etc.), the denunciation declaration against our nation during the war.*¹⁹ This opinion was based on the false premise that *the noble generation which comes from old Austria and participated in the war is completely useless for us.*²⁰ However, in the late thirties Adolf Schwarzenberg clearly proved by specific actions and attitudes that he did not deserve such condemnation. On the contrary, the Czech state could rely on him. In the 1937, Adolf Schwarzenberg gave the Czech state one million Czech crowns for the completion of the border fortifications, on the grounds of increasingly threat by the expansionist efforts of Nazi Germany; he personally handed over the amount to Edvard Beneš during his visit to the castle in Český Krumlov.²¹ At that time Adolf inherited all his family property, because his father, Johann Nepomuk II, died that year. With this step he made it publicly clear for the first time that he fully supported Hitler's opponents. It was already in March 1938 that he wrote how concerned he was about the situation in Austria, and at the same time he openly criticized the policy of appeasement: *If you British fools go on like that, then Hitler and Mussolini will be presently so strong together they might even trash you to pieces. A great war is sure to end in bolshevism.*²² After Austria became part of the German Reich, Adolf Schwarzenberg raised black flags at his Hradčany palace.

He was also among a number of aristocrats who personally participated in Runciman's mission. This mission of British diplomats led by Lord Walter Runciman²³ was sent to Prague by Prime Minister Neville Chamberlain on 3 August 1938. Its task was to assess the situation and mediate negotiations between the Sudeten German Party and the Czechoslovak government. However, none of its members had detailed knowledge of the local situation and understood different positions that had led to the conflict. Adolf Schwarzenberg and Zdeněk Radslav Kinský were the only nobles who tried to provide the members of the diplomatic mission with information in accordance with the interests of the Czechoslovak state and its efforts to preserve its integrity. In contrast, other nobles such as Ulrich Kinský, Alfons Clary-Aldringen, Max Egon Hohenlohe, Karl Khuen and brothers Josef and Friedrich Westphalen supported the Sudeten German Party.²⁴ After the Second World War, however, Adolf Schwarzenberg's views were totally misinterpreted. An example is an article published in April 1946 under the title "Removing the hotbed of Germanness" in the daily *Rudé právo*, citing the text of the resolution adopted in Horní Planá which stated the following: *We do not want to have people among us who in times of increased threat to the Republic consorted with the enemies of our state such as Mr. Schwarzenberg, who at the time hosted at his seat in Český Krumlov the English pimp of our Republic Runciman and the German traitor Henlein, and enjoyed hunting with them in Šumava. The Schwarzenberg bureaucracy was a hotbed of Germanness and in times of heightened threat to the security of the Republic a hotbed of Hitler's Nazism.*²⁵ Just one year after the end of the Nazi occupation, which heavily affected Adolf Schwarzenberg, the communist press managed to falsely attack this representative of one of the most significant Czech aristocratic families.

In fact, as was also found based on an investigation of the State Security Service in Český Krumlov, after the commencement of Konrad Henlein's activity Schwarzenberg repeatedly warned all his employees to refrain from any action against Czechoslovakia.²⁶ The actual visit of the British diplomats to South Bohemia went off in a completely different way. When Adolf hosted Lord Runciman and his entourage, he prevented the SdP

leaders from meeting Runciman.²⁷ Konrad Henlein was never a guest of Adolf Schwarzenberg. He only spoke at a public meeting of the Sudeten German Party on the square in Horní Planá in the summer of 1938.²⁸ Runciman himself was not welcomed by Schwarzenberg at his seat, but in the gamekeeper's lodge in Černý les near Horní Planá,²⁹ where Runciman was accommodated, and Schwarzenberg went to his wife in Stožec. Runciman spent the afternoon catching trout with the farm estate director Nikendey and the forest manager Stoch. On the second day Schwarzenberg invited Runciman to Stožec for lunch at the gamekeeper's lodge, which was also attended by his wife Hilda Runciman and Sir Frank Ashton-Gwatkin, the de facto main personality of the British mission.³⁰ Adolf Schwarzenberg originally did not want to receive Runciman on his estates, but he yielded to the wishes of the Czech government circles.³¹ At the same time he made it clear that he did not welcome this visitor, and so he did not invite him to the Hluboká castle or to Český Krumlov, where he commonly received official visitors. Reportedly, Schwarzenberg spoke rather bluntly about Runciman when giving orders to the servants: *Give him something to eat and drink to get it over with.* After his departure he said: *This is a weird guy – he doesn't eat, doesn't drink and doesn't speak.*³² Although Adolf Schwarzenberg practically did not spend any time with his guest, and Lord Runciman's presence probably did not make him happy, it seems that he really believed that the agent of the British government would be able to resolve the dispute between the Czechoslovak government and the Sudeten German Party, i.e., by extension, Hitler's Germany. In one of his letters he wrote the following: *At the end of last week I was in Prague and met the so-called "English Mission", i.e. Runciman & collaborators. The situation seems to be far better, I am nearly quite sure that war won't break out immediately. If it were to break out it would be the end of everything.*³³ In fact, Runciman had several meetings with Beneš from 1 to 3 September, trying to convince him of the need to develop a new plan that would be based on the Sudeten German requests adopted at the congress of the SdP in Karlovy Vary.³⁴ The Czechoslovak government yielded, in early September commenced preliminary discussions, and eventually adopt-

ed the "fourth plan", which basically met all Henlein's original requirements – the "eight Karlovy Vary points".³⁵ Having read the programme, Runciman informed London that although the plan did not go as far as his own proposals, it generally corresponded to them.³⁶ However, the Sudeten German Party was not interested in any discussion or autonomy and, based on a directive from Berlin, it rejected the plan. Subsequently, a rebellion was initiated in the border area that completely thwarted further discussions. In that tense situation, part of the Czech nobility decided to protest against violations of the old borders of our country.³⁷ On 17 September 1938 a delegation of twelve prominent representatives of the Czech nobility came to Prague Castle to take an oath of allegiance to the Czechoslovak state before President Edvard Beneš.³⁸ Adolf Schwarzenberg was not among them.³⁹ However, the reason was not that he did not want to join the declaration, but the fact that the twelve delegates represented a much larger group of aristocrats, because it was agreed that each family – if possible – would only be represented by its head, so the name of each family appeared only once.⁴⁰ The Schwarzenberg family was represented by Karel VI, head of the secundogeniture, who was also the author of the statement which included the following: *the Czech Lands have been together for such a long time and have survived so many storms that we hope that we can endure even these times of unrest and violence.*⁴¹ These times of unrest culminated in violation of the historical borders of the state.

The Czechoslovak government was forced to submit to the demands to cede the border areas to Germany. Although President Beneš tried to convene an international conference with the participation of Czechoslovakia, all his efforts were in vain. He accepted the inevitability of ceding the borderlands to Germany, hoping that the outcome of the conference of four powers would ensure, at least temporarily, the existence of Czechoslovakia in the curtailed form. The Munich conference, which began on 29 September 1938 and which could not be attended by representatives of the Czechoslovak state, only sealed Hitler's demands.

Based on the Munich Agreement, the German troops began to occupy the border areas of Bohemia, Moravia and Silesia at the beginning of October 1938.

The occupied territory came under the administration of the German Reich.⁴² Most of this territory was part of the Sudeten province, and the rest of the occupied borderlands became a direct part of other administrative units (Upper Silesia, Lower Bavaria and the provinces of Upper and Lower Danube). After ceding the border areas to Nazi Germany, many Czech farms owned by Adolf Schwarzenberg suddenly became part of the Reich. These were Lovosice, Český Krumlov, Vimperk and Horní Planá. While Lovosice was in the Reich Province of Sudetenland (*Reichsgau Sudetenland*),⁴³ on 16 October 1938 some areas of South Bohemia became part of the Provincial District of Upper Danube (*Landeshauptmannschaft Oberdonau*), which was founded immediately after the Anschluss of Austria. Part of the property of the Schwarzenberg primogeniture was thus located in the residual Czech Lands, part in the Sudeten province, and Český Krumlov, Vimperk and Horní Planá were subject to the administration of the Provincial District of Upper Danube; based on the act on the division of the Sudeten German territory, these areas were directly connected to the newly formed Reich Province of Upper Danube (*Reichsgau Oberdonau*) on 15 April 1939.⁴⁴ In the autumn of 1938, soon after the occupation of the Czech borderlands by Nazi Germany, two of Schwarzenberg's employees were arrested by the Gestapo in Horní Planá – the farm director Antonín Nikendey (1887–1961) and his driver Jan Jílek (1887–1947). Despite the great risk, Adolf Schwarzenberg went to Berlin and interceded directly with the Reich SS leader Heinrich Himmler for their release, which he managed.⁴⁵ However, he found himself in considerable danger. His anti-Nazi views were well known to the occupying authorities. After the establishment of the Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia on 15 March 1939, Adolf Schwarzenberg went into exile. However, he did not retreat to his farm in Africa, which he had also bought as a place of asylum in case the situation in Europe escalated, because he offered it to a person who needed it more – his Jewish friend Max Benies. Adolf went to his farmhouses in Italy, stayed for some time in a villa in Bordighera, and then, via Switzerland, left for the United States of America. As he explained a year later, he left because he could not live in an unfree country. Under the rule of the

Nazi regime, life was undignified and impossible for him.⁴⁶ In exile he supported the resistance movement, and *with respect to the nation he behaved perfectly*, as Jan Masaryk testified after the war.⁴⁷ In a letter to František Schwarzenberg, he literally wrote the following about Adolf: *I have been asked by you, as well as by several other people, about Dr. Adolf Schwarzenberg. I saw him several times in New York during the war. [...] with respect to the nation he behaved perfectly, reported immediately, and supported the resistance movement, so I can only commend his attitude. He was and is a passionate anti-Nazi.*⁴⁸

Since Adolf Schwarzenberg did not have his own children, the oldest branch of the Schwarzenberg family in a direct line died with him. In order to have an heir and dynasty successor, he adopted his cousin Jindřich Schwarzenberg (1903–1965) on 7 August 1940. Jindřich, as the general trustee, had managed the assets of the primogeniture since September 1939; however, on 17 August 1940, based on the decision of the Linz Gestapo, all property owned by Adolf Schwarzenberg was confiscated.⁴⁹ Jindřich Schwarzenberg strongly protested against the confiscation, as a result of which, at Himmler's direct command, he was prevented from returning to both Bohemia and the Reich. In Bordighera, Italy, where he was staying with Adolf, he was arrested by the Gestapo and imprisoned first in Italy and then in Linz and Innsbruck, Austria, from where he was deported in July 1944 to the Buchenwald concentration camp. However, in August of that year, based on intervention, he was released and spent the rest of the war as forced labour in the Linz area.⁵⁰ It was before the actual confiscation of all the property owned by the Schwarzenberg primogeniture branch in August 1940 that the representatives of the Nazi apparatus in the Reich and the Protectorate started fighting to obtain this large property under their administration.⁵¹ It did not include only the land, immovable property and forests in Bohemia, but also in Styria and Franconia.⁵² The assets were claimed by Reichsjägermeister Herman Göring, Gauleiter of Franconia Julius Streichel, as well as Gauleiter of Oberdonau August Eigruher.⁵³ The dispute over the administration of the confiscated Schwarzenberg estates was finally solved by Hitler's decision, which entrusted all the property

to Reichsgau Oberdonau, while the remote Schwarzenberg Castle was handed over to Franconia.⁵⁴

AFTER THE SECOND WORLD WAR

Despite his anti-Nazi views, support of the government in exile and participation in the resistance movement, Adolf Schwarzenberg faced property persecution even after the defeat of Nazi Germany. After the war the property of the primogeniture went into receivership under Decree No. 5/1945 Coll., on nullity of certain property-law acts from the time of oppression and on national administration of property values of Germans, Hungarians, traitors and collaborators, issued on 19 May 1945.⁵⁵ Section 1 of the Decree stipulated that *any transfer of property and any property-law acts, whether relating to movable or immovable property, whether public or private property, shall be null and void if performed after 29 September 1938 under the pressure of occupation or national, racial or political persecution.*⁵⁶ Under this provision Adolf Schwarzenberg should have had his property restituted, because his estates were confiscated during the occupation as a result of political persecution. However, Adolf Schwarzenberg finally faced receivership instead. Under Section 3 of the above-mentioned Decree, national receivership was imposed, among other things, in order to maintain the *smooth production process and economic life* in companies and *abandoned assets*, i.e. those where the owner was not present and could not take over the administration,⁵⁷ as was also the case of Adolf Schwarzenberg.⁵⁸ The imposition of national receivership, however, was only a prelude to the seizure of his property in favour of the state.

Based on Decree No. 12/1945 Coll., on expropriation of agricultural property of Germans, Hungarians and collaborators, all land property owned by Adolf Schwarzenberg was confiscated,⁵⁹ which was decided, due to his German nationality, on the grounds of the assessment of 5 October 1945. This was based on the fact that his census sheet from 1930 indicated German nationality, and Section 2 of Decree No. 12/1945 Coll. provided that *persons who at any census since 1929 have stated German or Hungarian nationality shall be deemed persons of German or Hungarian nationality.*⁶⁰

Adolf Schwarzenberg appealed against the confiscation assessment to the Dis-



Adolf Schwarzenberg in 1908 when studying at the Catholic boarding school Stonyhurst in Lancashire (bottom row, left).

Source: Adam Pezold's archive

trict National Committee in České Budějovice through his lawyer on 16 October 1945, explaining that the German nationality was not stated in the census sheet in 1930 by him, because he was abroad at that time, but by the official Rothbauer. He also emphasized that *if someone declared that he was German, it undoubtedly occurred against his will and without his knowledge.*⁶¹ The Ministry of the Interior itself admitted in its opinion in the matter of state citizenship that there was no reason to doubt the Czech nationality of Adolf Schwarzenberg and his Czechoslovak citizenship.⁶² It was based, among other things, on Schwarzenberg's qualification document from 1925, in which he stated Czech nationality.⁶³ Schwarzenberg also noted that he *completed a Czech school, introduced Czech administration on his farms, was an arch-enemy of Nazism and Hitler's regime, and as such made public pronouncements and actively participated in the struggle for the unity and liberation of the Czechoslovak Republic.*⁶⁴ Therefore, he requested that based on his anti-Nazi views and participation in the struggle for freedom his property should be released from confiscation. The confiscation of the agricultural property of all persons of German and Hungarian nationality and the persons unreliable with respect to the state was stipulated by Section 1 of Decree No. 12/1945 Coll.,⁶⁵ identifying as such those *persons who carried out activities directed*

*against the state sovereignty, independence, integrity, democratic-republican state form, security and defence of the Czechoslovak Republic, who instigated or attempted to entice other persons to carry out such activities, and who intentionally supported in any manner German and Hungarian occupiers.*⁶⁶ Adolf Schwarzenberg, who spent the whole occupation in political exile where he persistently supported the resistance movement abroad, of which Jan Masaryk issued a certificate after the war,⁶⁷ should obviously not have been affected under these provisions. The Decree took account of similar cases in Section 1 (2), stipulating that *the agricultural property under paragraph 1 of persons of German and Hungarian nationality who actively participated in the struggle for integrity and liberation of the Czechoslovak Republic shall not be confiscated.*⁶⁸ The Central National Committee in Prague announced in its statement of 5 March 1946 that Adolf Schwarzenberg was not, within the meaning of Decree No. 12/1945 Coll., of German nationality and that he fought for freedom and territorial integrity of the Czechoslovak Republic.⁶⁹ However, no decision was ever made in the case of Schwarzenberg's appeal against the confiscation. The extensive property of the Schwarzenberg primogeniture in the hands of one person in post-war Czechoslovakia was a kind of *national and moral harm.*⁷⁰ There was no willingness to return property worth four

billion crowns, which was its assessed value, to its rightful owner.

The fact that it was not possible to apply nationalization decrees to Adolf Schwarzenberg led to the preparation and discussion of a bill whose adoption in the National Assembly could enable a completely unprecedented expropriation of a certain person's property by the state under a special act. In 1947 two new bills were discussed (and subsequently enacted) that fundamentally affected the aristocratic property: Act No. 142/1947 Coll., on the revision of the first land reform, and Act No. 143/1947 Coll., *lex singularis*,⁷¹ which specifically dealt with the transfer of large estates of the Hluboká branch of the Schwarzenbergs to the Czech Land.

When Act No. 143/1947 Coll. was being discussed, Adolf was not in Czechoslovakia. He tried to get to the country from Switzerland, where he had lived since 1946, because in other countries where he owned large estates before the war he had, in fact, nowhere to stay.⁷² However, the Czechoslovak Consulate General in Zurich refused to grant him an entry visa,⁷³ officially on the grounds that he had not specified the purpose of the journey. Angry, Schwarzenberg phoned the consulate, saying that he stated the *purpose of the journey (settlement of property in Bohemia) in his original submission, so the destination (South Bohemia) must be clear to everyone, un-*



Hilda, Princess of Luxembourg and Nassau.
Source: SOA Třeboň



Adolf Schwarzenberg.
Source: SOA Třeboň

*less the person is an idiot. He also said that after the refusal of the visa it is quite clear to everyone that we don't want to let him enter Bohemia and that we want to rob him. He has [...] prepared a book for publication on his and similar cases for which he would not receive 4 billion, of which we have robbed him, but certainly a decent royalty.*⁷⁴

After the complex discussion of the issue of extensive property owned by the Schwarzenberg primogeniture and the "fight for four billion", a separate act was adopted which expropriated the property without compensation. Given that Adolf Schwarzenberg could not be viewed as a collaborator and traitor to the nation, and he could not be clearly identified as German, it was not possible to apply Decrees No. 12 and No. 108/1945 Coll. to his property. Therefore, an unprecedented procedure was used, i.e. adoption of completely new legislation affecting a single person.

The bill was submitted by social-democratic deputies headed by Blažej Vilím.⁷⁵ During the discussion in the house, he openly argued as follows: *the property of the South Bohemian Schwarzenbergs which is subject to transfer represents, with respect to its area, such a vast complex of property that a need is generally felt to resolve the ownership of this property in a way that would reflect the new spirit of the economic and social structure of the Czechoslovak Republic. Therefore, it should not be allowed that ownership of such large real property continues to*

*be concentrated in the hands of an individual, all the more so that the process of administration of this estate in the past is not the best guarantee that the property will be used in the future exclusively and clearly in the Czech spirit, as the owners have not proved beyond all doubt their absolute and pure Czech nationality...*⁷⁶

This legislative proposal was taken over by the National Front, and none of the parties or their deputies protested against its wording in any way, although exactly a year before the bill was submitted, after approval in the house to be signed by the President, several political leaders, including the then chairman of the National Socialist Party and deputy Prime Minister Petr Zenkl and deputy for the National Socialists Milada Horáková, spent a night at the Hluboká castle. As evidenced by the letter of an employee, *Dr. Zenkl spoke very beautifully about the prince, he has also sent a letter to him and hopes that he will come to Prague soon.*⁷⁷

Yet even Zenkl did not officially protest against the wording of the act called Lex Schwarzenberg. During the discussion in the house, Milada Horáková diffidently supported the Schwarzenberg management system, but not Adolf Schwarzenberg. In fact, when the act was being discussed, his name almost completely disappeared. His merit related to the resistance movement and his anti-Nazi views were completely forgotten in the discussion about the expropriation act. In contrast, especially communist deputies described the Schwarzenbergs as

exploiters and "Germanizers" of South Bohemia, at variance with the actual development and status. For example, the deputy for the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia Janouš said in his speech that *South Bohemia had their Schwarzenbergs, who like a polyp, like an octopus stretched their tentacles in all districts of South Bohemia, permeating and exploiting all fields of business activity [...] In addition, they also had their supported churches and in those churches their benches and their flatterers. Everything was designed to praise and glorify their name. And during that time South Bohemia suffered from being drained by this vampire and was hampered in its development.*⁷⁸

Despite all the attacks, Adolf Schwarzenberg tried to find an acceptable solution and proposed a common foundation of the Czech Lands and the Schwarzenbergs in which he would put his property. The proceeds of the property would be used to finance various social and cultural programmes. He only required that he be allowed to carry out the function of one of the members of the board and that he be awarded a modest sustenance pension. Despite all efforts, however, no agreement with the Czechoslovak state was reached. On 10 July 1947 the Constituent National Assembly adopted the act on the transfer of ownership of the property of the Hluboká branch of the Schwarzenbergs to the Czech Land.⁷⁹

Five days later Adolf's lawyer, Ing. JUDr. František Bukovský, sent a letter to President Edvard Beneš. He referred to Section 5 of the adopted act, which contrary to the original proposal provided that *the property should be transferred to the ownership of the Czech Land without compensation and that the previous owner should only be provided with a sustenance pension.* Bukovský noted that this provision was contrary to the applicable principles of democracy and legal interpretation, because it is impossible that *using such a far-reaching intervention only one person is prosecuted who is not guilty of anything, and who even has certain merit with respect to our resistance movement and our national economy. He again reminded that Adolf Schwarzenberg always behaved perfectly with respect to the nation, was a passionate anti-Nazi, and supported the resistance movement both materially and morally, as a result of which all his property was confiscated by the Gestapo and an arrest warrant was issued for him. Therefore, he is fully*

entitled to restitution of his property.⁸⁰ He referred to the applicable constitutional charter, which stipulated the principle of civil equality (§ 106), as well as personal and financial freedom (§ 107 and 111), especially freedom to acquire property and exercise gainful occupation, and protected the principle of private ownership, providing that expropriation was only and exclusively possible for appropriate compensation. However, all these provisions were denied by § 5 of Act No. 143/1947 Coll. mentioned above.

František Bukovský approached President Beneš on behalf of Adolf Schwarzenberg as the last refuge of law and justice in order to have the circumstances examined and verified and by denying the signature to prevent the implementation of this act.⁸¹ Although Edvard Beneš knew Adolf Schwarzenberg personally and was aware of the fact that he promoted foreign exile, he did not hesitate with the signature for long and on 5 August 1947 signed the act which expropriated all the property of the Schwarzenberg primogeniture. He took this action even though he was urged to reconsider the signature by the ministries that prepared their opinions of the bill and that took into account the objections of Schwarzenberg's lawyer. Bukovský's objection that Act No. 143/1947 Coll. was *lex singularis*, i.e. an act affecting only one particular person in a way typical of criminal regulations, for which there was no reason in Schwarzenberg's case, was considered significant. On the other hand, the act was seen as crucial in political and economic terms.

In the case of confiscation of the property of primogeniture, the considered issues also included the question of Adolf Schwarzenberg's nationality and state citizenship, because he had two citizenships since his birth: Czechoslovak and Swiss. As confirmed by the Swiss embassy in Prague in the notes of 30 April and 9 July 1947, the Schwarzenberg family had Swiss citizenship for many generations.⁸² The Ministry of Foreign Affairs issued its own opinion of the issue of state citizenship, pointing out that *the Swiss citizenship of Adolf Schwarzenberg may entitle the Swiss government to provide him with its protection in a foreign country*; as the Ministry assumed, the Swiss government would probably defend the opinion that the state has committed an international offence if the foreign citizen's property is expropriated without



Statement taken by the Prague StB with František Bukovský on 12 March 1948.

Source: Security Services Archive

adequate compensation.⁸³ However, after it was shown that Adolf Schwarzenberg also had Czechoslovak citizenship, these concerns were considered unfounded, because the government had a strong reason to reject any Swiss intervention. In its opinion of Act No. 143/1947 Coll., the Ministry for the Unification of Law commented on the reasons outlined in the explanatory memorandum to the Act. The adoption of the act was motivated by the *doubt about the current owners with respect to their national reliability and the public interest* that the extensive property should not remain in the ownership of an individual, which, however, the Ministry did not consider relevant. *Unless the facts that justify the real reason are safely established, they cannot be accepted as the true reason for legal action.* With respect to economy, it drew attention to the fact that the expropriation would bring *no financial benefit to the Czech Land*.⁸⁴ Despite the fact that the numerous shortcomings of the act were also noted by the Office of the Government Presidium when it was discussed in the house and also when it was submitted to the President,⁸⁵ it was signed by Beneš on 5 August 1947, as mentioned above. Act No. 143/1947 Coll. was thus adopted.⁸⁶ Under Section 1, all property of the Schwarzenberg primogeniture was transferred to the Czech Land.⁸⁷ It included real agricultural property, forests, ponds, industrial plants, commercial and trade property, including all buildings

and castles with their internal equipment, as well as both live and dead stock with supplies and all working capital.⁸⁸ Under the act, the property as a whole was administered by the sixteen-member board headed by the Chairman of the Central National Committee. According to Section 5 mentioned above, the property was transferred to the state without compensation.⁸⁹

As stated by Dr. Bukovský, Schwarzenberg believed that *the act was adopted unconstitutionally, and he was very indignant, because given his behaviour during the occupation and given the fact that he was persecuted by the Germans, he assumed that his property in the Czechoslovak Republic confiscated by the Gestapo would be at least partially returned to him*.⁹⁰ He was going to appeal against the new act to the Supreme Administrative Court or to the Constitutional Court.⁹¹

At the next joint meeting in Austria he gave his lawyer, František Bukovský, leaflets in which he said goodbye to his staff and expressed his negative opinion of the new act. He also indicated that he would continue to fight for his rights. Reportedly, he prepared hundreds of copies of these leaflets which he intended to send to prominent political leaders and all his employees, but Bukovský talked him out of this step.⁹² Therefore, Bukovský only brought two letters by Adolf Schwarzenberg from Vienna to Czechoslovakia, the longer of which was intended for all employees and the shorter for officials. In the latter, Adolf wrote the following: *If the employees who remained loyal to me are in any way forced to take a stand against me due to this proclamation, I will never blame them. I will understand them, because such a procedure is known to me from the recent past*.⁹³ In the letter of farewell to his employees, he wrote how deeply he was touched by the resolution of the representatives of this nation, for which my family has done so much in the past centuries. It is also clear how hard it was for him to see how the senior political leaders of the Czechoslovak state repaid him for all his support: *This act does not only go against the applicable constitution and the solemn declaration of the President and the Government in Košice, but it is also in direct conflict with universal human rights enshrined in the Charter of United Nations, adopted and recognized also by Czechoslovakia. The President, Government and Parliament knowingly violated the constitution, for which they*

bear full and sole responsibility. The act will remain forever a non-erasable stain in the history of Czechoslovak law.⁹⁴ The immense injustice committed to Adolf

Schwarzenberg by his own state and nation also affected his health – soon after the war he came down with angina pectoris. He went twice to his farm in Africa,

but his final home was the small village of Katsch am Mur in Styria, Austria. He died in his villa in Bordighera, Italy, on 27 February 1950.⁹⁵

NOTES

- 1 Military Historical Archives – Military Central Archives, Personal File, Adolf Schwarzenberg.
- 2 MAŠEK, Petr: *Slechtické rody v Čechách, na Moravě a ve Slezsku od Bílé Hory do současnosti*, Volume II (N–Ž). Argo, Prague 2010, p. 270.
- 3 BUBEN, Milan M.: *Česká zemská šlechta. Schwarzenberkové. Primogenitura*. Střední Evropa, 1995, Vol. 54–55, p. 115.
- 4 Adam Pezold's archive. Adolf Schwarzenberg's own record on previous education entered in the books at the British boarding school in Stonyhurst, Lancashire (undated). I would like to thank Ruediger Pezold and Zdeněk Hazdra for their kind provision of the document.
- 5 Military Historical Archives – Military Central Archives, Personal File, Adolf Schwarzenberg.
- 6 Ibid. In 1945 he also received a doctorate in philosophy at Columbia University in New York. Cf. the Archive of the Office of the President of the Republic, collection D (important), Nobility 1920–1947, box 260, inventory number 1505, call number D 10429, Adolf Schwarzenberg.
- 7 It was an Austro-Hungarian military mission that helped the Ottoman Empire to face the onslaught of British troops. He recalled the experience in his book of travels: SCHWARZENBERG, Adolf: *Pod praporem tureckého půlměsíce. Válečné vzpomínky na Sýrii a Palestinu*. Rudolf Březina, Prague 1926. See the correspondence about its publishing: State Regional Archives in Třeboň, department Český Krumlov, f. Family Archiv Schwarzenberg (Hluboká nad Vltavou), Dr. Adolf Schwarzenberg, sign. 10 – 13 a (F).
- 8 Military Historical Archives – Military Central Archives, Personal File, Adolf Schwarzenberg. Ibid, Personal Book File, Dr. Adolf Schwarzenberg. Cf. BUBEN, Milan M.: *Česká zemská šlechta. Schwarzenberkové. Primogenitura*, p. 116.
- 9 Military Historical Archives – Military Central Archives, Main Basic File, Adolf Schwarzenberg.
- 10 Ibid, Personal File, Adolf Schwarzenberg.
- 11 Archive of the Office of the President of the Republic, collection D (important), Nobility 1920–1947, box 260, inventory number 1505, call number D 10429, Adolf Schwarzenberg. Ministry of Foreign Affairs, ref. no. J. A-4617-17/9-47-VI/1. Letter dated 19 September 1947. Cf. Military Historical Archives – Military Central Archives, Personal File, Adolf Schwarzenberg.
- 12 VOŽENÍLEK, Jan: *Předběžné výsledky československé pozemkové reformy. Země Česká a Moravsko-Slezská*. Prague 1930, pp. 374–378, 224–228, 208–211, 431–432, 443, 514, 233–236, 548–550, 244–247, 254–259, 262–263. LUSTIG, Rudolf – SVĚTNIČKA, František: *Schematismus velkostatků v Čechách*. Prague 1933, p. 640.
- 13 BUBEN, Milan M.: *Česká zemská šlechta. Schwarzenberkové. Primogenitura*, p. 116.
- 14 Archive of the Office of the President of the Republic, collection D (important), Nobility, box 260, inventory number 1505, call number D 10429, Adolf Schwarzenberg. Opinion of the Ministry of the Interior of 28 July 1947.
- 15 LELLKOVÁ, Šárka: *Das verlorene Paradies*. Die Farm des Fürsten Adolf Schwarzenberg in Afrika. In: CERMÁN, Ivo – VELEK, Luboš (Hg.): *Adel und Wirtschaft. Lebensunterhalt der Adelligen in der Moderne*. Martin Meidenbauer, München 2009, p. 237.
- 16 LELLKOVÁ, Šárka: *Das verlorene Paradies*, p. 242. Adolf Schwarzenberg's letter to Roy Home of 5 December 1932.
- 17 Ibid. A letter of 7 May 1933, p. 242.
- 18 E.g., Ulrich Kinský, Adolf Dubský, Karel Khuen, Alfons Clary-Aldringen and the Westphalen brothers.
- 19 Archive of the Office of the President of the Republic, collection D (important), Nobility, box 260, inventory number 1505, call number D 10429, Adolf Schwarzenberg, ref. no. 119/34. Record dated 28 February 1935.
- 20 Ibid. Přemysl Šámal's letter to deputy Antonín Hajn of 8 February 1935.
- 21 State Regional Archives in Třeboň, department Český Krumlov, f. Family Archiv Schwarzenberg (Hluboká nad Vltavou), Dr. Adolf Schwarzenberg, sign. 10 b – 2. Letter from presidential chancellor Přemysl Šámal dated 11. Mai 1937. See also: Jihočeské listy, roč. 43, 1937, č. 36, s. 2.
- 22 LELLKOVÁ, Šárka: *Das verlorene Paradies*, p. 242. Letters dated 15 March 1938 and 28 March 1938.
- 23 Walter Runciman (1870–1949), a British politician. In 1915–1940 he worked as a foreign policy advisor to many British governments. Although he was sent to Czechoslovakia by the conservative government of Neville Chamberlain, he was a liberal politician.
- 24 GLASSHEIM, Eagle: *Urození nacionalisté. Česká šlechta a národnostní otázka v 1. pol. 20. století*. Garamond, Prague 2012, p. 191.
- 25 *Security Services Archive* (hereinafter only ABS), collection State Security Service Headquarters 1945–1948 (hereinafter referred to as 305), call number 305-38-6, Maintaining Contact with the Former Owner of the Schwarzenberg Estate Abroad. Article "Removing the hotbed of Germanness" (cutting) from *Rudé právo* of 25 April 1946.
- 26 Ibid. Maintaining Contact with the Former Owner of the Schwarzenberg Estate Abroad. Letter of the District Branch of the State Security Service in Český Krumlov to the Political Intelligence Section of the Ministry of the Interior dated 12 August 1946.
- 27 GLASSHEIM, Eagle: *Urození nacionalisté*, p. 193.
- 28 ABS, collection 305, call number 305-38-6, Maintaining Contact with the Former Owner of the Schwarzenberg Estate Abroad. Letter of the District Branch of the State Security Service in Český Krumlov to the Political Intelligence Section of the Ministry of the Interior dated 12 August 1946.
- 29 State Regional Archives in Třeboň, department Český Krumlov, f. Family Archiv Schwarzenberg (Hluboká nad Vltavou). Dr. Adolf Schwarzenberg, sign. 10 b – 2. Report dated 18. August 1938.
- 30 ABS, collection 305, call number 305-38-6, Maintaining Contact with the Former Owner of the Schwarzenberg Estate Abroad. Letter of the District Branch of the State Security Service in Český Krumlov to the Political Intelligence Section of the Ministry of the Interior dated 12 August 1946.
- 31 State Regional Archives in Třeboň, department Český Krumlov, f. Family Archiv Schwarzenberg (Hluboká nad Vltavou). Dr. Adolf Schwarzenberg, sign. 10 b – 2.. Report dated 10. August 1938.
- 32 ABS, collection 305, call number 305-38-6, Maintaining Contact with the Former Owner of the Schwarzenberg Estate Abroad. Letter of the District Branch of the State Security Service in Český Krumlov to the Political Intelligence Section of the Ministry of the Interior dated 12 August 1946.
- 33 LELLKOVÁ, Šárka: *Das verlorene Paradies*, p. 243. Adolf Schwarzenberg's letter to Roy Home dated 12 September 1938.
- 34 A programme consisting of "eight Karlovy Vary points" was declared at the Congress on 24 April 1938. BRÜGEL, Johann Wolfgang: *Češi a Němci 1918–1938*. Academia, Praha 2006, p. 592.
- 35 The points were as follows: 1. complete equality of Germans and Czechs, 2. recognition of the German national group as a legal entity, 3. precise demarcation of the German territory in Czechoslovakia, 4. full national self-government of the territory, 5. legal protection of Germans living outside this territory, 6. redress of economic and national-political wrongs suffered by Germans since 1918, 7. exclusive appointment of German state and public employees in the German territory, 8. full freedom to claim allegiance to the German nation and the German world view.
- 36 BRÜGEL, Johann Wolfgang: *Češi a Němci 1918–1938*, p. 595.
- 37 Archive of the Office of the President of the Republic, collection D (important), Nobility, box 6, inventory number 214, call number 3038/40, Copy of the Declaration of the Czech Nobility of September 1938.
- 38 The twelve-member delegation consisted of Karel Schwarzenberg, Zdenko Radoslav Kinský, František Kinský, Jan Adolf Lobkowicz, Zdenko Kollowrat, Rudolf Czernin, Leopold Sternberg, Weikard Colloredo-Mannsfeld, Karel Parish, Jindřich Dobrzenský, Hugo Strachwitz and Karel Belcredi.
- 39 It was the same in the case of the declaration of the Czech nobility in January 1939. In September 1939, when another memorandum of the nobility addressed to President Hácha was prepared and signed by sixty-nine representatives of the nobility, Adolf Schwarzenberg was already in exile.
- 40 KINSKÝ, Zdenko Radoslav: *Zu Pferd und zu Fuss. 70 Jahre aus den Erinnerungen*. Heidrich in Komm, Wien – Rom 1974, p. 143. An exception was only made in the case of the Kinský family, presenting two delegates – apart from Zdeněk Radoslav of Chlumec, there was also František Kinský of Kostelec nad Orlicí, who eventually presented the declaration at Prague Castle, although it was originally intended that it would be read by Zdenko Kollowrat of Rychnov nad Kněžnou, Chairman of the Union of Czechoslovak Large Landowners. However, František Kinský expressed his wish to do it himself, primarily to clearly express views contradictory to those held by his nephew Ulrich Kinský of Česká Kamenice, who was an exponent of the Sudeten German Party.
- 41 Archive of the Office of the President of the Republic, collection D (important), Nobility, box 6, inventory number 214, call number 3038/40, Copy of the Declaration of the Czech Nobility of September 1938.
- 42 Based on Adolf Hitler's decree of 1 October 1938 on the takeover of the Sudeten German territory under the administration of the Reich. The unification of the occupied areas with Germany was de jure carried out under the act on reunification of the Sudeten territory with the German Reich of 21 November 1938. See

- Reichsgesetzblatt* (RGBl) I./1939, Chapter 70, p. 745, and Chapter 74, p. 780. On 1 October 1938 Konrad Henlein was appointed Reich Commissioner for Sudeten German territories.
- 43 The Reich province of Sudetenland was established on 15 April 1939, based on Hitler's decision of 25 March 1939, incorporating the greater part of the Sudeten territory, with Liberec (Reichenberg) as the centre of the territorial-administrative unit. The province was divided into three districts: Cheb (Eger), Ústí nad Labem (Aussig) and Opava (Troppau). For more information on the establishment of the Reich province of Sudetenland see GEBHART, Jan – KUKLÍK, Jan: *Druhá republika 1938-1939. Svár demokracie a totalita v politickém, společenském a kulturním životě*. Paseka, Prague – Litomyšl 2004, pp. 26-36.
 - 44 Gesetz über die Gliederung der sudetendeutschen Gebiete vom 25. März 1939. See <http://www.verfassungen.de/de/de33-45/sudetenland-verwaltung39.htm> (accessed on 15 May 2013).
 - 45 NIKENDEY, Antonín: K narozeninám JUDr. Adolfa Schwarzenberga. *Obnovená tradice. Časopis historického spolku Schwarzenberg*, 1990, Vol. 2. See <http://www.hss.barok.org/text-clanku.php?t=13&c=2&cc=1#top> (quoted as of 15 May 2013).
 - 46 LELLKOVÁ, Šárka: Das verlorene Paradies, p. 244.
 - 47 NIKENDEY, Antonín: K narozeninám JUDr. Adolfa Schwarzenberga. Jan Masaryk (1886-1948), son of the first President of Czechoslovakia Tomáš Garigue Masaryk, was in 1925 – 1938 the Czechoslovakia Ambassador to the United Kingdom, in 1940-1945 a Foreign Minister by the Czechoslovak Exil-Government in London, in 1945-1948 he was a Foreign Minister of Czechoslovakia.
 - 48 Ibid. Jan Masaryk's letter to František Schwarzenberg dated 8 October 1945. Security Services Archive, collection 305, call number 305-38-6, Maintaining Contact with the Former Owner of the Schwarzenberg Estate Abroad. Letter of the District Branch of the State Security Service in Český Krumlov to the Political Intelligence Section of the Ministry of the Interior dated 12 August 1946.
 - 49 BUBEN, Milan M.: *Česká zemská šlechta. Schwarzenberkové. Primogenitura*, p. 117.
 - 50 Ibid, p. 118.
 - 51 *National Archive* (hereinafter only NA), collection State Secretary of the Office of the Reich Protector, box 31, inventory number 622, call number 109-4/370, Motion to Establish the Supreme Provincial Forest Office of Bohemia and Moravia and to Select Officials for the Administration of Forests Owned by the Schwarzenberg Family in South Bohemia. Letter dated 5 January 1940.
 - 52 SCHWARZENBERG, Karel Jan: *Knížecí život*, p. 21.
 - 53 After the Anschluss of Austria, August Eigruber, until then Gauleiter of the illegal Nazi party in Upper Austria, was appointed Landeshauptmann and from 1940 Gauleiter of the Reichsgau Oberdonau. On 13 May 1946 he was sentenced to death by the Nuremberg Tribunal for his responsibility for crimes in the Mauthausen concentration camp. He was executed on 28 May 1947.
 - 54 SCHWARZENBERG, Karel Jan: *Knížecí život*, p. 21.
 - 55 Decree of the President of the Republic No. 5/1945 Coll., on nullity of certain property-law acts from the time of oppression and on national administration of property values of Germans, Hungarians, traitors and collaborators and certain organizations and institutions, with effect as of 23 May 1945.
 - 56 Section 1 (1) of Decree No. 5/1945 Coll.
 - 57 Section 3 of Decree No. 5/1945 Coll.
 - 58 He only managed to return to Europe in 1946.
 - 59 Decree No. 12/1945 Coll., on expropriation of agricultural property of Germans, Hungarians and collaborators with the Nazi regime, of 21 June 1945.
 - 60 Section 2 of Decree No. 12/1945 Coll.
 - 61 Archive of the Office of the President of the Republic, collection D (important), Nobility, box 260, inventory number 1505, call number D 10429, Adolf Schwarzenberg. Letter to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs dated 19 September 1947.
 - 62 Ibid, Letter of the Ministry of the Interior to the Office of the President of the Republic dated 28 July 1947, ref. No. A-4617-28/7-1947-VI/I.
 - 63 Military Historical Archives – Military Central Archives, Original Qualification Document, Adolf Schwarzenberg.
 - 64 Ibid, Adolf Schwarzenberg. Letter of the Ministry of the Interior dated 19 September 1947.
 - 65 Section 1 (1) of Decree No. 12/1945 Coll.
 - 66 Ibid.
 - 67 ABS, collection 305, call number 305-38-6, Maintaining Contact with the Former Owner of the Schwarzenberg Estate Abroad. Letter of the District Branch of the State Security Service in Český Krumlov to the Political Intelligence Section of the Ministry of the Interior dated 12 August 1946.
 - 68 Section 1 (2) of Decree No. 12/1945 Coll.
 - 69 NIKENDEY, Antonín: K narozeninám JUDr. Adolfa Schwarzenberga.
 - 70 Václav Černý's words. See ČERNÝ, Václav: *Paměti III. 1945-1972*. Atlantis, Brno 1992, p. 128.
 - 71 The act affecting a specific individual, i.e. Adolf Schwarzenberg in this case.
 - 72 The Schwarzenberg castle was plundered, the Murau castle in Styria was turned into official rooms and flats, and the palace in Vienna was in ruins. See BUBEN, Milan M.: *Česká zemská šlechta. Schwarzenberkové. Primogenitura*, p. 117.
 - 73 Archive of the Office of the President of the Republic, collection D (important), Nobility, box 260, inventory number 1505, call number D 10429, Letter of the Ministry of the Interior to the Office of the President of the Republic dated 28 July 1947, ref. No. A-4617-28/7-1947-VI/I.
 - 74 Security Services Archive, collection 305, call number 305-38-6, Maintaining Contact with the Former Owner of the Schwarzenberg Estate Abroad. Letter of Dr. Pospíšil, Consul General in Zurich, to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs dated 5 June 1947.
 - 75 Blažej Vilím went into exile after 1948 and was the first chairman of the Czechoslovak Social Democracy abroad. See Security Services Archive, collection 305, call number 305-38-6, Letter of the Ministry of the Interior to the StB Headquarters dated 20 March 1948.
 - 76 Archive of the Office of the President of the Republic, collection D (important), Nobility, box 260, inventory number 1505, call number D 10429, Lex Schwarzenberg. Stenographic report. Act on the Transfer of Ownership of the Property of the Hluboká Branch of the Schwarzenbergs to the Czech Land.
 - 77 ABS, collection 305, call number 305-38-6, Maintaining Contact with the Former Owner of the Schwarzenberg Estate Abroad.
 - 78 Archive of the Office of the President of the Republic, collection D (important), Nobility, box 260, inventory number 1505, call number D 10429, Lex Schwarzenberg. Stenographic report. Act on the Transfer of Ownership of the Property of the Hluboká Branch of the Schwarzenbergs to the Czech Land.
 - 79 Act No. 143/1947 Coll., on the transfer of ownership of the property of the Hluboká branch of the Schwarzenbergs to the Czech Land.
 - 80 Archive of the Office of the President of the Republic, collection D (important), Nobility, box 260, inventory number 1505, call number D 10429, Adolf Schwarzenberg. Letter of lawyer Ing. JUDr. František Bukovský to President Beneš dated 15 July 1947.
 - 81 Ibid.
 - 82 Ibid, Adolf Schwarzenberg. Certificate from the Swiss embassy of 30 April and 9 July 1947 and from the city of Zurich of 7 March 1947.
 - 83 Ibid, Opinion of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs No. 157.538/VI/47, dated 29 July 1947.
 - 84 Ibid, Opinion of the Ministry for the Unification of Law, ref. No. 11268/47, dated 23 May 1947.
 - 85 Ibid, Letter of the Office of the Government Presidium to the Office of the President of the Republic dated 15 July 1947, ref. No. 303653/47.
 - 86 Act No. 143/1947 Coll., on the transfer of ownership of the property of the Hluboká branch of the Schwarzenbergs to the Czech Land.
 - 87 Section 1 (1) of Act No. 143/1947 Coll.
 - 88 Section 1 (2) of Act No. 143/1947 Coll.
 - 89 Section 5 (1) of Act No. 143/1947 Coll.
 - 90 The property of the Schwarzenberg primogeniture in Austria and Germany was returned to Adolf in full after the Second World War.
 - 91 ABS, collection 305, call number 305-38-6, Maintaining Contact with the Former Owner of the Schwarzenberg Estate Abroad, Testimony of Dr. František Bukovský dated 12 March 1948 at the Prague StB.
 - 92 Ibid, call number 305-514-7, Report of the Ministry of the Interior on the Investigation Concerning the Persons in the Case of Česká obchodní společnost dated 3 August 1945, p. 5.
 - 93 Ibid, call number 305-38-6, Maintaining Contact with the Former Owner of the Schwarzenberg Estate Abroad. Adolf Schwarzenberg's letter to officials dated 18 August 1947.
 - 94 Ibid, Maintaining Contact with the Former Owner of the Schwarzenberg Estate Abroad. Adolf Schwarzenberg's letter to employees dated 18 August 1947.
 - 95 BUBEN, Milan M.: *Česká zemská šlechta. Schwarzenberkové. Primogenitura*, pp. 116 and 118.





Walter Runcimon in Prague, 3 August 1938.

Source: Czech News Agency



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Washing a shop window.

Source: Miloslav Vlk's archive

The Greater the Pressure, the Better You Can Resist

CARDINAL MILOSLAV VLK IN CONFLICT WITH THE COMMUNIST DICTATORSHIP

How could it happen that a priest took the role of StB collaborator? Cardinal Miloslav Vlk sees the failure of some clergymen in the lack of personal loyalty and personal relationship to Christ: *If you have a "looser" character, you always somehow justify it: this is still acceptable, there could be someone even worse instead of me, and a thousand similar justifications. If you don't choose God and the will of God radically and you mix it with what is human, it ends up like this. [...] They wanted to save the Church for the Lord, none of them did it as something evil; when making decisions, everyone looked for the positive things that such cooperation might bring, accentuated that too much, and put the negative aside. Those who think soberly see it differently. Those who are not faithful to the path of God may lose their way. [...] Unfortunately, this shows that ordination is not enough and that life based on this sacrament is also necessary.*¹

STANISLAVA VODIČKOVÁ

Miloslav Vlk's path to priesthood was not straight and unobstructed. He was born on 17 May 1932 in Lišnice, a small village in South Bohemia. He grew up in a family with three sisters in Záluží and, beginning in his childhood, worked on a small farm. His humble origins, intensified by the beginning of the Second World War, shaped both his character and value framework. He attended primary and secondary school in nearby Chyšky. When he was fourteen years old, he started thinking about his future and the direction he should take. It was at that time that he first longed for the priestly vocation, but it seemed too lofty and unattainable for him. Like most boys at the end of the war, he admired war pilots and eventually decided to become an airman.

He enrolled at a gymnasium with the assumption that after completion he would continue at the flight school. He passed the entrance examinations at the Jirsík Gymnasium in České Budějovice² and with the help of the Charity, which financially supported talented poor Czech students, his fam-

ily could afford to pay for his studies and life in the boarding school. To his surprise, the principal gave him an acknowledgment of admission at the entrance interview, including a sentence which again stirred up his hidden desire: *Miloslav Vlk has been admitted and, God willing, he will become a priest one day.*

FURTHER EDUCATION? FORGET IT!

The advent of the communist regime fatally affected the life of the whole society, including the Jirsík Gymnasium students. In April 1948, the Uniform School Act³ was adopted, which subsequently led to the destruction of church and private schools. In 1951–1952, the Jirsík Gymnasium lost its attribute "Jirsík" and it was moved into the building in Česká Street, where students from other church and private schools were gradually transferred. In total, the students of eight top forms (final-year students) of gymnasias were placed here in that school year.

The pressure of the regime on the involvement of secondary school stu-

dents grew stronger with the effort to attract them to the Czechoslovak Union of Youth (ČSM).⁴ The agitators clearly indicated that joining the ČSM was a condition of admission to university. There were even suggestions that the mass youth organization could be joined by the whole classes together. This was criticized by the student Miloslav Vlk, and he managed to reverse this "idea". However, most of his classmates did not want to risk their future, and although they had different opinions of the regime, they finally joined the ČSM. There were only three students from the 8.A class who refused to – Josef Břicháček⁵, František Cibuzar⁶ and Miloslav Vlk.

Shortly after that, the then health minister Josef Plojhar⁷ personally offered the students the opportunity for potential candidates for the study of theology to enter the St. Cyril and Methodius Theological Faculty established by the state.⁸ The bishops tried to dissuade the boys from studying at the faculty, which was controlled by the communists and which did not have the approval of Rome. None of this, however,

was mentioned by the Minister, and after his speech he initiated a discussion. The audacious student “Míla” asked him a question that provoked resentment: *How come we are advised to study at the theological faculty by you, a representative of the regime that has abolished all seminaries and thus restricted the Church?*⁹ The conflict was finally settled, but the student Vlk ended up on a “black list” and soon also among those watched by the State Security Service (StB). Just before the secondary school leaving examination in 1952, he was first contacted by two officers of the StB who attempted to recruit him. A popular and straightforward student in touch with the “reactionary” priests and like-minded peers was, in their opinion, a good candidate for a successful secret collaborator. First, they asked him about his studies and plans for the future. Then the talk turned to who he met and knew. They asked for information and in return offered admission to any university and training as a deployed agent. He resisted the lure, but he had to sign an agreement that he would not talk about their conversation to anyone.

At the next meeting they started with threats: *You’re a student – do you have good results? If you refuse, it might happen that your studies will be over!*¹⁰ They did not manage to intimidate him, and he refused to cooperate, despite the fact that the threat of an incomplete education was very real.

On the day of the school leaving examination, Břicháček, Cibuzar and Vlk came in dark suits with bow ties, while the others were wearing communist youth movement blue shirts. They knew that it would be perceived as provocation, so they thoroughly prepared for the exams. Miloslav excelled in all subjects, but the committee chairman Abund Žlábek (1910–1966) refused to confirm on the school report that he graduated with honours. That was a clear message: Further education? Forget it!

He tried to apply for admission to medical school, but his application was accompanied by such a negative reference from the gymnasium that he did not have a chance. Hoping that he would surely find a job anywhere with such a great school report, he went to the South Bohemian brick-

works, but he was rejected there as well. Finally he found the least qualified and physically demanding work at the Motor Union foundry. During morning shifts he wheelbarrowed sand, and on afternoon shifts he knocked out castings from moulds. He had health problems after some time, so he was transferred to lighter work at the lathe.

He did not want to abandon the idea of university studies and after a year in the foundry he applied for admission to the Faculty of Arts of Charles University to study Latin and Greek. His chances were great at that time, because workers who wanted to study automatically took precedence over other applicants. However, during the entrance interview he was accused of concealing his studies at the church gymnasium. He vainly protested that the school was operated by the state. One of his former gymnasium classmates who studied at the faculty gave the committee a full explanation, which completely buried his prospects: *Yes, the gymnasium was operated by the state. The Church only ran the boarding house where he stayed.*¹¹

During that difficult time full of disillusion he was spiritually reinforced especially by the “stations” of the Urban Sisters¹² where he completed his preparation to enter the lay Third Order of St. Francis.¹³

A PERPETUAL TROUBLEMAKER

In 1953 he joined the army – he attended a NCO school for mortarmen in Dvory near Karlovy Vary. In the second year he became commander of the squad that made it to the finals of the military competition. The school leadership wanted to show off the perfectly organized character of their students before the coming congress of the ČSM, but their plan was spoilt by one soldier – squad commander Miloslav Vlk. The principal of the school, together with the political commissar, tried to persuade him for a long time to join the ČSM, but he refused. After the success of the squad everything was forgotten, and the soldiers, including their commander, were promoted.

During military service he again tried his luck with university education. He filed an application to study his-

tory. He needed a positive reference, but he stubbornly refused to join the ČSM for that purpose. The commander finally found a solution and wrote the following sentence in the report: *As a model soldier, Miloslav Vlk is being prepared to join the Youth Union as a reward.*¹⁴ In 1955 the application including this recommendation was sent to the Faculty of Arts of Charles University, and after successful completion of the examinations he was admitted.

However, he soon found out that it was unacceptable for him to study history in the Marxist interpretation and to prepare for subsequent pedagogical activity. Therefore, he transferred to the archival science department, which – due to its nature – could not really be politicized.

In 1958 another wave of checks and purges was launched among university students. Miloslav Vlk was summoned before a group of classmates and “accused” of disagreeing with the religious policy of the Communist Party. *We discussed that over and over until finally one of them said that if I was not a member of the Union, I didn’t have to accept the policy of the Party.*¹⁵ Although he managed to escape the personnel officers, he attracted the StB again. In that year the StB started to spy on him, which lasted almost continuously until the fall of the regime in 1989.

WATCHED BY THE STATE SECURITY SERVICE

The StB began to spy on Miloslav Vlk in 1958. A total of nine dossiers of “state-security elaboration” were created for him as an “enemy individual”.¹⁶ The only time when a separate dossier was not kept on him was the period from 1966 to 1969, when he was shadowed within the St. Cyril and Methodius Theological Faculty.

Surveillance of his activities was carried out by central counterintelligence departments of the StB: the 2nd Directorate and 10th Directorate of the National Security Corps (SNB) and regional or district SNB Directorates, depending on the specific place of Miloslav Vlk’s activity. The dossiers had the code names “Brigade”, “Little Crayfish” and “Secretary”.¹⁷ He was also mentioned in a number of other dossiers kept by the StB on his friends and



Working as an archivist. Source: Miloslav Vlk's archive



Blessing from his mother. Source: Miloslav Vlk's archive

acquaintances as a “contact person”.¹⁸ As noted above, the StB first started shadowing him during his studies at Charles University. It focused on his work among university students in order to gather incriminating evidence against him. Apart from Vlk, the StB also watched his colleagues: Fr. Josef Pynta, a priest without state approval to exercise clerical service (“state approval”)¹⁹, František Pich and Václav Konzal, with whom he organized, according to the findings of the StB, ideological-religious enemy activities among university students, based on the spirituality of the lay Third Order of St. Francis.

In 1960 Miloslav Vlk graduated and joined the District Archives in Třeboň. It was soon reorganized and moved to Jindřichův Hradec. A year later he went to the District and Municipal Archives in České Budějovice, where he became the director.

The entire career of most of the “working intelligentsia” was based on their “personnel reference”, containing the collected information that the regime considered important.²⁰ Miloslav Vlk also had a personal dossier kept by the StB.²¹

The reason for “elaboration” was still the same – work with young people: [...] he is one of the main initiators and

organizers of the religious education of youth, focusing on the education of youth in the spirit of Vatican ideology and preparation of the personnel of the Roman Catholic Church in case of the reversal of the state regime.²²

According to the findings of the StB, a group of young Christians gathered around him in České Budějovice. They met in different flats, read the Bible together, prepared different lectures and then discussed them. At the same time, the StB found that Miloslav Vlk had connections in foreign countries from which he received religious literature. The StB was right. Lack of religious literature in Czechoslovakia forced the Christians to publish samizdat literature and to smuggle books, for example from the neighbouring German Democratic Republic (GDR) and the Polish People's Republic.

The StB struck in May 1963, when the group of young people came back from a three-day trip to Malšín in the foothills of the Šumava Mountains. They were summoned for interrogation and subjected to harsh intimidation. The StB first classified the activity of the group under Section 178 of the Criminal Code – obstruction of the supervision of churches and religious societies. Over time, the severity was reconsidered, and the StB settled for

decomposition and prophylactic measures based on participation of investigators.²³

A STIR IN THE ARCHIVE

Miloslav Vlk was professionally successful in that period, publishing numerous studies in various periodicals, but he longed more and more for a priestly vocation. In 1963 he visited Josef Hlouch, Bishop of České Budějovice in internment, and after consultation with him he filed an application to study theology. In his workplace it was generally known that Vlk was a practicing Catholic, but his decision took everybody by surprise. The superior District National Committee did not give him a recommendation for studies, so he was rejected. He assumed that he would be dismissed, but the District National Committee chose a different strategy – he was given a higher salary and the plant organization of the Revolutionary Trade Union Movement made a commitment to marry him. However, he remained obdurate and the next year he applied again. This time he was better prepared for the clash of arguments with the District National Committee. His determination and persistence eventually paid off; he received the recommendation and enrolled on the St. Cyril



Photodocumentation made by the StB. Going to work.

Source: Security Services Archive

and Methodius Theological Faculty. At the end of his career in the archive he managed to find a bug in his office and prevented the StB from collecting enough “evidence of his subversive activities”.

DECONSPIRACY

In September 1964, before going to the Theological Faculty, Miloslav Vlk lost his patience with the StB. He went to his friend Marie Tunglová,²⁴ who worked in the archive department of the Ministry of the Interior, and told her about his suspicion that he had long been shadowed by StB officers, literally wherever he went. In his opinion, it was not a coincidence, and when checking what was happening around him, he noticed the agents several times. He also told her that he had found a bug in his office, installed by the two employees of the Ministry of the Interior in his absence. Moreover, he found that his telephone was tapped and he managed to reveal the identity of the StB collaborator Dědičová. *In this context, he also talked about the fact that he was informed by his friends that there was something going on around him and that his case should be finished in October. One of his friends even told him that some StB officers talked about him in a pub over a glass of beer.*²⁵ The StB was unpleasantly surprised by the deconspiracy to such an extent, and in the reports of different departments it tried to downplay or question its mistakes. Dědičová, his colleague from the district archive, was really used as an agent from mid-1963. She provided information about Vlk's visits, of his being away from the workplace, etc. Contrary to the facts, the report states:

*Based on the situation as it is known, no deconspiracy has occurred ...*²⁶

The StB officers also variously questioned the revealed end of his elaboration in October, although it turned out that it was discussed as a possible deadline in May at the meeting with comrade Ledinský, deputy chief of the 2nd Section of the České Budějovice Directorate. The StB officers who apparently disclosed the deadline of the operation against Vlk were not identified.

The bug in his office was used for a total of sixty-nine days. In the period from the installation to uninstallation, the employees of the operative technology department entered the archive director's office four times. However, they denied any mistakes. In order to cover the operation, a story was created in which two StB officers, accompanied by chief of the archive department of the Ministry of the Interior Veselý, urgently needed to obtain some old magazines, and therefore entered the archive in the evening. Vlk's suspicion was intensified by the behaviour of the chief Veselý, who provided him with that explanation, and subsequently acted unnaturally in the bugged rooms. Moreover, he found that his telephone was tapped when after talking with one his friends the person was contacted by the StB and asked about Vlk. The report said that the bug was discovered by Vlk, who allegedly looked for eavesdropping devices every day. The report also denied that Vlk managed to identify any specific members of the surveillance group, although it admitted that he closely watched around him, changed the direction in which he was walking, got on means

of public transport in the last minute and, consequently, the operations had to be interrupted several times. The surveillance was carried out for ten days, with breaks from 20 June to 16 July 1964, and a total of twenty StB officers were deployed. After evaluating the situation it was finally admitted that he could have seen someone more than once, *which could have led him to make the wrong conclusions, as he told the archive department employee Tunglová. So, for example, in the record he talks about how he carried out checks from the trolleybus. Throughout the surveillance period, he only used the trolleybus twice and in no case was the trolleybus caught by the personnel at the last minute, but surveillance was performed using a service car.*²⁷ According to the report, M. Vlk believed that everybody was an agent, but allegedly he did not disclose the actual officers. A note was added to the summarizing report, expressing astonishment at the tendency to look for excuses displayed by individual departments: *There have been a few cases like that of serious suspicion of disclosure of classified information. It would be better not to quibble and prove otherwise, but instead to critically assess the quality of work and focus on its improvement!*²⁸

STUDYING THEOLOGY

The St. Cyril and Methodius Theological Faculty was a state institution and its leadership was carefully chosen and verified by the regime.²⁹ If they did not cooperate directly with the StB, they were controlled by the communists using other means. There were also informers among the seminarians, but the other students usually recog-



Followed in the Průhonice park in the photographs taken by the StB.



Source: Security Services Archive

nized them by the way they behaved and talked.

We had a church secretary at the faculty – comrade Souhrada. He used to guard priests in concentration camps, and here he guarded theologians. He was present all the time, supervising and checking everything. We had to attend interviews on current political events, endure celebrations of the Great October Revolution and the like.³⁰

The seminarians looked for spiritual guidance and support outside the faculty. Miloslav Vlk found it during his visits to the GDR. The local monks, Oratorians,³¹ initially sent religious literature to Czechoslovakia in bulk. However, this “illegal channel” was broken by the East German Ministry for State Security (Ministerium für Staatssicherheit – Stasi) in collaboration with the StB. Therefore, the monks chose a different strategy – they supplied the books to the German priests who then posted them individually to the selected addresses in Czechoslovakia. Miloslav Vlk’s “contact-man” was Fr. Johannes Klan. Later they met in person, and it was through him that Vlk discovered the Focolare Movement³² – Work of Mary³³, whose strong spirituality he perceived as ideal for the period of communist persecution of the Church.

Frequent visits to the GDR and smuggling of Christian literature mobilized the secret police officers, and he was summoned for questioning several times during his studies. He was told about the meetings of the community of young believers from Budějovice again: *It also had psychological reasons – it was something like a reminder that I shouldn’t think that being in the seminary means I’m home and dry.³⁴*

Deacon Vlk’s life was significantly impacted by the year 1968. *We prepared various petitions: to Dubček to allow the return of the bishops to their dioceses, to Cardinal Tomášek to ask for greater freedom for the Church from the representatives of the state, and so on.³⁵ It was important to us that we were invited by the Prague university students to their meeting in the Great Hall of the Faculty of Arts. I had the opportunity to be there as a delegate of Litoměřice. It was evident that the university was in a state of agitation.³⁶*

Due to the fact that he graduated in archival science, the study of theology was reduced from five to four years.³⁷ He was ordained a priest on 23 June 1968 in the České Budějovice cathedral by Mons. Josef Hlouch³⁸, who could take his office again on 1 June 1968, after long years of internment.³⁹ A month later, priest Vlk became his secretary.⁴⁰

Despite general social easing, the position of the Church was difficult. The activities of the dioceses were still overseen by the church secretaries who were often directly connected with the StB. When assigning priests to parishes, the bishop or his deputy had to ask for the church secretary’s approval. Every priest needed the state approval in order to carry out his work. The Church was allowed to operate only on the premises of churches; it was still criminal to conduct pastoral care in families, to influence young people or to hold public processions without permission. If a priest wanted to perform a church act outside the area for which he had the state approval, he needed a special permission. Orders did not for-

mally exist, although they were never officially cancelled.

Most dioceses were not run by bishops, but by capitular vicars installed by the regime. The church structure was renewed and bishops returned to their posts only very slowly. The České Budějovice diocese was assigned to Mons. Karel Skoupý⁴¹ and the Litoměřice diocese to Mons. Štěpán Trochta⁴². Prague Archbishop Josef Beran lived in exile in Rome,⁴³ and in his office, based on an agreement between the communist state and the Holy See, he was represented by Mons. František Tomášek⁴⁴, as an administrator. All of these obstacles faced by the clergy were still present at the time of easing, and it was only very slowly that some of them were removed.

A Catholic club that organized charitable activities, spiritual exercises, concerts, lectures, youth events, etc. was soon established in České Budějovice.⁴⁵ In the school year 1968–1969 the number of applications to study religion in the region increased to fourteen thousand, which was about five thousand more students than in the previous year.⁴⁶

As the bishop’s secretary, Miloslav Vlk experienced both the hopeful Prague Spring and the Warsaw Pact invasion of Czechoslovakia. After the occupation Bishop Hlouch, together with other bishops, issued a protest that his secretary read on the České Budějovice radio station. *At that time we tried to comfort and encourage people, and of course we prayed; we shared a huge disappointment with all the people.⁴⁷*

The hard-won freedom from the time of easing existed for some time. Secretary Vlk continued to lead a group of young people, and apart from religious instruction he also went on trips with them. However, the situation soon became tense.

GOING UNDERGROUND AGAIN

In 1969 religious education for secondary school students was cancelled, and the following year the State Office for Church Affairs issued an opinion of the regulation by the Ministry of the Interior of the reporting obligation for the organization of church events and gatherings. The vague wording allowed the church secretaries arbitrary interpretations of what fell under the reporting obligation.

Z d ů v o d n ě n í .

V akci "BRIGÁDA" (osobní svazek zavedený na VLKA Miloslava) byla rozpracovávána skupina nábožensky založené mládeže v Jihočeském kraji pro nepřátelskou ideologickou činnost po linii řím.kat. církve .

Rozpracováním akce bylo zjištěno a potvrzeno, že jde o organizovanou činnost po linii řím.kat. církve směřující k získávání mladých lidí pro vatikánskou ideologii a její odtrhávání od socialistického způsobu života . Současně se zaměřují na výchovu kádří řím.kat. církve, kteří by našli uplatnění po změně situace . K této činnosti kromě společných schůzek používají i písemné materiály tendenčně zaměřené proti dnešnímu zřízení, které si sami zpracovávají a mezi sebou rozšiřují (zjištěno úkonem "77" u Julie MACKOVÉ v Táboře). Skupina má spojení na zahraničí (NSR, Rakousko, Vatikan a NDR) odkud získávají hlavně náboženskou literaturu a dále na církevní hierarchii v ČSSR arcibiskupa BERANA a biskupa HLOUCHA od kterých získávají rady ke své činnosti .

Podle dosud získaných poznatků lze činnost nábož.skupiny mládeže hodnotit jako nepřátelsky zaměřenou proti dnešnímu zřízení jež je v rozporu s § 178 tr.zákona - "Maření dozoru nad církvemi a náboženskými společnostmi" . Proto navrhuji zavedení skupinového operativního svazku a v něm konkrétní nepřátelskou činnost skupiny nábožensky založené mládeže odhalit a postihnout .

Operativní orgán :
.....
por. B r o m Boh

One of the continuing reports of elaboration of M. Vlk by the State Security Service.

Source: Security Services Archive

The group of young people around Fr. Vlk officially became a *church choir* and continued in their meetings. In that year Professor Karel Skalický⁴⁸ came from Rome to visit his hometown České Budějovice and promised to provide organizational assistance with a trip to Italy. The preparation took almost the whole year, because at that time it was only possible to travel to the capitalist states individually, based on a personal invitation. These invitations from Rome for about twenty young people were arranged via Italian families by Professor Skalický, so the trip could take place in the summer of 1970. Fr. Hrdina became the leader of the group. Shortly before leaving the StB infiltrated the choir. However, the boy and girl whose applications to travel abroad were dealt with unusually quickly were soon revealed due to their fatal ignorance of basic Christian morality.

On 4 May 1970, in response to these activities of the *church choir*, the České Budějovice StB established a dossier codenamed "Secretary", later renamed "Little Crayfish", on Miloslav Vlk⁴⁹ and monitored the "illegal" activities of the choir.⁵⁰ The young people were gradually exposed to exhausting interrogations and intimidation. The questions during interrogations proved that the StB had information from tapped telephones and unlawful searches. A "secret personal search" was once also performed by secretary Vlk. Bishop Hlouch was on different occasions visited by Leo Drozdek, a church secretary who performed the state supervision over the Church. Drozdek would sit with the bishop for hours, smoking and drinking alcohol, which made him more and more aggressive. When discussing ecclesiastical matters, he threatened and blackmailed the bishop using his position of power. However,

after one meeting he left his notebook in the meeting room. Secretary Vlk went through the notes and found a plan to establish a collaborationist association of priests called *Pacem in terris*⁵¹ in the diocese of České Budějovice.

It also included the names of selected priests that the church secretary wanted to contact as potential members. Secretary Vlk visited all of them, pointing out Bishop Hlouch's negative opinion of the participation in this new movement organized by the communists.

WE DON'T WANT YOU HERE

Vlk finished in the office of secretary in 1971, when he was transferred to a different place due to the pressure of the StB.⁵² His state approval for České Budějovice was revoked by the district church secretary on 1 May 1971, and it was granted by the Prachatice church secretary in June of that year, when Vlk started working as an administrator in Lažišť and Záblatí in Šumava.⁵³ His contacts with the believers from České Budějovice were limited, but the community he founded continued to meet. In Lažišť he began rebuilding the parish office to become an open house for all people. His friends from České Budějovice came to help him: *Their presence was a kind of evangelism – people perceived the relationship between us, seeing that the parish office was not a closed castle, and that created a community.*⁵⁴

He fully applied his art of communication with everybody, the parish office was always full of people, he visited local families, and went on trips with young people – all with full awareness that he was being watched by the StB. After sixteen months the regional church secretary Leo Drozdek again revoked Vlk's state approval to exercise clerical service for Lažišť and Záblatí. The official letter presented the following explanation: *Due to the fact that you do not meet the conditions for activity in this parish, we hereby revoke your state approval as of 2 November 1972.*⁵⁵ The local chairman of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia explained the opinion of the Party concerning the removal of the popular priest to the people as follows: *When Vlk said something, everybody bent over backwards to do it, but when we said something,*



At an audience with Pope John Paul II.

Source: Miloslav Vlk's archive

nobody bothered.⁵⁶ The priest Vlk was given a different explanation from his bishop: *Before his death, Bishop Hlouch wrote to me that he was under great pressure to transfer me somewhere else, because I buried the mother⁵⁷ of the "King of Šumava" (Josef Hasil – author's note) and organized a famous funeral for her that was even attended by the Germans. Yes, they came there, that's true – but how could I prevent them from coming? And why should I have done it at all?*⁵⁸

A NEW PLACE OF ACTIVITY

After three months he was again granted the state approval, but in another district. He was transferred to Rožmitál pod Třemšínem. His transfer was accompanied by a reference prepared by the Prachatice church secretary: *In Lažiště he proved to be an arch-enemy of our socialist system. He has great relationships with the priests committed to the Vatican, and he is also its faithful servant. He meets people who do not have a positive relationship to our regime. When discussing official*

*matters with this person, it is necessary to be familiar with the matter, because Vlk is sneaky...*⁵⁹

After his arrival he transformed the parish into a vibrant community, successfully performed the pastoral care of families and youth, and publicly discussed the conclusions of the Second Vatican Council, which reconstructed the Church.

The Příbram department of the StB perceived his activity as a threat and "actions against the state". As a result of his activities, he was "elaborated" for misuse of the religious function under Section 101 of the Criminal Code, for which he faced a prison sentence of six months to three years.⁶⁰ The incriminating evidence against him was continually gathered using wiretaps and secret house searches until 1978.⁶¹ In 1973 he was interrogated by the Příbram department of the StB in connection with monitoring of the activities of the German organization Ackermann Gemeinde (AG) in the territory of Czechoslovakia. The

comprehensive dossier on the General Secretary of AG Adolph Kunzmann (1920–1976) was codenamed "Operation Revenge".⁶² This organization contacted dozens of people by sending packages with different food, trying to identify reliable priests and laypersons to whom it subsequently sent religious and philosophical literature, within the project of assisting the eastern countries. It also helped to co-finance the repair of churches, giving cars to priests who served in several distant parishes due to the lack of clergy, etc. Miloslav Vlk received a package with cocoa powder, which he admitted during the testimony, and he added that he did not know Adolf Kunzmann personally and that he had broken off relations with him in May 1973, i.e. shortly before his interrogation by the StB.

As part of the campaign against Charter 77, the StB also required the Catholic Church to present its negative opinion. The initiative was publicly condemned by the collaborationist movement *Pacem in terris*. Cardinal

František Tomášek also disassociated himself from Charter 77. His opposition was primarily caused by the fact that one of the first three spokespersons was the reformist communist Jiří Hájek, who, among other things, held the post of Minister of Education in 1965–1968, whose competence also included church issues. In this function, he behaved arrogantly towards the representatives of the Church and he even shouted at the archbishop during negotiations several times.⁶³ The clergy mostly held a restrained attitude to Charter 77,⁶⁴ but the StB looked for every possible connection or support: *Negative actions are displayed by the priest Vlk from Rožmitál, in connection with whom evidence has been collected that he privately encourages the believers to listen to the foreign radio station where the Charter is published.*⁶⁵ By 1978 the Příbram Department of the StB had accumulated a sufficient amount of “documentation of negative activities” of the priest Vlk, based on which his state approval was revoked again.⁶⁶ The church secretary used children’s masses as the pretext. Vlk rejected the warning to end this activity immediately, referring to the officially approved circular letter of Cardinal Tomášek that invited the clergy to organize them. After another children’s service in September 1978 his state approval was revoked the following month. This time forever.

REVOLT

The local organist Emil Stehlík lodged a complaint against the state authorities with the President of the Republic.⁶⁷ The letter also contained sheets with more than two hundred signatures of the Rožmitál believers. In the letter they expressed their concern about the absurdity of the revocation of state approval: *Miloslav Vlk’s state approval to exercise clerical service was revoked on the grounds that it does not meet the general conditions of eligibility under Section 2 of Act No. 218/40 Coll., but the provision of this Section applies to the fact that the state approval is required to exercise clerical service...*⁶⁸ The capitular vicar tried to mitigate the impact of the decision and requested that the priest only be transferred to another parish, without revocation of the state approval. His attempt at a compromise went unheeded.

The situation was not solved by the meeting of the believers with the state officials on 5 December 1978 either. The minutes of the meeting stated that Vlk’s approval was revoked and a new priest appointed instead. His other activities were to be decided by the superior ordinary. The believers had to sign the explanation provided by the state officials – Chairman of the Municipal National Committee in Rožmitál pod Třemšínem, Secretary for Church Affairs of the Příbram District National Committee, and the representative of the Ministry of Culture of the Czech Socialist Republic. However, in their opinion, the explanation was insufficient, and after the meeting they went to the parish office, where they informed the removed priest of the result of the meeting. The comrades of the National Committee also went to the local parish office to ask the new priest, Fr. Uhlíř, to calm the situation. After they left, they were awaited by the laymen who made them discuss the matter with Fr. Vlk: *In this interview, Fr. Vlk argued that his case was a violation of human rights. When he was told what laws applied to the relations between the Church and the state, he said that it was a concrete expression of the dictatorship of the proletariat.*⁶⁹ The case of Miloslav Vlk was published by the foreign press as an example of the violation of human rights as defined by the Helsinki Protocol: *The complaint was later, in a biased form, published in foreign press, where it was used for further attacks on the state religious policy in our republic.*⁷⁰

The brave activity of the parishioners did not help, and Fr. Vlk had to find a civilian job. He agreed with his successor that he could continue to stay at the parish office, and from 13 November 1978 he worked again at the lathe in the local metalworking cooperative Věšín. As of 1 December he handed in his notice and moved to Prague. The Příbram StB therefore ended his monitoring, assessed the operation, and forwarded the dossier codenamed “Operation Secretary” to their colleagues in Prague.⁷¹

CLEANING WINDOWS

His reference made it very difficult for him to find civilian employment. Finally, he managed to find a job as a win-

dow cleaner with the Prague company Úklid. After eight years, he had to stop this employment for health reasons and found a position as an archivist of the Czechoslovak State Bank.

Over the years in Prague he secretly performed his priestly vocation among small groups of secondary school and university students, in families and within the Focolare Movement, and he was among the leading representatives of the “underground church”. As shown by the archival materials, according to the State Office for Church Affairs and the StB, he was seen as one of the most dangerous priests without state approval: *His characteristics indicate that Dr. Vlk is a very experienced and skilful priest with a significantly negative view of our social order...*⁷²

In the “underground” a number of activities were organized that could not be performed by the official Church: various meetings of like-minded people, prayer circles, youth formations, priest meetings and exchange of information, translations and creation of texts as well as their reproduction, distribution, etc. The core of the “underground” church was formed by priests without state permission, retired priests and those who were not busy in barren parishes.

These “illegal” church activities and “obstruction of the supervision of churches and religious societies” were dealt with by the StB,⁷³ which responded to them with “heightened supervision”: it secretly made photographic documentation,⁷⁴ performed unlawful flat searches without his presence (intelligence-technical action “ANALYSIS”),⁷⁵ and installed a permanent eavesdropping device in his flat (intelligence-technical action “DIAGRAM”)⁷⁶ in order to *disrupt his influence and impact on young people.*⁷⁷

However, Miloslav Vlk was also “watchful and alert”, escaping his guards in different ways. The StB reports tell us that he conducted various countermeasures to prevent his surveillance: he generally got on and off the means of public transport at the last minute, closely watching what was happening around him, which thwarted the surveillance. However, he did not manage to escape every time. *We went to a meeting of priests, but we were being watched. I assumed they were after me, so I got out of the car*

in Práhonice and went for a walk in the park to shake them off. They followed me to the point where the road ended by the wall. I turned around, went to meet them and said: "Gentlemen, it really stops here, so we have to go back." I sat on a bench and waited. They went back and this time I followed them.⁷⁸

It was not until 1 January 1989 that the state approval to exercise clerical service was restored to him, but only "conditionally" for a period of one year.⁷⁹ It was better for the state authorities to return the state approval and get the uncomfortable priest off the streets of Prague. He provided pastoral service in the parishes of Žihobce and Bukovník in the Klatovy region, and later in Čachrov, Javorná, Železná Ruda, Běšiny and Stráž in Šumava.

FROM THE UNDERGROUND TO THE TOP

After the change of the regime in Czechoslovakia, Pope John Paul II appointed him Bishop of České Budějovice on 14 February 1990. He was ordained a bishop on 31 March 1990 in the České Budějovice cathedral. After the resignation of František Tomášek, Archbishop of Prague, he became his successor on 27 March 1991. Miloslav Vlk was named the 35th Archbishop

of Prague, Metropolitan and Czech Primate. He officially took office on 1 June 1991.

From 1991 he served as the head of the Czechoslovak and later Czech Bishops' Conference for nine years. From 1993 to 2001 he was Chairman of the Council of the Bishops' Conferences of Europe (Consilium Conferentiarum Episcoporum Europae, CCEE). In 1994 he became a member of the Pontifical Council for Social Communications and the Congregation for the Oriental Churches, as well as the Moderator of the Bishop-Friends of the Focolare Movement.

On 26 November 1994 Pope John Paul II appointed him cardinal. He participated in the conclave at the Vatican in April 2005, when the College of Cardinals elected the new head of the Catholic Church – Pope Benedict XVI.

Cardinal Miloslav Vlk has won a number of awards. In 1999 he received the "Grosses Verdienstkreuz", a high state award of the Federal Republic of Germany. In 2001 he won an honorary medal of Tomáš Garrigue Masaryk from the Masaryk Democratic Movement and the international award of Görlitz – "Brückepreis". A year later President Václav Havel bestowed the Order of Tomáš Garrigue Masaryk on

him for outstanding contribution to democracy and human rights. In 2006 he received the award of Ackermann-Gemeinde, etc.

From 1992 to 1993 Cardinal Vlk was awarded honorary doctorates from Illinois Benedictine College and the University of St. Thomas in the USA as well as an honorary doctorate of theology of the University of Passau, Bavaria. In 2001 he received an honorary doctorate of the Pontifical Academy of Theology in Krakow, Poland, and in 2002 an honorary doctorate of the Opole University.

He also received honorary citizenships of Rožmitál pod Třemšínem (CZ), Cedar Rapids (USA) and Baltimore (USA) (all in 1992), Třeboň (CZ) and Klodzko (PL) (both in 1996), Roudnice nad Labem (CZ) (1997), Karlštejn (CZ) (1998) and Brandýs nad Labem-Stará Boleslav (CZ) (2010). He is an honorary member of the Czech Archive Society.

In February 2010 Pope Benedict XVI received the resignation of Cardinal Vlk of Prague from the pastoral leadership of the Archdiocese of Prague due to reaching the set age limit. However, he remained an active priest. He was never prevented from exercising this vocation by the state machine nor by age.

NOTES

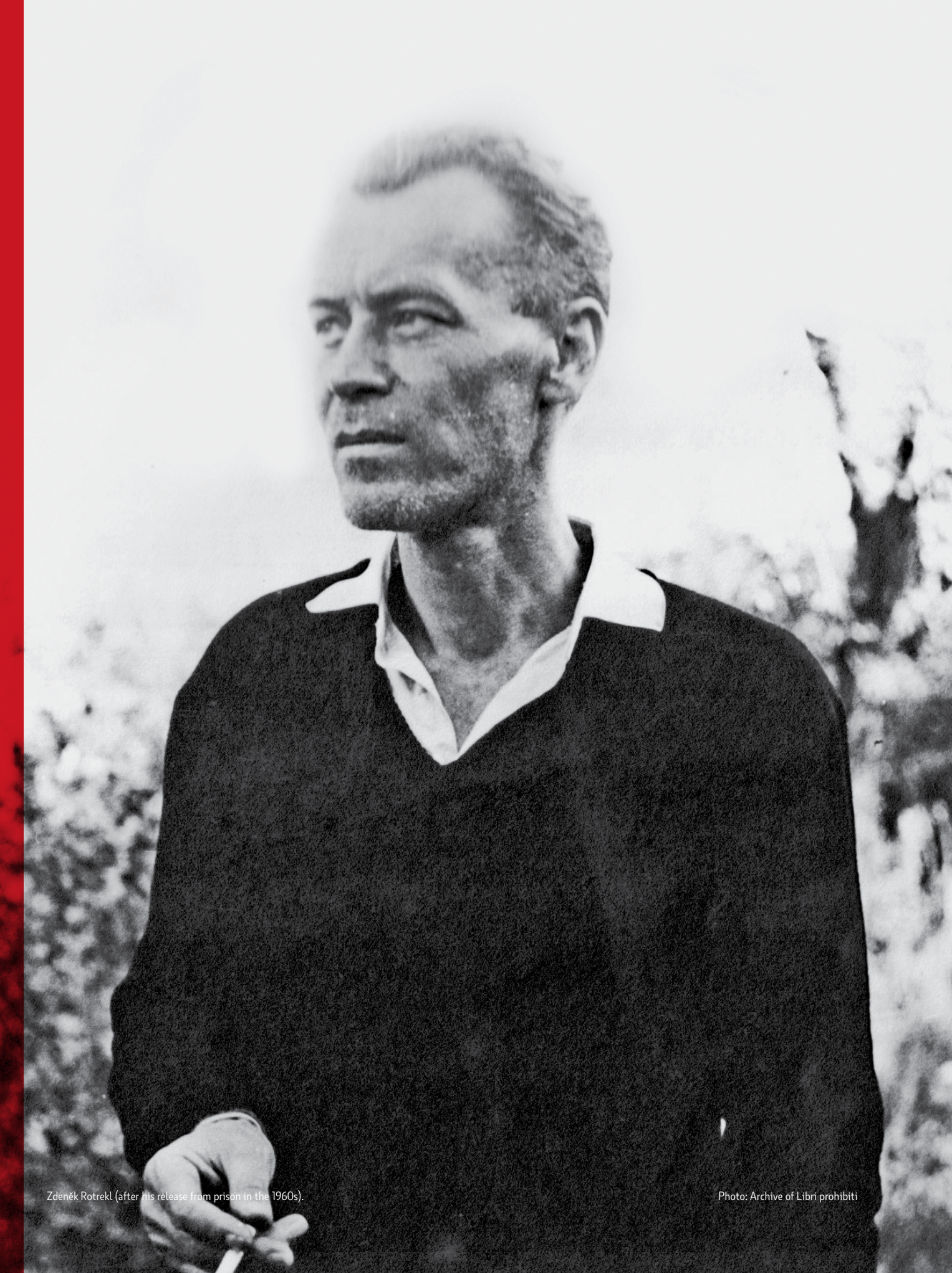
- PIRNOSOVÁ, Blanka: *Koho má za zády? Čtyřicet dramatických let kardinála Miloslava Vlka*. Nové Město, Prague 2002, p. 35.
- The Jirsík Gymnasium for Czech students was founded in the 1870s by Mons. Jan Valerián Jirsík in České Budějovice, a town that was mostly German-speaking at that time. The gymnasium also included the Small Seminary – a boarding school for poor boys from the Czech countryside.
- Collection of Laws and Regulations No. 95/1948, Act of 21 April 1948, on the basic regulation of uniform education (Education Act), which came into effect on 1 September 1948.
- The Czechoslovak Union of Youth was a united youth organization formed in 1949 by merging the existing youth organizations. It became a component of the National Front and was directly subject to the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia (KSČ). In 1968, it split up, and a year later it was succeeded by the Socialist Union of Youth (SSM).
- Josef Břicháček (1928–2004) attended the juniorate in Libějovice near Vodňany in 1945–1948. In 1948 he entered the novitiate of the Redemptorists and a year later he took early vows. After the destruction of the monastery he joined the military service in the Assistant Technical Battalion (PTP) in Komárno in September 1950 and then in Sliač. In 1951–1952 he attended a gymnasium in České Budějovice. Subsequently he was recalled to the Assistant Technical Battalion, first to Klecany, then to Prague and Trenčín. After his return in 1954 he worked for two years with his brother in agriculture, and from 1956 as an accountant at the Orlik dam construction. In 1963–1967 he studied theology at the Roman Catholic St. Cyril and Methodius Theological Faculty in Prague, based in Litoměřice, and on 25 June 1967 he was ordained a priest. As a chaplain he worked in Pelhřimov, Veselá and Častrov until 1969, then became the administrator in Kdyně, and in 1974–1990 he managed the Zavlekov parish. In 1990 he was called to participate in the reconstruction of the Redemptorist community at Svátá Hora. Until 1999 he worked there and at the same time managed the Třebosko parish. Then he provided pastoral care in Pelhřimov and the surrounding area, and from 2001 he worked as the administrator of the pilgrimage place Lomec, spiritual administrator of the Grey Sisters of the Third Order of St. Francis, and administrator in Chelčice.
- František Cibuzar (1932–2002) joined the State Farm in Netolice after completing gymnasium studies in 1952. He continued to study theology at the St. Cyril and Methodius Theological Faculty from 1964. He graduated from the faculty in 1969, and on 29 June of the same year he was ordained a priest by Mons. Josef Hlouch. He served his first mass on 5 July 1969 at the Netolice dean church. Until 1971 he worked as a chaplain in Domažlice and administrator in Folmava. Then he served as the administrator in Hostouň. In 1993 he was appointed vicar in Nepomuk. He died in a car accident and is buried in the family grave in Netolice.
- Josef Plojhar (1902–1981) was ordained a priest in 1925, then worked as a chaplain in České Budějovice and was politically active in the Czechoslovak People's Party (ČSL). During the Nazi occupation he was imprisoned at the Buchenwald and Dachau concentration camps. In 1945–1948 he chaired the regional organization of the ČSL in České Budějovice and was a member of the ČSL presidium. In 1948 he became a member of the Central Action Committee of the National Front and a "progressive priest" favoured by the communists. In 1948–1951 he was vice-chairman, in 1951–1968 chairman, and from 1969 honorary chairman of the ČSL. In 1948–1968 he was the Minister of Health, in 1945–1969 he was a deputy of the National Assembly, and from 1969 a deputy of the House of the People of the Federal Assembly. In 1951–1968 he chaired the National Peace Committee of the Catholic Clergy, and from 1952 he was vice-chairman of the Union of Czechoslovak-Soviet Friendship. In his positions he managed to "survive" all the crises of the regime until 1968.
- Under Section 33 of Act No. 58/1950 Coll., on universities, the Catholic Theological Faculty was excluded from the Charles University union and in 1953, together with the seminary, moved to Litoměřice. The same fate befell the St. Cyril and Methodius Theological Faculty of the Palacký University in Olomouc. Under Section 34 of the same Act, supreme administration and supervision over them was exercised by the minister responsible for management of the State Office for Church Affairs. Study and examination regulations for these faculties were published by the State Office for Church Affairs after agreement with the Ministry of Education, Science and Art.
- PIRNOSOVÁ, Blanka: *Koho má za zády? Čtyřicet dramatických let kardinála Miloslava Vlka*, p. 9.
- Ibid, p. 10.
- Ibid, p. 15.

- 12 Fr. Jan Evangelista Urban (1901–1991) founded the monastic institute called the Sisters of the Apostolate of the Third Order of St. Francis (Urban Sisters) whose mission was a lay apostolate, catechesis, and social and charitable services. In the 1950s the Sisters escaped centralization, because they did not live together in convents, but usually in pairs in what were called stations, i.e. rented flats. At the request of the founder, they did not use their simple monastic robes during the time of persecution of the Church. In civilian life, faithful to their order, they worked among laypersons as caregivers and nurses in hospitals. The continuation of the monastic life and the acceptance of new members led to a large operation of the StB in 1958. A total of 12 Sisters were convicted. More on the topic: VLČEK, Vojtěch (ed.): *Ženské řehole za komunismu 1948–1989. Sborník příspěvků z konference pořádané Konferencí vyšších představených ženských řeholí v ČR a Českou křesťanskou akademií dne 1. října 2003 v kostele sv. Vojtěcha v Praze*. Matice cyrilometodějská, Olomouc 2005.
- 13 The initiation ceremony was led by Fr. Karel Šmákal (1924–2002).
- 14 PIRNOSOVÁ, Blanka: *Koho má za zády? Čtyřicet dramatických let kardinála Miloslava Vlk*, p. 20.
- 15 Ibid, p. 22.
- 16 I would like to thank PhDr. Vladimíra Vaníčková and PhDr. Světlana Ptáčníková for the provision of the extract from the StB records concerning Miloslav Vlk.
- 17 Most dossiers on Miloslav Vlk were destroyed by the StB, and only fragments or records of dossiers have been preserved. The last shredding was carried out on 6 December 1989. The first dossier of state-security elaboration kept on Vlk with registration number 01737 was created by the Internal Intelligence of the 3rd Directorate of the StB (1st Department of the 4th Section) on 21 November 1958, and it was subsequently handed over to the 1st Department of the 1st Section. The dossier was categorized as JOC (*La Jeunesse ouvrière chrétienne* movement – Young Christian Workers, who live according to the gospel, studying the Bible, meditating and, if possible, exercising their personal apostolate) and university youth.
- 18 *Security Services Archive* (hereinafter only *ABS*), collection 4th Directorate of the SNB – Surveillance Directorate, dossiers codenamed “Operation Tone” (František Kohlíček), “Radko” (František Radkovský), etc.
- 19 The state approval to exercise clerical service was a decision by which state authorities in communist Czechoslovakia granted permission to priests of churches and religious organizations to carry out their activities. The state approval was applied for by the church or the priest himself from the national committee or the State Office for Church Affairs. The state approval was usually locally specified, and regional secretaries used its granting and revocation to blackmail the clergy, to move the troublesome priests within the republic and to remove them from the spiritual administration. If the priest performed his profession without state approval, he was not granted a salary and subsequently a pension. In addition, this activity was classified as obstruction of supervision of churches and religious societies (Section 178 of the Criminal Code). This crime was also committed by a priest who performed a clerical act (e.g., confession, baptism, etc.) outside the territory for which the permission was issued.
- 20 The personnel material mostly contained information about family background and origin, qualifications achieved, career, positions, political opinions and attitudes, personality traits, etc.
- 21 The personal dossier codenamed “Brigade” was handed over from Prague to the 2nd Department of the 3rd Section of the České Budějovice Directorate of the StB, where it was registered on 25 July 1961 and converted to a group dossier under registration number 04883. Subsequently, on 9 November 1961, it was handed over to the StB in Jindřichův Hradec. Later it returned to České Budějovice, where it was registered under new registration number 07232 (5th Department of the 2nd Section).
- 22 *ABS*, collection Counterintelligence Elaboration Dossiers – Č. Budějovice (CB-KR), archival number 1329 ČB, report dated 10 March 1964, p. 2.
- 23 *ABS*, a dossier codenamed “Brigade”, registration number 7232, České Budějovice Directorate of the StB, Decision to Establish a Personal Operative Dossier, p. 9. The dossier was archived on 25 May 1965 under archival number 1329 ČB.
- 24 *ABS*, collection České Budějovice Regional Directorate of the National Security Corps, Part II (B 2/II), inventory unit 71, call mark Vlk Miloslav, director of the Regional Archive in České Budějovice – deconspiracy, 1964.
- 25 Ibid, p. 1.
- 26 Ibid, p. 5.
- 27 Ibid, p. 8.
- 28 Ibid.
- 29 Under Section 34 of Act No. 58/1950 Coll., on universities, the supreme administration and supervision over the St. Cyril and Methodius Theological Faculty were carried out by the minister in charge of managing the State Office for Church Affairs.
- 30 PALÁN, Aleš: Tanky rozdrtily svobodu, která přicházela. *Katolický týdeník*, 2008, No. 33 (12–18 August 2008), p. 5.
- 31 A congregation of secular priests founded in 1522 whose main mission was the restoration of Rome using new pastoral methods (sermons for children, pilgrimages, religious singing in folk speech, spiritual exercises, etc.).
- 32 “Focolare” can be translated as “family fireside”.
- 33 The Focolare Movement was founded in the middle of heavy bombing during the Second World War in the Italian city of Trento by Chiara Lubich. Together with a few friends, she decided to radically accept Jesus's words: *Love one another as I have loved you*. They unconditionally accepted these words and acted on them. They began to collect and distribute food and clothing for the needy in the city. Their example soon inspired other people to act in a similar way. The main purpose of the Movement is to create communities at different levels – families, young people, priests, children, etc. – and encourage, with mutual love, unity at various levels in both the Church and society.
- 34 PIRNOSOVÁ, Blanka: *Koho má za zády? Čtyřicet dramatických let kardinála Miloslava Vlk*, p. 34.
- 35 *ABS*, collection B 2/II, inventory unit 155, Evaluation of the Operative Situation of the 5th Department of the 2nd Section of the České Budějovice Directorate of the StB in 1969–1970.
- 36 PALÁN, Aleš: Tanky rozdrtily svobodu, která přicházela, p. 5.
- 37 *National Archive* (hereinafter only *NA*), collection Ministry of Culture – Secretariat for Church Affairs – not arranged, box 124, Record of Interview with Chraštica Parish Office Administrator František Laňka of 26 July 1979, p. 1.
- 38 Josef Hlouch (1902–1972) was ordained a priest in 1926 and from 1945 he was professor of pastoral theology. He was appointed bishop of České Budějovice on 25 June 1947 and ordained on 15 August 1947. From 1950 to 1963 he was interned in his residence and later at various secret locations outside his diocese. He resumed the office of bishop in 1968.
- 39 *ABS*, Secretariat of the Minister of the Interior, 1948–1959, Part I (A 2/1), inventory unit 732, Motion to Release Bishop Josef Hlouch from Internment.
- 40 Ibid.
- 41 Karel Skoupý (1886–1972) was ordained a priest on 16 July 1911. In 1921 he became a teacher at the Brno seminary and from 1923 he was rector of the episcopal seminary. On 3 April 1946 he was appointed and on 30 June 1946 he was consecrated residential bishop of the Diocese of Brno. From 1950 he was interned, first in his residence and later at various secret locations outside the diocese. In 1963 the internment was eased, but he continued to live under the supervision of the StB in the charity home in Žernůvka near Tišnov. In 1968 he resumed his office.
- 42 Štěpán Trochta (1905–1974) joined the novitiate of the Salesian Congregation in 1923, took monastic vows on 24 September 1925, and in 1933 was ordained a priest. During the Protectorate he became a member of the illegal organizations Defending the Nation and Political Headquarters. In June 1942 he was arrested by the Gestapo and subsequently imprisoned at Pankrác, the Small Fortress of Terezín, and the Mauthausen and Dachau concentration camps, where he remained until the end of the war. In 1947 he was appointed residential bishop of Litoměřice. From 1948 to 1949 he became speaker of the Czech bishops in negotiations with the representatives of the communist state power, and from 1949 to 1953 he was interned in his residence. In 1954, based on trumped-up charges, he was sentenced to 25 years in prison. He was released in 1960 and he worked as a construction worker and plumber. In 1968 he took the office of bishop, and in 1973 he was appointed cardinal.
- 43 Cardinal Josef Beran (1888–1969), Archbishop of Prague, was expelled from Czechoslovakia, without the possibility to return, in late February 1965, after sixteen years of internment. He is buried at St. Peter's Basilica in Rome.
- 44 František Tomášek (1899–1992) was ordained a priest on 5 July 1922. On 12 October 1949 he was appointed auxiliary bishop of Olomouc and the following day he was secretly ordained. In 1951–1954 he was interned in the internment camp in Želiv. From 1954 to 1965, after his release, he worked as a parish priest in Moravská Huzová. In 1965–1978 he served as apostolic administrator of the Archdiocese of Prague. On 24 May 1976 he was promoted to cardinal in pectore, and on 27 June 1977 his appointment as cardinal was announced. From 30 December 1977 he served as Archbishop of Prague and Czech Primate.
- 45 The club ceased to exist after August 1968.
- 46 *ABS*, collection 2 B/II, inventory unit 133, Report on Activities of the České Budějovice Directorate of the StB in 1968.
- 47 PIRNOSOVÁ, Blanka: *Koho má za zády? Čtyřicet dramatických let kardinála Miloslava Vlk*, p. 44.

- 48 Karel Skalický (1934) illegally emigrated in 1956 and in Rome, at the Lateran University, graduated in theology and philosophy. In 1961 he was ordained a priest. In 1966–1969 he served as second secretary of Cardinal Beran. From 1968 he taught at the Lateran University. He was a member of the Christian Academy in Rome and edited the journal *Studie*. In 1994 he returned to his birthplace and became a parish priest in Hluboká and head of the Department of Christian Philosophy at the Theological Faculty of the University of South Bohemia.
- 49 The dossier with registration number 08578 was established as a monitoring dossier, on 9 October 1970 it was changed to a personal dossier, then (without indicating a date) to a monitoring dossier, and on 22 July 1971 again to a personal dossier.
- 50 ABS, collection 2 B/II, inventory unit 171, Analysis of Operational Activities of the České Budějovice Directorate of the StB and 2nd Section of the StB Directorate in 1971; *ibid*, Prague, inventory unit 174, Work Plan of the 2nd Section of the České Budějovice Directorate of the StB for 1972 + assessment.
- 51 The association of Catholic clergy *Pacem in terris* was the successor of the Peace Movement of Catholic Clergy. It supported the communist regime and its church policy.
- 52 ABS, collection B 2/II, inventory unit 171, Analysis of Operative Activities of the České Budějovice Directorate of the StB and the 2nd Section of the StB Directorate for 1971.
- 53 NA, collection Ministry of Culture – Secretariat for Church Affairs – not arranged, box 124. Miloslav Vlk lodged an appeal against the arbitrary delay between revocation and re-granting of the state approval with the Secretariat for Church Affairs department of the Ministry of Culture on 21 June 1971. The church secretary Leo Drozdek *categorically said that he would not change anything*.
- 54 PIRNOSOVÁ, Blanka: *Koho má za zády? Čtyřicet dramatických let kardinála Miloslava Vlka*, p. 66.
- 55 *Ibid*, p. 68.
- 56 *Ibid*.
- 57 Rozálie Hasilová died on 18 May 1972.
- 58 PALÁN, Aleš: *Tanky rozdrtily svobodu, která přicházela*, p. 5.
- 59 Cardinal Miloslav Vlk's personal archive.
- 60 On 15 March 1973 the Příbram department of the StB established a personal dossier codenamed "Operation Secretary", registration number 19672.
- 61 ABS, Prague addition of 1986, package No. 15, Annual Implementation Plan of the Příbram Department of the StB for 1978; ABS, collection Directorate of the SNB of Capital City of Prague and Central Bohemian Region – Prague Directorate of the StB 1964–1981 (B 1/II), inventory unit 59, Implementation Work Plan of the Central Bohemian Region Department of the StB along the line of the 2nd Section of the Prague Directorate of the StB for 1976 + assessment.
- 62 ABS, collection Counterintelligence Elaboration Dossiers – Headquarters (CB-KR), archival number 631420 MV. A dossier codenamed "Revenge" was established on 22 May 1968 at the Regional Directorate of the SNB, Brno Directorate of the State Security Service.
- 63 Over time he revised his opinion of Charter 77.
- 64 The signatories of Charter 77 from the Catholic Church included: Fr. Josef Zvěřina, Václav Malý, František Lízna SJ and Josef Kordík.
- 65 ABS, collection B 1/II, inventory unit 79, Annual Implementation Plans of the Central Bohemian Region Department of the StB for 1977 along the line of the 2nd Section of the Prague Directorate of the StB + assessment.
- 66 ABS, Prague addition of 1986, package No. 15, Work Plan Assessment of the Příbram Department of the StB for 1978.
- 67 NA, collection Ministry of Culture – Secretariat for Church Affairs – not arranged, box 124, Record dated 30 September 1978.
- 68 PIRNOSOVÁ, Blanka: *Koho má za zády? Čtyřicet dramatických let kardinála Miloslava Vlka*, p. 83.
- 69 NA, collection Ministry of Culture – Secretariat for Church Affairs – not arranged, box 124, Record dated 7 December 1978.
- 70 *Ibid*, Record dated 3 January 1979.
- 71 ABS, Prague addition of 1986, package No. 15, Work Plan Assessment of the Příbram Department of the StB for 1978.
- 72 NA, collection Ministry of Culture – Secretariat for Church Affairs – not arranged, box 134, Information on the Situation, 3 January 1979.
- 73 The dossier codenamed "Operation Secretary" / "Secretary", registration number 20723, was handed over to the 5th Department of Section 2b of the Prague Directorate of the StB on 3 May 1979, and then, on 25 February 1987, to the 4th Department of the same section. On 14 September 1987 it was handed over to the 1st Department of the 5th Section of the 10th Directorate. The shredding was performed on 1 December 1989. The control dossier codenamed Secretary, registration number 34279, registered on 14 September 1987 at the 1st Department of the 5th Section of the 10th Directorate, was handed over to the 1st Department of the 9th Section of the 2nd Directorate and shredded on 6 December 1989. The group dossier codenamed "Little Crayfish", registration number 8688, was deposited in the archives by the 5th Section of the StB České Budějovice – Headquarters on 22 July 1971, filing number 1987 ČB.
- 74 ABS, collection SL, dossier "Secretary" (Miloslav Vlk).
- 75 *Ibid*, p. 12.
- 76 *Ibid*, p. 14.
- 77 ABS, Prague addition of 1986, package No. 15, Task Elaboration Plan of the Příbram Department of the StB for 1979.
- 78 Interview with Cardinal Miloslav Vlk conducted on 16 May 2012.
- 79 NA, collection Ministry of Culture – Secretariat for Church Affairs – not arranged, box 124, State approval to exercise clerical service for PhDr. Miloslav Vlk of 22 December 1988.







Zdeněk Rotrekl (after his release from prison in the 1960s).

Photo: Archive of Libri proibiti

Rejecting the Magical Power of Idols

ZDENĚK ROTREKL, BRNO, 1920–2013

On 15 June 2013 the St. Thomas Church on the Moravian Square in Brno witnessed a large and solemn ceremony – a requiem for Zdeněk Rotrekl, a literary historian, critic, journalist and above all poet, a witness of truth, which in the “order of things” of the previous regime also meant a political prisoner. He died at the age of nearly ninety-three years – a doyen of not only Catholic poets, imprisoned by the communists right after seizing power at the end of the 1940s to intimidate the whole intellectual community. The remarkable terrestrial pilgrimage of a remarkable man ended at the St. Thomas Church in Brno – in the same place where Rotrekl was baptized in the early 1920s. His life story introduced the supernal order.

PETR PLACÁK

Zdeněk Rotrekl was born in Brno to the family of a gardening tools dealer who worked his way up from a poor crofter to a successful entrepreneur (due to poverty, his two brothers went to the USA in the 1880s to try their luck). In 1904, after his return to his hometown Brno, as a trained gardener and fruit grower who had also worked as a trainer of fruit growers in the imperial-royal pomological institute in Prague-Trója and later rearranged parks in Bulgaria, he founded the first seed business in the Czech Lands – Tomáš Jan Rotrekl, Brno, Jánská 12. To start the company he borrowed five thousand crowns, which was a fortune at that time. Thanks to his hard work and ingenuity, however, he managed to pay off the debt in a few years, and in 1917 he used the earned money to buy a big house below Špilberk on Údolní Street near Obilní trh. In this house his son Zdeněk first saw the light on the first day of October in the year of grace 1920. The memory of the garden that was adjacent to the house and that went up to the castle became one of Rotrekl's central motifs, permeating his entire poetic work.

His father was a national democrat (*Our family, that was patriarchy, totally fantastic. We were on formal terms with our*

father, recalls Rotrekl),¹ who read the National Democratic newspaper *Národní listy*, but Zdeněk unfortunately didn't have enough time to talk to him about more serious things, because his father died in 1933 – in fact, in Zdeněk's opinion, he worked himself to death. Even though his views during adolescence were partly influenced by his brother-in-law's brother, who was an editor of *Národní listy*, Rotrekl was able to form his worldview mainly by himself – as he said, he enjoyed reading newspapers from when he was a child. Gradually, he adopted a view of the world from the “conservative Catholic” perspective (in quotes, because he himself didn't like pigeonholing, if only for the reason that in the Czech Lands it had different connotations due to cultural discontinuity; see below), but he was able to separate the world of politics and faith, and was open to different developments of thought if they were authentic and truly experienced.

Rotrekl recalled a friend he met in 1968 when, as a founding member of a club of former political prisoners called K 231, he negotiated with the reform communists at the regional committee meeting of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia (KSČ) in Brno. The friend was a pre-war member of the

Party who was linked to the Central Committee of the Party after the war, but who then gradually lost his faith – from 1950, when he was to be tried for participation in an “anti-state conspiracy centre”, until the occupation of Czechoslovakia in 1968. Based on his experience from the Communist Party, he finally came to the conclusion that there would not be peace in the country until the Party was banned.

He was older than me, a convinced communist of the First Republic who was in a concentration camp during the war because of communism. So in his case it wasn't a cheap gesture, but a view that had the highest seriousness, and for me it was extremely instructive, says Rotrekl. This was a man who underwent tremendous development, and I respect people like that, people in whom I can directly feel such development.

When asked whether he had left-wing views when he was young, he replied: *I never had any compulsions like that, and actually I don't know if it's not a mistake. I only thought about it in 1936, during the civil war in Spain, but this is to be taken again in the contemporary context. I was born and lived in a functioning democracy, and having not enough information, I couldn't understand how a general can oppose the legal govern-*

ment. For me it was a question of constitutionality, but it wasn't tinged with any left-wing sympathies at all.

LITERARY BEGINNINGS

Rotrekl was born at the beginning of the First Republic, long enough before its demise during the Munich crisis to absorb the liberal atmosphere of the Masaryk Republic and Czech-German-Jewish pre-war Brno, whose cultural milieu shaped him.

In 1931 he began to study at a classical gymnasium, which he completed in 1940, at the beginning of the war. At that time his journalistic debuts appeared in magazines such as *Akord*, *Řád* and *Obroda*. In the year of his secondary school leaving examination, the Catholic student magazine *Jitro* headed by Dominik Pecka and Leopold Vrla published his first poems. *Rotrekl is a poeta doctus who began his poetic pilgrimage in the beloved garden of his youth*, writes the literary historian Jaroslav Med, according to whom one of the keys to understanding Rotrekl's poetry is the poet's "aristocratism" and "intellectualism".²

At that time his poetic guru František Halas brought him to Kunštát and introduced him to the poets of the "Bednář generation".³ Despite Halas's ups and downs of life, Rotrekl always respected him.⁴

Before he completed secondary school, the Nazis closed the Czech universities, and he was sent to work in forced labour. Until 1943 he managed to avoid work in the German war economy by simulating health problems, including a mental disorder, and staying in various nursing homes (a similar strategy was used by the opponents of the service in the Communist army during the "normalization" period, who tried to obtain what was called a "blue book" by feigning mental health issues). Finally, however, he was forced to start working as a labourer for Maschinenfabrik Jergl in Brno, which originally specialized in fire-resistant strongboxes and whose production was adapted to the needs of the German war machine, but he boycotted the "totaleinsatz" and didn't go to the factory. When he was warned by an official from the labour office, his mother's acquaintance, that a denunciation was made that he was sabotaging the war effort of the Reich, for which he could have

been hanged, he decided to go underground – from the summer of 1944 until the end of the war he was in hiding in his friends' flats in Brno and in suburban cottages. At the very beginning he was given shelter by the mother of one of his classmates. *She was the leader of the Brno Volná myšlenka movement, an atheist, recalled Rotrekl, who once told me with complete horror in her eyes: "Imagine what's happened to me, my son is in a seminary, he wants to become a priest, it's awful, imagine how I feel!" I say this just to prove that the paths of people are different and that we won't make do with labels. Actually, that's why I've hated labels ever since.*

LIBERATION AS CONQUEST

Although many, even non-communists, succumbed to the post-war enthusiasm for the liberation of the country from the east by the Red Army, Rotrekl saw it the other way around: *The manner of the so-called liberation of South Moravia, especially my hometown, reliably prevented me from seeing it that way. President Beneš was already at the Brno City Hall, while women were still hiding in the coal to escape from being raped. The Red Army behaved like it was in a conquered, enemy territory. As more and more new troops kept coming, the looting continued.*

Whether the behaviour of the Red Army soldiers in Brno was due to the fact that the inner city had to some extent a German character (about a third of the population in the city centre was of German origin before the war and the German element was reinforced during the war) or there was another, politically or otherwise motivated, intention of the Red Army commanders, Rotrekl was clear about it from the very beginning: *In 1946 I wrote a piece of prose called "Report on the Fall of the City" about the way Brno was conquered, which the poet Jan Zahradníček was afraid to publish in Akord, because he thought we would be arrested. So it was published later in samizdat form.* However, the way Brno was "liberated" by the Soviets was not the only issue. It was already during the war that he had a reason not to accept that optimism saying that *when the Germans are away, it will be just open arms and hearts (with the Russians – author's note).*

He returned to that issue in the novel *Světlo přichází potmě* (Light Comes



Zdeněk Rotrekl's photograph in investigation file archival number V-2682 Brno Rotrekl Zdeněk et al.

Photo: Security Services Archive

in the Dark), which was published by Atlantis as the second volume of his collected writings.⁵

RESETTLEMENT OF THE BRNO GERMANS

The aftertaste of the Red Army's behaviour was mixed with the aftertaste of the post-war atrocities committed by collaborators and all sorts of "partisans" who were trying to obtain "resistance" credentials by chasing defenceless German civilians.

The disgraceful manner of "resettling" Brno denizens of German nationality was seen by Rotrekl clearly as the action of the collaborating workers of Zbrojovka Brno who, in an attempt to divert attention from the fact that they produced weapons for the Wehrmacht until the last moments, "atoned" for their past by punishing the defenceless German civilians.

Those who had some German dirt under their nails made off long before the end of the war, he commented on the post-war settlement of accounts with the Brno Germans. *Those who remained were old men and women, and some of them even had a Jewish ancestor in their pedigree. They were scared during the whole protectorate that it might be revealed and they would be sent to Theresienstadt, so they said to themselves: What can happen to us? And so they stayed here. The street here in Hlinky, that was all Jewish villas. When the Nazis transported their owners away, the houses were*

taken by the Reich Germans. But they all disappeared in early 1945. Resettlement in Brno was initially performed by a commando from the Zbrojovka factory, or *Flintůvka*, as we called it, and it is necessary to know the context. The workers who exceeded standards in the arms industry for the victory of the Third Reich received special rations of rum, cigarettes, etc., as well as recreational activities in Luhačovice and other spas in the *Kraft durch Freude* organization, which was directly Heydrich's action⁶ – a sort of Nazi “Revolutionary Trade Union Movement”. This is where we should see the beginning of the violent expulsion of the Brno Germans, because it was done by the Zbrojovka employees favoured by the Nazis.

In Rotrekl's opinion, the death march of old people to the Austrian border is a huge shame, a stain on the history of Brno, and I'm surprised that the city of Brno hasn't made a clear statement on that.

Illegal actions against German civilians, however, had their “logical” continuation. The Red Guard members and post-war avengers often became fanatical communists and secret police (StB) investigators. *The commandos responsible for atrocities in 1945 behaved in the same way in February 1948 and then they committed them against us*, he says. *The same people with the same methods then looked after us after February 1948.*

POST-WAR INTERMEZZO

As soon as the Nazi occupation ended, Rotrekl threw himself into the cultural and political renewal of Czech society, which had been mutilated during the occupation. In 1945 he began to study history and art history at the Masaryk University in Brno and became one of the youngest members of the Syndicate of Czech Writers. A year later he was elected in a secret ballot to the regional committee of the Union of University Students, which represented twelve thousand students. There were neither communists nor social democrats among the elected members of the committee, which according to him again showed how Brno was “liberated”. (This fact was probably one of the stimuli which in Brno led to the trial of university officials after February 1948; see below.) In 1946 he also became a representative of the Association of Catholic

Writers and Journalists in Brno, which, under the leadership of the poet Jan Zahradníček, published the social-literary periodical *Akord*, in which Rotrekl published his texts. In 1947 he was elected to the committee of the Moravian Circle of Writers, a provincial professional organization.

From 1945 to 1948 he mostly focused on cultural and political journalism (he published in *Akord*, *Vývoj* and *Národní obroda*). He regularly wrote reviews, polemics and comments in newspapers and magazines such as *Lidová demokracie*, *Řád*, *Úsvit* and *Selka*.

With respect to direct political engagement, somehow in spite of the post-war development that went “to the left”, he joined the only allowed non-socialist party, the People's Party, in June 1945. The People's Academics Club was “the most reactionary, the most disgusting” organization, as we were called by the people of the socialist bloc, he recalled. What he found interesting was mainly the weekly *Obzory*, founded and directed by the journalist and People's Party politician Ivo Ducháček and his colleague Pavel Tigrid. Both journalists worked in exile during the war – Ducháček first in France and then in London, and Tigrid as a broadcaster of the Czechoslovak section of the BBC. However, the fact that Rotrekl wasn't attracted by “leftist utopias” didn't mean that he had no social awareness. In his opinion, the programme of the People's Party was social-reformist – he himself never linked social elements of politics with socialism, let alone communism. In this regard, he had very clear views from the very beginning. *As for communism, my ideas were really simple: social hatred, class struggle, dictatorship of the proletariat, the world revolution. From when I was seventeen, eighteen years old, it was quite clear to me that this was a way to hell. That was a simple reflection of a boy who wasn't influenced by anything – I just always asked my relative, my brother-in-law's brother, who was arrested by the Gestapo immediately after the occupation in March 1939 and who only returned from Buchenwald in 1945.⁷ These “simple” considerations, however, foreshadowed his fate for decades.*

FATAL 17 NOVEMBER

Immediately after the communist takeover on 25 February 1948, the loop

around Zdeněk Rotrekl began to tighten. The Action Committee of the Faculty of Arts of Masaryk University stated that he was not politically reliable and so he was not allowed to enter the university and sit for the final examination. *I was just finishing school when a colleague came to me with the application to join the KSČ. I kicked her out*, he recalled. *A week later I went to my last exam, and they didn't give me the envelope with questions, saying that they had a call from the Action Committee and that they couldn't let me sit for the final exam. I went to the dean, who had tears in his eyes, and that was it. Two days later I received a letter informing me that I was excluded from study for two semesters. Meanwhile I was expelled from the Syndicate of Czech Writers due to “the enemy attitude to the democratic system and the Soviet Union”. It was signed by Jiří Taufer and Karel Nový, both national artists who were obviously also good at other things – I don't know if Taufer was a KGB captain or major then.*

At the same time when he was excluded from the Syndicate the typeset pages of his collection *Žalmy* (*Psalms*), which was to be printed, were disassembled, and the publishing house returned him the manuscript of his collection *Pěvec florentský* (*Florentine Singer*) ready for release. Instead of the pen Rotrekl was supposed to use the shovel. *The excluded people were immediately passed to the Office for the Protection of Work for manual labour in the sectors like mining, metallurgy, construction and agriculture for “re-education through labour”. We called it another totaleinsatz.⁸* The same fate befell the institutions of which he was a member. The Association of Catholic Writers and Journalists was dissolved and the publication of its association periodical *Akord* stopped in February 1948, together with other magazines where Rotrekl published – *Kritický měsíčník*, *Řád*, etc. The Moravian Circle of Writers was destroyed. The “gleichschaltung” of the Syndicate of Czech Writers at the Dobříš conference of young writers in March 1948 didn't help, and a year later the Syndicate was replaced by a communist professional organization – the Union of Czechoslovak Writers (based on the model of the “Union” of Soviet Socialist Republics).

However, Rotrekl wasn't intimidated. He met like-minded and similarly ac-

tive people, especially members of the National Socialist Party and the People's Party, who tried to resist the communist arrival in the post-war period – he participated in leaflet operations and helped people endangered by the regime to go into exile. Gradually, he managed to build a network of people who gathered information about the economic and political situation in the country, about the mood of the population, about the repressions and the victims of the regime, about those who contributed to lawlessness, as well as information of a military character. He then sent the information to the West, both through the embassies of democratic countries and through couriers, including agents of Western intelligence services who secretly returned to Czechoslovakia. He also had links to his former colleagues living in exile, the People's Party politicians and journalists Pavel Tigrid and Ivo Ducháček.⁹ Although it is difficult to reconstruct facts based on the StB documents and it is always necessary to view the statements of the accused as well as the assessment of the case by the investigators with extreme caution, because we never know how the statements were obtained or how the case was manipulated based on a pre-prepared plan, there is no doubt that Zdeněk Rotrekl was not “just” a victim of blind communist police and a judicial machine that ground up both the real and imagined opponents of the regime without distinction, because the aim of the communists was to intimidate the society as a whole. He purposefully built an intelligence network and information channels to the West in order to assist the coup, which – as he and his colleagues believed – was to come, sooner rather than later. They tried to create the conditions for it and prepare for the time after it. Rotrekl was an authentic, real enemy of the communist regime – the StB didn't manufacture his resistance.

ARRESTED

Considering the large number of people with whom he came into contact or who were directly involved in the activities of the group it was only a matter of time before “Rotrekl et al.” were placed on the watch list of the communist State Security Service. He was arrested on 14 April 1949. The Brno depart-

ment of the state prosecutor's office accused him of founding (in May 1948) and leading a subversive organization called *Difuse in order to fight against the existence of the Republic, the existing political and economic system, and to restore the capitalist order*.¹⁰ Fifteen other people were charged along with him.

He was first secretly held for two weeks in the conspiratorial place of the StB in the Hlinky medical building in Brno and then in the cell of the Regional Headquarters of the StB. He was interrogated for many days, and during interrogations he was physically tortured. *I don't want to talk about it, that's for sure. Those investigators were primitive, but you don't really care if you get beaten up by a stupid or clever person. I was just afraid that they might ruin my kidneys, so I tried to cover sensitive areas when I got knocked out.*

In the trial of Brno students and university officials, he was sentenced to death as the leader of the “subversive” group – symbolically on 17 November 1949. We now commemorate 17 November to remember the tyranny of the two totalitarian regimes turned against university students (17 November started one form of totalitarianism in 1939 and finished another one in 1989), but 17 November 1949, when Zdeněk Rotrekl, as the spokesman of Brno anti-communist university students, was sentenced to death, connects both events, not only symbolically – he personally participated in all three “17th Novembers”, although against his will in the middle one. In November 1939 he went from Brno to Prague to support the protesting students and he was also involved in the events of November 1989 in Brno.

The sentence was eventually commuted to life imprisonment – mining uranium for the Soviet Union seems to have taken preference over the liquidation of a class enemy in this case.

PRISON

His anabasis around prisons and labour camps of communist Czechoslovakia, where he met the elite of Czech society, started in the Brno judicial prison at Cejl, where across the corridor the regime imprisoned Lieutenant Colonel of the General Staff Josef Robotka, one of the military commanders of the resistance organization the

Council of Three (Rada tří) in the Vysočina region, who was executed by the communists in 1952.

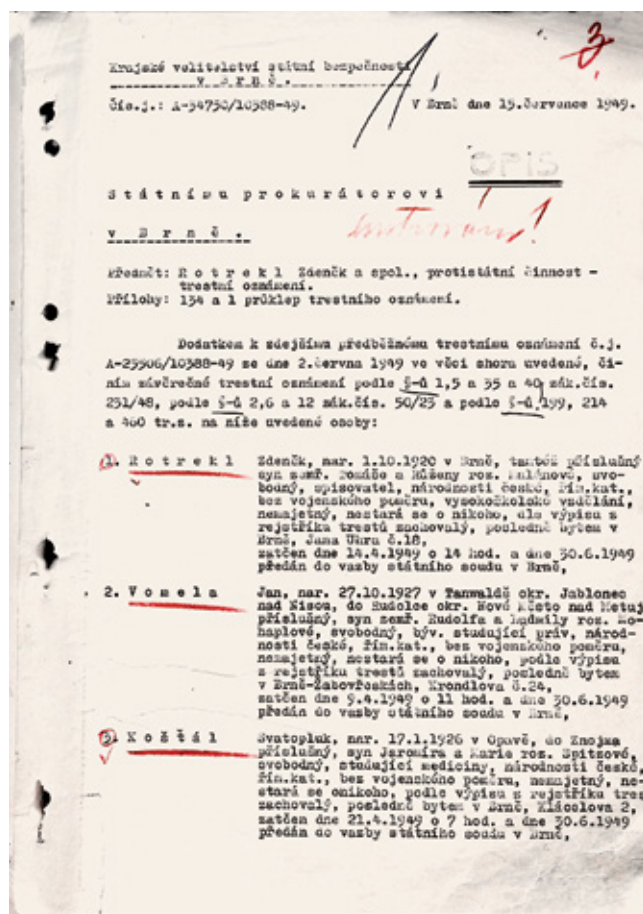
From Brno he was then transferred to the Bory prison in Pilsen. Here in the Kremlin, as the prisoners called the separate department D 1 for political offenders, he met a number of similarly affected people. *There were various generals and deputies, General Janoušek or People's Party member Procházka. There were five common rooms, and they put one double world champion in hockey in each of them, so I was with Bóža Modrý, thanks to whom I mastered the theory of the art of goalkeeping. With Major of the General Staff Poldá Kuncel and Colonel Čížek I also went through the Dukla pass, so I know exactly where the Nameless Position or the Barvínek settlement, etc., are. Kuncel was wounded there, but he managed to get through Dukla to Prague.*

From spring 1951 to May 1952 he shared a cell with the poet and anti-Nazi resistance fighter Josef Palivec, husband of Helena Čapkova-Koželuhová, sister of the Čapek brothers.

I shared my cell with Count Jiří Bořek-Dohalský of Dohalice on the right, poet Josef Palivec on the left and the Frenchman Garsette in the corner, who couldn't say a word in Czech – but despite that he got twenty-five Czech years. We were working with press fasteners, when he suddenly stood up and began shouting “pérdé” and “ovrnó”! I was wondering what those French words could mean. There was deputy Herl, life sentence too, on the other side of the room and he began to laugh and everyone else with him – he had just cried “prdel” (arse) and “hovno” (shit) in a French accent.

The Pilsen-Bory prison was only a transit station. Since the communists expected an armed conflict with the West, they decided to move political prisoners to the other side of the Republic, further from the western border. This is how Rotrekl was moved to Leopoldov, an infamous prison in Slovakia. *And that was really “vernichtungslager” – they had a list of people to be liquidated.*

In Leopoldov the communist regime “dumped” together political prisoners, anti-Nazi resistance fighters and prisoners convicted during retributive trials with collaborators and Nazis. *The first was Rudolf Beran – nobody knows what he got twenty years for, recalled*



Cover of the investigation file and a list of names of the accused persons which begins with the name of Zdeněk Rotrekl and ends at number 55.

Source: Security Services Archive

Rotrekl. Then there was General Syrový, protectorate Prime Minister Krejčí – I shaved them all. Toussaint, a commanding general of the Wehrmacht, was in cell No. 56 together with the commanding general of the Prague uprising Karel Kutlvašr. There was General Příkryl, who participated in the Slovak National Uprising, bishops, abbots, ministers, deputies and poets ... From Leopoldov he was sent to engage in slave labour in the Bytíz uranium mine and in 1961 “transferred” back to his “hometown” Leopoldov.

He came out of prison after thirteen years, in 1962, based on the amnesty granted by the President of the Republic, but he was only given a ten-year conditional discharge. Meanwhile, his mother died. The communists refused to let him go to the funeral. *The warder brought me the telegram announcing the death of my mother and said directly that submitting a request to attend the funeral would be pointless. It wouldn't be allowed. She waited for me for thirteen years, but in vain. She died in February 1962, and I returned in May, three months later. My*

mother was amazing, great, wonderful, she was a saint, and I constantly think of her – I dedicated to her the collection of poems Hovory s mateřídouškou (Conversations with Thyme), which was first published in Rome.

“FREE”

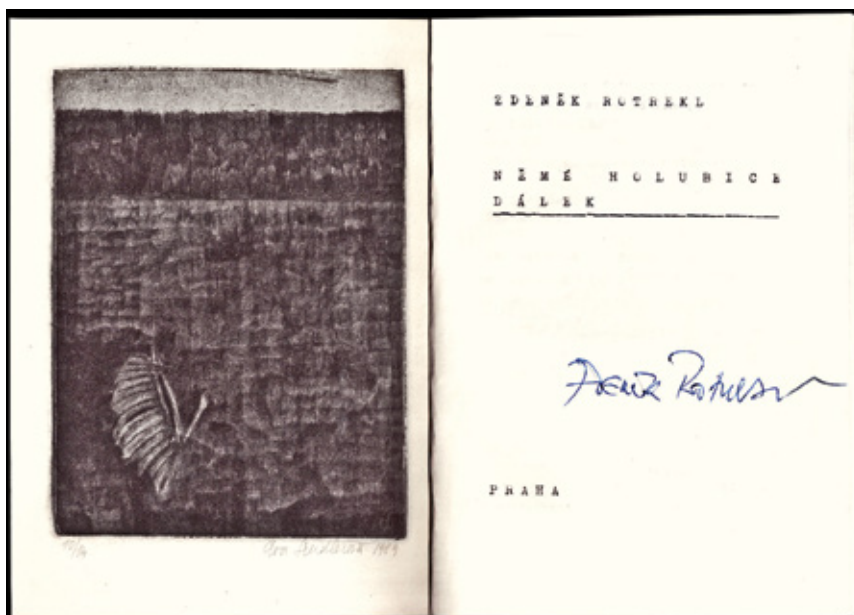
After his release Zdeněk Rotrekl worked as an unskilled labourer for the Technical and Garden Administration in Brno until the Prague Spring. He tried to make the most of the brief period of liberalization of the regime in 1968, when he was also rehabilitated. He finished his university studies and participated in the official cultural events. He collaborated with the radio, and in the spring of 1968 he joined the editorial team of the People's Party fortnightly *Obroda* and became editor “for Culture and Moravia”.¹¹ He was also active politically. He was at the birth of the association of political prisoners K 231 – he co-founded the South Moravian committee.

How did he view the events of the Prague Spring? As an opportunity.

*Of course, I had my own opinion, but I thought that if the door opened a bit, we must kick it out. I was rehabilitated, twenty years later I passed the last exam at school, it was fun. At that time I made a living by lighting paraffin lamps along ditches in Brno streets, and I smelled of paraffin. The People's Party wanted to publish the fortnightly *Obroda* and they suggested that I should be an editor. In Moravia we managed to do what failed elsewhere. Party committees were immediately summoned and new people, mostly political prisoners, were elected, and the old functionaries were kicked out.*

SAMIZDAT

As we know, this situation didn't last long. After the occupation of Czechoslovakia by the Warsaw Pact forces under the leadership of Moscow, things started to return to normal. K 231, as one of the centres of the “counter-revolution” was dissolved and, with the advent of “normalization”, *Obroda* was stopped and the typeset pages of Rotrekl's poetry collection *Malachit* (Malachite),



Samizdat edition of Rotrekl's collection of poems with the author's handwritten signature.

Source: Archive of Libri prohibiti

whose manuscript written on toilet paper was smuggled out of Leopoldov, were disassembled – after twenty years the same situation repeated. (The collection was only published in Ludvík Vaculík's samizdat series Edice Petlice in 1978.)

After the liquidation of *Obroda* Rotrekl worked for some time as a technical editor in the publishing cooperative Logos, but then he was forced to retire as well as leave public life. His family was also affected – his wife, a nurse, was transferred to an inferior position in the hospital, and his son was prevented from attending extramural studies at secondary school.

After he was denied the opportunity to publish officially, he remained active in samizdat. He contributed to *Kritický sborník* and *Křesťanské obzory*, published in the samizdat anthologies of *Moravská čítanka*, collaborated with the editors of the Brno version of the periodical *Střední Evropa*, from 1981 regularly published in the samizdat magazine *Obsah*, collaborated with the samizdat publishing houses such as Ludvík Vaculík's Edice Petlice, Václav Havel's Edice Expedice and poet Jaromír Hořec's *Česká expedice*, as well as with the samizdat newspaper *Lidové noviny* and the broadcasting project *Originální videožurnál*.

In the spring of 1989, along with Karel Coudal, who was in charge of the technical aspects of the magazine, he

again started to publish unofficially his "home" magazine *Akord*, which was banned by the communists after 1948. Besides the domestic samizdat, he also published in exile publishing houses and magazines – *Svědectví* (Paris), *Rozmluvy* (London), *Archa* (Munich), *Proměny* (New York) and in the periodicals based in Rome: *Nový život*, *Studie*, *Listy*.

DISSENT AND CRITICISM

Rotrekl refused to accept the atmosphere of the "dissident ghetto" where all are herded aboard one ship and therefore have to spare each other (their individualities, views and work). In his opinion, it must be exactly the opposite, because a free culture, culture as such, cannot exist without a critical spirit. *How can a talent grow in a friendly, "indulgent" environment?* he asks and, paraphrasing Šalda, adds that *we have friends to make them develop their creative powers, deepening and exceeding their own patterns*. In his view, *the aesthetic criterion cannot consist in the dissent nature, as we said years and years before Ota Filip, neither in the fate of the author (I say that responsibly), nor exile or official character*.¹²

In his opinion, these are all extra-literary things that may be interesting for the reader, important for the literary historian, but irrelevant for the critic. In this context he re-

calls a story that he heard from Josef Palivec, an eyewitness: *On one Austrian, imperial day, at Můstek in Prague, Jaroslav Vrchlický met a critic who had slated the poet's last work. One thing, as the saying goes, led to another, and the clouds thickened. Both those in the discussion and those distant in the sky. Because, or although, both developed accordingly, the debaters took their umbrellas and started fighting. But they had no protection against the rain, and since both liked the same pub, they went there, each taking a different route. One walked along Národní Street, the other around the Powder Tower. In the pub they sat at one table, dried their wet necks and chins, and ordered each other a glass of wine. Nothing happened. (underlined by Z. R. – author's note) They fought with their umbrellas not because of the criticism, but because of different aesthetic views. They stayed friends. Today in the samizdat atmosphere writers hold a monologue. Umbrellas are a scarce commodity, and there are pubs galore*.¹³

And Rotrekl didn't speak to the winds – he indulged in sharp polemics. In the samizdat magazine *Obsah* of June 1989 he attacked the writer Zdeněk Urbánek, a leading personality of Czech cultural dissent, who in *Obsah* critically responded to the discussion on the topic of the existence of Moravia in Central Europe, which was published in the third issue of the Brno version of the samizdat periodical *Střední Evropa*. *It was a relatively well-prepared agitational meeting of the Catholic advocates of moravianism*, Urbánek commented on the discussion from the position above the "regional" Catholicism and "Moravian question".¹⁴ Rotrekl was enraged by the arrogance of the Prague intellectual, otherwise a colleague-dissident. He called Urbánek's anti-Catholic (and anti-Moravian) invectives (it is not possible to summarize the nature of the debate here) a *post-Zhdanov polemic in the warder style of those times* and a *ti-rade of non-innovated arsenals of anti-Catholic hunts from the years of grace 1945–1989 – all from agitprop of post-February years, all that can be printed in any newspaper*, and mockingly asked: *Does Urbánek need samizdat for that?*, calling him a *fossil graphomaniac*, whom in this context he dared to address, *which I only do very rarely when writing about Zdeněk Urbánek*.¹⁵



Zdeněk Rotrekl's books could only be officially published after 1989.

CULTURAL DISCONTINUITY

The central theme of Rotrekl's samizdat journalism is the issue of cultural discontinuity after February 1948. The fact that the communists sought to push out of the people's awareness not only the names of certain authors, but also the whole generations of artists, styles and epochs has, in Rotrekl's view, equally devastating effects on the nation as the Nazi campaign against Czech intelligence during the war.

Cultural discontinuity is an essential feature of totalitarian regimes – the Nazi as well as communist systems. Rotrekl refers to Max Picard here. He believes that Picard sees a fundamental feature of Hitlerism in a person who doesn't understand time as duration, but as a moment, and his inner life therefore doesn't know any contexts. In such a world, he interprets Picard, *anything can happen at any time and in any way, ordered events and occurrences can soon refute each other without internal connections, without anyone noticing anything; seeing a phenomenon as a whole is denied*.¹⁶

Against this "lack of correlation" Rotrekl postulates cultural continuity which, among other things, explicitly calls for freedom, connecting creative acts of different generations, even in polemics and disagreement.¹⁷

In 1989, just before the fall of the regime, Rotrekl reiterated the above in an editorial written for the Brno samizdat periodical *Host*. In literary periodicals and magazines of the First Republic and in the decade before February 1948, an enormous amount of extremely valuable and still significant intellectual work is concealed with which the present and almost three generations are virtually

not connected, and they cannot and may not be connected. Czech cultural discontinuity, which I have been talking about for fifteen years now, has tragic consequences that increase and deepen from year to year, works and personalities of previous generations disappear in the Orwellian "memory hole" [...] without culture, because culture directly requires connection of creative generations, whether in agreement or in controversy, it simply requires knowledge.¹⁸ (underlined by Z. R. – author's note)

Therefore, Rotrekl collected data about the writers who were silenced, and in 1977 he published in samizdat a dictionary of banned authors titled *Skrytá tvář české literatury* (*The Hidden Face of Czech Literature*). A direct impetus to write it was the death of many members of the older literary and scientific generation (Josef Palivec, Václav Renč, František Křelina, etc.). He also realized that *their work is not only removed from Czech literature again, but there are also no biographical texts about their lives, and they do not even occur in existing dictionaries, and if they do sporadically, their dictionary entries contain a number of errors*.¹⁹

Zdeněk Rotrekl is neither included in the official *Slovník českých spisovatelů beletristů 1945–1956* (*A Dictionary of Czech Prose Writers 1945–1956*) by Jaroslav Kunc from the 1950s (SPN, Praha 1957) and in the dictionary *Čeští spisovatelé 20. století* (*Czech Writers of the 20th Century*), published by Československý spisovatel in 1985, nor in the similar *Slovník českých spisovatelů* (*A Dictionary of Czech Writers*), published by Československý spisovatel in 1964, at the time when it was (temporarily) possible to talk about many au-

thors, including Václav Černý, Václav Renč or Jan Zahradníček.

However, Rotrekl's book only covers his literary-scientific and educational interests. The included authors also show an intellectual and spiritual world that was close to him and that he created around himself (most of the twenty-eight authors included and presented by Rotrekl have a Catholic orientation, and there is also his "teacher of poetry" František Halas and his Brno friend from the time of normalization Jan Trefulka, for whose 50th birthday he wrote a text for the samizdat anthology *Chvála bláznovství* (*Praise of Folly*), published in 1979 in the samizdat series Edice Petlice).

For the anthology *Moravská čítanka 1981* he wrote a long study on Josef Palivec's anti-fascist resistance activities (*Počátky české literární rezistence a odbojová činnost Josefa Palivce*). In the following year he prepared for *Moravská čítanka* a study on Ivan Blatný, a poet "from around the corner", called *Nezapomenutý básník – Pohled na život a dílo brněnského básníka* (*An Unforgotten Poet – A Look At The Life And Work Of A Brno Poet*). Blatný was born in Brno, a few metres from Rotrekl's house on Obilní trh No. 4. For *Obsah* No. X/1986 he prepared *Zamyšlení nad jednou knihou* (*Reflection Of A Book*) on Ivan Jelínek and, for example, for the anthology *Danny je náš*, published for the 60th birthday of Josef Škvorecký in Edice Petlice, he wrote a text for Škvorecký in the form of a "letter".

DEFENDING HISTORY

The concept of cultural discontinuity primarily refers to the history disfigured by the totalitarian "interruption", the



Zdeněk Rotrekl in Brno in 2007.

Source: Author

purpose of which is to cut off society from its own identity. *Taboo neuralgic points are bypassed or falsified, history might be retrospectively reorganized, adjusted to fit different needs as necessary – and nobody will notice – exactly as Orwell foresaw after the war. Archives will be modified according to this necessity and hermetically sealed.*²⁰ In contrast, a nation which is aware of its past, knows it, *is not subject to myths, delusions, in other words, it understands itself through culture in the context of traditions that are diverse and mutually enriching.* In Rotrekl's view, narrowing

a nation exclusively to one tradition means *cutting off all the branches, creating a stub covered with fruitless leaves. [...] The more cultural traditions that [the nation] relies on to live, the better for its inner life and richness. If it is aware of them.*²¹

Therefore, Rotrekl also defends old Czech families which were connected with the cultural and material heritage of the Czech lands like hardly any other social group and which were also separated from the nation long before the communist coup. When he protects the Czech nobility from "historical pro-

gressives", he doesn't do it out of snobbery, but as an "advocate" of culture professing a holistic view of Czech history which is not disfigured by particular interests and an ideological past.

For the samizdat magazine *Obsah* he also wrote the obituary of Prince Karel of Schwarzenberg (1911–1986), in which he returned to the history of Czech-oriented nobility, recalling their merits, including their actions in defence of the Czech lands from the Nazis in which Schwarzenberg participated, and highlighting also Schwarzenberg's journalistic activity, recalling his essay *Svoboda a totalita (Freedom and Totalitarianism)* from 1937, which retained its prescient validity: in the essay Schwarzenberg recognized *both the danger of the known totalitarian systems and many bad ways of materialistic quantitative democracies without moral authorities, without responsibility for the past and future of the following generations and without the knowledge of traditions.*²²

What does Rotrekl mean by tradition? *Continuous, uninterrupted (that is, not discontinuous) transmission (that is, not silencing, full or partial concealing) of morals, opinions, practices, doctrines ... That is, the opposite of historical or cultural fragments presented as a whole in some ideological-rhetorical trope called synecdochal particularism on a plate submitted for believing with sufficient instructions for further self-service.*²³

In 1988, in samizdat form, he published a collection of Karel Schwarzenberg's journalistic texts called *Obrana svobod (Defending Freedoms)*.

For the same reason, in the case of nobility, Rotrekl also defends Moravian identity. In his essay on the Moravian question he presented the following definition: *It is a cultural-historical geopolitical unit, aware of both its difference from the neighbouring units with different development and the sense of belonging of the people to the integrity of the territories of several interrelated, although variously differentiated ethnographic regions, growing from its own spiritual and material resources and capable of autonomous development, which it has historically proved.*²⁴

Rotrekl's Moravian patriotism is nothing more than his central theme: awareness of historical continuity the disruption of which is so useful for all

Zdeněk Rotrekl was one of the few political prisoners of the 1950s who didn't stay away from the dissident movement during the period of "normalization" and regularly socialized with Brno Chartists, although he didn't sign Charter 77. When asked why, he replied: *Of course, I thought about it. I knew many outstanding people among the signatories, including those who were imprisoned in the 1950s - father Zvěřina, Růženka Vacková, etc. On the other hand, there were some on whom I wouldn't bet a pipe of tobacco. So for me it was a kind of unsure relationship. The Charter sought a dialogue with power, and I thought that a dialogue with the truncheon was perhaps only acceptable after my death. But the Democracy for All manifesto of the Movement for Civic Freedom later, which, for example, rejected the leading role of the KSČ, that was something different. However, despite my objections to the dialogue with the truncheon, I want to emphasize that it was an extremely important act. It was the first opposition group. Until then there was nothing going on, and on the other side of the border it might have seemed that Czechs and Slovaks probably liked the Bolshevism - nobody protested against those criminals, so everything was probably in order. The Charter shouldn't be underestimated, but we should see it in the context of the time. Basically, I respected the Chartists. Those from Brno were isolated and exposed. I met them imme-*

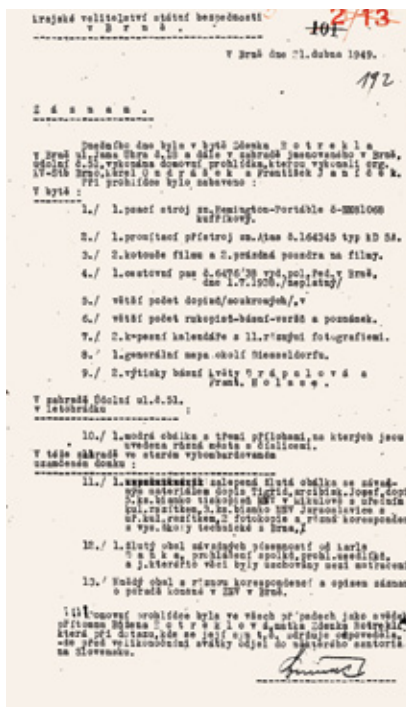


Photo: Security Services Archive

diately, regularly visited them, and tried to help.

Every Tuesday Rotrekl regularly met with the Chartists Milan Uhde and Jan Trefulka in their semi-detached house in the Jirásek district in Brno. *Well, and then I got into the circle of Václav Havel and Ludvík Vaculík, and the dissident activities started.* However, he was primarily in the Catholic dissent around P. Josef Zvěřina. In 1988 he became one of the founding members of the Movement for Civic Freedom (HOS), which – contrary to Charter 77 – presented itself as a political movement with a political programme and political objectives, including the requirement to repeal the constitutional article on the leading role of the Communist Party. He actively participated in the events of November 1989 and the Velvet Revolution in Brno. *Just before that, after lengthy trouble, after forty-two years, I was given a passport when I received money from abroad,* he recalled. *I had a meeting with my friends in Rome. We were staying just outside of town. There were heaps of great food and even better wine. This is where I met Karel Schwarzenberg, Bedřich Strachwitz and Richard Belcredi and all the people from Radio Free Europe. And then I saw one Italian reading a newspaper and a head-*

line on the front page read that the Berlin Wall had come down, and I said: Guys, there will be a revolution in Czechoslovakia without us.

After his return he was, as a passer-by, pulled onto the Velvet Revolution platform in Brno without even knowing that it had just started. After returning, I slept the whole day. The next day I went out and the actors František Derfler and Trúda²⁵ led a meeting on Freedom Square. I went around and they told me that I should say something, dragged me to the platform, so I said something off-hand about my 17th of Novembers. There were thirty thousand people. When I got down, a young man approached me, saying that he was a student of English and asking me if I wanted to come to the Faculty of Arts where they were just starting an occupation strike and if I wanted to speak to the students as a former university official. So this is how I returned to the Faculty of Arts. That was around 21 November.

The circle of the half-century anabasis of the Moravian poet in totalitarian regimes of the 20th century was closed on 17 November 1989. On 19 September 1990 Zdeněk Rotrekl was fully rehabilitated by the Regional Court in Brno. And as many times in the past, he again launched into organizing cultural and political life in freedom. He logically started by preparing portraits of imprisoned writers for radio and television. He also became one of the founding members of the Confederation of Political Prisoners, the Union of Moravian-Silesian Writers and the Syndicate of Czech Journalists – that is his “home” professional organizations. From 1994 he was a member of the Czech Centre of the International PEN club.

He received a number of awards for his lifelong views and work such as the Jan Zahradníček Prize, Jaroslav Seifert Prize, Karel Havlíček Borovský Prize and the Order of St. Cyril and Methodius. In 1995 the President of the Republic Václav Havel awarded him the Order of T. G. Masaryk of class III and, last but not least, he was honoured as a participant of opposition and resistance against communism under Act No. 262/2011 Coll. Of all the accolades he most appreciated the fact that he was admitted to the Order of Malta.

THE ESSENCE IS IN DISAGREEMENT

Who was Zdeněk Rotrekl then? First of all a poet. What he experienced, what he advocated, what he criticized – he did all of that as a poet who defended the culture by resisting lies.

Allow me to be proud of the fact that at the time when the nation is pinned to the wall of non-existence there are writers and poets who resurrect the forgotten common language, he writes. *The language of a disagreeing and fighting spirit.*²⁶

For him the word *poet* doesn't only mean a designation of someone who writes poetry. The poet is also, and above all, a witness of truth. Although the poet is not a preacher of truths, he is himself and he is not suitable as a rule for anyone, he paraphrases Albert Vyskočil's text about Jan Zahradníček, adding: *These are sovereign tasks of an artist who has not been bribed, bought and borrowed, and whose picture has not been attached to the existing systems of power.*²⁷

In his opinion, the essence of the poet is in *DISAGREEMENT*.²⁸ This "disagreement" is a holistic matter, not accompanying only the poet's work, but also an organic part of the poet's life – without this the poet would be a mere craftsman-rhymester. A poetic text cannot be isolated from the biographical and contemporary background, especially not in the current environment of double Czech cultural discontinuity, he stresses.²⁹ Everything else is then derived from the above. And this is what makes Zdeněk Rotrekl a poet.

For decades he supported all those who refused to accept in any way or even tolerate the communist world and to submit to the communist pressure. As a poet of "disagreement", consistently rejecting the world presented by the regime to live in, he could rely on his worldview – the Christian faith of the ancient Catholic confession which was

in direct contrast to the official interpretation. However, he didn't see his Catholicism as membership in a sports club whose colours must be defended at all costs, but as a lifelong commitment which only becomes valid if the person strives to act under its rules.

If someone was considered a "qualified" ideological enemy by the communists, coherently, with all necessary education, ethically and aesthetically, intellectually and emotionally, it was the Catholic poet Zdeněk Rotrekl – with the whole strength of his personality, his work, faith, defence of Czech history against the arbitrary Marxist interpretation, protection of the Czech culture against mutilation by the communist lumpenproletariat...

Politically, he was, of course, "in the right", even though in the "pre-modern" spirit, probably as the "last Lancknecht" Bedřich Schwarzenberg, an original Czech nobleman of the mid-19th century. *I've always been attracted by royalist regimes, not by these leftist systems, but today it's classical archaeology. A long time ago the left and the right were useful, but now it doesn't matter,* he said in an interview for the periodical *Babylon*, although he himself refused any "labels" for his person.

In the angry polemic with Zdeněk Urbánek he says: *Having good teachers in my early youth, I have never been an "internationalist" or "nationalist", and I have nothing to do with those terms such as conservative, left, right, left of centre, right of centre, progressive or regressive. These are the terms of the Western, "open" society, and have different meanings in our country. For ten years I have been promising to give the young people six A4 pages "On the Need for Precise Terms", on the need not to transfer the terminology of open society to the society that has been closed and locked for forty years, and that also suffers from total discontinuity. I even*

*doubt the correctness of the term that I have freely chosen in the same issue of Obsah: traditionalist.*³⁰

With respect to politics, he "dryly" says: *I never intend to choose between freedom and oppression. And to the despondent at any time and in any situation this person who faced execution says: They say that's the time we live in. What should we do then? Well, the time we live in is the time we create. And you have an obligation to act in such a way to make it in the human, that is also God's, image.*³¹

Rotrekl advocates ideas, but he is not an ideologue. He neither screens, nor judges, but he only says what he thinks and confesses.

*Let me use the unheard-of luxury not to judge and not to preach guilt and forgiveness. I preach the need to cross the bloody bulwark in our own country, the importance to cross the Jordan together, to reject the magical power of idols who only exist in your mind...*³²

After Zdeněk Rotrekl was sentenced to death and then to life imprisonment, after he spent four thousand seven hundred and seventy days in prison, after he spent years of slavery before that, after he could not officially publish a word in his country for four decades, after he spent years jumping around ditches for wages for which a West German citizen would barely buy his cigarettes and usual beer ..., the Catholic poet asks the Lord (perhaps with not enough humility) for the only thing: *Create constantly in my children and in my brothers a feeling of freedom that cannot be sold or borrowed.*³³

This "feeling of freedom that cannot be sold" is outside the categories of left-right, beyond any ideology. It is a poetic category which is unbreakable.

The poet Zdeněk Rotrekl passed away with his head held high on 9 June in the year of grace 2013. Let us honour his memory.

Regional Headquarters of the State Security Service in Brno
Ref. No.: A-34750/10388-49

In Brno on 15 July 1949

For the attention of State Prosecutor in Brno

Subject: Rotrekl Zdeněk et al., subversive activity – criminal complaint
Appendices: 134 and 1 carbon copy of the criminal complaint

By attaching an annex to this preliminary criminal complaint ref. No. A-25506/10388-49, dated 2 June 1949, regarding the above case, I hereby file the final criminal complaint under Sections 1, 5, 35 and 40 of Act No. 231/48, under Sections 2, 6 and 12 of Act No. 50/23 and under Sections 199, 214 and 460 of the Criminal Code against the persons specified below:

1. Rotrekl Zdeněk, born 1 October 1920 in Brno, registered in Brno, son of deceased Tomáš and Růžena, née Malánová, single, writer, Czech nationality, Roman Catholic, without military employment, university education, without property, not caring of anyone, without criminal records, last residence in Brno, Jana Uhra No. 18, arrested on 14 April 1949 at 2 p.m. and on 30 June 1949 transferred into custody of the state court in Brno, [...]

Criminal activity of the individuals:

Zdeněk Rotrekl,

a former student of philosophy and writer from Brno, is on reasonable grounds suspected of the crimes under Sections 1, 5 and 40 of Act No. 231/48 Coll., which he committed by

linking up with JUDr. Jaroslav Čaha, Jan Vomela, Miloslav Richter, Ivan Hanuš, Vlasta Homoláčová, Gustav Janečka, Jiří Čech, Milan Šeda, Rudolf Boleslav and a large number of other persons for the purpose of destroying the people's democratic establishment in the Czech Socialist Republic, guaranteed by the Constitution, and establishing, for the same purpose, indirect contact with foreign intelligence services, i.e. foreign officials,

inquiring facts, actions and objects that were to remain secret in the important interests of the Republic, in particular in the economic, political and military interests, intending to disclose them to a foreign power, and disclosing a state secret to a foreign power indirectly, as a member of organizations which aimed to elicit state secrets, for a longer period of time and to a considerable extent,

assisting Czechoslovak citizens with unauthorized departure from the Czech Socialist Republic, intending to harm the interest of the Republic.

The person named above is a son of the deceased sole trader Tomáš Rotrekl, has three other siblings, and his mother runs a seed shop in Brno. During the time of oppression he completed secondary school education in Czech language, and then was transferred to industrial production. At that time he began to be treated at the psychiatric clinic in Brno, where he was given a guardian appointed by the court who was removed in 1945, so Rotrekl is fully responsible for his actions. After the liberation he began to attend the Faculty of Arts of the Masaryk University in Brno, where in 1948 he reached the level of graduate examination. In addition, Rotrekl has been engaged in writing since 1943, which he now states as his main occupation. From 1945 he was a member of the People's Party, cultural secretary of the Union of University Students, and a member of the Syndicate of Czech Writers, from which he was excluded after 1948 for his negative attitude towards the people's democracy. Rotrekl is an extremely reactionary person, hostile to the existing establishment, ambitious and verbose.

Rotrekl started with subversive activities in a limited student circle immediately after the events of February 1948. As a former official of the Union of University Students, he maintained relations with the former officials of this club even after February, and very soon these reactionary persons formed a group holding a view that all means must be used to fight against the current establishment.

It was already in March 1948 that the meetings of the former officials of the Union of University Students began to take place, and apart from Rotrekl they were mainly attended by JUDr. Jaroslav Čaha, Miloslav Richter, Miloš Slabák, Miroslav Illek, Zdena Koudelová and others, who were mostly members of the former National So-

cialist Party, except Rotrekl, who was a member of the former People's Party. After several meetings, the resultant illegal organization was called DIFUSE; its initial tasks were not particularly dangerous to the State, but they fully represented the focus and intentions of all concerned persons. In other meetings of this organization it was agreed that, in case of a turn, special drafts for universities would be prepared concerning study reliefs for the students in these schools who were excluded from further study by the Action Committee. These drafts for the medical faculty were supposed to be prepared by Illek, for the faculty of law by JUDr. Čaha, and for the technical university by Richtř. It was found that such a draft was probably only prepared by Richtř, who later gave it to Rotrekl for safekeeping. The original of Richtř's draft was found and seized during the search of Rotrekl's flat. /See copy in Appendix No. 59./

The meetings of this organization in the following months were always held in the flat of one of the participants, and it was agreed that they would obtain messages of a political and economic nature which would for the time being serve the need of the organization itself. After establishing contact with foreign countries, these messages were intended to be sent to foreign agents for further use, as evidenced by the testimonies of some of the accused and talks held in these meetings. For the above reasons the organization acquired a high treason character. /See Appendix No. 56/1-2, 29/4-5, 11/3-5 a 5/2-3./

The organization DIFUSE, which was later renamed to AMOS, performed its activities until the arrest of the leaders of the group, but Rotrekl later only maintained contact with this organization based on immediate needs, probably until the end of 1948. JUDr. Jaroslav Čaha, as one of the leaders, was reported in relation to this activity to the state prosecutor in Brno under local ref. No. A-18802/61660-49, dated 24 April 1949, under code-name Dr. Alena Tichácková et al.

In April 1948 Rotrekl made a very intensive effort to seek contacts with foreign countries, because he wanted to establish links with Czechoslovak emigrants, knowing that a turn within the State was only possible with the help of foreign powers. Therefore, at the time he used his knowledge of the upcoming escape of Dr. Stránecký and the editor Emil Petříček abroad, prepared several reports in which he distortedly described the February events, and through the aforementioned persons sent them abroad with a request to be published in the foreign press. These reports were titled COMMUNIST COUP IN THE CZECHOSLOVAK CULTURAL LIFE, RESOLUTION OF THE CZECHOSLOVAK UNIVERSITY STUDENTS, FEBRUARY PERSECUTION OF CZECHOSLOVAK STUDENTS AND RESOLUTION OF CZECHOSLOVAK WRITERS, the concepts of which were found and seized during the search of Rotrekl's flat. /See photocopies in Appendix No. 60, 61, 62 and 63./ It was already on this occasion that Rotrekl sought to help foreign enemies of the Republic with a message of a military character obtained from JUDr. Čaha about a purge of the officer corps which, due to lack of time, he only wrote on the report using a pencil.

Dr. Stránecký, who fled abroad with his companions with the help of Prior Zeměk from Znojmo, arranged before his escape contacts for Rotrekl with Zeměk in order to help Rotrekl send, through this channel, people who would contact him abroad. Using this channel Rotrekl enabled the editor Jiří Kovtun from Prague and student Černíček from Brno to escape abroad in May 1948, after a previous agreement with Zeměk. Then, at JUDr. Čaha's request, he attempted to use the same channel for the escape of the National Assembly deputy Ludvík Rychtera from Brno, but at the time Zeměk had been discovered and secured by the security service authorities, so Rychtera's escape through this channel was not successful.

Another opportunity to establish contacts with foreign countries presented itself for Rotrekl in May 1948, when Dr. Čaha introduced him to Jaromír Dočkal from Brno, who was also preparing to flee abroad. Dočkal, who was involved in a number of illegal organizations and was already in contact with foreign countries, was supposed to unite all illegal organizations, or at least coordinate their activities. As a result of the planned escape, Dočkal tried to hand over this task to Rotrekl and introduced him to his deputy for illegal activity, Dr. Stolička and to Jan Vomela, as well as to Josef Fikr from Znojmo, with the possibility of illegal escape abroad. Rotrekl asked Dočkal to deliver letters to the emigrant Jiří Kovtuna abroad, editor of Czech foreign broadcasting Karel Brušák and former deputy of the National Assembly Ivo Ducháček. Using the letters he informed these persons about the political situation in the Czech Republic and asked them for instructions concerning his subsequent subversive activities. At the same time he asked Dočkal abroad to press for the publication of the resolutions which he had sent through Dr. Stránecký and Petříček and to deliver to Dr. Ivo Ducháček illegal leaflets apparently issued by Archbishop Beran that Rotrekl acquired from Jiří Kadlec from Prague. One of these leaflets was found and seized during the search of Zdeněk Rotrekl's flat. /See photocopy in Appendix No. 64./

Then Rotrekl, through Josef Fikr, sent abroad Jiří Kadlec and Emil Kovtun, both from Prague, of whom he knew that they wanted to flee abroad. The aforementioned persons arrived in Brno, Rotrekl let them stay over-

night in his flat and in the flat of his fiancée Drahomíra Němcová, and then went with them to Znojmo to Fíkr, who arranged their illegal escape. On this occasion, Rotrekl was also introduced to Karel Heikenwälder from Bystrc, who was also fleeing abroad and whom he only knew under the name Karel. Rotrekl helped these persons with the intention to harm the interest of the Republic, as evidenced by his confession.

Josef Fíkr from Znojmo was reported to the state prosecutor in Brno for this treasonous activity under code-name Josef Podsedník et al., local ref. No. 28547/48, dated 27 January 1949. The contacts with Dr. Stolička did not have any significant implications for Rotrekl, because the person was not very active in illegal activity and the organization in which he was Dočkal's deputy lost significance, especially when JUDr. Alena Ticháčková focused on the activity in another organization, called SINIOLCHU. Based on the available findings, it can be said that the cooperation with Dr. Stolička was only limited to warning of certain persons against arrest. /See Appendix No. 1/10./ Due to this activity Dr. Stolička was reported to the state prosecutor in Brno under code-name JUDr. Alena Ticháčková et al., local ref. No. A-18802/61660-49, dated 24 April 1949.

However, the establishment of contact with Dočkal had far-reaching consequences for Rotrekl, especially his meeting with Jan Vomela. Vomela was in fact already in the spring of 1948 in charge of a large illegal organization of reactionary university students. In June 1948 Rotrekl had several meetings with Vomela in which Vomela informed him in detail of the whole organization and introduced him to his collaborator František Hlaváček, the former executive of People's Academics Club.
[...]

In August 1948 it was revealed that Rotrekl is a well-known person not only in the subversive circles in the local national territory, but also in the circles of treacherous political emigrants, and that his efforts to establish contacts with foreign countries were not fruitless. In this month Rotrekl was sought in Brno by the CIC agent Rudolf Boleslav with the letters of recommendation from Josef Franci and the former deputy Pavel Tigríd. Franci's letter contained a request for assistance in personal matters, and Tigríd's letter informed the domestic illegal movement about the situation abroad, giving instructions about how the subversive activities should be continued. The original of this letter was handed over by Rotrekl to Vomela for safekeeping, and Vomela then gave it to Vladimír Metyš, who was tasked with hiding all evidence of the activities of the entire organization. When Metyš gathered more of these documents and was afraid to keep them in his flat, he agreed with his colleague František Dobeš to hide them in a safe place. For this purpose Dobeš made a "metal box", put the illegal material in it, sealed it, and then took it to his aunt Marie Vondalová at Pamětice No. 40, Boskovice district, where he buried it in the yard. The box was found in the specified place and, together with the written material, seized. The aforementioned letter from Tigríd was found in the box. /See photocopy in Appendix No. 67./ The aforementioned "metal box" shall also be attached to the criminal complaint as an exhibit /See Appendix No. 66./ and shall hereinafter be referred to as the "metal box". [...]

NOTES

- 1 Unless noted otherwise, the quotations of Zdeněk Rotrekl's direct speech are used from an interview which the author recorded with him in January 2007 and part of which was published in the *Babylon* journal (*Dobrý den, Zdeněk Rotrekl z Brna. Babylon*, 15 January 2007, vol. XVI, No. 5, pp. 1 and 5).
- 2 MED, Jaroslav: *Spisovatelé ve stínu*. Portál, Prague 2004, p. 140.
- 3 In 1940 the poet Kamil Bednář published a programmatic essay *Slovo k mladým*. For the text of the essay see ŠEVČÍK, Jiří – MORGANOVÁ, Pavlína – DUŠKOVÁ, Dagmar: *České umění 1938–1989. Programy, kritické texty, dokumenty*. Academia, Prague 2001, pp. 31–32. The poets of that group included Oldřich Mikulášek, Jiří Orten, Ivan Blatný, Josef Kainar, Hanuš Bonn, Klement Bochořák, Jiří Daniel, Jan Pilař and Zdeněk Urbánek.
- 4 See Martin C. Putna: *A number of emerging poets who were paternally cared for by Halas at the end of the thirties and early forties also included two Moravian Catholics, Klement Bochořák and Zdeněk Rotrekl. Both thankfully preserved and disseminated Halas's memory*. PUTNA, Martin C.: *Česká katolická literatura v kontextech: 1918–1945*. Torst, Prague 2010, p. 1039.
- 5 The Brno publishing house Atlantis has published four volumes of Zdeněk Rotrekl's collected writings: *Nezděné město*, poetic work from the period 1940–2000 (2001), *Podezřelá krajina s anděly*, prose and drama (2003), *Skryté tváře*, literary history and essays (2005). The novel *Světlo přichází potmě* was published by Atlantis as the second volume of his collected works in 2001. It was created gradually over many years. Rotrekl first thought about the text when he was imprisoned in the Bytíz camp. The manuscript from 1976 was completely revised in the 1990s by the author. The version published by Atlantis is therefore the first edition. The author's unfinished memoirs are being prepared by the same publishing house under the title *Hnízda ze stromu, který odchází* to be published in 2015.
- 6 The Nazi organization Kraft durch Freude (KdF) was founded in 1933 at the behest of the chief of Nazi trade unions, Dr. Robert Ley, to recruit workers of the Hitler regime by improving their standard of living.
- 7 This relative was not only arrested by the Gestapo, but he also ended up in prison after 1948, and he served ten years for political reasons. In 1967 he was rehabilitated. See *Dobrý den, Zdeněk Rotrekl z Brna*, pp. 1 and 5.
- 8 ROTREKL, Zdeněk: *Nezapomenutý básník (Pohled na život a dílo brněnského básníka). Moravská čítanka* (samizdat), 1982, without pagination.
- 9 For more information about his activity see Security Services Archive, collection Investigation Files – Brno (BN-V), investigation file archival number V-2682 Brno – Rotrekl Zdeněk et al. or Vomela Jan et al. (criminal complaint of 15 July 1949, statement of Z. Rotrekl 15 April 1949, operative material of operation “Omega”; map of provisional detention person Zdeněk Rotrekl, summary of Zdeněk Rotrekl's activities by the secret police and other materials relating to his collaborators). One of the links to the West was mediated by Abbot Anastáz Opasek. *Before I was arrested*, recalls Opasek, *two of my friends had been imprisoned: the poet Zdeněk Rotrekl and the lawyer JUDr. Vojtěch Jandečka, an official in the government presidium, a Catholic and member of the People's Party. I introduced him to the French military attaché in Prague, General Flippo, at the request of the attaché. I think they met in our place in Břevnov. In the communists' opinion, that was high treason. I met Zdeněk Rotrekl at that time. He asked me for mediation, to send his letters abroad. I hope I managed to give them to General Flippo through the intermediary*. OPASEK, Anastáz: *Dvanáct zastavení. Vzpomínky opata břevnovského kláštera*. Torst, Prague 1997, pp. 191–192.
- 10 *Security Services Archive* (hereinafter only ABS), collection BN-V, investigation file archival number V-2682 Brno – Rotrekl Zdeněk et al. (vol. 1), State Prosecutor's Office, Brno Department, charge ref. No. PSt II 668/49, 7 October 1949, p. 2.
- 11 In his voluminous outline of the Catholic Czech literature, M. C. Putna counts Zdeněk Rotrekl of the late 1960s among the authors of “the third Catholic journalistic series” (along with Ladislav Jehlička, Ivan Slavík and others), who in the *Vyšehrad* magazines *Obroda* (more openly) and *Naše rodina* (rather anxiously) revived the tradition of pre-February fame of both Czech and European Catholic literature. PUTNA, Martin C.: *Česká katolická literatura v kontextech: 1918–1945*, p. 711.
- 12 ROTREKL, Zdeněk: *Otázky nad ineditní literaturou* (Glosy k diskusi o studii Vladimíra Pistoria *Stárnoucí literatura*). *Obsah*, No. V, 1987 (samizdat), without pagination.
- 13 Ibid.
- 14 ROTREKL, Zdeněk: *Na kus řeči o Moravě* (Ale také o jiných vážných věcech). *Obsah*, June 1989 (samizdat), pp. 55–60.
- 15 Ibid.
- 16 ROTREKL, Zdeněk: *Slovo o české kulturní diskontinuitě, o minulosti a současnosti, ale také o českém románu*. (Přednáška s několika zdánlivě nesouvztažnými odstavci). *Obsah*, February 1983 (samizdat), without pagination.
- 17 Ibid.
- 18 ROTREKL, Zdeněk: *Slovo úvodem. Host*, no. 5, January–October 1989 (samizdat), without pagination.
- 19 Zdeněk Rotrekl in the introduction of *Skrytá tvář české literatury*, quoted according to the official post-November edition. ROTREKL, Zdeněk: *Skrytá tvář české literatury*. Blok, Brno 1993, p. 5.
- 20 ROTREKL, Zdeněk: *Slovo o české kulturní diskontinuitě...*, without pagination.
- 21 Ibid.
- 22 ROTREKL, Zdeněk: *Za Karlem knížetem ze Schwarzenbergu* (died on 9 April 1986). *Obsah*, September 1986 (samizdat), without pagination.
- 23 ROTREKL, Zdeněk: *Slovo o české kulturní diskontinuitě...*, without pagination.
- 24 ROTREKL, Zdeněk: *Existence Moravy ve střední Evropě*. Published by Milan Jelínek, Brno 1987 (samizdat), without pagination.
- 25 Eva Trúda Vidlařová, a cultural activist and dissident from the circle of the Brno theatre Na Provázku.
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Contacts

The Institute for the Study of Totalitarian Regimes

Siwiewcova 2, 130 00 Prague 3, Czech Republic

Operator

Phone: +420 221 008 211

Phone: +420 221 008 212

Office Secretary

Phone: +420 221 008 274, +420 221 008 322

Fax: +420 222 715 738

E-mail: info@ustrcr.cz

Web: www.ustrcr.cz

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