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Human Rights between Political Identity and Historical Category

Czechoslovakia and East Central Europe in a Global Context

Michal Kopeček

“The standard of human rights and liberties is the standard of socialism,” asserted two prominent legal theoreticians of the Czechoslovak “normalisation” regime, Jiří Grospič and František Koranda, in their representative book *Socialism and Human Rights* published in 1980. It seemed absurd to them that “bourgeois politicians and ideologues attempt to present the historically and class-limited concept of the bourgeois rights of an individual as a paragon of human rights.” It was, after all, socialism which was the first-ever social-political order to eliminate economic and social inequality, thus establishing, for the first time in human history, a society-wide base for “the creation of the fundamental human right – the right to a respectable existence without any exploitation.”¹ In historical retrospect this statement may look like a not very successful propagandistic attempt to react to the struggle by dissidents and their Western sponsors for respect for human and civil rights by the socialist regime. Yet this commonplace but misleading reading misses the fact that “human rights talk” had by no means been the exclusive domain of Western liberal democracies for the better part of the Cold War.

It is true that universal human rights, the “world-wide secular religion” as Ellie Wiesel called it, had become an inseparable part of Western political vocabulary

1 GROPIČ, Jiří – KORANDA, František: *Socialismus a lidská práva* [Socialism and Human Rights]. Praha, Svoboda 1980, pp. 10, 15.

in both domestic and international politics. Moreover, they had become the core of the political identity of all major mainstream political trends in the Western world. This applies to the current Czech political world, too. The struggle for human and civil rights before 1989 and the heritage of the Czechoslovak dissidence constitute one of the foundations of the historical identity of today's Czech democracy. The position of human rights as a pivotal value of Western political culture is, on the other hand, a fairly recent phenomenon. The place was previously occupied by a grand narrative about progress and civilizing missions, in the framework of which all the principal modern political ideologies of the 19th and 20th centuries – liberalism, socialism, and modern conservatism – were formed. However, the short 20th century, the “age of extremes,” shook confidence in European culture from the midst of which the two staunchest opponents of liberal democracy, Fascism and Communism, were born. It was expected that human rights, their defence and promotion, would act as a panacea against totalitarianism.

In the second half of the 20th century, human rights became the fundamental transnational legal norm. The more substantial the role they play, the higher the importance of historical narrations and theories which attempt to explain their origin and evolution. Perhaps the most widespread interpretation locates their birthplace in Western Europe – in particular France – and North America in the 18th century. While today's historians of human rights are increasingly sceptical of the theory of their primarily Enlightenment Age origin, there are also excellent works which attempt to build on it. An example is an inspiring and often cited work by a leading American cultural historian, Lynn Hunt, on “inventing human rights” published in 2007.² She defends the thesis of the origin of human rights in the Enlightenment; however, she does not see their roots in the ideas of radical thinkers such as J. J. Rousseau or Thomas Paine, but rather in a major cultural shift in the course of which she believes a new social feeling of “imagined empathy,” i.e., an ability to be sympathetic to others, even to those we do not know directly, was born. In her opinion, proof of this is found in a number of fundamental social changes that took place before the French Revolution such as the abolition of court torture.

The Enlightenment origin thesis and the one-sided emphasis on the French and American Revolutions had already been rectified earlier. An example may be Georg Jellinek, an influential Austrian-German legal positivist and philosopher of law, who was one of the first to advocate, in his well-known essay *Erklärung der Menschen und Bürgerrechte* published in 1895, the universal validity of human and civil rights. Jellinek pointed at older sources of human rights, such as ancient political thought, particularly Roman republicanism, and especially German Reformation and Protestant political theology. This interpretation emphasised the importance of the Christian concept of a “person” and of the longer-term historical evolution of the notion of “civil rights” in European political thought and governance practices. This has, by the way, been reflected in Czech Protestant circles, and has

2 HUNT, Lynn: *Inventing Human Rights: A History*. New York, W. W. Norton & Company 2007.

given us some of the most interesting domestic theoreticians of human rights such as Emanuel Rádl, Božena Komárková, and Jakub S. Trojan.

Most of the prevailing interpretations of the history of human rights have, nevertheless, one thing in common, namely an emphasis on their positive evolution in the course of history, their seemingly gradual, although uneven spread. This trend has grown even stronger since 1989. The peaceful revolutions in Eastern Europe, in many respects perceived also as revolutions of human rights, have considerably strengthened the legitimacy of Western-type liberal democracy. In East-Central Europe, the struggle for human, civil and partly also social rights waged by organisations such as Charter 77, the Polish KOR, or various Helsinki committees, played an important part in the formation of a democratic political identity and its historical genealogy.

However, an oversimplified evolutionist model presenting the progress of human rights as a slow but continuous onward march through history, an inexorable strengthening of morals and rights against power structures, may not just be misleading but dangerous. The indiscriminate idolisation of human rights poses the threat that they may become an untouchable fetish for one side of the political spectrum and a mere symbol of bourgeois or “Western” hegemony for the other, losing all credibility in the process. Reacting to this danger, a relatively influential critical and revisionist school of the history of human rights has been formed in recent years. It is represented by historians and sociologists, such as Samuel Moyn, Stefan Ludwig Hoffmann, Hans Joas, and Mark Mazower,³ who seek to set the evolution of human rights in the context of power politics and the cultural and social changes of the last two centuries and present it as a historical phenomenon significantly influenced by political structures and power interests.

They point out some essential problems in the evolutionist model, such as the fact that the notion of human rights as perceived by Enlightenment thinkers disappeared from the political vocabulary after 1800. In the 19th century liberal movement it was replaced by “freedom,” and the entire political discourse of the “civilized Europe” of those days revolved around other central political concepts such as *civilization*, *race*, *nation*, and *class*. A look at the constitutional and democratisation processes of the period is all it takes to confirm this. Constitutions of the 19th century did not know the idea of universal human rights. As a matter of fact, rights were consistently tied to the national state and citizenship. Explicitly formulated political (and later also social and economic) rights applied only to citizens. From the viewpoint of constitutional law, they were perceived predominantly as positive rights, i.e., rights granted by the state, not as natural rights.

3 See e.g., MOYN, Samuel: *The Last Utopia: Human Rights in History*. Cambridge, MA – London, The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press 2010; HOFFMANN, Stefan-Ludwig (ed.): *Human Rights in the Twentieth Century*. Cambridge, Cambridge University Press 2011; JOAS, Hans: *Die Sakralität der Person. Eine neue Genealogie der Menschenrechte*. Berlin, Suhrkamp 2011.

The dependence of human rights on the state and citizenship and their cultural bonding to European civilization understandably influenced, among others, the character of colonialism and colonial administration. Everything outside the territory of the national or multi-ethnic state was an extra-legal space from the viewpoint of civil rights. Rights as well as legal guarantees and sanctions did not necessarily extend to non-citizens. This fact was of course reflected in utterly different measures and tolerance of political violence in colonies and outside colonies, as illustrated, for example, by the British policy in India, the Dutch in Southeast Asia, and the German in Southwest Africa. The binding of human rights to the boundaries of the national state had an impact on the codification of international law with respect to how war was waged, too. Here again rights applied only to wars between the so-called civilized countries, not to wars in the colonies for which international treaties were not relevant. In short, in the century following the Enlightenment declarations on human and civil rights, these rights as a universal political principle did not play any significant role.

Human Rights as a *Kampfbegriff*

For decades, the civilizational self-confidence of the European West gave hardly any thought to the universal character of human rights in the sense of their global validity. This situation began to change at the turn of the 1930s and 1940s, with the growth of “anti-civilization” regimes within the European realm. At the time, they were not represented primarily by the Soviet Union, whose political project – all the existing criticism notwithstanding – was carried by a universalistic ideology with roots in European humanism, that was in many respects compatible with liberalism. It was mainly Nazism with its racially exclusivist ideology that was a blatant abuse of the collective right to self-determination and a denial of the universal validity of civil rights within national legal boundaries. As early as the August 1941 Atlantic Charter, that is before the United States entered the war, the Americans and British proclaimed the protection of the individual and the goal of “a world freed of want and fear” to be among their objectives in the struggle against Nazism. In the January 1942 Declaration of the United Nations, the signatories, including Czechoslovakia and the Soviet Union, undertook “to preserve human rights and justice in their own lands as well as in other lands.” Thus, during the Second World War, universal human rights returned to the political vocabulary as a normative framework of the Allies in their ideological contest with Nazism. The politics of human rights certainly owes a lot to humanitarian impulses and the moral outrage over Nazi atrocities. Yet to become a real force, it had to start playing the role of an efficient propaganda tool (*Kampfbegriff*) of power and war politics.

Another part of this development was the replacement of the so-called minority legislation with a universal human rights doctrine. The rights of minorities during the interwar period in a number of emerging new multi-ethnic states (presenting themselves often as national states, e.g., Czechoslovakia) were guaranteed by the League of Nations framework and international legislation, even though this

applied mostly to client states of the superpowers, not to the superpowers themselves. The abuse and conversion of minority self-determination rights into a tool in the aggressive policy of the Third Reich substantially discredited this type of international legal guarantee. As noted by Mazower, the Allies used the rhetoric of universal human rights to facilitate the “silent burial” of collective minority rights. He mentions a symptomatic example in the case of the Czechoslovak President-in-Exile Edvard Beneš who, on the one hand, advocated the expulsion of the German population from Czechoslovakia and Eastern Europe, which meant a total negation of the legal principles of the interwar arrangement concerning minority rights, while being simultaneously one of the staunchest political supporters of the universal human rights doctrine.⁴

To understand further the evolution of human rights in domestic and foreign politics, the ideological contest of the Cold War must be taken into account. After 1945, human rights not only retained their strong political undertone; in point of fact, the establishment of the United Nations and the adoption of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights made their interpretation one of the key issues in the international ideological dispute. The postwar period in international politics is, in this regard, a period of competition among the socialist, liberal, and anti-colonial interpretations of human rights and their universality.

The East was by no means a passive element in this struggle. Joining forces with third world liberation movements, it actively promoted a critique of racism, colonial and segregationist regimes, and the anti-social exploitation of labour by capital. On the other hand, it emphasised the collective right to self-determination as well as social and economic rights as an indisputable achievement by the workers’ movement and socialism. It was a rather hypocritical set of arguments considering that forced labour and the system of gulags were at that time principal components of both political oppression and the overall economic system of the Soviet Union.

The West, on the other hand, postulated basic political and civil rights and an emphasis on protecting the individual against state intervention as the core of its human rights agenda and of its criticism of Soviet-type societies. Since the principle of racial segregation still applied in the southern US states at that time, the argument was just as hypocritical as that in the previous case. In an alliance with the anti-communist emigration – democratic, but often nationalistic – and assisted by US-funded organisations such as the Congress for Cultural Freedom, the National Committee for a Free Europe, and Radio Free Europe, criticism of the suppression of political and civil rights in Sovietised Eastern Europe became one of the main ideological weapons of the West.

The “Third World” also supported human rights. The declaration adopted at the Bandung Conference in April 1955, which was a breakthrough in terms of the active involvement of developing countries in international politics, still identified itself with the full scope of human rights as formulated by the Universal Declaration.

4 MAZOWER, Mark: The Strange Triumph of Human Rights, 1933–1950. In: *The Historical Journal*, Vol. 47, No. 2 (2004), pp. 379–398.

However, the years of the intensifying anti-colonial struggle that followed saw the issue of human rights in the Third World shrink largely into a single aspiration, namely the right to self-determination and national-state sovereignty, in other words principles emphasising collective rights which – according to many human rights activists and theoreticians – contradict rather than reinforce the basic notion of trans-national protection of the rights of the individual.

It is true that human rights were an important part of international politics until the early 1970s, but ultimately without any direct consequences for national governments. If governments violated them, there was hardly any way to make them change their behaviour. Both superpowers, the United States and the Soviet Union, had fundamental deficiencies in their own human rights record, which was why they had little interest in promoting the matter in international politics beyond ideological rhetoric. Recent studies show that it was some Western and Southern European countries, and often also the post-Fascist states such as Germany, Italy and Austria, which had an eminent interest in the politics of human rights within the framework of the Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms from 1950 and the Council of Europe. Fearful of a return to political extremism at home they were willing to surrender some of their sovereignty in favour of the protection of human rights. Without this coincidence of their own historical reflection and the pressure that Western Europe was exposed to due to the rivalry of the superpowers, European states would hardly have been willing to cede a substantial part of their sovereignty.

Another interesting moment indicating historically coinciding elements in the unexpected, triumphant rise of human rights is the fact that it was mainly Christian Democrats – Italian, German and Austrian – who favoured the policy as an appropriate reformulation of their political anti-Communism in the postwar period. This might seem surprising, since political Catholicism had been condemning “the secularised religion of human rights” as a child of the blasphemous French Revolution until the early decades of the 20th century. It was only in the 1940s with the so-called “personalist turn” that European Christian Democrats found that the basic ideological and strategic principle in their attitude toward Communism lay in the notion of the “person” and his or her sanctity – i.e., including the inalienable rights of the individual.

As demonstrated by the political scientist Daniel Thomas, it was, first and foremost, the formation of European identity and integration within European communities which was the prime mover in the transfer of human rights from a declarative level onto the agenda of international law during multilateral negotiations before the Helsinki conference in 1975. According to Thomas, the “Helsinki effect” was immense, since it fundamentally changed the dynamism of international and domestic politics and their interconnection on the basis of newly adopted principles of international relations.⁵

5 THOMAS, Daniel C.: *The Helsinki Effect: International Norms, Human Rights, and the Demise of Communism*. Princeton NJ, Princeton University Press 2001.

A less idealistic interpretation offered by revisionist historians shows the 1970s as the period of the so-called “second globalisation.” Human rights, at that time, were elevated to the position of a principal ideological tool not only by organisations such as Amnesty International and *Médecins Sans Frontières*, but also by the US Administration during Jimmy Carter’s presidency. To Americans, human rights were a ploy in the ideological struggle against Communism, but increasingly also a welcome legitimisation of their own growing political and economic power in the age of the global integration of markets and space. In preparation for the future new world order, the *Pax Americana*, human rights moved to the role of central agent in the transformation process of global policy, which was heading toward US hegemony after the end of the Cold War.

Central European Echoes

An understanding of influences and developments outside the Western world had for a long time been missing in the “Western story” about the elevation of human rights to the pedestal of international politics. It is true that the “Helsinki effect” was a key prerequisite in the formation and media-propagandistic success of the East European opposition. However, it is less known how much the experience of the East European dissent contributed to a human-rights turn among, for example, radical democrats and leftist activists in the West. Robert Horvath, an Australian historian specialising in the history of the Soviet Union, uses the term “Solzhenitsyn effect” to describe the process, alluding to the great impact the most renowned prison camp work, *The Gulag Archipelago*, had on Western leftist intellectuals.⁶ It resulted in a radical challenge to the “revolutionary privilege” and Jacobin heritage of the Western radical Left. Horvath uses the example of mainly French intellectuals, “traditional guardians of revolutionary enthusiasm,” to demonstrate how the reading of Solzhenitsyn and other dissident literary works made them gradually abandon the idea of a violent emancipatory revolution and move toward a global defence of human rights. For many of them, the figure of a dissident replaced that of an intellectual or guerilla revolutionary and red terrorist. On the other hand, the Western left continued to be divided for many years by the dilemma of whether to support the peace movement sponsored by the governments of socialist states, or the democratic dissidence against these governments.

Similarly, we tend not to see our own history of human rights as a history of conflicts and as an epiphenomenon of political contest, in this case the Cold War and its repercussions in Czechoslovakia and Central Europe. After 1948 Czechoslovakia became part of the Eastern Bloc. This fact was reflected in the concept of human rights in Czechoslovak legislation and the ensuing legal and political practices. The Communist Constitution of 9 May 1948, which was more or less a copy of the so-called Stalin Constitution of 1936, clearly stipulated that the main purpose of exercising

6 HORVATH, Robert: “The Solzhenitsyn Effect”: East European Dissidents and the Demise of the Revolutionary Privilege. In: *Human Rights Quarterly*, Vol. 29, No. 4 (2007), pp. 879–907.

all the powers of the state, including the judicial, was the building of the socialist order. It is true that the May 1948 Constitution contained a catalogue of basic human rights in its opening part, but this was declaratively opposed to the “abstract bourgeois concept of human rights.” It was emphatically collectivist, emphasising the society and the state which “bestow” basic political and civil rights on individuals according to their involvement in the socio-political project of building the socialist order. Socio-economic rights, and partly also cultural rights, which were at least theoretically available to all citizens of the state, prevailed over political and civil rights which were reserved only for politically loyal citizens.

The 1960s represent an attempt at change. The Czechoslovak reform Communists were in many respects a decade behind their Hungarian and Polish predecessors, who had been unsuccessfully trying to transform the Stalinist model of socialism since the mid-1950s. The fact that the Czechoslovak endeavour occurred later gave it a considerably different dynamic. The so-called rehabilitation commissions had been playing a very important role in the field of legal reform and human rights since the early 1960s. It is true that most were concerned with just one segment of the Stalinist political terror, namely the fabricated trials against the Communists themselves. But information about the commission’s work and internal debates gradually leaked out and added weight to public discussion about Stalinist crimes. This prompted efforts by Czechoslovak jurists to introduce mechanisms preventing such cases of political despotism and police brutality into the communist legal order. Jurists among the reform Communists were not the most radical component of the movement, but the most prominent of them, including Zdeněk Mlynář, Michal Lakatoš, Vladimír Klokočka, Zdeněk Jičínský, František Šamalík, Jiří Boguszak, and Petr Pithart, became well-known faces in Czechoslovakia in 1968. For a long time, the legal experts’ discussions remained within the language space defined by the originally Stalinist, but now fundamentally reinterpreted, concept of “socialist legality.” Formerly primarily a practical tool in the exercise of state control, it started to be interpreted during the Prague Spring as a potential guarantee of the independence of the courts and a basic mechanism for limiting and checking the power of the security organs and executive authorities.

Compared to similar reform communist projects in Eastern Europe, one of the most significant features of 1968 Czechoslovakia was the attention paid to the concept of the protection of fundamental civil rights – including political rights such as freedom of assembly and freedom of speech – in a socialist state. Some experts well-versed in the subject, such as the British historian Kieran Williams, even use in this regard the term “civic socialism.” As a matter of fact, legal and political theoreticians at that time stopped distinguishing between the “bourgeois” and the socialist concepts of civil and political rights. They began to interpret civil rights not just as a mere by-product of the hegemony of bourgeois power, but as the outcome of a complex historical process affected, *inter alia*, by the strong influence of the workers’ and socialist movement. They saw modern constitutional forms and institutions as general cultural and humanisation tools whose application was not to be limited to the “bourgeois social formation” but was necessary,

as shown by the experience of Stalinism, for socialist societies as well. Principles of constitutionality and legality became for them an independent, autonomous, and indispensable component of “socialist democracy.”

Without using the term “socialist rule of law,” which appeared only during the perestroika in the second half of the 1980s, some of the reform Communist Party elite started to mull over the conceptual prerequisites of a human rights and constitutional synthesis of liberal democracy and socialism in 1968. It is thus quite emblematic that many of the “civic socialists,” including Jičínský, Pithart, Rychetský, Šamalík, Jiří Hájek, and Gertruda Čákrtová-Sekaninová, ended, only a few years later, as Chartists and leading representatives of the legalistic and human rights opposition to Gustáv Husák’s consolidation regime.

The rise of human rights in international relations, symbolised by the Helsinki Accords, gave an essential impetus to the formation of a different type of democratic opposition. This was not because it introduced the issue of human rights into political thought – it had been present there for some time already – but because it made human rights the basic playground of the dissidents’ *anti-politics*. At the same time, it backed to some extent the dissidents in their action by an international monitoring system recognised by the socialist states themselves.

The overwhelming majority of dissidents did not initially perceive human rights as a criticism of the socialist order, not to speak about criticism of the social welfare state. Most viewed the emphasis that socialist countries assigned to socio-economic rights and the generous social welfare benefits as positive outcomes of postwar development. However, they criticised the fact that “democracy” and equality in the socio-economic sphere was in sharp contrast with the denial of political democracy and with the reduction of citizenship to ritual manifestations of loyalty. The dissidents’ fight for political and civil rights thus increasingly became a struggle against the paternalistic socialist state and its again repressive “socialist legality.”

An instantiation of this can be seen in some of the most significant and best-known dissident analyses of the consolidation socialist regimes in the 1970s and 1980s. The late socialist dictatorships were based on a combination of strong etatism, socio-economic provisions, support of consumerism, and skilfully orchestrated, targeted political repression and intimidation. Not by accident the most brilliant analyses of how state socialism was abusing the idea of the social welfare state and the state’s absolute economic power came from the countries which had achieved the highest level of socio-economic development such as Hungary and Czechoslovakia. A classic piece in this respect is the *Dictatorship over Needs* by a trio of Hungarian Marxist dissidents in exile Ágnes Heller, Ferenc Fehér, and György Márkus. In their opinion, human needs have always been socio-historically determined, and every political system has striven to regulate them. However, whereas capitalism deformed them while retaining at least formal freedom of choice, Soviet-type societies, instead of moving toward a classless society, made needs and their satisfaction one of the central social pillars of the dictatorship.

Some works by Czech and Slovak dissidents (not fortuitously written by ex-Marxists) also identified the paternalistic state as a prime instrument in the suppres-

sion of existing or potential resistance. This applies, for instance, to the renowned *Obnovení pořádku* [Restoration of Order] by Milan Šimečka, in which the author provided a masterly analysis of different pacification mechanisms employed in Czechoslovak society after 1968. The key role in his analysis belongs to “existential persecution” and the political usability of the total economic power of the state against its population. A similar point of view was put forward by Zdeněk Mlynář in his *Krise sovětských režimů 1953–1981* [Crises of Soviet Regimes 1953–1981], a broadly conceived analysis of critical moments in state socialist dictatorships and how they were overcome. He focused on the methods to achieve socio-political stabilisation and the creation of political loyalty and conformism by means of a politicised social state controlled by a repressive apparatus.

The outcome of these analyses, and perhaps even more of one’s own dissident experience of exclusion (neither universal, nor total) from the network of socio-economic provisions, was the lesson that any social and economic rights declared or even materially guaranteed by the state were unenforceable without political and civil rights. In such a situation, social and economic rights lose their character of rights and become a mere privilege guaranteed by the party and the state power. This basic historical experience was behind the gradual liberal conversion of some ex-Marxists in the opposition, and later influenced substantially the process of liberal democracy-building after 1989. Nevertheless, the authors of the abovementioned works, and a substantial number of dissidents in Eastern Europe in the 1980s, would hardly have identified themselves with traditional “liberal democracy.” Their project continued to be “socialist democracy” or “democratic socialism,” whatever this might have meant.

Human Rights: A Truncheon of Interventionism or a Space for Politicisation?

The fall of the communist empire in Eastern Europe meant not only a fundamental change in European and global geopolitics, but also the return of liberal internationalism as the main paradigm in international politics. Contrary to its Wilsonian predecessor, it placed less emphasis on sovereignty and more on global networking, mutual guarantees of freedom, democracy and human rights. Typical in this respect was the theory of liberal “democratic peace” of Michael W. Doyle, one of the spiritual fathers of the new American liberal internationalism, which tried to prove that democracy as a political order basically inclines towards peaceful coexistence. The events in Europe were often used as an example. The success of the policy of non-violent pressure for change accompanied by consistent support of human rights activism in states with authoritarian governments seemed to be indisputable after 1989. Developments in some parts of Central and Eastern Europe and the vision of the incorporation of these countries into the European Union became a model for many American liberals of how democracy could be spread peacefully through the rule of law, expansion of the market economy, and interventions by efficient international institutions.

Retrospectively, the line connecting liberal internationalism and so-called humanitarian interventionism may seem very short. The latter, however, has earned a very bad reputation as a result of where it led Western interventionist policy. It found almost caricature form in, for example, the speech that US President George W. Bush delivered on 9 November 2001, on the occasion of a new public holiday, World Freedom Day, in which he announced a global crusade for liberty, freedom, and a universal fight for human rights under the leadership of the United States. Two years later, Iraq, one of the principal battlefields in the campaign, became embroiled in a civil war in which any “human rights talk” was an out-of-place luxury.

Historically, at any rate, one must look at the real rather than caricature-like causes of the rise of liberal humanitarianism, particularly the wars in the Balkans. In the 1990s, the European trauma caused by the war in Bosnia, the death camp in Omarska and the mass murders in Srebrenica, fuelled by harrowing historical images of the Holocaust and other genocides, together with a “never again” moral imperative on both sides of the Atlantic, brought about a transformation of liberal internationalism into humanitarian interventionism, legitimised, first and foremost, by references to violations of human rights. This extends from US Secretary of State Madeleine Albright, learning from the Bosnian lesson and promoting the idea of “American moral leadership,” to George W. Bush and the invasion of Iraq, on up to the apparently equally problematic involvement of the hesitant interventionist Barack Obama and his European allies in Libya with the purpose of ousting the corrupt authoritarian regime of Muammar Gaddafi.

We can follow a similar trajectory in the Czechoslovak and Czech post-dissident foreign policy, which had grown out of its own struggle for human rights before 1989. Czech foreign policy had a significant human rights dimension, initially explicitly non-imperial, based on the “heretical geopolitics” of the dissident Prague Appeal of 1985.⁷ It was Václav Havel and Foreign Minister Jiří Dienstbier who proposed a parallel dissolution of the Warsaw Pact and NATO and their replacement by an ongoing CSCE process in the first few months following the democratic revolution in 1989. Nor were they the only ones to do so. However, everything started to change at the time of the disintegration of the Soviet Union and the beginning of the Yugoslav ethnic wars. The US-led NATO soon appeared to be the only possible guarantor of security in Europe and, as demonstrated in Bosnia, also the only organisation capable of preventing ethnic cleansings. All of the above made Havel and many of his followers and sympathisers, who have had considerable influence in Czech foreign policy, lean toward American humanitarian interventionism. A symbolic peak in this development was Havel’s speech to the Parliament of Canada during the Kosovo crisis in the spring of 1999. He justified the air raids on Belgrade for “humanitarian reasons,” defence of the expelled Kosovo Albanians and the higher principle of the protection of human rights. He also envisaged the end of national states, which were to be replaced by a pluralist, solidarity-conscious global society.

7 SZULECKI, Kacper: Heretical Geopolitics of Central Europe. Dissident Intellectuals and an Alternative European Order. In: *Geoforum*, Vol. 65 (2015), pp. 25–36.

The adoption of humanitarian interventionism by the Republican administration of US President Bush, the intervention in Afghanistan after 9/11, and another in Iraq, forced many of its former supporters to reassess their position. One telling and early example was Michael Ignatieff, a liberal Canadian political philosopher and one of the most vociferous advocates of humanitarian interventionism. The leading theme of his *Human Rights as Politics and Idolatry* is the defence of human rights as a political space, i.e., a conflict zone of communication, and their rejection as an “idol” justifying seemingly indisputable political decisions.⁸ Ignatieff pointed out that human rights were not above politics, but part of it. Consequently, there are frequent conflicts and contradictions between, for instance, requirements for state stability (and security) and human rights, and between democracy as majority rule and human rights. He maintained that stability and security might sometimes be more important than human rights, since stability and the rule of law – no matter how imperfect this might be – were a prerequisite for the observation of human rights. Ignatieff was thus indirectly arguing against Havel, claiming that dreams about a time without national-state sovereignty were utopian, since state sovereignty was a source of legal order and as such an irreplaceable basis for the international system and its human rights dimension.

Human rights did not become, by and large, a “political space” in Central and Eastern Europe during the first decade after 1989, which was characterised by the victory of liberal constitutionalism. This is very distinctive particularly in the Czech context. In the anti-political inclination of Havel’s liberalism, human rights defined in a narrowly liberal sense as “negative freedoms” assumed the role of an above-politics guarantee of a democratic state and not of an arena for political struggle. This resulted, among others, in a visible loss of the authority – but not of the validity *en tout* – of social and economic rights in post-communist liberal constitutionalism.

This is perhaps one of the reasons why human rights defined in such a narrow liberal sense have recently become a target for criticism, particularly from the Left. The criticism, nonetheless, is often aimed at “human rights rhetoric” concealing political interests rather than at the philosophical implications of the notion. As a matter of fact, human rights are a potential space for political contestation from which the Left can also profit. There are some developments in Czechia and many other countries in the region showing that human rights in the past two decades have not only been the idol of humanitarian interventionism; they have provided space for a number of struggles, large and small, more or less successful, for tangible improvements in the quality of life. Human rights comprise an area broader than that of “negatively” defined freedoms in representative democracy. They are a potential tool for an efficient *democratisation of democracy*. Their job in societies with a functioning legal order is to provide a universal reference point permitting criticism and a review of the particularistic national law.

8 IGNATIEFF, Michael: *Human Rights as Politics and Idolatry* (edited by Amy Gutman). Princeton, N.J., Princeton University Press 2001.

In the Czech milieu, this position was represented mainly by the Czechoslovak (Czech) Helsinki Committee, some other non-governmental human rights groups, and also the Ombudsman's office. From the viewpoint of these organisations and institutions, the year 1989 was not the end-point and culmination of a liberal revolution, but simply the conclusion of its "pre-historical" phase. Only then did the room open for the genuine promotion of human rights and cultivation of society and politics through a continuous process of coming to terms with a changing human rights agenda. According to one of the main proponents of this line of thought, the former dissident and radical democrat Petr Uhl, the Left plays a crucial role in this process, although its members do not always understand it. "This is a historical fact – the Left was fighting for an eight-hour workday, emancipation of women, separation of the church from the state, universal suffrage, while the Right was against it. It has also been demonstrated in recent decades by the fight for children's rights, against racial discrimination, and discrimination in general, for a more accommodating attitude toward refugees and economic immigrants, and also foreign workers, the fight for the European Social Charter and the rights of minorities, for a full ban on capital punishment all over the world, or in efforts for more extensive rights for gays."⁹

Universal human rights have lost much of their apparent innocence in the last two decades. Yet they remain an important – if not the only – starting point for those looking for a universal space in domestic and international politics and global dialogue. This is admitted by liberals such as Ignatieff, who sees in them – their disputed nature notwithstanding – the basis for a world of critical dialogue and deliberation, adding that the historical primacy of Europe in the recognition of human rights as the universal bedrock of politics by no means establishes its moral pre-eminence. On the contrary, human rights have the potential to contribute to the gradual elimination of civilizational and cultural hierarchies. The Czech liberal sociologist of law, Jiří Přibáň, perceives human rights in a similar way as the keystone of the "law and a politics of conversation," a legitimisation fiction permitting freedom of social action and supporting the potential for dissent within a legal framework. Human rights are for him the underlying legitimisation substructure of a democratic society, whose claim, however, always extends beyond the legalistic, i.e., a positivist legal framework within the liberal democratic political order.

A different but structurally compatible argument can be heard from the more or less radical leftist part of the political spectrum overcoming its primary anti-American instincts. The Left icons such as Slavoj Žižek or Jacques Rancière warn that universal human rights cannot be rejected as a mere reified fetish of liberal capitalist power ambitions. Inspired by Marx they perceive human rights as a form of bourgeois hegemony. They believe, however, that this form lends itself to creative reshaping and use in emancipatory efforts, which already occurred historically during the workers' movement in the second half of the 19th and the first half

9 UHL, Petr: *Právo a nespravedlnost očima Petra Uhla* [Law and Injustice as Seen by Petr Uhl]. Praha, Beck 1998, p. 248.

of the 20th centuries. Universal human rights thus stake out a space for potential politicisation. According to Žižek, they may be perceived not as a sign of the victory of liberal democracy, but as a symbol for the precarious position of the individual in the pre-given social space, a signifier of the universality and malleability of the “social” itself in the melting pot of political contest. For Rancière, the struggle for human rights creates a space for politics by permitting the articulation of democratic dissent where those who have so far been deprived of the right to political participation will get a politically audible voice.

It seems that human rights continue to be the subject of political struggle. However, as their historical development suggests, they can remain politically, socially and culturally productive only as such a *Kampfbegriff*.

This essay is a slightly longer and elaborated version of the Czech original entitled Lidská práva mezi politickou identitou a historickou kategorií, which originally appeared in PŘIBÁŇ, Jiří – BĚLOHRADSKÝ, Václav et al.: Lidská práva, (ne)smysl české politiky? [Human Rights, (Non)Sense of Czech Politics?]. Praha, Sociologické nakladatelství SLON 2015, pp. 167–182. The whole collection including this essay was an echo of the Czech public controversy in 2014 concerning the role of human rights and the “dissident legacy” in Czech foreign policy.

Between Two Suns

Czechoslovakia and the Sino-Soviet Dispute over the International Communist Movement (1953–1962)

Daniela Kolenovská

World War II paved the way for the legitimisation of the foreign policy strategy, which the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia had been pursuing since its foundation in the 1920s. Up to that time, the Soviet Union had mainly been considered as an example of the extreme left, but its wartime success and the emphasis it put on Slavic solidarity made its authority generally acceptable. Moscow acted as the main architect of the German defeat and as the guarantor of Czechoslovak independence. However, it was not until February 1948 that the Communists succeeded in fully incorporating the international goals of the Soviet strategy into Czechoslovak national policy. Communist Prague subordinated its interests to the international commitments of the socialist movement as defined by the Soviets and hastily started to reorganise its alliance system to fit this framework. As a result, Czechoslovak foreign-policy goals exceeded the economic and personnel capacity limits of the state, and in the long-term contributed to the increasing dependence of Czechoslovakia on Moscow.

From Moscow's perspective, this unequal partnership was valued for the strategic situation of Czechoslovakia, its relative economic development and traditionally extensive international contacts, hence its interest in controlling Czechoslovak financial and production resources, foreign policy and security forces. Similarly, the Czechoslovak People's Army was not built with a view to defending the nation,

but rather with the aim of implementing the joint Soviet Bloc strategy.¹ The relations between both allies were heavily lopsided in favour of Moscow. As a result, Czechoslovakia loyally defended the political primacy of Moscow within the international communist movement, facilitated the flow of information and contacts, and mediated trade where Moscow could not act itself. Ideologically, this was justified by the slogan on the international division of labour between socialist countries. The foreign policy activities of Czechoslovakia in the service of Moscow had no geographical limits; however, they were most visible in selected countries of Asia, Africa and Latin America during the period of decolonisation. The triangular Egyptian-Czechoslovak-Soviet agreement from September 1955 became a famous symbol of Czechoslovak policy in Africa.² Prague accepted a plan, whereby the national liberation movements in the colonial countries were provided aid in their fight for independent statehood and subsequently also economic support. This was to compel them to accept “the irreversible historical process” leading towards socialism and to form an alliance with the Soviet Union. Both bilateral relations and the activities of Czechoslovakia within international organisations were subordinated to this objective. There was also a rival plan from the People’s Republic of China (PRC) for the national liberation movements, encouraging leftist radicals to carry out an implacable armed struggle against the national and international bourgeoisie until ultimate revolutionary victory. This plan had, however, already been rejected by Czechoslovakia at the outset of the Sino-Soviet dispute at the turn of the 1950s and 1960s, and therefore it did not present any internal complications in terms of Czechoslovak policy. For Moscow, the dispute with Beijing over the future of international communism was of vital importance and every effort was made to defend its position. A broad range of instruments was created to regulate relations within the Soviet Bloc. Later, some were also employed in less important and less strained contacts with third parties. This text compares archival documents from the Czechoslovak Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the National Assembly with documents from the Archive of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia (mainly from the Presidium and the Political Bureau fund, its International Department fund and the Antonín Novotný fund). It aims to determine which instruments the Soviets used to influence Czechoslovak foreign policy to act in favour of Moscow in the growing dispute with Beijing, and to what extent these were effective.

1 BÍLEK, Jiří–LÁNÍK, Jaroslav–MINAŘÍK, Pavel–POVOLNÝ, Daniel–ŠACH, Jan: *Československá lidová armáda v koaličních vazbách Varšavské smlouvy: Květen 1955 – srpen 1968* [The Czechoslovak People’s Army and the Warsaw Pact: May 1955 – August 1968]. Praha, Ministerstvo obrany ČR 2008, p. 17.

2 SIEBER, Karel – ZÍDEK, Petr: *Československo a Blízký východ v letech 1948–1989* [Czechoslovakia and the Middle East 1948–1989]. Praha, Ústav mezinárodních vztahů [Institute of International Relations] 2009, pp. 54–59; LITTLE, Douglas: *The Cold War in the Middle East: Suez Crisis to Camp David Accords*. In: LEFFLER, Melvyn P. – WESTAD, Odd Arne (ed.): *The Cold War*, Vol. 2: *Crises and Détente*. Cambridge – New York, Cambridge University Press 2010, pp. 305–326, here p. 306.

Two Suns in the Communist Heavens

While the capitalist world, except for local Communists and their sympathisers, was regarded by Prague as hostile, the Soviet Union stood at the centre of the allied Communist Bloc. The significance of the individual Soviet allies within this space was then ranked according to geographical location, strategic importance for the Eastern Bloc and the current political situation. In the latter half of the 20th century, no organisation existed which possessed the ability to encompass the bulk of the world communist movement as did the interwar Comintern (the Communist International). Until its own dissolution in 1956, the successor organisation, the Cominform (the Communist Information Bureau), remained a forum with limited outreach. As a result, there was no platform to formulate agreement on how the Soviet Bloc, strengthened by the presence of the People's Republic of China, should operate. The differences of opinion, which had already begun to separate the Soviet and Chinese Communists from the end of the 1920s, further complicated relations between Moscow and Beijing after the end of the Chinese civil war when Stalin and Mao Zedong completely disagreed on the approach that should be taken to the conflict on the Korean Peninsula. However, until Stalin's death the Chinese Communists accepted the authority of the Soviet Union. This situation resulted in Moscow providing support to the People's Republic of China only so far as building up its capacity to resist external aggression, hence ensuring the stability of the Soviet Eastern border.³

While going through a fierce power struggle inside the Party, Khrushchev probably did not expect to be automatically embraced by all Soviet allies. He was preparing a revision of Stalin's foreign policy, which, in relation to China, resulted in his acceptance of a long-standing invitation from Mao Zedong to visit Beijing. During the visit, which took place at the turn of September and October 1954, Khrushchev made every effort to guarantee fulfilment of the economic requirements presented to him by the President of the Chinese Communists Mao Zedong and the Prime Minister Zhou Enlai. While still in Beijing, Khrushchev agreed to provide a loan of more than 400 million roubles, generous technological assistance to back the industrialisation of China, and top Soviet experts to support the first Chinese five-year plan. He also relinquished control of Sino-Soviet companies and the harbours of Port Arthur and Dalian to Beijing. He was convinced that one year after the end of the Korean conflict, which had proved so costly for China, and only four years from the termination of the exhausting Chinese civil war, China would gratefully rely on the strong Soviet economy. Nevertheless, he showed reluctance to fully

3 Stalin's policy obliged the Chinese Communists to cooperate with Chiang Kai-shek. They did not receive any significant support from Moscow, not even when they were attacked and defeated by the Kuomintang in 1927. This failure posed a threat to Stalin's rise to power. Nevertheless, in December 1936, he did support a new deal which united the Chinese Communists and the Kuomintang in an anti-Japanese united front. In 1949, the Chinese Communists won the civil war without any particular assistance from the Soviets.

sharing the Soviet nuclear programme and categorically rejected any suggestion of readjusting the border of the Mongolian People's Republic (Outer Mongolia) in China's favour.⁴

The communist heavens were lit up by two suns, as the historian Sergey Radchenko described Moscow and Beijing, with some exaggeration, in the title of his book, which charts Sino-Soviet relations after 1962.⁵ Whereas the Beijing sun dominated the first Asian-African Solidarity Conference in Indonesian Bandung in April 1955, and began to present itself as a model for the national liberation movements in the colonies, the Moscow sun strengthened its European position in reaction to the Federal Republic of Germany's admission into NATO by forming the Warsaw Pact with its six allies in May 1955.⁶ However, the following year was critical for Moscow. Khrushchev's criticism of Stalin's personality cult at the 22nd Congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union added fuel to anti-Soviet unrest in Poland and Hungary and these events jeopardised, albeit indirectly, the fragile Soviet-Yugoslav reconciliation. Additionally, in the eyes of Mao Zedong, Khrushchev deprived himself of his potential to claim the absolute authority by rejecting the Stalin cult. Later this became the grounds for Chinese criticism of Soviet policy. But, meanwhile, China began to gather its own information on the recent developments in Poland and Hungary and sought to act as a pro-Soviet mediator in disputes within the Communist Bloc (especially in relation to Yugoslavia).⁷ Between 7 and 10 January 1957, a delegation

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- 4 TAUBMAN, William: *Člověk a jeho doba* [Khrushchev: The Man and His Era]. Praha, Jiří Buchal – BB/art 2005, pp. 340–342; GALENOVICH, Yuriy M.: *Rossiya v "kitayskom zerkale": Traktovka v KNR v nachale XXI veka istorii Rossii i russko-kitayskikh otnosheniy* [Russia in the "Chinese Mirror": Interpretation of Russian History and Russian-Chinese Relations in the People's Republic of China at the Beginning of the 21st Century]. Moskva, Vostochnaya kniga 2011, p. 158 n.
- 5 RADCHENKO, Sergey: *Two Suns in the Heavens: The Sino-Soviet Struggle for Supremacy, 1962–1967*. Washington D.C. – Stanford, Woodrow Wilson Center Press – Stanford University Press 2009.
- 6 The mainly cultural composition of the Soviet delegation to the preparatory Asian conference before the Bandung Conference indicates that at the very outset Moscow had no intention of competing with China in Asia: whereas China was represented by the writer and the Minister of Culture, Guo Moruo, the Soviet delegation included the writers Nikolai Tikhonov (head of the delegation), Aleksandr Korneychuk, Wanda Wasilewska, Ilya Ehrenburg, and Anatoly Sofronov, the chief-editor of the magazine *Literaturnyy ogonok*, together with the member-correspondent of the Academy of Sciences of the Soviet Union, Georgy Zhukov and the President of the Presidium of the All-Union Chamber of Commerce, Mikhail Nesterov, whose task it was to pursue Soviet economic interests (see *Sovětská delegace na asijskou konferenci o zmírnění napětí v mezinárodních vztazích* [Soviet Delegation to the Asian Conference on Relaxing Tensions in International Relations]. In: *Rudé právo*, 1 April 1955, p. 3). Only Soviet observers travelled to the Bandung Conference. While in Bandung, Zhou Enlai did not give any pretext for Soviet concern. For example, when Egypt asked him for weapons, he loyally referred the request to Moscow. (For details see DURMAN, Karel: *Popely ještě žhavé* [Ashes Still Hot], Vol. 1: *Válka a nukleární mír* [War and Nuclear Peace]. Praha, Karolinum 2004, pp. 433–435.)
- 7 VELICHANSKAYA, Lyudmila Aleksandrovna – STYKALIN Aleksander Sergeevich: *Mezh-dunarodnye soveshchaniya predstaviteley kommunisticheskikh i rabochikh partiy v Moskve*

headed by Zhou Enlai successively negotiated in Moscow with the Soviets, the government delegation of the Democratic Republic of Germany, and the Party and government delegation of Hungary. Between 11 and 15 January, the Chinese visited Poland to enquire about the situation there and spent the following two days in Hungary. Only then did the delegation return to Moscow, and on 18 January, after taking part in the customary ceremonial formalities, it travelled back to China. During the year, Mao Zedong openly criticised Khrushchev's foreign policy, but, impressed by the successful launch of Sputnik on 4 October 1957, he began to believe again in the Soviet capacity to contribute to the victory of socialism.⁸ He therefore participated in the Soviet search for a new effective mechanism that would ensure Moscow's influence over the global communist movement. Both communist powers agreed that this could best be achieved through an international conference of representatives from the national parties. The first Conference of Communist and Workers' Parties from all over the world was held in Moscow as part of the celebrations of the 40th Anniversary of the Great October Revolution. Mao Zedong came to Moscow over a month earlier in order to prepare the final, joint document together with the Soviets. While he repeatedly claimed allegiance to the Soviet model, his behaviour at the conference, as well as his apparent ambition to act as the main theorist of Marxism-Leninism, reflected the increasing international influence of Chinese Communists and their intention to preserve it.⁹

The following period was decisive for the unfolding Sino-Soviet conflict. During just three years, the original ideological clash developed into an insuperable conflict. Khrushchev relied on a threefold policy of bilateral negotiations, accenting the importance of economic relations; carefully prepared multilateral meetings of Marxist-Leninist parties, which allowed him to exert pressure on China; and military strategy. By 1960, it was clear to Moscow that the economic support provided to China had not had the desired effect. On the contrary, China used

(noyabr' 1957g.) [International Meetings of the Representatives of the Communist and Workers' Parties in Moscow (October 1957)]. Moskva, ROSSPEN, 2013, pp. 25–26.

- 8 TOMLINA, Nataliya G. – VELICHANSKAYA, Lyudmila A. – STYKALIN, Aleksandr S. (ed.): *Nasledniki Kominterna: Mezhdunarodnyye soveshchaniya predstaviteley kommunisticheskikh i rabochikh partiy* [Successors of the Comintern: International Meetings of the Representatives of the Communist and Workers' Parties]. Moskva, ROSSPEN 2013, p. 35; DURMAN, Karel.: *Popely ještě žhavé*, p. 484. See also articles published in the *Rudé právo* daily between November 1957 and February 1958.
- 9 TOMLINA, Nataliya G. – VELICHANSKAYA, Lyudmila A. – STYKALIN, Aleksandr S. (ed.): *Nasledniki Kominterna: Mezhdunarodnyye soveshchaniya predstaviteley kommunisticheskikh i rabochikh partiy*, pp. 41–44; Rech tov. Mao Cze-duna na Soveshchanii predstaviteley kommunisticheskikh i rabochikh partiy socialisticheskikh i kapitalisticheskikh stran 18 noyabrya 1957 g. v Moskve [Speech of Comrade Mao Zedong Delivered at the Meeting of the Representatives of the Communist and Workers' Parties of Socialist and Capitalist Countries in Moscow on 18 November 1957]. In: *Ibid.*, pp. 566–574; Manifest mira [Peace Manifest] in *Ibid.*, pp. 222–226; SHEN CHZHIKHUA: O kitaysko-sovyetskikh otnosheniyakh (1950–1960-e gg.) [On Sino-Soviet Relations, 1950–1960]. Moskva, Institut Dal'nego Vostoka RAN, 2014, pp. 102–111.

the “economisation” of international relations in the new Soviet diplomatic strategy as further proof of Khrushchev’s ideological heresy. In August 1958, without informing Khrushchev, who was in Beijing at the beginning of the same month, China began to bomb the Taiwan Strait, triggering a crisis with the United States. In return, Khrushchev, who had never hesitated to use the Soviet nuclear arsenal for intimidation, refused to continue sharing the technology of atomic weaponry with China and stopped Soviet aid in this area in August 1959.¹⁰ He claimed that the Soviet Union was ready to defend its allies and commenced preparations for a new international coordination meeting of communist leaders. Three years after the first meeting took place, Moscow hosted the second International Meeting of Communist and Workers’ Parties, which was to unite the communist movement again under the Soviet flag. At the meeting, Moscow highlighted its strong theoretical background as well as the important role that the practical support of the world communist movement had played in the successes achieved by the Chinese comrades. During that same time, Beijing (with the assistance of some socialist countries) was looking intently into the possibilities of a partnership with Latin-American countries and Moscow feared that it might be relegated to the position of an obsolete European socialist power, which had gradually given up on efforts to define what was the right path to socialism for the newly emerging Asian, African, and Latin-American countries.

Although in September 1959, in his talks with the American President Dwight Eisenhower, Khrushchev defended Beijing as the rightful representative of China and demanded its admission to the United Nations, within the Soviet Bloc he did everything in his power to prevent the emancipation of Mao’s diplomacy in its own right. He obstructed Chinese efforts to put all the members of the Soviet Bloc on a par with one another and in so doing to weaken the Soviet bargaining position. He also rejected the idea of escalating the struggle against capitalism and kept promoting peaceful competition. The Soviet Bloc was not as united as Khrushchev had imagined. Nonetheless, his strong position within the Party discouraged Beijing from supporting some of his opponents from the ranks of the Soviet Stalinists. The final declaration, as the Declaration of the Representatives of the Communist, Workers’ and Socialist Parties and the Manifesto of Peace from the Moscow Conference in 1957, was signed by all the participating delegations. However, Beijing and Moscow interpreted these documents differently. They were in agreement that the unity of the international communist movement would benefit the common goal – the defeat of world imperialism. On the other hand, they diverged on

10 According to Chinese historian Shen Zhihua, China and the USSR had successfully cooperated on manufacturing Chinese nuclear weapon since 1956. This cooperation was suspended as a result of Soviet-American disarmament negotiations and also because of the high cost of Soviet equipment, which the PRC could not afford to pay for at that moment. See SHEN CHZHIKHUA: *O kitaysko-sovyetskikh otnosheniyakh*, pp. 88–93; compare TAUBMAN, William: *Chruščov: Člověk a jeho doba*, p. 392.

the means of achieving this unity, and defined the hierarchy of specific tasks to be undertaken according to different priorities.¹¹

At the same time, the growing Sino-Soviet dispute spilled over into the arena of domestic policies. The Soviet October Revolution and its transformation into everyday Soviet reality was not perceived by China as a model to follow and in April 1958, Beijing initiated the campaign of the Great Leap Forward instead, which was based on the concept of the people's communes, and not the working class. In this context, China began to openly label the Soviet Union as the source of "revisionism," "opportunism" and "hegemonism," and subsequently focused attention on building its own system of allies within the World Federation of Trade Unions,¹² the Non-Aligned Movement, and at Asian-African (later also Latin-American) Solidarity Conferences. After political and economic cooperation between Moscow and Beijing was frozen, tensions further increased because of a border dispute. Understandably, this development led to the suspension of cooperation between China and its Soviet allies.¹³

Party-State Mechanism in Czechoslovak Foreign Policy

After 1948, Czechoslovakia adopted the Soviet theory of international relations, as well as the Soviet strategy of establishing international contacts both along state and Party lines. Similar to Moscow – regardless of who held the post of Prime Minister or Minister of Foreign Affairs at any particular moment – it was the role of the Communist Party authorities to analyse important information and, based on the

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- 11 *Národní archiv, Praha* (hereinafter *NA*) [The National Archive of the Czech Republic], fond 1501 [fund - f.], karton 285 [cardboard box – box], archivní jednotka 367 [archival unit – AU], Minutes of the meeting of the Political Bureau of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia, 21 November 1960, Item 20 – Some documents from the meeting of the fraternal communist and workers' parties; compare TOMLINA, Nataliya G. – VELICHANSKAYA, Lyudmila A. – STYKALIN, Aleksandr S. (ed.): *Nasledniki Kominterna: Mezhdunarodnye soveshchaniya predstaviteley kommunisticheskikh i rabochikh partiy*.
- 12 The split of the World Federation of Trade Unions (WFTU, established in Paris in 1945) in January 1949 was followed by the summer WFTU Congress in Milan and the November meeting of the WFTU Presidium in Beijing, where a Secretariat was established with the aim of promoting unity within the world trade movement. In the latter half of November 1949, the Secretariat organised the first Trade Union Conference of Asian and Australasian Countries and gradually ensured Chinese dominance within this part of WFTU. The non-communist trade union members formed their own International Confederation of Free Trade Unions in December 1949, which continued in existence until 2006.
- 13 *Archiv Ministerstva zahraničních věcí České Republiky* (hereinafter *AMZV ČR*) [Archive of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Czech Republic] f. Politické zprávy Kuba, 1965–1969 [fund Political news Cuba, 1965–1969], Special Political Report No. 1, 24 January 1966; *Ibid.*, f. Teritoriální odbor – tajné (TO-T) Čína, 1955–1959 (hereinafter TO-T Čína) [fund Territorial Department – confidential China, 1955–1959], box 2, file 10, Record of the Visit at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs – Information about the PRC Contacts with Latin-American Countries, 30 July 1959.

recommendations of, or following instructions from the Soviets, to subsequently oblige the constitutional authorities and lower state officials to act accordingly. The Communist Party also strictly regulated the work of foreign journalists. The most important positions in the key areas of state sovereignty were occupied by people who were both Party and state functionaries. The Party determined strategic priorities and state posts served them as instruments for the implementation of these priorities.

Nevertheless, Communist Party leaders could never be certain as to which steps corresponded at any given moment to current Soviet ideology and strategy which were constantly being modified. Contacts with allied parties and groups abroad were therefore essential for the international orientation of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia. Ever since Bolshevisation in 1929, these contacts were dominated by the All-Union Communist Party (Bolsheviks), later the Communist Party of the Soviet Union. However, even before that time the All-Union Communist Party's (Bolsheviks) influence was strong, because it financed and hosted the Comintern in Moscow, whose third most numerous section was the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia. Thanks to the anti-fascist campaign of the 1930s, the influence of Soviet Communists within the international communist movement further increased. After the dissolution of the Comintern in 1943, the Communist Party of the Soviet Union took over its agenda as a matter of course.¹⁴ It was only willing to loosen its control over the European section, albeit formally and for less than a decade, by setting up the Information Bureau of the Communist and Workers' Parties (Cominform) in 1947.

Czechoslovakia's foreign policy was reformulated mainly through contacts between the parties and was extended beyond national needs to reflect class interests. On 30 March 1956, the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia adopted a resolution which reflected the changes resulting from Khrushchev's ideological revision and the related reinterpretation of Soviet foreign policy strategy. Two weeks later, the Czechoslovak Communist Party leadership confirmed its agreement to the dissolution of the Cominform and in mid-June they successfully advocated the new principles of international relations approved in Moscow at the nationwide Party conference. The principles appeared among the tasks of the Czechoslovak state authorities less than six months after their approval by the Kremlin. On Monday 30 July 1956, Prime Minister Viliam Široký presented the idea to the National Assembly on behalf of the government. In the opening of his speech he underlined the significance of the 20th Congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union and claimed that the peace efforts of the Soviet Union and its allies had helped ease international tensions between countries with different social systems. He acknowledged the possibility of political, economic and cultural rapprochement between them and suggested that the spectrum of potential Czechoslovak allies should be broadened beyond the limits of the "Socialist Camp"

14 REES, Tim – THORPE, Andrew (ed.): *International Communism and the Communist International 1919–1943*. Manchester, Manchester University Press 1998.

to include countries with “active peace policies.” He specifically mentioned examples of well-functioning cooperation with countries such as Afghanistan, Burma, Egypt, Syria and other countries of the Middle and Near East, promising them assistance with building independent national economies of their own. He also mentioned Austria, France, Italy and the Nordic states, and went so far as to mention Great Britain and the United States.¹⁵

The loyalty of the top Czechoslovak Communists was, to a great extent, influenced by the fact that the opinion of the Soviet protector usually determined the distribution of power within the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia. At the turn of the 1950s and 1960s, it was the First Secretary of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia and the President of the Republic, Antonín Novotný, who had a major influence over foreign policy. He amassed the most important information and carefully sought support from Moscow. As Karel Kaplan pointed out, Novotný was familiar with the Party environment and compensated for his lack of experience in the Comintern by direct contact with Soviet diplomats in Prague. Shortly after he was elected First Secretary in 1953, he played an instrumental role in the systematisation of the way the entire state apparatus operated, adapting it to the Soviet model and introducing planning and more rigorous rules into the decision-making process. In the context of these changes, he reserved for himself the right to summon meetings of the Political Bureau of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia, to prepare the agenda, and to formulate the final resolutions.¹⁶ At an emergency meeting with the Soviet leader Nikita Khrushchev, which took place in Bucharest in the autumn of 1956, on the eve of the military intervention in Hungary, Novotný brought the Czechoslovak foreign policy position into line with that of the Soviet Union by offering Czechoslovak military units for the suppression of the Hungarian “counter-revolution.” The Central Committee of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia confirmed his decision and thus accepted Khrushchev’s thesis on the possibility of peaceful coexistence, albeit in a version which was modified in the light of the current crises developing in Hungary and Egypt. Should the world balance of power be threatened, Prague agreed that the policy of non-intervention in the internal affairs of other countries

15 *Společná česko-slovenská digitální parlamentní knihovna* [online] (hereinafter SČSDPK) [The Joint Czech and Slovak Digital Parliamentary Library], Národní shromáždění Republiky československé 1954–1960 [National Assembly of the Czechoslovak Republic 1954–1960], Stenographic Protocols, 11th Session, 30 July 1956, Programme Declaration of the Government [cit. 2014-06-06], Available at www.psp.cz/eknih/1954ns/stenoprot/011schuz/s011001.htm.

16 KAPLAN, Karel: *Antonín Novotný: Vzestup a pád “lidového” aparátčika* [Antonín Novotný: The Rise and Fall of a “Popular” Apparatchik]. Brno, Barrister & Principal 2011, pp. 83–84 and 91; NA, f. Antonín Novotný II., box 192, AU 110, Antonín Novotný’s consultation in Moscow in September 1953.

would lose its validity and all means, including military, would be used to cement the cooperation of socialist countries.¹⁷

In the following year of 1957, when Antonín Novotný became Czechoslovak president with the open support of Khrushchev, it was apparently related to the stance he had taken on the events in Poland and Hungary. It seems that by this time his comments at meetings of the governing body of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia played a decisive role in the formulation of Prague's position towards the rest of the world. Novotný had never concealed his loyalty to the Soviet Union. He was genuinely convinced, as he admitted in his memoirs, that it was in the interest of the Czechoslovak people to act in line with Soviet wishes and therefore he would not take any political decisions without consulting Moscow.¹⁸

Novotný had a prominent position within the Party and enjoyed in a marked degree the confidence of fellow members. Whenever he participated at Communist Party meetings, he presented his thoroughly prepared speeches, but if necessary would adjust their content to the situation on the ground. Similarly, he could also choose delegates. Although it was the Political Bureau, or the Presidium of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia which selected the most important participants, Novotný could select additional representatives at his own discretion. Unlike the delegates of other communist parties, who consulted on any unexpected developments that arose in negotiations with officials in their home countries, Novotný acted on his own initiative and only informed the Party leadership at home retrospectively. Novotný's infrequent consultations with Prague prove both his strong position as Head of the Party, and the fact that at the turn of the 1950s and 1960s, the leadership of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia was – despite the lack of information about internal issues in the Communist Party of the Soviet Union – well informed about Soviet actions on the international scene and agreed with them. Having no need to resort to obstruction tactics, Novotný also helped to speed up the process of negotiations at Communist Party meetings.¹⁹

17 DURMAN, Karel: *Popely ještě žhavé*, p. 458; PICHOTA, Rudolf G.: *Sovetskij Soyuz: Istorija vlasti. 1945–1991* [The Soviet Union: History of Our Home Country. 1945–1991]. Moskva, RAGS 1998, pp. 161–165; compare NA, f. Antonín Novotný II., box 192, AU. 112, Discussion between the First Secretary of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia, Antonín Novotný, and L. M. Kaganovich during his visit to Czechoslovakia on the occasion of the 10th anniversary of liberation and the unveiling ceremony of the Stalin Monument in Letná Park, May 1955.

18 SČSDPK, National Assembly of the Czechoslovak Republic 1954–1960, Stenographic Protocols, 11th Session, 30 July 1956, Programme Declaration of the Government (see Footnote 12). See also ČERNÝ, Rudolf: *Antonín Novotný: Vzpomínky prezidenta* [The Memoirs of President Antonín Novotný]. Česká Kamenice, PolArt 2008, p. 161.

19 NA, f. 1501 (the Political Bureau of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia 1952–1964 – initial fund designation 02/02) box 281, AU 364/23, Minutes of the 110th meeting of the Political Bureau of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia, 1 November 1960, Decision on the item – Draft letter to the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China; *Ibid.*, f. Antonín Novotný II., box 53, AU 58, file 39, Antonín Novotný's speeches at the meetings of the international communist movement (international situation, peaceful coexistence,

As regards the state apparatus, besides Prime Minister Široký, it was the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Václav David, long-time member of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia and for three years also a member of the Presidium of its Central Committee, who was the key figure in Czechoslovak diplomacy during the Novotný era. He controlled the agenda of the Ministry through meetings of the Collegium, where he was informed about the department's activities, about the most important findings of diplomats, along with the fulfilment of defined objectives several times a month. The minutes of the meetings show that while the planning of specific tasks came under the responsibility of David's subordinates, the main documents were submitted by David directly to the Party leadership and the objectives that were binding for the diplomats were defined only by Party resolutions. If in exceptional cases a substantial policy on Czechoslovak relations with a particular region was drawn up at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the interpretation of developments in the area was usually prepared by the ambassadors through discussions with Soviet diplomats on the ground. The final version of the policy was drawn up after careful examination in Moscow, to where the heads of the territorial departments of the Czechoslovak Ministry of Foreign Affairs travelled for consultations with their counterparts. Only there was the decision made as to whether the programme set out by the Czechoslovak diplomats "correctly" reflected the development tendencies of the region and made use of all available opportunities, or whether it needed to be amended. For example, in August 1956 Antonín Novotný ordered that a draft Czechoslovak foreign policy document should not be presented to the Party leadership nor the government until after the November meeting in Moscow, so that the Soviet experience might be incorporated.²⁰ Following the same pattern, the list of Czechoslovak priorities in Africa in 1961 included countries which had already established diplomatic relations with the Soviet Union.²¹ Similarly, in 1963 Venezuela

situation in the international communist movement and the policy of the Communist Party of China, comments on the matter of meeting convocation, procedural issues), 1960; compare *Ibid.*, file 38, Antonín Novotný's report for the Political Bureau of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia regarding the meetings of the communist and workers' parties held in Bucharest between 24 and 26 June 1960; *Ibid.*, file 43, Resolution of the Political Bureau of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia regarding the preparation and convocation of the meeting of the communist and workers' parties and the composition of the delegation; compare *Ibid.*, file 46, Draft of Antonín Novotný's speech to be delivered at the meeting of the communist and workers' parties in Moscow, 31 October 1960; *Ibid.*, file 47, Interim and final report of the delegation of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia on the meeting of the communist and workers' parties held in Moscow between 10 November and 1 December 1960.

- 20 *Ibid.*, f. Antonín Novotný II., box 192, AU 114, Supporting documents for negotiations of the delegation in Moscow (Czechoslovak Foreign Policy), 1956.
- 21 ZÍDEK, Petr – SIEBER, Karel: *Československo a subsaharská Afrika v letech 1948–1989* [Czechoslovakia and Sub-Saharan Africa in the Years 1949–1989]. Praha, Ústav mezinárodních vztahů 2007, p. 14 n.; compare DAVIDSON, Apollon B.: *Afrika i otechestvennye istoriki: K 50-letiyu "Goda Afriki"* [Africa and the History of Nationalism: On the 50th Anniversary of the "Year of Africa"]. In: *Novaya i noveyshaya istoriya*, Issue 1 (2010), pp. 44–47.

was defined as one of the Czechoslovak foreign policy priorities in Latin America, along with the task of informing the Cuban leadership more extensively about Soviet policy and commitment to fight more consistently against the expansion of “adventurist” Chinese ideas in the region. The final version of the document was then immediately sent from the Czechoslovak Ministry of Foreign Affairs to the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia.²²

Yet, the Communist Party has never fully depended on information from Czechoslovak diplomats, Party cells at Czechoslovak embassies or secret service agents. Its International Department obtained information about the Party line from foreign communist and workers’ parties, its own employees abroad or special reporters at the Czechoslovak News Agency and media. From 1961, regular consultations were held with a similar department of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union. Vladimír Koucký, long-time Head of the International Department of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia and former chief editor of the *Rudé Právo* communist daily, exercised extraordinary influence over the international strategy of Czechoslovak Communists. He often represented the Party leadership abroad, and at home. He instructed the Party propagandists on how to explain international issues from the Soviet perspective and prepared supporting documents for resolutions of the Party leadership regarding suitable policies towards particular states or regions.²³

Whereas the information Moscow obtained from Prague was detailed, extensive and quickly delivered, the information received from Moscow consisted of instructions or circulars with the decisions of Soviet politicians on specific matters, rather than reports. This information was often encoded in specific ideological language and references to Soviet life and institutions, which were difficult for outsiders to understand. Therefore, the way this information was interpreted and handled was greatly influenced by the skills and attitude of the Czechoslovak politician who conveyed the Soviet view to Prague at that particular time. However, this influence was not absolute. Moscow continuously and retrospectively monitored, through consultations with friendly parties, whether the countries of the “Socialist Camp” were proceeding with due compliance. The countless opportunities for doing

22 AMZV ČR, f. Porady kolegia ministra [Meetings of the Collegium of the Ministry], book 22, 25 October 1956. Also *Ibid.*, book 88, Record of the meeting of 31 October 1963, Report on the progress and results of the consultations between the Czechoslovak and Soviet delegations regarding the Czechoslovak foreign policy document towards the Latin-American countries held at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Soviet Union in Moscow between 4 and 8 October 1963.

23 See for example *Německá otázka a hlavní problémy současné mezinárodní situace: Referát tajemníka ÚV KSČ soudruha Vl. Kouckého na celostátním aktivu lektorů a propagandistů dne 7. září 1961 v Praze* [The German Question and Major Current International Problems: Speech of the First Secretary of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia, Vl. Koucký, at the nation-wide meeting of instructors and propagandists held in Prague on 7 September 1961]. Praha, Oddělení propagandy a agitace ÚV KSČ [The Department of Propaganda and Agitation of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia] 1961.

so included not only the official visits of Nikita Khrushchev (in 1954, 1957, 1962 and 1964) and Lazar Kaganovich, the First Deputy Prime Minister of the Soviet Union (in 1955), to Czechoslovakia, and the annual visits of Novotný to Moscow, but also direct telephone calls from top Soviet leaders to Novotný, which provided him with instructions during moments of crisis. Several times a year, Czechoslovak Communist Party delegations attended congresses of friendly parties and participated in related meetings of communist leaders. Other delegations took part in the various celebrations of friendly parties and states. The leadership of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia held regular consultations with Soviet diplomats and assessors in Prague. Novotný also systematically saw to it that no significant change in Czechoslovak policy happened before the responsible official travelled to Moscow to explore the Soviet position on the issue.²⁴ Every year, study exchanges of Czechoslovak Communists with friendly parties were organised, expanding the focus of foreign policy to cover primarily internal issues such as science and the education system.²⁵ Communist leaders also came to Czechoslovakia for work and recreational stays, and occasional technical stops in Prague, which the foreign delegations were obliged to make on their way to the Soviet Union, were used as an opportunity for consultations. From 1956, the number of consultants gradually increased: whereas in 1960 there were 654 consultants, two years later the International Department of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia mentioned 439 consultants who stayed in Czechoslovakia for recreational purposes and 1,793 officials travelling through Czechoslovakia, of whom 520 became guests of Czechoslovakia. At that time, Prague maintained contact with 79 countries. Similarly, Czechoslovak delegations stopped in Moscow on

24 NA, f. Antonín Novotný II., box 192, AU 452, Antonín Novotný's consultations in Moscow, 1952–1954; *Ibid.*, AU 454, Antonín Novotný's meeting with L. M. Kaganovich (organisation of the work of the Political Bureau of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, situation in the Czechoslovak national economy – raw materials, industry, agriculture, planning, ideological work, class struggle in the countryside), Antonín Novotný's proposals, 1955; *Ibid.*, AU 455, Discussion between the members of the Political Bureau of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia and the delegation of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union led by A. Aristov, held in Prague on 4 November 1956 (situation in the Czechoslovak Republic, the work and education of the Party apparatus, Party work among the intelligentsia, trade unions, students, the situation in the national economy).

25 For more details see FRANC, Martin: *Úderná skupina? Výprava českých lékařů a přírodovědců do SSSR v roce 1950 ve světle dopisů Ivana Máleka* [The Assault Group? The 1950 Expedition of Czech Doctors and Natural Scientists to the USSR in the Light of Letters by Ivan Málek]. Praha, Masarykův ústav AV ČR a Archiv AV ČR [Masaryk Institute and Archives of the Academy of Sciences of the Czech Republic] 2009, pp. 7–55; DEVÁTÁ, Markéta – OLŠÁKOVÁ, Doubravka – SOMMER, Vítězslav – DINUŠ, Peter: *Vědní koncepce KSČ a její institucionalizace po roce 1948* [Science Policy of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia and its Institutionalisation after 1948]. Praha, Ústav pro soudobé dějiny AV ČR [Institute of Contemporary History of the Academy of Sciences of the Czech Republic] 2010, pp. 70–73 and 77 n.

journeying to and from partners lying further to the East.²⁶ Cooperation between Higher Political Schools of the Central Committees of the Communist Parties in Prague, Moscow and Warsaw was developed; and Communist Party periodicals exchanged redactors and correspondents. Instructors at the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia participated in international exchange stays which provided opportunities for the presentation of successes at local communist meetings. A greater number of Czechoslovak citizens learnt about life in the friendly countries through twinning relations, established, at the behest of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia, with selected state companies, state farms and, beginning in 1961, also with neighbouring countries (mainly with Austria, from where several thousand activists came to Czechoslovakia between 1956 and 1961). The Soviet Union was the most important and the most frequently involved partner in these activities. In contrast, negotiations with the People's Republic of China usually merely led to general plans with no specific time frame and activities which were subject to further negotiation.²⁷

Table 1. The number of meetings of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia (KŠČ) with leading representatives of socialist and workers' parties 1956–1966

		1956/1957	1960	1961	1962	1963	1965	1966
Bilateral meetings	Communist Party of the Soviet Union (CPSU)	2	-	1	-	1	2	-
	Parties of the European socialist countries	2	2	3	1	3	1	1
	Parties of the capitalist countries	5	-	-	-	-	9	-
	Parties of Third World countries	2	-	-	-	-	2	-
	Parties from Asian countries	2	-	-	1	1	1	1
Multilateral meetings	In the presence of the CPSU	2	9	16	9	3	9	9
	Without the presence of the CPSU	1	-	-	-	-	-	-

26 NA, f. Antonín Novotný II., box 192, AU 126, Visit of the delegation of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia and the Czechoslovak government headed by Prime Minister Široký to Moscow on 10 April 1957 when returning from the East-Asian socialist countries, Oldřich Černík's transcript, 12 April 1957.

27 *Ibid.*, box 49, file MKH [International Communist Movement] – Overview of the contacts between the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia and communist and democratic parties.

Table 2. The number of study trips of Communist Party delegations between Czechoslovakia and friendly countries 1956–1966²⁸

		1956/1957	1960	1961	1962	1963	1965	1966
In Czechoslovakia	The Soviet Union	6	1	9	2	2	2	6
	The European socialist countries	8	5	16	7	6	14	16
	Other countries	9	1	4	5	4	-	-
From Czechoslovakia (KSČ)	The Soviet Union	9	1	-	3	5	5	7
	The European socialist countries	3	5	12	4	6	12	15
	Other countries	1	-	-	1	-	-	-

Czechoslovakia between Two Suns

Shortly after February 1948, the Chinese communist government of Yan'an was able to open a permanent office in Prague which, as the only one of its kind, served as a base for the activity of its envoys in Europe.²⁹ In the spring of 1949, when Chinese Communists failed to obtain the visas necessary for participation at the World Congress of Defenders of Peace in Paris initiated by the Soviets, they were welcomed, together with other refused delegates, at the Prague Peace conference which was organised in protest on 23 April.³⁰ Also, several months before

28 *Ibid.* Both tables were drawn up on the basis of data from the summaries of the meetings of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia with fraternal parties between 1956 and 1966. Data for 1964 are not available. Apart from annual summaries, Antonín Novotný also sporadically received lists with the names of the leading representatives of the friendly parties and their relatives staying in Czechoslovakia at the given dates and records of meetings with them. The foreign trips of Czechoslovak functionaries were discussed and decided upon on an ongoing basis by the Political Bureau, or the Presidium of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia.

29 I would like to thank the sinologist Ivana Bakešová for this information.

30 The title "Prague Peace Conference" is borrowed from the Czechoslovak press and literature of the period. In reality, the World Congress of the Defenders of Peace convened the conference in Prague because the French government did not grant visas to some of the delegates to the Paris Central Congress. Both parts of the Congress were in contact, for example the speech of the head of the Chinese delegation (composed of 44 members), Guo Moruo, in Prague was translated and read at the 4th session of the Paris Congress. The Czechoslovak Communists naturally used the event for self-promotion. (Traduction par M. Gaucheron du discours à Prague de M. Kuo Mo Jo: Messages de Chine. La section de Prague. List des participants aux Assises de Prague. In: *Congrès mondial des Partisans de la paix Paris-Prague, 20–25 avril 1949*. Paris, Les éditeurs français réunis 1949, pp. 455–462, 707–709, 725–730 and 763–771; ROTATAJEV, A. S. (ed.): *V borbe za mir: Literaturno-stradnyy sbornik* [In the Struggle for Peace: Literary and Popular-Cultural Almanac].

the proclamation of the People's Republic of China, and the related abolition of diplomatic relations with the government of the Kuomintang, the working conditions of the Ambassador of the Republic of China in Prague, Xi-hui Liang, had become remarkably worse.³¹ Czechoslovakia recognised the People's Republic of China in a telegram sent by the Prime Minister Viliam Široký to Zhou Enlai on 4 October 1949. The establishment of the new Czechoslovak Embassy in Beijing, a consulate in Shanghai, and the new Chinese Embassy in Prague swiftly followed. Shortly before Christmas, Karl Weiskopf, the well-known leftist writer, travelled to Beijing to take up the post of Czechoslovak Ambassador. He brought personal gifts from Klement Gottwald to Mao Zedong, which included a shotgun, a specially adapted rifle and binoculars, all manufactured by Zbrojovka Brno. Gottwald took care to have the representatives of the People's Republic of China treated with great respect. Already at the meeting with Mao Zedong, which took place during his stay in Moscow, he offered 50 scholarships for Chinese students interested in studying at the Czechoslovak University of Technology. When General Tan-shi-lin, the first Ambassador of the People's Republic of China, came to Prague at the beginning of September 1950, Gottwald rejected the standard protocol, because the importance of the People's Republic of China within the "Peace Camp" required a far more elaborate reception in his opinion.³²

Translated Soviet literature, publications of the most prominent Czechoslovak sinologist and convinced Communist Jaroslav Průšek, as well as the exhibitions organised by the Czechoslovak-Chinese Society which he presided over, all helped to spread the image of China as a new ally which had successfully organised a rebellion against its exploiters and which had committed itself to the ideals of socialism.³³ However, direct interaction between the inhabitants of the two countries was rare and limited to official meetings. The trading contacts of private Czechoslovak companies, which had exported goods to the Chinese market ever since the 1920s, were severed by World War II and the Chinese civil war. Not even the Czechoslovak citizens who lived in China in the 1940s, mostly in precarious conditions, could have challenged the traditional, romantic and distant Czechoslovak vision of the Orient. Their postwar repatriation was complicated and could only be finalised in 1954. The Czechoslovak authorities were probably aware that even a careful selection of repatriates could not guarantee their positive attitude towards a radicalised China. Therefore, the repatriates were systematically

Moskva – Leningrad, Iskusstvo 1949; compare ŠIMOVIČ, Ladislav: Z československo-čínských styků [From Czechoslovak-Chinese Relations]. In: KOMZALA, František (ed.): *Ve velké čínské zemi: Sborník statí čs. vládní delegace v ČLR r. 1952* [In the Great Country of China: Collection of Articles of the Members of the Czechoslovak Government Delegation to the PRC in 1952]. Praha, Orbis 1953, pp. 121–136.)

31 LIANG, Hsi-huey: *Mezi Berlínem a Prahou: Střední Evropa ve vzpomínkách čínského historika* [original title – Encounters in Berlin and Prague: An Academic Autobiography]. Praha, Prostor 2006, pp. 372–376.

32 *Archiv Kanceláře prezidenta republiky* (hereinafter AKPR) [The Archive of the President's Office of the Czech Republic], f. Sekretariát prezidenta republiky, Klement Gottwald [The Office of the President of the Republic, Klement Gottwald], box 1, Os 726/5

33 See for example PRŮŠEK, Jaroslav: *Čínský lid v boji za svobodu* [The People of China in the Struggle for Freedom]. Praha, Naše vojsko 1949.

housed in the secluded area of Western Sudetenland and never participated in the official celebrations of Sino-Czechoslovak friendship.³⁴

However, the Asian Department responsible for the Chinese agenda at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs lacked experts with knowledge of China. It was also strained by personal conflict, the incompetence of the new employees who had replaced the politically “unsuitable” experts after February 1948, as well as by Czechoslovak participation in the Neutral Nations Commission supervising the armistice in Korea. It could barely cope with its operative information and documentary agenda. In June 1950, the Ministry of Foreign Trade established economic cooperation with the People’s Republic of China and began to prepare a deal which would enable both countries to engage in maritime trade.³⁵ However, the Agreement on Exchange of Goods and Payments was subject to lengthy annual negotiations. The Czechoslovak export list included machine tools, textile and agricultural machinery, engines, tools, measuring instruments, vehicles, and also film studio equipment and musical instruments. China offered raw materials for heavy and light industry, raw materials for consumer goods production, and food. In its first year, trade exchange increased from 1,288 to 4,680 million Czechoslovak crowns (compared to a planned 70 percent increase). According to the Czechoslovak negotiators, it was in Prague’s interest to seek a long-term contract in order to avoid competition from other socialist countries. Nevertheless, not even the expert team, which stayed permanently in China from 1952 for this purpose, was able to conclude the contract with Beijing.³⁶

In 1951, the arrival of a Czechoslovak military and aviation *attaché* in Beijing, and the participation of a Chinese army delegation in celebrations to mark the Day of the Czechoslovak People’s Army signalled that a new era of mutual cooperation was about to open.³⁷ Eventually, in May 1952 the journey of the Minister of Information, Václav Kopecký, to Beijing culminated in the signing of four new agreements: the Cultural Agreement and Agreements on Scientific and Technical Cooperation, on Postal Services, and on Telecommunications. Immediately after this visit, the Vít Nejedlý Army Art Ensemble set out on a four-month tour of China, and on the basis of these agreements other tours by Czechoslovak delegations and student scholarship stays followed. Various Chinese guests also visited Czechoslovakia. Particularly notable was the participation of Zhou Enlai at Gottwald’s funeral in March 1953. Prague also served as an intermediary

34 AMZV ČR, f. Porady kolegia ministra [Meetings of the Collegium of the Ministry], book 4, Minutes of the meeting, 17 March 1954.

35 KRÁTKÁ, Lenka: *A History of the Czechoslovak Ocean Shipping Company, 1948–1989: How a Small, Landlocked Country Ran Maritime Business During the Cold War*. Ibidem Press, Stuttgart – Hannover 2015, pp. 22–54.

36 AKPR, Klement Gottwald, Čína – obchodní smlouvy s ČLR [Klement Gottwald, China – Trade Agreements with PRC].

37 *Archiv bezpečnostních složek*, Ministerstvo národní obrany Československé socialistické republiky, Generální štáb – Zpravodajská správa [Security Services Archive, Ministry of National Defence of the Czechoslovak Socialist Republic, Intelligence Directorate of the General Staff], Operative dossier registration No. 133010/AS Jasmín, Peking, 14/20; AKPR, Klement Gottwald, Čína [Klement Gottwald, China].

for the People's Republic of China with the countries which regarded the Chiang Kai-shek government as the official government. But the Embassy in Beijing had difficulty keeping up with increasing demands. Only two of its employees could speak Chinese and official information from the press agency Xinhua, present in Czechoslovakia since the latter half of 1948, was no substitute for high-quality diplomatic reports. There was also a lack of technology to ensure a stable radio connection.³⁸

From the outset, Prague focused mainly on economic problems, willingly received Chinese trade union members, journalists and health workers for study stays, offered support for Chinese industrialisation and shared its experience in building a communist society.³⁹ Czechoslovak politicians understood that the domestic authority of Mao was unquestionable. They were also aware that with decolonisation set in motion, his aspirations to determine the rules for the global national liberation movements according to the Chinese model had increased.⁴⁰ But Czechoslovakia depended greatly on information and interpretation from Moscow, which was at this time overwhelmed with its own problems and therefore lagged behind events. For example, when the Soviet preparatory council for the Bandung Conference sent a delegation to the negotiations in India, the *Rudé Právo* daily adopted the news bulletin from the Soviet news agency TASS stating that it would be a meeting of 13 Asian countries to which the Soviet Union would send a mostly cultural delegation to negotiate on the principles of reducing international tensions. The Czechoslovak news agency repeated the report.⁴¹ As a matter of fact, the representatives of 19 Asian countries met in Delhi, between 6 and 10 April 1955, to coordinate a common position before the much more important Bandung Conference, where the government representatives of 29 Asian and African countries held talks about nothing less important than their reaction to the US strategy embodied in the recently established Southeast Asia Treaty Organisation (SEATO).⁴² The Ministry

38 AMZV ČR, f. Porady kolegia ministra [Meetings of the Collegium of the Ministry], book 1, Minutes of the meeting of 13 August 1953; *Ibid.*, book 4, Minutes of the meeting of 17 March 1954.

39 This is evidenced, for example, by the exhibition "Ten Years of Building Socialism in the Czechoslovak Republic," which opened in Beijing on 15 April 1955 in the presence of the Czechoslovak government delegation headed by the Deputy Prime Minister, Ludmila Jankovcová. Photographs from the period show that the exhibition area of 16,000 square metres was dominated by a 50-tonne carousel lathe and large drilling machines. A similar industrial-cultural exhibition was opened in Guangzhou on 21 February 1956.

40 Foreword and speech of the President of the Central Council of the Trade Unions and the Deputy President of the World Federation of the Trade Unions, František Zupka, in the publication *Všečínská federace práce: Asijské národy v boji za svobodu* [All-China Federation of Trade Unions: Asian Nations in the Fight for Freedom] (Praha, Práce 1951, pp. 5–12 and 330–335).

41 Sovětská delegace na asijskou konferenci o zmírnění napětí v mezinárodních vztazích [Soviet Delegation to the Asian Conference on Relaxing Tensions in International Relations]. In: *Rudé právo*, 1 April 1955, p. 3; VOLF, Alois: Dnes začíná asijská konference [The Asian Conference Starts Today]. In: *Ibid.*, 6 April 1955, p. 4; IDEM: Za mír a solidaritu v Asii [For Peace and Solidarity in Asia]. In: *Ibid.*, 14 April 1955, p. 3.

42 Paradoxically, some of the news that the daily *Rudé právo* was taking from TASS at that time was based on information from the Chinese press agency *Xinhua*, a branch of which had its seat in Prague. (See for example Resoluce KS Číny o protistranické skupině [Resolution of

of Foreign Affairs sought to ensure its own better analysis by sending the experienced diplomat Otto Klička to Bandung. His report, which was regarded by the Collegium of the Ministry as ideologically poor, recorded the efforts of the People's Republic of China, India and Burma to promote the Five Principles of Peaceful Co-existence. In his view, this was natural since it complied with Lenin's expectation that the emancipated East would demand its own share of influence over world affairs. Despite the proposal to pronounce communism a new form of colonialism and the fact that ten of the states adopted a pro-American position (which in the logic of a bipolar world was anti-Soviet), Klička concluded that the national liberation movements moved towards political independence and that the conference was successful. He gave credit for this to peaceful China, which, according to him, served as an example of an improving standard of life since its liberation from imperialism, and which invited the participating countries, through its representative Zhou Enlai, to unite in demanding the elimination of colonialism. According to Klička, the Bandung Conference confirmed that it was not possible to hold any serious talks on national-political questions in Asia without the presence of Beijing and that its acceptance in the UN was needed.⁴³

Beijing's aspirations to become more than merely a regional power were evident from Marshal Zhu De's tour of the countries of its European allies. After visiting Romania, the German Democratic Republic, and Hungary, he was received by Antonín Novotný in Prague on 17 January 1956. He stayed in Czechoslovakia for 10 days, but feeling tired by the journey he spent five days in a sanatorium at the spa town of Karlovy Vary. Despite the absence of the Marshal, the members of his delegation participated in the programme of excursions, which included visits to engineering and chemical companies, at their special request.⁴⁴

In the summer of 1956, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs began preparations for the visit of the Czechoslovak government delegation to China, Mongolia and North Korea. After obtaining the approval of the Political Bureau of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia and consequently of the government, the programme was prepared and proposals for the contracts to be signed were sent to the Soviet Embassy. However, shortly before the planned date, at the end of October 1956, the preparations were suspended.⁴⁵ On both sides, priority was given to the dramatic events in Hungary. The Chinese discussed it for several days in Moscow, and separately

the Communist Party of China on the Anti-Party Group]. In: *Rudé právo*, 6 April 1955, p. 3; První mezinárodní konference asijských a afrických zemí zahájena [The First International Asian-African Conference Has Started]. In: *Ibid.*, 19 April 1955, p. 3.)

43 AMZV ČR, f. Porady kolegia ministra [Meetings of the Collegium of the Ministry], book 14, box 89, Minutes of the meeting, 2 June 1955. O. Klička's Report on the Bandung Conference; compare Z hlavního projevu vedoucího čínské delegace Čou En-laje [From the Main Speech of Zhou Enlai, the Head of the Chinese Delegation]. In: *Rudé právo*, 20 April 1955, p. 4; BEBA, Karel: První konference asijsko-afrických zemí: Původní telegrafická zpráva z Bandungu [First Conference of Asian and African Countries: The Original Telegram from Bandung]. In: *Ibid.*, 22 April 1955, p. 4.

44 AKPR, KPR – protokol T (Tajné [Secret]) 1945–1963, T 189/56, box 101.

45 AMZV ČR, f. Porady kolegia ministra [Meetings of the Collegium of the Ministry], book 22, Minutes of the meeting, 25 October 1956, State of preparations for the departure of the

Antonín Novotný discussed it briefly in Moscow and Bucharest. On 4 November, talks were also held between 10 members of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia and the Soviet delegation in Prague.⁴⁶ On 11 November, Novotný and Prime Minister Široký received a joint invitation from Bulganin and Khrushchev to visit Moscow between 25 and 30 January 1957, with a Party and state delegation to discuss the common interests of both states.

When the delegation arrived in Moscow several days after the departure of Zhou Enlai, it was evident that the issues to be discussed would be fundamental. Czechoslovakia rarely had a similar representation. The delegation was led by the President Antonín Zápotocký, followed by the Prime Minister Viliam Široký and the First Secretary of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia, Antonín Novotný. The talks were also attended by Václav Kopecký and seven other government ministers, the President of the Slovak Board of Commissioners (Slovak executive body), and the secretaries of the Central Committee, Jiří Hendrych and Vladimír Koucký, on behalf of the Party. The meeting was held at Khrushchev's office in the building of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union and in addition to Khrushchev, Nikolai Bulganin, Kliment Voroshilov, Anastas Mikoyan, Vyacheslav Molotov, Mikhail Suslov, Leonid Brezhnev, Averky Aristov and Boris Ponomarev participated. After the opening speech of Novotný, Khrushchev took the floor and moved swiftly from the issue of mutual economic cooperation to an evaluation of the recent visit of Zhou Enlai to Eastern Europe. He expressed his concern about complaints from several Polish Communists to Zhou Enlai and stated that the Chinese Prime Minister, when in Moscow and Warsaw, proposed a meeting of all socialist countries which would be held in Budapest, Bucharest, Prague or Sofia and would also include a debate on military issues. According to Soviet information, he had addressed the Yugoslav President Josip Broz Tito with the same suggestion. During the debate, Khrushchev showed unprecedented openness to sharing control over the global communist movement with the PRC. He stated that the Soviets had agreed to a resolution with the Communist Party of China which designated the Communist Party of the Soviet Union as just one of the parties with extensive experience, and explained that "the leading role of someone is moral. We will jointly lead and jointly respond. Lately, there have been nationalist tendencies. However, it is not enough to use repression, it only helps a little; we need to meet more often." The Czechoslovak delegates strongly opposed the idea of changing

Czechoslovak government delegation to the People's Republic of China, Hungarian People's Republic and the Democratic People's Republic of Korea.

46 NA, f. Antonín Novotný II., book 192, AU 115, Meeting of the First Secretary of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia, Antonín Novotný, at the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union on 24 October 1956; *Ibid.*, AU 116, Discussion between the members of the Political Bureau of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia and the delegation of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union Led by A. Aristov Held in Prague on 4 November 1956; ŠEVELENKO, A. (ed.): *Vospominaniya: Izbrannye fragmenty. Nikita Khrushchov* [Memories: Collected Fragments. Nikita Khrushchev]. Moskva, Vagrius 2007, pp. 354–360.

the established practice according to which the PRC's influence was restricted to Asia. They pointed out that the weakening of the leading role of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union could lead to events similar to those in Hungary happening elsewhere in the world, expressed their loyalty to Moscow, and in the final declaration reaffirmed their commitment to the Marxist-Leninist tenets of socialist construction and proclaimed unity to be the main interest of all socialist countries.⁴⁷

Zhou Enlai did not visit Czechoslovakia in January 1957, when he enquired about the consequences of the crisis in Eastern Europe. At that time, only the representatives of the Chinese machinery import and export company visited Prague, together with the Deputy Foreign Trade Minister. But as early as March 1957, the postponed government delegation, headed by Viliam Široký, visited China to sign the Agreement on Cultural Cooperation, the Agreement on Cooperation in the Health Sector, and most importantly the Friendship and Cooperation Treaty. Apart from Beijing, Široký also visited Shanghai and Nanjing. In his speeches, he took the opportunity to stress the importance of the Czechoslovak position in international relations and the significance of Czechoslovak assistance for Chinese industrialisation. He rejoiced at the fact that the machines manufactured thanks to this assistance were called “the flowers of the mutual friendship” by the Chinese workers, and he proudly recalled the Czech propagandistic slogan from 1949: “From the City of Aš up to Shanghai, the red flag flies high.” He did not forget to stress that the friendly community of socialist countries under the leadership of the Soviet Union sought freedom and peace and described China as a beacon of liberty and independence for Asia and other nations. At the airport, when leaving Shanghai, he was bidden farewell, as on other occasions, not only by the regional representatives, but also by the local Soviet consul general.⁴⁸

Nevertheless, the PRC slowly started to abandon its role as a grateful recipient of Czechoslovak industrial assistance. In 1955, it still accepted the offered products without any objections and responded by exporting materials such as rice, tea and spices, and improving cultural cooperation.⁴⁹ But after 1956, China became more demanding, it refused to sign a long-term trade agreement and, starting in 1958, the economic negotiations stagnated considerably. This was reflected in the complicated talks on the Trade

47 NA, f. Antonín Novotný II., box 192, AU 119, Report on the meeting of the delegation of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia with the delegation of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, p. 15. The meeting programme and related correspondence are available *Ibid.*, AU 118; Final joint Czechoslovak-Soviet declaration including Koucký's corrections according to the Soviet text, *Ibid.*, AU 122.

48 Jednota a síla socialistického tábora je zárukou nových vítězství [Unity and Strength of the Socialist Camp are the Guarantee of New Victories]. In: *Rudé právo*, 25 March 1957, pp. 1 and 3; Československá vládní delegace se vrátila do Pekinu [Czechoslovak Government Delegation is Back in Beijing]. In: *Ibid.*, 26 March 1957, p. 1.

49 For example in 1950, China donated the basis of its library to the Oriental Institute, in the autumn of 1954 it organised a tour of the Janáček Academy of Music Arts to China, donated to Czechoslovakia half of the items from the exhibition of Chinese useful arts held at the Prague Hybernian house in February and March 1955, in 1956 it organised an exhibition on Tibet, and its artists participated in the Prague Spring music festival.

and Navigation Treaty. China also indefinitely postponed the promised visit of Zhou Enlai to Czechoslovakia, which he had originally planned with the army delegation for the latter half of 1958 as part of another journey to Eastern Europe. Although the decrease in contacts was probably related to the economic setbacks of the Great Leap Forward, Czechoslovak diplomats in China gradually became isolated and complained about deteriorating access to the authorities and a lack of information.⁵⁰

The reason for this lay in the reserved Czechoslovak position towards the increasing ambitions of the PRC. On 30 April 1957, when the Political Bureau of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia evaluated the results of the stopover of Viliam Široký in Moscow on his way back from China, it concluded that it was necessary to deepen friendship and relations with the Soviet Union, consolidate in every way the unity of the “Socialist Camp” and provide support for Soviet disarmament efforts. On Soviet recommendation, it pondered the submission of its own disarmament proposal to the UN General Assembly and planned assistance to the independent development of Asian and African countries, especially Egypt, Syria, Ethiopia, Ceylon, Burma, Afghanistan and Indonesia. It also intensified its verbal attacks against West German revanchism. In this context, both Široký’s visit to China, Mongolia and North Korea, and Prague’s proposal to better coordinate national economic plans, which was raised at the Council for Mutual Economic Assistance (CMEA) meeting in May, thereby only fulfilled tasks resulting from the understanding between Czechoslovak and Soviet Communists. Any Czechoslovak declarations on the strengthening of friendship between the nations were based on the Soviet-interpreted Leninist tenets of equality and fraternal cooperation.⁵¹

In mid-July 1957, Nikita Khrushchev visited Czechoslovakia with the President of the Council of Ministers of the Soviet Union, Nikolai Bulganin. They visited industrial companies, agricultural cooperatives and scientific institutions; debated with workers and with political representatives; and at meetings with their Communist Party partners highlighted their common commitment to socialism. The final joint *communiqué* stated that the visit had confirmed the absolute unanimity of views on all issues discussed.⁵² In August 1957, another delegation of Czechoslovak Communists, led by Antonín Novotný, visited Moscow to coordinate policy towards Yugoslavia and Albania with other European socialist states.⁵³ In contrast, the meeting between the Czechoslovak

50 AMZV ČR, f. TO-T Čína, 1955–1959, book 2, file 3, Telegram of the Ambassador Antonín Gregor from Beijing of 10 May 1957; *Ibid.*, Telegrams of the Ambassador Ján Bušniak from Beijing, 2 April 1958, 5 May 1958, 25 June 1958 and 3 March 1959; *Ibid.*, file 10, Overview of contacts with PCR in the 2nd trimester of 1957.

51 NA, f. 1501, Minutes of the 179th meeting of the Political Bureau of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia, 30 April 1957; *Ibid.*, f. Antonín Novotný II., box 192, AU 125, Record of the discussion with comrades Khrushchev, Bulganin, Mikoyan and Gromyko, 10 April 1957 (O. Černík, 12 April 1957).

52 *Ibid.*, f. Antonín Novotný II., box 192, AU 132, *Communiqué* on the stay of the Party and government delegation of the Soviet Union in Czechoslovakia, 17 July 1957.

53 *Ibid.*, AU 133, Record of the discussion with comrade Khrushchev held in Moscow on 16 August 1957.

parliamentary delegation and Mao Zedong, held in Beijing on 29 September, was more a courtesy meeting and did not bring any practical results. Talking to Mao Zedong, the head of the delegation, Zdeněk Fierlinger, merely expressed his understanding of the complex tasks faced by the Chinese Communists in eliminating the consequences of colonial oppression. When Mao Zedong appraised the mutual relations as very close and friendly, he responded: “The political relations between Czechoslovakia, the People’s Republic of China and the Soviet Union could not be better, as comrade Khrushchev stated when visiting Czechoslovakia. In respect to economic relations, they could be much better and much closer.”⁵⁴ The departure of Bohumír Lomský, the Minister of National Defence at the head of a military delegation to Beijing on 6 December 1957 gave some indication as to which course Czechoslovakia wanted to take. However, the Czechoslovak expectations did not materialise. The Chinese army’s interest remained limited to the possibility of learning about Czechoslovak and Soviet military technology at an expert level. For example, in May 1959, three demonstrations were held within one week, which included a show of MIG-15 and MIG-19 Soviet aeroplanes at the air base in Líně, a simulated response of the border guard near Rozvadov in case of cross-border infiltration, and the show of CS102 and S05 Czechoslovak aeroplanes, and L29 Czechoslovak jet aircraft at Aero Vodochody. Chinese soldiers also attended a motorcycle competition, prepared for them by Svazarm and visited the training area for the motorised rifle troops in Vyškov.⁵⁵

The Conference of the Communist and Workers’ Parties, which took place following the success of the Soviet Sputnik on the occasion of the 40th anniversary of the October Revolution in Moscow, did not resolve the conflict. The persistent discrepancy in views on how relations between socialist countries should be organised and how they should relate to “world imperialism” and to emerging national liberation movements were reflected in the ambiguous final documents.⁵⁶ Czechoslovakia supported the Soviet position. On 3 December 1957, the Political Bureau of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia approved a resolution on the Moscow meeting, welcoming the adoption of the Declaration of the Representatives of the Communist and Workers’ Parties of Socialist Countries as well as the Peace Manifesto and declared both documents the program of the communist movement, in defence of peace and socialism construction. According to the Political Bureau, the 20th Congress of Soviet Communists contributed to a massive upheaval in communism. This was reasserted by Czechoslovak politicians at meetings of the representatives of the communist

54 AMZV ČR, f. TO-T Čína, 1955–1959, book 2, file 10, Record of the discussion of the Czechoslovak parliamentary delegation with the President of the People’s Republic of China, Mao Zedong held on 29 September 1957.

55 Svazarm (Union for Cooperation with the Army) was founded in Czechoslovakia in 1951 according to the Soviet model of organising sports in cooperation with the army. It was an umbrella organisation for sports related to national defence such as aviation, dog breeding, shooting, biathlon of amateur radio operators. *AKPR, KPR – protokol T (Tajné [Secret]) 1945–1963, O 1158/59, box 107.*

56 Compare SHEN CHZHIKHUA, *O kitaysko-sovetskikh otnosheniyakh (1950–1960-e gg.)*, pp. 97–111.

and workers' parties of CMEA member countries in Moscow on 25 May 1958.⁵⁷ The analysis of the international situation at the 11th Congress of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia between 18 and 21 June 1958, was another demonstration of loyalty to Moscow. The Congress highlighted the possibility of excluding war as a means of conflict resolution and expressed the conviction that it was better to confront the danger of imperialism through economic competition between the two world systems and a relentless struggle for peace and coexistence. To the less developed countries it promised the perspective of participation in the joint use of the resources of socialist countries within the framework of mutual fraternal assistance and economic, political and cultural cooperation. According to the Congress, the colonial nations could learn from Soviet Communists on how to eradicate poverty and underdevelopment by means of non-capitalist, national-democratic development. The Czechoslovak representatives claimed that the existence of the world socialist system was a guarantee of the transition of power to the workers and peasants without civil war, in cooperation with the local national bourgeoisie against the colonisers. The primary position of Moscow was also manifested at the 11th Congress of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia officially. President Novotný first received the Soviet delegation, and only then and with slightly more reserve, the Chinese delegation.⁵⁸ Apart from this, based on the decision of the Moscow Conference in November 1957, Prague became the seat of the international editorial office of the magazine *Problems of Peace and Socialism* which was to publish the contributions of individual central committees of national communist parties and in that way contribute to the unity of the socialist community and to the cultivation of opinions. In reality, the editorial staff promoted Soviet interests. As a result, the Chinese Communists stopped co-financing it, did not deliver any contributions, and in May 1962, refused to support the Chinese edition of the magazine.⁵⁹

On 28 September 1959, Antonín Novotný finally made his visit to the People's Republic of China, which had been postponed for a year. In his speech at the 10th anniversary celebrations of the founding of the People's Republic of China, he spoke about the long tradition of comrade solidarity between both countries which based their revolutionary path on the enduring legacy of the Great October Socialist Revolution

57 Komuniké o poradách [*Communiqué on Meetings*] see KOTYK, Václav: *Dokumenty československé zahraniční politiky: 1945–1960* [Documents of Czechoslovak Foreign Policy: 1945–1960]. Praha, státní nakladatelství politické literatury 1960, pp. 310–312.

58 *Mezinárodní postavení a zahraniční politika ČSSR v období mezi XI. a XII. sjezdem KSČ* [The Czechoslovak Socialist Republic's International Position and Foreign Policy between the 11th and 12th Congress of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia], Praha, Oddělení propagandy a agitace ÚV KSČ 1962 [The Department of Propaganda and Agitation of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia 1962]; *Zpráva o činnosti ÚV KSČ na XI. sjezdu a současně hlavní úkoly* [Report on the Activities of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia at the 11th Party Congress and Current Major Tasks]. In: *Rudé právo*, 19 June 1958, Supplement, pp. 1–24.

59 NA, f. Antonín Novotný II., box 89, AU 164, Rupture between the Communist Party of China and other communist parties (relations between the Communist Party of China – other communist parties), Correspondence between the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China and the redaction of the magazine *Issues of Peace and Socialism*.

and contributed to the promotion of socialism in the world. He paid tribute to Chinese industrial efforts as observed at the Brno Fairs, and acknowledged the contribution the steadfastness of the People's Republic of China was making to crushing "revisionism" and "imperialism."⁶⁰ However, the celebrations were marred by Khrushchev's disdainful comments on the results of the Chinese policy, the Great Leap Forward. Later on, when the Chinese political elite met to celebrate the decade of the Chinese-Soviet Friendship Society, the representative of its partner Soviet-Chinese Friendship Society, Nikolai Tichonov, announced the release of the 3rd Soviet space rocket. The news received only a lukewarm reaction. The showing of the documentary on Khrushchev's journey to the United States took place at the Soviet Embassy in Beijing on 16 October without Chinese participation.⁶¹

Understandably, China did not take long to respond to Soviet criticism. Still in February 1960, the Chinese observer at the Moscow meeting of the Warsaw Pact supported Khrushchev by praising the reduction in international tension, which was allegedly achieved without any concessions and in favour of socialism. Antonín Novotný noted that the Chinese representative sharply criticised the imperialists and, unsure as to the accuracy of the interpretation, he wondered about the resolute proclamation that China would recognise a disarmament plan only if it participated in it.⁶² The key moment came in April 1960, when China published its objections towards Soviet politics in the pamphlet "Long Live Leninism," shortly after Khrushchev's visit to South East Asia.⁶³ Beijing was critical of promoting peace in countries which still suffered from colonialism and rejected Khrushchev's foreign policy, perceiving it as an inappropriate appeasement to the West. This policy was, in China's view, to be blamed for the imperialists taking the war initiative. China was offering an alternative to the bipolar division of the world. It was focusing on the poor countries of the Southern hemisphere, offering them the shield of its own revolutionary model and economic assistance based on mutually beneficial cooperation.⁶⁴ Nevertheless, Prague loyally supported the Soviet strategy. From the perspective of the Czechoslovak representatives, Beijing ignored

60 AMZV ČR, f. TO-T Čína, 1955–1959, book 2, file 2, Supporting documents for the journey and correspondence between Antonín Novotný and Mao Zedong; Antonín Novotný's speech of 28 September 1959. In: KOTYK, Václav (ed.): *Dokumenty československé zahraniční politiky: 1945–1960* [Documents of Czechoslovak Foreign Policy: 1945–1960]. Praha, Státní nakladatelství politické literatury 1960, p. 347.

61 AMZV ČR, f. TO-T Čína, 1955–1959, book 2, file 10, Record of 5 October 1959; *Ibid.*, Record of the projection of films at the Embassy of the Soviet Union on 16 October and 17 October 1959.

62 REIMAN, Michal – LUŇÁK, Petr: *Studená válka 1954–1964: Sovětské dokumenty v českých archívech* [The Cold War 1954–1964: Soviet Documents in Czech Archives]. Brno, Doplněk 2000, pp. 137–139.

63 Between 11 February and 5 March 1960 Khrushchev visited Afghanistan, Burma, India and Indonesia, countries which had conflictual relations with China at that time (see *Ibid.*, pp. 158–160); compare BAKEŠOVÁ, Ivana: *Čína ve XX. Století* [China in the 20th Century], Volume 2. Olomouc, Univerzita Palackého 2003, p. 70.

64 ALDEN, Chris – ALVES, Ana Cristina: History and Identity in the Construction of China's Africa Policy. In: *Review of African Political Economy*, Issue 115 (2008), pp. 47–52.

the opinion of the majority of communist parties, pursued a strange interpretation of Marxism-Leninism in domestic politics, based solely on Mao Zedong's texts, and underestimated the importance of incentives for the working class. In terms of foreign policy, it disrupted the unity of the "Socialist Camp," complicated its success, and took the side of the contemporary leftists. The Czechoslovak Ambassador also greatly resented the withdrawal of Soviet political economy textbooks from Chinese schools.⁶⁵

Under the pretext of the American U-2 spy plane shot down over its territory, the Soviets tried to convene a meeting of communist parties to discuss international issues during the congress of Romanian Communists in Bucharest. They also promoted the necessity of adopting a final document that would bind all the participants to a common international policy. The Chinese, who had exchanged several letters regarding growing differences of opinion in this area with the Soviets, refused. They asked for time to study what was going to be said in Bucharest and agreed only to a discussion.⁶⁶ The developments at the congress proved that they had every reason to be cautious. To the unpleasant surprise of Beijing, the Soviet material distributed during the Bucharest congress did not denounce American imperialism but made public the thinly concealed dispute with the leadership of the Chinese Communists. The Chinese Communists were only capable of a delayed reaction by addressing explanatory letters to the allies in Europe. But the communist parties did not take the Chinese arguments seriously and jointly tried to get them to respect the Moscow line. Finally, the Soviets decided to submit the issue to the new International Meeting of the Communist and Workers' Parties. In mid-July 1960, Khrushchev withdrew the Soviet experts from China and the surprised Czechoslovak experts slowly followed. A teacher of Czech language and literature in Beijing, Jan Líbal, complained that the situation was chaotic and that following the withdrawal of the Soviet experts from the school his work was being made impossible. He complained about the overloading of students with extra-curricular activities and about the shift in opinion reflected in the teaching of the past and present of Czechoslovakia, which resulted in the prohibition of existing textbooks. He also felt he was being shadowed and asked for instructions.⁶⁷

At the beginning of 1960, the Soviet leadership invited the Czechoslovak comrades to send their representative to a preparatory commission for the November Conference of Communist and Workers' Parties, which Moscow proposed to link with the 43rd anniversary of the October Revolution. Antonín Novotný and Vladimír Koucký

65 *AMZV ČR*, f. Porady kolegia ministra [Meetings of the Collegium of the Ministry], book 53, Minutes of the meeting, 15 September 1960, Item – Current political situation in the People's Republic of China and Czechoslovak-Chinese contacts.

66 *NA*, f. Antonín Novotný II, box 53, AU 37, Letters between the Central Committees of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union and the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia regarding the convocation of the international meeting of the communist and workers' parties and opportunities for the exchange of opinions during the Congress of the Romanian Workers' Party, dated between 2 and 7 June 1960.

67 *Ibid.*, f. 1501, box 279, AU 362, Minutes of the meeting of the Political Bureau, 25 September 1960, Item regarding the information – Jan Líbal, Report of the professor of Czech language and literature at the University of Foreign Languages in Beijing.

agreed and prepared a list of possible delegates and jointly presented it to the Political Bureau of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia.⁶⁸ On 27 September, the Secretary of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, Mikhail Suslov, received Koucký and informed him on the previous Soviet-Chinese talks which showed Beijing's intransigence; and presented him with the main background material for the meeting and the next steps to be taken in that regard. Koucký agreed (according to himself he was also an opponent of ideological dogmatism) and promised Suslov that he would help to influence the opinions of other delegations in favour of the Soviets. In this spirit, the work of the drafting commission continued until the conference itself was held in November 1960. After his return, on 26 October, Koucký presented a report at the meeting of the Political Bureau. Five days later, Novotný had his draft speech for the Moscow conference approved. He was particularly concerned not to call the conflict a Sino-Soviet dispute, but rather a clash between the PRC and the whole international communist movement.⁶⁹

On 10 November, in the Georgievski hall of the Kremlin, Khrushchev opened the conference in question by stating that the power struggle between socialism and capitalism had shifted considerably in favour of the first and that new opportunities and problems had emerged which he deemed appropriate to discuss in order to define the new tasks of the world communist, workers' and national liberation struggles. His speech received a standing ovation from all present except the Chinese and Albanian delegations. During the conference, Suslov attacked the Chinese delegate, Deng Xiaoping, by describing the meeting of the World Federation of Trade Unions in Beijing as an example of Chinese escalation of mutual disputes. His stance was backed by delegates from the other parties. The Hungarians, for example, mentioned the evaluation of the Bucharest meeting, according to which the Chinese Revolution was the most important event since the Great October Revolution and the people of China were heroic, but the Communist Party of China had made mistakes which should be recognised and rectified. After 12 days, when the main speeches of all 78 delegations had been made, the Secretary of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China, Deng Xiaoping, asked, against established practice, once more for the floor, seeking to explain that the adoption of the wrong position could not make China abandon its correct minority viewpoint. Upon the recommendation of Khrushchev that "it is better to let the illness manifest

68 *Ibid.*, f. Antonín Novotný II., box 53, AU 43, Correspondence between the Central Committees of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia and the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, Resolution of the Political Bureau of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia on the preparation and convocation of the meeting, the delegation composition.

69 *Ibid.*, AU 44, Record of Vladimír Koucký's reception by Mikhail Suslov on 27 September 1960; *Ibid.*, AU 45, Report on the work of the Editorial Commission; *Ibid.*, AU 141, China: Bilateral negotiations between the delegations of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union and the Communist Party of China held between 17 and 22 September 1960; *Ibid.*, f. 1501, box 280, AU 363, Minutes of the meeting of the Political Bureau, 25 October 1960, Item 17 – Meeting of fraternal communist and workers' parties in Moscow; *Ibid.*, box 281, AU 364, Minutes of the meeting of the Political Bureau, 31 October 1960, Item 22 – Draft of Antonín Novotný's speech to be delivered at the November consultation meetings in Moscow.

itself, because then it is easier to cure,” he was allowed to speak on the following day, despite protests from the representatives of 23 of the participating parties against the unconstructive position of China, which insisted on its erroneous ideas and threatened to lead to a rift in the whole conference. The drafting commission met again to adapt the text of the planned joint declaration from the conference. The issues in question were the appraisal of the role of a national bourgeoisie; the relation of the workers and peasants to the struggle for an independent state; the so-called cult of personality; criticism of Yugoslavia; and the issue of the essence of imperialism, which according to the Chinese could not change its nature, disarm itself or become peaceful. The controversial issues were delegated to a sub-committee of the drafting commission which made its final decision only after bilateral discussions had been held between the Soviet and Chinese Communists. On 1 December, Khrushchev made his final speech and all the participating parties signed a joint final declaration.⁷⁰ However, according to Koucký, the Chinese kept seeking a revision of the document, accentuating disproportionately some parts of the declaration while intentionally suppressing others. They did not draw any conclusions on the basis of the criticism expressed at the Moscow meetings, and they also articulated their preparedness to strive for changes at the borders of their country.⁷¹ Koucký also noted the extraordinary relations between the People’s Republic of China and Albania, North Korea and Vietnam, and condemned them as an alleged reward for their solidarity with the Chinese line in Moscow. He stressed that it was still necessary to fight for the correct interpretation of the declaration.⁷²

Conclusion

In the clash between the world of capitalism and the world of Soviet socialism, Mao’s China sought to present itself as the most influential power in the “third world” – the world of the future, which according to Beijing shared very little of its past with the former worlds. To those who were willing to become its allies, China promised equal relations and mutually advantageous cooperation in the fight against imperialism in all its forms. In the light of the increasing economic problems of Czechoslovakia, Khrushchev’s *protégé*, Antonín Novotný, adhered to

70 *Ibid.*, f. 1501, Vol. 285, AU 367, Minutes of the meeting of the Political Bureau, 21 November 1960, Item 20 – Some of the documents from the meeting of the fraternal communist and workers’ parties presented to the Political Bureau of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia by Antonín Novotný.

71 The first incident at the Soviet-Chinese border occurred in June 1960. For more details, see KIREJEV, G. V.: *Rossiya i Kitay: Neizvestnye stranitsy pograniichnykh peregovorov* [Russia and China: Unknown Pages of Border Negotiations]. Moskva, ROSSPEN 2006, pp. 56–82.

72 NA, f. 1501, box 281, AU 364, Minutes of the meeting of the Political Bureau, 31 October 1960, Item 23 – V. Koucký: Draft letter of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia to the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China; *Ibid.*, box 300, AU 384/8, Minutes of the meeting of the Political Bureau, 21 March 1961, Resolution on V. Koucký’s report – Development of the situation in the People’s Republic of China after the Moscow meetings.

a more realistic foreign policy. The emphasis that the radical Chinese partner put on support for those involved in civil wars in the collapsing colonial world was of no concern to him as it did not translate into any benefits for the internal needs of the system, to which his career was closely linked. On the other hand, Khrushchev offered a transparent hierarchy, traditional lord-vassal relations, the benefit of access to the Soviet market and its raw materials, and stability and peace after years of wars and terror. As for the countries which could become part of Mao's "third world" – revolutionary Cuba, which was perceived by leftist radicals as a new, living proof of the oncoming inevitable collapse of imperialism, claimed allegiance to Moscow through its delegate Aníbal Escalante at the November conference in 1960. In the eyes of Czechoslovak Communists, this confirmed once again that the Soviet approach was correct.

On 1 June 1961, when Nikita Khrushchev conducted talks with the leadership of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia near Bratislava, he was significantly less optimistic in his appraisal of international politics than at the beginning of 1960. Despite a friendly atmosphere, he claimed that he was unlikely to come to an agreement with the American President John Fitzgerald Kennedy and expressed his concerns about the possibility of achieving a satisfactory solution to the "German question." He was also worried about the consequences of the rapid success of the revolution in Laos, which complicated the Soviet policy towards the neutral Asian countries. The unsatisfactory state of relations with Tirana and Beijing led him to a revision of his approach to nationalism, and to the decision not to underestimate the resulting disputes within the Socialistic Bloc in the future. He also said that he would not make any further foreign policy decisions until after discussing them at the 22nd Congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union. In October 1962, this congress marked a definitive rupture in Sino-Soviet relations.⁷³

After the Moscow consultation in 1960, Sino-Czechoslovak relations followed the deteriorating level of Sino-Soviet relations. Any problems had an immediate impact on the sensitive economic cooperation of Czechoslovakia with China. In July 1961, however, Novotný managed to convince Khrushchev to take over part of the Chinese investment orders, which China had rejected, as payment for Czechoslovak support.⁷⁴ The leadership of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia tempered the charged

73 WANG, Dong: *The Quarrelling Brothers: New Chinese Archives and Reappraisal of the Sino-Soviet Split 1959–1962*. (Cold War International History Project, Working Paper No. 49 [online].) Washington D.C., Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars [cit. 2013-09-01.] Available at: <http://www.wilsoncenter.org/publication/the-quarrelling-brothers-new-chinese-archives-and-reappraisal-the-sino-soviet-split-1959>; compare NA, f. 1537 (Mezinárodní oddělení ÚV KSČ – původní označení fondu 100/3) [International Department of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia – initial fund designation 100/3], box 31, AU 131, Record of the speech of the head of the delegation of the Communist Party of China, Zhou Enlai, at the 22nd Congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union; *Ibid.*, The position of the Chinese press regarding the 22nd Congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union.

74 NA, f. Antonín Novotný II., box 204, AU 342, Industrial facilities rejected by China, intended for sale to the Soviet Union; *Ibid.*, f. 1501, box 321, AU 408/4, Minutes of the meeting of

anti-Chinese speeches of Vladimír Koucký, and appealed for a calmer and more deliberate tone, but in general it preferred the Soviet “liberator” and calibrated its approach to Chinese politics accordingly. The documents of the leadership of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia and materials from the Archives of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Czech Republic show that it had been thus from the beginning of its relations with the Chinese Communists. As for the Czechoslovak position in the Sino-Soviet split, the decisive factor was Moscow’s capacity to ensure the highest Party post and, after the death of President Antonín Zápotocký, also the highest state post for Antonín Novotný, who had strongly supported Soviet authority within the international communist movement during his meeting with Khrushchev in January 1957. The increasingly friendly and responsive approach of Soviet Communists towards Czechoslovakia, the attention the Soviets paid to the economic needs of its ally and the share they offered Prague in the joint foreign policy strategy, all further strengthened the long-term loyalty of Czechoslovak Communists towards Moscow.⁷⁵

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the Political Bureau, 12 September 1961. Resolution on the report regarding the economic negotiations held in Moscow between 27 July and 10 August 1961.

75 The loyalty of Czechoslovak Communists was manifested not only by rhetorical attacks against West German revanchism, in relation to the arming of the Federal Republic of Germany and its contribution to NATO defence, but also by the only internationally relevant document of the Foreign Minister, Václav David, which was pushed through at the UN General Assembly in September 1962 as the Declaration of the Legal Principles of Peaceful Coexistence (*Ibid.*, f. 1537, box 32, AU 135, Report on the Implementation of the Principles of the Resolution of the Political Bureau of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia of 21 March 1961 on Sino-Czechoslovak Relations, 10 January 1962).

In between Sympathies and Loyalty

The French Communist Party and the Prague Spring

Michaela Kůželová

The official response by French Communists to the invasion of Czechoslovakia by Warsaw Pact troops in August 1968 is deemed to be the first instance ever that the French Communist Party (*Parti communiste français*) decided to publicly refuse to support an international action by the Soviet Union.¹ The close of the Prague Spring coincided with the French Communist Party coming to terms with the consequences of the mass demonstrations in France in May 1968.² For most Party members the initial rejection of the invasion was a popular decision.³ From the perspective of the years that followed, 1968 seemed to be a success for the French Communist Party, at least in terms of membership growth. According to data provided by Philippe Buton, in 1969 the Party had approximately 380,000 members, which was about a 30,000 increase on 1967.⁴ The support rendered to Alexander Dubček and the Prague Spring, however, was not entirely straightforward. The subsequent rejection of the August invasion proved quite inconsistent as well.

1 Compare LAZAR, Marc: *Le communisme: Une passion française*. Paris, Perrin 2005, p. 39.

2 The student and workers' unrest in France in May 1968 led to the empowerment of the radical Left, *inter alia*, to the detriment of the FCP which, failing to assume control over the protests, had distanced itself from them.

3 See BELL, David Scott: *The French Communist Party in the Fifth Republic*. Oxford, Clarendon Press 1994, p. 94.

4 Compare COURTOIS, Stéphane – LAZAR, Marc: *Histoire du Parti communiste français*. Paris, Presses universitaires de France 2000, p. 357.

Some historians and others have studied the repercussions of the Prague Spring within the French Communist Party. Shortly after the August invasion, a number of books were published in France by French communist intellectuals and sympathisers with the “restoration movement” in Czechoslovakia.⁵ Somewhat later, the sociologist Pierre Grémion analysed the reception of the events in Czechoslovakia within the French Left in general (not merely the communist Left).⁶ The Czech historian Karel Bartošek studied the relations between the French and Czechoslovak Communists. In his publication *Les aveux des archives: Prague–Paris–Prague 1948–1968*, Bartošek devotes quite an extensive chapter to this particular period.⁷ Nonetheless, besides his memories, he largely draws from Czechoslovak archives. The position of the French Communists is thus portrayed through the prism of the Czechoslovak Embassy in Paris. Recent years have also brought comparative perspectives on the theme: in her book, Maud Anne Bracke explores the response of French and Italian Communists to the Prague Spring, and the subsequent intervention.⁸ She focuses on the effect of the events in Czechoslovakia on the change in the understanding and strategy of internationalism within the French Communist Party and its Italian counterpart. The German historian Ulrich Pfeil studied the reception of the Prague Spring among East German and French Communists.⁹ Both older and more recent works on the history of the French Communist Party address its official position on the Prague Spring and, particularly, on the August intervention.¹⁰

Most publications hitherto (apart from the Bracke monograph), however, did not draw from the recently opened archive of the French Communist Party. The presented study therefore aims to offer a further insight into the still prevailing perspective in historiography on the relations between French and Czechoslovak Communists in 1968 by shedding further light on the findings concerning the internal material of the French Communist Party (hereafter the FCP). Based on the new evidence the study attempts to reconstruct the reaction to the Prague

5 Compare for example DAIX, Pierre: *Journal de Prague: Décembre 1967 – Septembre 1968*. Paris, Julliard 1968; GARAUDY, Roger: *La liberté en sursis: Prague 1968*. Paris, Fayard 1968; IDEM: *Toute la vérité*. Paris, Grasset 1970.

6 GRÉMION, Pierre: *Paris–Prague: La gauche face au renouveau et à la régression tchécoslovaques (1968–1978)*. Paris, Julliard 1985.

7 BARTOŠEK, Karel: *Zpráva o putování v komunistických archivech: Praha–Paříž (1948–1968)* [A Report on The Pilgrimage through Communist Archives: Prague–Paris (1948–1968)]. Praha – Litomyšl, Paseka 2000, pp. 219–231 (originally published in French: *Les aveux des archives: Prague–Paris–Prague 1948–1968*. Paris, Seuil 1996).

8 BRACKE, Maud: *Which Socialism? Whose Détente? West European Communism and the Czechoslovak Crisis, 1968*. Budapest – New York, Central European University Press 2007 (published also in Italian the following year).

9 PFEIL, Ulrich: SED, PCF and The Prague Spring. In: *Soudobé dějiny*, Vol. 8, No. 1 (2001), pp. 58–75.

10 Compare for example ROBRIEUX, Philippe: *Histoire intérieure du Parti communiste*, Vol. 2: *1945–1972*. Paris, Fayard 1981, p. 646; BELL, D. S.: *The French Communist Party in the Fifth Republic*, p. 93 n.; COURTOIS, S. – LAZAR, M.: *Histoire du Parti communiste français*, pp. 353–357.

Spring at three different levels within the FCP: 1. by the Party leaders (official reception), 2. among French communist intellectuals, and 3. within the Party rank and file. The reception within the first two groups has already been explored and detailed quite extensively. Official statements and communiqués by FCP leaders were issued in the FCP daily *L'Humanité*. The views of intellectuals were printed in French (Communist Party) journals such as *Les Lettres Françaises* or *Démocratie nouvelle* and in their own books. Moreover, some of the internal documents from the FCP have also been published already.¹¹ On the other hand, by and large, grassroots members felt no urge to express their views, which had mainly been shaped by the Party leadership. The latter was conscious of its influence and therefore emphasised membership instruction, which also included an interpretation of the events in Czechoslovakia. Those among the rank and file who had spent time in Czechoslovakia reported their experiences to the FCP. Their accounts show how French nationals responded to the Prague Spring as well as on the information base used by the French Communist Party leadership to form its views on the events in Czechoslovakia. The sources also shed further light on the usual image of the first two groups: transcripts of speeches given at sessions of the FCP Central Committee were no doubt published with some editorial intervention in terms of content, whilst the now accessible archive contains audio recordings of these addresses. Moreover, internal decisions taken at political bureau sessions and the Party Secretariat have not, for the most part, been accessible. In addition, the study examines Czechoslovak reflections on the position adopted by the French Communists. In so doing, it draws largely on documents from the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia (hereafter CPC) preserved at the National Archive of the Czech Republic, on reports issued by the Czechoslovak Embassy in Paris available at the Archive of the Czech Ministry of Foreign Affairs and, in some cases, on printed documentary series.

Prague Spring: A Future for Czechoslovakia?

French Communist Party circles began to discuss the Prague Spring as early as the mid-1960s. A piece of writing by Roger Garaudy from June 1963 is deemed to be the first consideration of the theme.¹² In his article published in *Les Lettres Françaises* and bearing the prophetic title “Kafka and the Prague Spring,” Garaudy highly commended the contribution made by a conference on Kafka in Liblice that had just ended: “The conference in Liblice and the respect that Prague has for Kafka

11 Compare FABIEN, Jean (ed.): *Kremlin-PCF: Conversations secrètes*. Paris, Olivier Orban 1984.

12 Roger Garaudy (1913–2012), philosopher and member of the CC FCP, expelled from the Party in 1970 for criticism of the Soviet intervention in Czechoslovakia; he later turned to Catholicism and, in the early 1980s, converted to Islam, having expressed his ideological transformation, *inter alia*, by denying the Holocaust.

seemed to us like swallows signalling the arrival of spring.”¹³ It came as no surprise therefore that five years later Garaudy was an enthusiastic supporter of the Prague Spring which had by then become an “official” phenomenon. In his position as a member of the FCP Central Committee (hereafter the CC FCP) Garaudy thus stood on the side of the Czechoslovak reform Communists. He expressed his position, *inter alia*, during the sessions of the CC FCP. By the same token, he also subjected Antonín Novotný, First Secretary of the CPC Central Committee, to frequent criticism. For instance, in April 1968, Garaudy criticised the government of Antonín Novotný (who had by then stepped down) for excessive bureaucracy, the absence of democracy and a national policy that was detrimental to Slovakia. While on the one hand, Garaudy recognised that it was during Novotný’s administration that the restoration of justice began for those who had been unfairly sentenced during the show trials, on the other he was critical of the fact that those who had been responsible for the persecutions during the 1950s were often allowed to remain in their posts.¹⁴

The journalist and writer Pierre Daix was another French intellectual within the Party who, during the Prague Spring, publicly declared his support for Dubček’s leadership.¹⁵ In the spring of 1968, Daix published reports from Czechoslovakia in the communist-oriented revue *Les Lettres Françaises*. His defence of the liberation endeavour was explicit. On 20 March 1968, for instance, he attended a public gathering entitled “Youth Enquires” which was held in the Congress Palace at the Julius Fučík Culture and Leisure Park in the Prague district of Holešovice. He was quite impressed by the atmosphere of the gathering. It reminded him of the French Revolution: “I pictured that evening a session of the Club des Cordeliers or that of the Jacobins 180 years earlier being transferred to Prague [...]”¹⁶ Daix was particularly taken by the activities generated by the then awakening civil society. He believed that it was in the Prague Spring that the Czechoslovaks had found “their future.”¹⁷ As a result of his articles Daix faced opposition from some of the more conservative FCP members. In one of his texts about Novotný, he argued that “[Novotný] launched his government with full prisons, and was the last one within the Socialist Bloc to empty them, whilst retaining the utmost trust in those who had filled them in the first place, as he did *vis-à-vis* the torturers and suppliers of

13 GARAUDY, Roger: Kafka et le printemps de Prague. In: *Les Lettres Françaises*, Vol. 22, No. 981 (6–11 July 1963). GRÉMION, P.: *Paris–Prague*, p. 57.

14 *Archives départementales Seine-Saint-Denis*, Bobigny (hereafter AD93), Archives du PCF, Fonds (fund – f.) Comité central, 4AV/121, Track 2, Address by Roger Garaudy given at the CC FCP session on 18–19 April 1968.

15 Pierre Daix (b. 1922), French journalist and writer, a member of the FCP since 1939, between 1948 and 1972 Editor-in-Chief of *Les Lettres Françaises* (Louis Aragon was the Director of the revue), left the FCP in 1974.

16 DAIX, P.: *Journal de Prague*, p. 64.

17 *Ibid.*, p. 206.

the gallows.”¹⁸ This caused disagreement, *inter alia*, with the former FCP Senator André Souquière who complained about Daix to the Party leadership.¹⁹ On the one hand, Souquière accepted that changes in Czechoslovakia had been needed: “I understand that the comrades from the CPC are now mending the long – no doubt too long – period of errors [...]” On the other, he believed that Daix went too far in his assessment, for he “bins all the past, makes judgements about old events whilst that only befits the Czechoslovaks themselves,” and not “a French Communist in a newspaper that he himself runs.”²⁰

FCP Leadership: Limited Support

Judging by the negotiations of the FCP Secretariat and Politburo at least, the leadership of the French Communists started to show a greater interest in developments in Czechoslovakia from March 1968. One of the undertakings made at the Secretariat session on 19 March 1968 was “to pass on information about the situation in Czechoslovakia and Poland.”²¹ Two weeks later members of the Secretariat decided that the address given by Dubček to the CPC Central Committee was to be “deemed positive,” since it fought “attempts to question socialism and reaffirms the position of Czechoslovakia in terms of its foreign policy.”²² Otherwise, however, the position of the FCP Secretariat remained prudent and restrained, whilst placing major emphasis on the need “to continue monitoring developments related to the situation in Czechoslovakia.”²³ Dubček’s speech published by the FCP daily *L’Humanité* on 1 April was also highlighted by Waldeck Rochet, the Secretary General of the French Communist Party.²⁴ Rochet wished Dubček and the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia and its Central Committee “a lot of success in implementing their agenda aimed at further developing socialism.” He also commended the entire post-January leadership of the CPC, which he thought to be composed of “people determined to defend socialism.” Rochet found such resolve, for instance, in Dubček’s statement that “democracy is not anarchy.”²⁵

18 AD93, Archives du PCF, f. Waldeck Rochet, 307J131, Letter by André Souquière to the CC FCP Secretariat dated 8 April 1968.

19 André Souquière (1908–1999), FCP member, French Senator between 1948 and 1952, involved in the peace movement in the 1960s.

20 *Ibid.*

21 *Ibid.*, f. Secrétariat, 2NUM4/14, Resolution of the CC FCP Secretariat dated 19 March 1968.

22 *Ibid.*, Resolution of the CC FCP Secretariat dated 2 April 1968.

23 *Ibid.*, Resolution of the CC FCP Secretariat dated 23 July 1968; compare Resolution of the CC FCP Secretariat of 1 August 1968.

24 Waldeck Rochet (1905–1983), Communist politician and journalist, member of the French National Assembly, between 1964 and 1972 Secretary General of the FCP.

25 AD93, Archives du PCF, f. Comité central, 4AV/123, Track 1, Address by Waldeck Rochet given at the CC FCP session held on 18–19 April 1968.

Nonetheless, the positive attitude taken by French Communists towards the Prague Spring had its limits. In the spring of 1968, the FCP leadership viewed developments in Czechoslovakia somewhat confidently, trying to focus on the constructive aspects (which, however, meant, from the perspective of the FCP, retaining loyalty to the Socialist Bloc and the Soviet Union rather than to régime liberalisation). The FCP leadership never saw the Czechoslovak model as a potential inspiration for the French Communist Party.²⁶ Czechoslovak diplomats in Paris, on the other hand, seemed to be more optimistic about the position the French Communists had assumed. The diplomatic despatches indicate that Rochet and other influential figures showed clear sympathy in their negotiations with the Czechoslovaks. In early June 1968, for instance, Guy Besse in conversation with Ivo Fleishmann, poet and Czechoslovak Cultural Attaché in Paris, mentioned that “the comrades close to Rochet and particularly Waldeck Rochet himself highly value Dubček’s bold and constructive approach” and that the CPC “has full trust” among French Communist Party members.²⁷ At the same time, he voiced their concern that “the leadership of the Party apparatus should not slip out of the hands of Com[rade] Dubček.”²⁸ In his despatch of 25 July, the Czechoslovak Ambassador in Paris, Vilém Pithart, reported an anti-Soviet mood within the French Communist Party and support for the Czechoslovak leadership: “Our approach is deemed to be peaceful and prudent, and enjoys full sympathy among the vast majority not only within the leadership but also among Party members. After such developments within the FCP, there is no one in the whole of France who would not support us and not assume an anti-Soviet stance. Expressions of sympathy for us keep flowing in from all directions.”²⁹ According to Pithart, Rochet’s official speeches were thus well “beyond our expectations.”³⁰

In the summer, particularly from the end of July 1968, the speeches by FCP representatives began to voice words of caution. On 27 July 1968, for instance, at a meeting of the FCP Central Committee, Waldeck Rochet rejected the Czechoslovak

26 See BRACKE, M.: *Which Socialism? Whose Détente?*, p. 149.

27 Guy Besse (1919–2004), philosopher and Communist politician, a member of the CC FCP between 1956 and 1985, Politburo member from 1967 to 1985.

28 *Archive of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Czech Republic* (hereafter *AMFA CR*), f. Political reports from diplomatic missions, IV/6, France, T (Classified) 1965–69, Record of a conversation held by I. Fleischmann with Guy Besse, a member of the CC FCP Political Bureau on 4 July 1968, Paris, 10 July 1968.

29 VONDROVÁ, Jitka – NAVRÁTIL, Jaromír (ed.): *Mezinárodní souvislosti československé krize 1967–1970: Červenec–srpen 1968* [International Context of the Czechoslovak Crisis in 1967–1970: July – August 1968]. (Prameny k dějinám československé krize v letech 1967–1970, sv. IV/2 [Sources on the History of the Czechoslovak Crisis in 1967–1970, Vol. IV/2]) Praha – Brno, Ústav pro soudobé dějiny Akademie věd České republiky – Doplněk 1996, p. 29, Document No. 110 – Dispatch by the Czechoslovak Ambassador to France, V. Pithart, concerning the increase in critical attitudes within the FCP leadership towards Soviet politics as a result of the approach by the USSR to the Czechoslovak case, 25 July 1968, Paris.

30 See BARTOŠEK, K.: *Zpráva o putování v komunistických archivech*, p. 223.

manifesto entitled *Two Thousand Words*, arguing that “it might be used by some forces hostile to socialism.” He considered the situation in Czechoslovakia to be “dangerous.” Yet, he questioned the idea that counter-revolution was underway. He criticised the Warsaw letter issued by the representatives of five Warsaw Pact member states as “unacceptable interference in the internal affairs of another Party and another country.” Rochet saw a possible intervention in Czechoslovakia as a “catastrophe.”³¹ The summit of Czechoslovak and Soviet politicians at the end of July and early August held in Čierna nad Tisou and Bratislava thus came as a relief to the French Communists: they believed the threat of intervention had been averted. The FCP press reported accordingly.³² In early August, Roland Leroy told the Minister of Education Čestmír Císař of “satisfaction within the FCP about the outcome of the negotiations in Čierna [nad Tisou] and Bratislava.”³³

In August 1968, shortly before the Soviet invasion, the French Communists grew even more careful in their assessment of developments in Czechoslovakia. Their representatives often voiced their rejection of anti-Sovietism and highlighted the need to struggle for unity within the international communist movement.³⁴ This position was also reflected in the official talks at the Politburo. At the session on 14 August 1968, for instance, the body decided against “assisting revisionist forces” in Czechoslovakia.³⁵

The official position of the French Communist Party was also expressed in its central publication channel *L'Humanité*. Until mid-July the daily merely informed its readers about debates on the Prague Spring within the CPC (publishing excerpts from statements by the leaders, measures adopted, etc.), although the term “Prague Spring” was omitted.³⁶ At the same time, criticism of the developments in Czechoslovakia made by East German Communists was ignored.³⁷ On the other hand, *L'Humanité*, along with the rest of the French Communist Party press, remained silent about *Two Thousand Words*. In its reports on the Prague Spring from July onwards, *L'Humanité* focused particularly on relations between the Czechoslovak and Soviet Communist Parties, while stressing that Czechoslovakia wished to remain

31 AD93, Archives du PCF, f. Comité central, 4AV/140, Track 1, Address by Waldeck Rochet given to the CC FCP session on 27 July 1968.

32 See BRACKE, M.: *Which Socialism? Whose Détente?*, p. 166.

33 *National Archive of the Czech Republic* (hereafter NA), f. 1591 (CC CPC Presidium 1966–1971 – original identification of the fund 02/1), box (k.) 79, archival unit (arch. u.) 118, information point 7 – Record from conversation held by Č. Císař with the CC FCP Secretary Comrade R. Leroy on 7 August 1968 (written on 9 August 1968). – Roland Leroy (b. 1926), Communist politician and journalist, served in the FCP leadership (member of the CC FCP from 1956 to 1994, member of the Politburo from 1964 to 1994 and of the Central Secretariat between 1960 and 1979); between 1974 and 1994 managed *L'Humanité*.

34 See COURTOIS, S. – LAZAR, M.: *Histoire du Parti communiste français*, p. 355.

35 AD93, Archives du PCF, f. Bureau Politique 1964–1972, 2NUM4/5, CC FCP Politburo resolution dated 14 August 1968.

36 See GRÉMION, P.: *Paris–Prague*, p. 67.

37 Compare PACTEAU, Sylvie: *Le P.C.F. face à l'intervention soviétique en Tchécoslovaquie*. Dissertation submitted to the Université des sciences sociales de Grenoble, 1984, p. 14.

faithful to the Soviet Union.³⁸ Information published by *L'Humanité* on the results of a poll among Czechoslovaks carried out by the periodical *Večerník Praha* was equally positive. According to the poll, 89 percent of respondents desired to retain socialism, while a mere five percent opted for capitalism and six percent abstained from giving their opinion.³⁹

Impressions of "Ordinary" French Communists

The views of the French Communist Party leadership on the developments were shaped by information in the Czechoslovak press and by accounts from FCP members in Czechoslovakia. French communist "reporters" largely viewed the liberalisation of Czechoslovakia in a negative light, even prior to 1968. Guy Besse, for example, a member of the FCP Central Committee who was in Czechoslovakia in early June 1967 as part of an official delegation led by Jeannette Vermeersch, noted the rise of "neo-capitalist" trends:⁴⁰ "The windows between Czechoslovakia and different capitalist countries have been open for some years. [...] Yet the wind that blows from the capitalist countries to Prague is not always right. [...] Some Czechoslovak economists and others – writers, journalists and Party cadres – have been more or less seduced by neo-capitalist themes."⁴¹

A number of similar reports suggested that the Czechoslovaks were captivated by the West, which they idealised excessively. In early 1968, the Prague-based correspondent for *L'Humanité* Pierre Hentgès and his wife Philippa spoke in the same vein about the "protagonists of a continual Fronde against the regime," who "are genuinely fascinated by the West, its lifestyle, ideology (Sartre or Camus)." The protagonists of the Fronde therefore, the Hentgès maintained, represented the "Czechoslovak petty bourgeoisie."⁴²

The report by Léon and Germaine Rabinowicz who visited Czechoslovakia from 29 July to 22 August 1968 might have been one source the French Communist leaders used for rank and file views on developments in Czechoslovakia.⁴³ As early as the beginning of their stay in Karlovy Vary [Carlsbad], the Rabinowiczs

38 *Ibid.*, p. 19.

39 See GRÉMION, P.: *Paris–Prague*, p. 69; compare *L'Humanité* (15 July 1968).

40 Jeannette Vermeersch (1910–2001), Communist politician; since the 1930s partner and, from 1947, wife of the FCP Secretary General Maurice Thorez, a member of the CC FCP Politburo; resigned from her post in protest against the position of the Party leadership on Soviet intervention in Czechoslovakia.

41 AD93, Archives du PCF, f. Gaston Plissonnier, 264J13, dossier (Vol.) 1 (1962–1967), G. Besse – Délégation du Parti en Tchécoslovaquie, 4–10 July 1967.

42 *Ibid.*, Vol. 2 (Année 1968), Pierre et Philippa Hentgès, Note sur les circonstances qui amenèrent des changements en Tchécoslovaquie, 19 January 1968.

43 The Rabinowiczs, husband and wife, were members of the Paris cell Trévis, Section Montmartre – 9th district. It was probably a private trip (they were not part of an official delegation). Germaine came originally from Egypt and moved to France in the 1950s; Léon, originally a Pole with Jewish ancestry, emigrated to France before the Second World War.

came across anti-Sovietism: a parking attendant told them that “the situation in Czechoslovakia would be better if the Russians were not taking everything for themselves” and that the Russians were looting Czechoslovakia, particularly the uranium from Jáchymov [Joachimstahl]. While in a restaurant in Jáchymov itself, they were asked to sign a petition in support of President Ludvík Svoboda and the First Secretary of the CPC Central Committee, Alexander Dubček. The young waiter who sought their signatures reportedly believed that the Tito régime was the best and Yugoslavia the most progressive of all socialist countries.⁴⁴

In the town of Teplá, the Rabinowiczs met young Czechoslovak soldiers who also complained about the Soviet Union, which they considered to be the root cause of their nation’s economic inertia. “They believed that Czechoslovakia should free itself from the custody of the Soviet Union which is a backward country and forces Czechoslovakia to keep its living standards below their potential.” It thus comes as no surprise to learn that the French communist couple did not get very far by conversing with the men in Russian: “We spoke Russian, but the young soldiers told us that they did not like Russian and preferred to learn German.”⁴⁵ In Prague the couple witnessed a gathering of students listening to a speech being given by a young English beatnik. Earlier in the year, in May, he had been on the barricades in Paris and “kept explaining to the people of Prague how Waldeck Rochet and Séguy,⁴⁶ following Brezhnev’s orders, had betrayed the revolution.”⁴⁷ The Rabinowiczs then chatted with an elderly woman who declared that “Czechoslovakia wishes to become oriented towards the West since it would then receive loans from the World Bank to modernise its industry.”⁴⁸

From Prague the couple hitchhiked to Terezín [Teresienstadt], together with a young construction worker who argued that “so-called socialism” and “so-called capitalism were dated notions.” It was “production and productivity that mattered.” The young man described the Nazi crimes as “horrific” but added that “the Soviets committed similar crimes.” While in Terezín, the Rabinowiczs met an elderly guide who, though not a Communist, “had many sleepless nights” because of the squabbles with the Soviet Union. He hoped “that everything would get settled.”⁴⁹

The Rabinowiczs then toured the region of Hradec Králové, where they first heard that “everyone in France enjoys high living standards, the workers own cars, life is simple and de Gaulle is highly popular.” It took some explaining for the French couple to let the locals know just how things “really” were in France. The Rabinowiczs,

They became FCP activists in their districts and local members of the Association of Friends of the Paris Commune; Léon Rabinowicz was also a contributor to *L'Humanité*.

44 *Ibid.*, f. Raymond Guyot, 263J31, Vol. 2 (Tchécoslovaquie Août 1968), Boîte (box – k.) 3, Notes et impressions d’un voyage en Tchécoslovaquie du 29 juillet au 22 août 1968, p. 1.

45 *Ibid.*, p. 2.

46 Georges Séguy (b. 1927), Communist politician and trade unionist; from 1967 to 1982 Secretary General of the French trade union CGT (*Confédération générale du travail*).

47 *Ibid.*, p. 2.

48 *Ibid.*

49 *Ibid.*, p. 3.

however, were not alone in being surprised by such idealism of the West: “We met a German in our hotel who was also taken aback by the idyllic visions that some Czechs held about the West.”⁵⁰

In Náchod they came across a medical doctor who considered Novotný an “agent of Moscow who implemented in Czechoslovakia the orders he was given.” Though the doctor “had a pretty flat, a car and a dacha,” vacationed in Bulgaria and Yugoslavia, he complained about excessive equality in wages. They also visited an art studio in the town: “The young painter hastily showed us works he did on commissions received from various associations. And then he produced the paintings he deemed to be genuine art.” It was a cycle of apocalyptic scenes on “totalitarian communism that crushes man with its propaganda. However, he considers France to be a land governed by freedom.”⁵¹

In Luhačovice, shortly prior to the Soviet invasion, the couple spoke with the staff in their hotel: “One of them told us openly that he stood for the return of capitalism.” They also met a young waitress who was concerned about the fact that everything they had learned at school “was promptly denied by her parents.”⁵² Before leaving the country, the Rabinowiczs had further confirmation of excessive Czech idealisation of France when a worker in Brno claimed “that workers in France are better off than in Czechoslovakia and that things are better in every respect there.”⁵³

Léon and Germaine Rabinowicz ended their report by voicing their disillusionment with the views held by the Czechoslovaks: “It seemed absurd to us that throughout our journey across a socialist country we had to constantly advocate the ideas of socialism and refute propaganda that supports a capitalist régime, portraying it at as prosperous, liberal, etc.” They concluded that a lesson learned from the journey was the need to carry on the “ideological struggle.”⁵⁴

This report on Czechoslovakia by “ordinary” French Communists along with other unpublished accounts by members of the FCP leadership stood in stark contrast with those from intellectuals published in the French pro-communist press (excluding *L'Humanité*). The French Communists who visited Czechoslovakia were most surprised at the idealisation of the West. Their conversations with locals gave them the impression that the majority of Czechoslovaks longed for nothing other than the restoration of capitalism. Though the French Communists, whose reports of visits to Czechoslovakia have been preserved, represented but a fraction of the sizeable membership base of the French Communist Party, it seems that the opening up of Czechoslovakia by no means met with the sympathy of all French Communists. The image of the Prague Spring, however, remained essentially an internal matter. It did not appear in the French Communist Party press even during sessions of the FCP Central Committee.

50 *Ibid.*, p. 4.

51 *Ibid.*, p. 5.

52 *Ibid.*

53 *Ibid.*

54 *Ibid.*, p. 6.

Similarly, the CPC leadership was forming its own opinion on how the Prague Spring was being reflected among the grassroots of the French Party. This was drawn in part from conversations with their French counterparts. Roland Leroy, for instance, informed the Minister of Education, Čestmír Císař, in early August 1968 that the FCP “membership masses” are not united in their position on the Prague Spring, and that the “position of the leadership of the French Communist Party is not plainly accepted and understood.” Leroy then reportedly added that “some Party members, even those in leading posts, did not wish to change their sentimental belief that ‘what the Soviet Union does, it does well.’” Leroy argued that “some time and instructional effort were required for everyone within the FCP to come to understand the nature of the so-called Czechoslovak case.”⁵⁵ In his memoirs, Čestmír Císař later recalled that it was essentially because of his conversations with Leroy that he came to understand the position of Waldeck Rochet and Georges Marchais,⁵⁶ who, “while having overcome Stalinism, still failed to reach the stage of a democratic model of socialism; they did not follow their Italian comrades and could not fully accept the Czechoslovak experiment.”⁵⁷

Rochet the Diplomat: Walking a Tightrope

When discussing the role played by the Secretary General of the French Communist Party, Waldeck Rochet, during the Prague Spring, most contemporary historians highlight his position on non-intervention in Czechoslovakia. His room for manoeuvre, however, was restricted by the friendship between the French Communist Party and the Soviet Union: the bottom line of one was also that of the other.⁵⁸ Rochet was representative of the Khrushchev faction among French Communists, hence a supporter of moderate de-Stalinisation similar to that subscribed to by Khrushchev. Rochet’s election as FCP leader in 1964 coincided with Leonid Brezhnev coming to power in the Soviet Union. Consequently, Rochet lost support in Moscow. Moreover, he also had to come to terms with the rather powerful conservative clique in his own Party (the “Thorezians”), who included, *inter alia*, Jacques Duclos⁵⁹ and Jeannette

55 NA, f. 1591, k. 79, arch. u. 118, information point 7 – Record from conversation held by Č. Císař with Comrade R. Leroy, CC FCP Secretary.

56 Georges Marchais (1920–1997), Communist politician, since 1959 a member of the CC FCP and its Politburo; from 1972 to 1994 FCP Secretary General, from 1973 until the end of his life a Member of the French National Assembly.

57 CÍSAŘ, Čestmír: Paměti: Nejen ze zákulisí Pražského jara [*Memoirs: Not Merely from Behind the Scenes of the Prague Spring*]. Praha, SinCon 2005, p. 952.

58 Compare for example BRÄCKE, M.: *Which Socialism? Whose Détente?*, p. 151 n.; BARTOŠEK, K: Zpráva o putování v komunistických archivech, p. 222; LAZAR, M.: *Le communisme*, p. 39 n.; COURTOIS, S. – LAZAR, M.: *Histoire du Parti communiste français*, p. 353.

59 Jacques Duclos (1896–1975), Communist politician and founding member of the FCP, from 1926 a member of the FCP leadership, from the 1930s the second person after Maurice Thorez for whom he covered during his illness in 1950–1953 as FCP Secretary General *ad interim*. After the return of Thorez, he retained influence in the closest Party circle.

Vermeersch, the widow of the recently deceased Secretary General, Maurice Thorez.⁶⁰ For the conservatives, solidarity with the Soviet Union was an imperative that could never be challenged and any steps that would lead to a deterioration in relations were rejected.⁶¹ Official support for the Prague Spring by the French Communist Party could therefore have never been anything but ambiguous. Thus Maud Bracke aptly describes Rochet's position on the events unfolding in Prague as "benevolent tolerance" or "formal and limited support."⁶² Nevertheless, Rochet tried to use diplomatic means to avert intervention by negotiating with both Czechoslovak and Soviet comrades but his conciliatory efforts proved ineffective. As phrased by Karel Bartošek, it resembled "walking a tightrope."⁶³

Waldeck Rochet launched his diplomatic mission in mid-July 1968. He first travelled to Moscow to meet the Secretaries of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (hereafter the CPSU), Mikhail Suslov, Boris Ponomarev and Andrei Kirilenko on 15 July. The following day he had talks with the Secretary General, Leonid Brezhnev. The Moscow trip was made partly on Rochet's own initiative and partly as a result of pressure exerted by other Communist Parties (such as that by Zoltán Komácsin, Secretary of the Hungarian United Workers' Party), as well as by the French non-communist Left (Guy Mollet,⁶⁴ for instance, explicitly requested Rochet to "intervene in Moscow on behalf of the current CPC leadership").⁶⁵ Rochet's visit to Moscow came just a few days after the French Communists received a letter "about the situation in Czechoslovakia" from the Kremlin that was addressed to West European Communist Parties. The letter stirred panic

During the German occupation, he was responsible for the work of the underground FCP. Between 1926 and 1958 he was a Member of the French National Assembly (after the foundation of the Popular Front in 1936 he became its Deputy Chairman); he was in the Senate between 1959 and 1975; and he was a Communist Party candidate in the 1969 presidential elections. He also held critical positions within the international communist movement.

- 60 Maurice Thorez (1900–1964), Communist politician and founding member of the FCP, serving as FCP Secretary General from 1932 to the end of his life, Member of the French National Assembly, joined the French Government after the foundation of the Popular Front in 1936; deserted from the army in 1939 and spent the Second World War in the Soviet Union. Between 1946 and 1947 served as French Deputy Prime Minister.
- 61 The admiration that the French Communists had for the Soviet Union ("the Land of Stalin") was quite strong even before the Second World War. The defeat of Fascism further enhanced the sentiment (compare LAZAR, M.: *Le communisme*, p. 37). In connection with French Stalinism compare also GOULEMOT, Jean-Marie: *Pour l'amour de Staline: La face oubliée du communisme français*. Paris, CNRS éditions 2009.
- 62 BRACKE, M.: *Which Socialism? Whose Détente?*, p. 151 n.
- 63 BARTOŠEK, K.: Zpráva o putování v komunistických archivech, p. 230.
- 64 Guy Mollet (1905–1975), socialist politician, from 1946 to 1969 Secretary General of *Section Française de l'Internationale Ouvrière* – SFIO, which was transformed in 1969 into the Socialist Party; from the liberation of France until the end of the 1960s he served in a number of ministerial posts and was French Prime Minister in 1956–1957.
- 65 BRACKE, M.: *Which Socialism? Whose Détente?*, p. 162 n.

in the FCP leadership because it gave the impression that the likelihood of a Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia was quite high.⁶⁶

Rochet reported on his brief discussions to the FCP Central Committee on 27 July. In Moscow, Mikhail Suslov had told him of Soviet concern over the fate of Czechoslovakia, where, allegedly, “reactionary forces pose a threat to socialism” and the CPC leadership had lost control of the situation. He warned that the Soviets would intervene if necessary. In his subsequent conversation with Rochet, Brezhnev used similar arguments and expressed the Soviet dilemma: “either to stand by idly and allow, after two decades, a change of borders for socialism or to intervene and take extreme measures.”⁶⁷ Rochet admitted that he tried to convince Moscow not to engage in military intervention in Czechoslovakia and warned Suslov of the effects of such action: “The consequences of letting Czechoslovakia fall into the imperialist camp might be severe but to adopt extreme measures would also have serious repercussions. [...] Soviet intervention in Hungary was justified and necessary in light of the counter-revolution. Yet such action would be difficult to explain now.”⁶⁸ He suggested to Brezhnev that he call a conference of European Communist and Workers’ Parties to address developments in Czechoslovakia – a proposal that Moscow rejected. On behalf of the FCP Central Committee, Rochet then sent a letter to Brezhnev in which he refused to support the Warsaw letter. He pointed out that intervention in Czechoslovakia would mean unacceptable interference in the internal affairs of another Party. He further warned that a violent end to the Prague Spring would be “a real catastrophe for the international communist

66 *Ibid.*, p. 162.

67 AD93, Archives du PCF, f. Comité central, 4AV/140, Track 1, Address given by Waldeck Rochet at the CC FCP session on 27 July 1968; compare also FABIEN, J. (ed.): *Kremlin–PCF*, pp. 51–58 and 61–73. For a Czech translation of the stenographic record of the conversation between W. Rochet and L. I. Brezhnev, see VONDROVÁ, Jitka – NAVRÁTIL, Jaromír (ed.): *Mezinárodní souvislosti československé krize 1967–1970: Červenec–srpen 1968* [International Context of the Czechoslovak Crisis in 1967–1970: July – August 1968]. (Prameny k dějinám československé krize v letech 1967–1970, sv. IV/1 [Sources on the History of the Czechoslovak Crisis in 1967–1970, Vol. IV/1]) Praha – Brno, Ústav pro soudobé dějiny Akademie věd České republiky – Doplněk 1995, pp. 305–309, here p. 308, Document No. 95 – Stenographic record of conversation between W. Rochet and L. Brezhnev concerning the culmination of the crisis in relations between the CP USSR and CPC, made by J. Kanapa, 16 July 1968, Moscow.

68 AD93, Archives du PCF, f. Gaston Plissonnier, 264J14, Vol. 2 (Les relations PCF–PCUS), Sténogramme de l’entretien entre Waldeck Rochet et Mikhaïl Souslov à Moscou, 15 July 1968, p. 11. Even prior to his trip to Moscow, Waldeck Rochet explained, in the same spirit, his position on 11 July 1968 to the Soviet Ambassador in Paris Valerian A. Zorin (VONDROVÁ, Jitka (ed.): *Mezinárodní souvislosti československé krize 1967–1970: Červenec–srpen 1968* [International Context of the Czechoslovak Crisis in 1967–1970: July – August 1968]. (Prameny k dějinám československé krize v letech 1967–1970, sv. IV/4 [Sources on the History of the Czechoslovak Crisis in 1967 – 1970, Vol. IV/4])) Praha – Brno, Ústav pro soudobé dějiny Akademie věd České republiky – Doplněk 2011, p. 168, note 1 on Document No. 52 – Resolution from the 91st session of the CC CPSU Politburo on point 31: Concerning the answer to the Central Committee of the French Communist Party, 18 July 1968, Moscow).

movement.⁶⁹ In concluding his rather lengthy address to the July session of the FCP Central Committee, Rochet stressed that his strategy for solving the Czechoslovak crisis was to seek an accord. This earned him massive applause.⁷⁰

The Soviets, on the other hand, had a somewhat different interpretation of Rochet's perception of developments in Czechoslovakia. At the plenary session of the CPSU Central Committee held on 17 July, Brezhnev said of the Moscow talks: "Comrade Rochet expressed grave concern about the state of affairs in Czechoslovakia. At the end of our discussions, he stated that he fully subscribed to the letter that was sent on behalf of the Warsaw summit to the CPC leadership, and that in negotiations with Dubček he would fully advocate the position expressed in the letter and recommend the Presidium of the Central Committee (hereafter the CC) of the CPC to listen attentively to the voice of the CPSU [...]."⁷¹

After his trip to Moscow, Rochet headed for Prague. The French and Czechoslovak delegations met on 19 July. The talks, however, failed to make any decisive breakthrough in the relationship between the French and their Czechoslovak and Soviet counterparts. According to Roland Leroy, the discussions with Dubček left a rather positive impression on Rochet. The meeting reportedly convinced him that "the path on which the Czechoslovak Communists had embarked reflects the fundamental needs and specific conditions in the country; the Party leadership has a firm grip on the situation and is aware of extremes and manifestations of anti-communism [...] and the CPC leadership is surrounded by unity among both the majority of the Party and the public, while Dubček's authority has risen sufficiently to handle the situation and his responsibilities." Therefore, any change imposed from outside to reverse the path taken in Czechoslovakia, would result in "utter disaster for the entire communist movement, particularly in the West."⁷² On the other hand, as far as Dubček and other Czechoslovak Communists were concerned, relations with the French Communist Party were not markedly different from those with other West European countries.⁷³

69 AD93, f. Comité central, 4AV/141, Track 1, Address given by Waldeck Rochet at the session of the CC FCP on 27 July 1968; compare also FABIEN, J. (ed.): *Kremlin-PCF*, pp. 99–104. For a Czech translation of the letter see VONDROVÁ, J. – NAVRÁTIL, J. (ed.): *Mezinárodní souvislosti československé krize 1967–1970*, Vol. 1, pp. 337–339, here p. 338, Document No. 108 – Letter by the FCP Politburo to L. I. Brezhnev, in which the FCP refused to join the so-called Warsaw letter, 23 July 1968, Paris. The CC FCP Politburo also informed Vilém Pithart about the content of the letter (*Ibid.*, p. 339, note 1).

70 AD93, Archives du PCF, f. Comité central, 4AV/141, Track 1, Address given by Waldeck Rochet at the CC FCP session on 27 July 1968.

71 VONDROVÁ, J. – NAVRÁTIL, J. (ed.): *Mezinárodní souvislosti československé krize 1967–1970*, Vol. 1, pp. 316–321, here p. 318, Document No. 98 – Record of the address given by L. I. Brezhnev at the Plenary Session of the CC CPSU on 17 July 1968 on the outcome of the Warsaw meeting, 18 July 1968, Moscow.

72 NA, f. 1591, b. 79, arch. u. 118, information point 7 – Record of conversation held by Č. Císař with R. Leroy, the CC FCP Secretary.

73 For example *Rudé právo* reported on the visit by the FCP delegation very briefly (compare Soudruh Waldeck Rochet v Praze [Comrade Waldeck Rochet in Prague]. In: *Rudé*

More than the discussions themselves, however, it was a recording made of them by Jean Kanapa, who was among Rochet's entourage, which had a much greater effect.⁷⁴ In January 1970, Prague Radio broadcasted an address by Alois Indra, Secretary of the Central Committee of the CPC, given in the city of Prostějov, in which he stated that the FCP delegation who visited Prague in November 1969 handed the Czechoslovak Government a written record made by Kanapa of the talks between Rochet and Dubček that were held on 19 July 1968.⁷⁵ According to Indra, Dubček spoke favourably of Club 231, the burgeoning Social Democracy and the *Two Thousand Words* manifesto. Indra's words triggered considerable tension among French and Czechoslovak Communists. The French wrote of their concerns and requested Prague to explain why Indra had quoted from the document.⁷⁶ Gustáv Husák, the new Secretary General of the Central Committee of the CPC, replied in July 1970. In his letter, Husák expressed regret for what had occurred but charged "French reactionary forces" with exploiting the situation.⁷⁷ They allegedly misused Indra's "erroneous statement" which was inappropriately disseminated by radio, press and television.⁷⁸ To pre-empt speculation about the Rochet–Dubček summit, and, at the same time, to respond to the publication of excerpts from Kanapa's account in the non-communist press,⁷⁹ the French Communist Party decided to publish the full record in *L'Humanité* on 18 May 1970. In their introduction, the editors emphasised that the publication of Kanapa's notes could not be considered, under any circumstances, a "disclosure," for they merely

právo (20 July 1968), p. 1; Waldeck Rochet odcestoval [Waldeck Rochet left]. In: *Ibid.* (21 July 1968), p. 1).

- 74 Jean Kanapa (1921–1978), Communist politician, a member of the CC FCP, from 1975 a member of the Politburo.
- 75 According to Georges Marchais, the French Communists had indeed lent the document to their comrades in Prague in November 1969, yet Gustáv Husák reportedly promised to use it for internal purposes only (compare AD93, Archives du PCF, f. Comité central, 4AV/1827, Track 1, Address by Georges Marchais at the session of the CC FCP 20–21 May 1970).
- 76 Session of the CC CPC Presidium on 5 June 1970, point 10 – FCP letter to Gustáv Husák dated 26 May 1970.
- 77 It was particularly Roger Garaudy who used the case of the Kanapa notes: he accused the FCP leadership of having intentionally handed the stenograph to the CPC leaders, knowing that it could be exploited against A. Dubček. For the CPC response to Garaudy's accusation, compare for example: *Oč vlastně šlo na schůzce Waldecka Rocheta s A. Dubčekem* [What was the July 1968 meeting between Waldeck Rochet and A. Dubček really about]. In: *Rudé právo* (22 May 1970), p. 6.
- 78 AD93, Archives du PCF, f. Gaston Plissonnier, 264J14, Vol. 4 (Année 1970), Session du CC, Vitry, 13–15 October 1970; NA, f. 1591, b. 131, arch. u. 206, Record from the 176th session of the CC CPC on 19 June 1970, point 23 – Letter by the CPC to the French Communist Party of June 1970.
- 79 *Le Monde* published excerpts from the document on 13 May 1970; they were also printed in the May issue of *Politique Aujourd'hui*.

contained Dubček's publicly known views. The notes could not therefore be used by anyone as "evidence" to support any accusation.⁸⁰

Nevertheless, *L'Humanité* did leave out some passages from the report, particularly those concerning information about military matters.⁸¹ According to stenographic data retained in the archive of the French Communist Party, Dubček spoke about the protection of the western borders: "The Soviets say: You weakened the western border. Yet, we did hand them our plans, our military plans, to show that we had rather strengthened the borders. Konev and other Soviet generals arrived. They had a look and told Brezhnev: 'Everything is alright.' We have more forces on the western border than ever before! Why? Because we are fully aware of the situation. That was also the first thing we did in January: we issued an order to the Ministry of Defence to enhance security on the western border. Let us speak of the manoeuvres [ref. to the military exercise Šumava – author's note]. Soviet units are just leaving our territory. Yet, Comrade Waldeck Rochet, it was me and Černík who initiated the exercise. Why? To prove to the entire world that we are an integral part of the Warsaw Pact. So that Bonn could see clearly [...] that there is someone to stand by us."⁸² *L'Humanité* also omitted a section that described Dubček's reaction to the information he received during his talks with the French delegation. According to Kanapa's records, Dubček said: "Here we go. The TASS agency informs us that we are invited to Moscow. So, it is from an agency we learn that."⁸³ According to Kanapa the "Czechoslovak comrades" then discussed the news and showed "signs of anxiety": "If we go there, the people would be discontented. We have already been abroad three times to speak about our country. Once in Dresden, twice in Moscow. Why do they not come to us? How can we travel to Moscow after the letter from Warsaw?"⁸⁴ Similarly, *L'Humanité* did not publish the closing sentences of the summit, when Dubček or Černík reportedly stated: "People speak of a situation of counter-revolution. Yet, during the past six months there was no street protest

80 Notes prises au cours de l'entretien entre Waldeck Rochet et Alexandre Dubček à Prague, 19 July 1968. In: *L'Humanité* (18 May 1970), p. 5. Information was also circulating among French Communists that Kanapa's notes would be used in the planned trial of Dubček (compare e.g. AD93, Archives du PCF, f. Comité central, 4AV/1827, Track 1, Address by Georges Marchais at the CC FCP session 20–21 May 1970).

81 The record of the talks, including the parts omitted by *L'Humanité*, is available in the series: FABIEN, J. (ed.): *Kremlin-PCF*, pp. 77–96; for a Czech translation (with some parts omitted) see VONDROVÁ, J. – NAVRÁTIL, J. (ed.): *Mezinárodní souvislosti československé krize 1967–1970*, Vol. 1, pp. 324–330, Document No. 102 – Record of conversation held by W. Rochet with the CPC leaders in Prague on 19 July 1968 on the current situation in relations between the CPC and CPSU, 19 July 1968, Prague.

82 AD93, Archives du PCF, f. Gaston Plissonnier, 264J14, Vol. 1 (Les relations PCF-PCT,) Stenogramme de l'entretien entre Waldeck Rochet et Alexandre Dubček à Prague le 19 juillet 1968 (4 pm – 6:45 pm), pp. 18–19. The part quoted is omitted in the Czech translation.

83 The last sentence quoted here is missing in the Czech series.

84 *Ibid.*, p. 25; VONDROVÁ, J. – NAVRÁTIL, J. (ed.): *Mezinárodní souvislosti československé krize 1967–1970*, Vol. 1, pp. 324–330, Document No. 102, p. 328.

against socialism, the Government or the Party here! [...] All that we ask is to be left in peace, to be allowed get on with our policies, to be given time.”⁸⁵

Soviet Intervention and the French Communists

The leadership of the French Communist Party was quite prompt in responding to the intervention of Warsaw Pact troops in Czechoslovakia. The FCP Politburo issued an official declaration on the events as early as 11 am on 21 August 1968, expressing, *inter alia*, “surprise” at and “rejection” [*réprobation*] of what had occurred. Such a solution, they argued, was not in line with the principles governing relations between Communist Parties: “The problems that arise among Communist Parties have to be examined and solved with the assistance of brotherly discussions in the form of bilateral and multilateral talks, while respecting the sovereignty of each country, the free decisions of every Party, and in the spirit of proletarian internationalism.”⁸⁶ The resolution adopted by the CC FCP and published the following day reiterated the demand that sovereignty be respected: “Each Communist Party has to decide on its own politics, formal negotiations and methods of struggle independently and according to the principles of Marxism–Leninism.” In their declaration, the members of the Central Committee stated that they “disapprove” [*désapprouve*] of the military intervention.”⁸⁷ Later allusions to a change in the official position of the Party leadership (softening the original “rejection” by replacing it with “disapproval”) were discounted by the FCP leadership, which argued that the two notions were synonymous.⁸⁸

It is no surprise that the Czechoslovak Embassy in Paris monitored the response of the French Communists to the Soviet intervention and reported to Prague. In his dispatch of 24 August, filed after an “hour-long” conversation with Waldeck Rochet, for instance, Vilém Pithart informed Prague of reassurances given by the Secretary General that the position of his Party was clear. Rochet also emphasised the need to “chiefly stress the rejection of the occupation.” At the same time, however, Rochet confided to Pithart that his options as CC FCP Secretary General were limited and that disapproval of the intervention was not entirely a straightforward matter. He mentioned that the Party leadership “has to take into account some less progressive factions within the membership base; as well as the position that they do not wish to pre-empt the possibilities of contact with the USSR.”⁸⁹

85 *Ibid.*, p. 30. A part of this paragraph is missing in the Czech series.

86 AD93, Archives du PCF, f. Gaston Plissonnier, 264J14, Vol. 1 (Les relations PCF–PCT), Déclaration du BP du PCF sur les événements de Tchécoslovaquie (21 August 1968, 11 am).

87 *Ibid.*, Vol. 2 (Positions du PCF), CC FCP resolution dated 22 August 1968.

88 See LAZAR, M.: *Le communisme*, p. 39.

89 VONDROVÁ, J. – NAVRÁTIL, J. (ed.): *Mezinárodní souvislosti československé krize 1967–1970*, Vol. 2, p. 257, Document No. 160 – Dispatch from V. Pithart concerning his discussion with W. Rochet, the CC FCP Secretary General about the possibility of calling a conference of Communist and Workers’ Parties on the situation in Czechoslovakia, 24 August 1968, Paris.

Nonetheless, in the months to come the FCP leadership officially maintained their critical stance. At the same time, they did not neglect to regularly emphasise the reasons for their response. At a meeting on 13 September 1968, for instance, the CC FCP decided “to keep reminding ourselves that our Party adopted its position on the basis of the following principles: class struggle for the preservation of socialism in Czechoslovakia, proletarian internationalism, and non-interference in the internal affairs of brotherly Parties.” The Politburo meanwhile repeated its position on the absence of counter-revolution in Czechoslovakia: “At the point of military intervention, also with regard to the activity of anti-socialist forces which we have always dismissed, the situation was not one of counter-revolution, and that is supported by hard facts. It became apparent that the CPC with the assistance of socialist and communist countries, was able to gather the inner strength to overcome problems.” The Politburo resolution further stressed the values honoured by the French Communist Party, such as free decision-making within each Party, respect for sovereignty and territorial integrity, proletarian internationalism, and the equality of individual Communist Parties. According to the Politburo, the military intervention breached those principles.⁹⁰ The Party Central Secretariat also discussed the views of French Communists on the developments in Czechoslovakia. For example, on 27 August 1968 the Secretariat resolved “to attach great importance to the Party’s interpretation of the events and the position of the Central Committee.”⁹¹ In the weeks that followed, the Secretariat continued to highlight the need to “reaffirm” the standpoint of the FCP⁹² and to “show the position of our Party as accurate.”⁹³

Arguments contained in the Politburo declaration of 21 August and those employed by the FCP Central Committee the next day were later frequently taken up by the French Communists, as, for instance, during a meeting of the Central Committee in October 1968. The Czechoslovak crisis became one of the most widely debated issues. Speakers continually stressed that the events entailed unauthorised interference in the internal affairs of the Party, a practice that is unacceptable in socialism;⁹⁴ that the CPC leadership enjoyed the support of the entire Party and of the public;⁹⁵ and that there was no counter-revolution in Czechoslovakia.⁹⁶ Similarly, André Stil, who 12 years earlier had been an ardent supporter of Soviet intervention in Hungary, criticised the occupation of 1968 which he considered damaging

90 AD93, Archives du PCF, f. Bureau Politique 1964–1972, 2NUM4/5, Resolution of the CC FCP Politburo on 13 September 1968.

91 *Ibid.*, f. Secrétariat, 2NUM4/14, Resolution of the CC FCP Secretariat on 27 August 1968.

92 *Ibid.*, Resolution of the CC FCP Secretariat on 10 September 1968.

93 *Ibid.*, Resolution of the CC FCP Secretariat on 17 September 1968.

94 *Ibid.*, f. Comité central, 4AV/143, Track 1, Address by Yann Viens given at the CC FCP session on 20–21 October 1968.

95 *Ibid.*, 4AV/145, Track 1, Address by Lucien Mathey given at the CC FCP session on 20–21 October 1968.

96 *Ibid.*, 4AV/145, Track 2, Address by Paul Courtieu given at the CC FCP session on 20–21 October 1968; *Ibid.*, 4AV/146, Track 1, Address by Henri Martin given at the CC FCP session on 20–21 October 1968.

to socialism.⁹⁷ The danger for Czechoslovakia, he argued, was not posed by those who wanted to enhance socialism but by the politics of Antonín Novotný.⁹⁸ In their addresses, Étienne Fajon⁹⁹ and Jacques Duclos pointed out the difference between the current situation and that of Hungary 12 years earlier: while the Soviet intervention in 1956, they argued, was in response to the invitation by the Hungarian Communists, accordingly a matter of “brotherly help,” this did not apply in the case of Czechoslovakia.¹⁰⁰

Justification of the position frequently taken by the central bodies of the French Communist Party, however, was not reflected in the Party press. After the August intervention *L'Humanité* adopted a neutral tone when reporting developments, avoiding explanations and analyses, and drawing largely on accounts from Czechoslovak and Soviet press agencies.¹⁰¹ Excerpts from the Soviet *Pravda* were regularly reprinted without commentary. As time went on, the articles increasingly quoted Gustáv Husák, the “future Czechoslovak Gomułka.”¹⁰²

In September 1969, the Czechoslovak Embassy in Paris informed Prague about the style used by *L'Humanité* in its coverage of the suppression of the Prague Spring and the subsequent “normalisation.” In its description the Embassy stated that “after the conclusion of negotiations in Moscow last year, *L'Humanité* reported particularly on the progress of normalisation in the CSSR [Czechoslovak Socialist Republic] and kept fending off attacks by the bourgeois press, as well as from the non-communist Left, which criticised the daily for its ‘conformist position.’” At the same time, the report hinted at the already familiar dilemma between the validity of “disagreement” with the intervention and the maintenance of good relations with the Soviet Union: “The communist press kept warding off those attacks in the sense that the FCP retained its position of 21 August 1968, though it would, under no circumstances, allow anyone to manoeuvre it into anti-Sovietism.”¹⁰³

97 André Stil (1921–2004), writer, journalist and screenwriter, member of the CC FCP, from 1950–1958 Editor-in-Chief of *L'Humanité*.

98 *Ibid.*, 4AV/142, Track 1, Address by André Stil given at the CC FCP session on 20–21 October 1968.

99 Étienne Fajon (1906–1991), a member of the Poliburo and Secretariat of the CC FCP, from 1958 to 1974 Director of *L'Humanité*.

100 *Ibid.*, 4AV/147, Track 1, Address by Étienne Fajon given at the CC FCP session on 20–21 October 1968; *Ibid.*, 4AV/148, Track 3, Address by Jacques Duclos given at the CC FCP session on 20–21 October 1968.

101 See BRACKE, M.: *Which Socialism? Whose Détente?*, p. 222.

102 TATU, Michel: *L'Hérésie impossible: Chronique du drame tchécoslovaque*. Paris, B. Grasset 1968, pp. 267–273. Cited by: PACTEAU, S.: *Le P.C.F. face à l'intervention soviétique en Tchécoslovaquie*, p. 47.

103 AMFA CR, f. Political reports from diplomatic missions, IV/6, Francie, Paris 1969, Political report No. 29 from 25 September 1969.

Garaudy vs. Vermeersch

The two definitive voices against the official position of the French Communist Party on Czechoslovak developments were those of Roger Garaudy and Jeannette Vermeersch. While Garaudy criticised the Party leadership for not having sufficiently condemned the intervention and called for a more critical stance towards the Soviet Union, Vermeersch – the widow of the former Secretary General, Maurice Thorez – believed that the French Communists should have officially approved of and supported the intervention.

As early as the beginning of September 1968, Roger Garaudy in a letter to Waldeck Rochet encouraged the Party to maintain a clear position. He insisted on condemning the Soviet intervention and did not allow for any compromise in connection with the “crime against socialism in Czechoslovakia.”¹⁰⁴ Nor did Garaudy forget to advocate Dubček. He believed that Dubček intended to introduce the Leninist concept of leadership in the CPC, hence there was no danger of socialism and peace being jeopardised in Czechoslovakia. The invasion was thus unjustifiable.¹⁰⁵ At the CC FCP session a year later, Garaudy laid out most of his critical arguments against the emerging “normalisation” in Czechoslovakia and opposed the passive attitude of French Communists. He highlighted the repression, the reign of a “police régime” and the “reconstitution of Stalinism” in Czechoslovakia. He warned that as long as French Communists continued to remain silent, they would be accomplices in what was happening in “normalised” Czechoslovakia. Moreover, such an attitude, Garaudy argued, could have a negative influence on FCP members who might come to believe that disapproval of the Soviet intervention was a mistake. “We have to tell the people that the socialism which we intend to introduce in France is not the same as that which is being imposed upon Czechoslovakia,” he appealed to the Party leadership.¹⁰⁶

As Garaudy began to increasingly voice his criticism of the intervention and “normalisation” in public, French Communists started to consider him a “heretic.” For instance, his comrades did not welcome that, in his book *La Liberté en sursis*, he had written that the Prague Spring was a potential model for the French Communist Party.¹⁰⁷ His *Le grand tournant du socialisme* also earned him criticism.¹⁰⁸ Nor were Garaudy’s comments on Czechoslovakia limited to a French audience. As early as the end of August 1968, for instance, he gave an interview to the Czechoslovak Press

104 AD93, Archives du PCF, f. Bureau politique 1964–1972, 2NUM4/5, Letter by Roger Garaudy to Waldeck Rochet dated 2 September 1968.

105 *Ibid.*, f. Comité central, 4AV/142, Track 2, Address by Roger Garaudy given at the CC FCP session on 20–21 October 1968.

106 *Ibid.*, 4AV/649, Track 3, Address by Roger Garaudy given at the CC FCP session on 13–14 October 1969.

107 GARAUDY, Roger: *La Liberté en sursis: Prague 1968*. Paris, Fayard 1968.

108 GARAUDY, Roger: *Le grand tournant du socialisme*. Paris, Gallimard 1969.

Agency in which he condemned the military intervention.¹⁰⁹ He assumed a similar position in an interview with the Yugoslav *Communist* in September 1968.¹¹⁰ Garaudy's stand eventually led the French Communist Party to expel him from their ranks in 1970.¹¹¹

In contrast, Jeannette Vermeersch was among the supporters of the invasion. She presented her views on the situation in an address to the CC FCP in October 1968. Her main argument was that Czechoslovakia had faced the threat of counter-revolution. She went on to criticise a number of the protagonists of the Prague Spring, such as the President of the Union of Czechoslovak Writers, the philosopher Karel Kosík, along with other members of the Union. She also condemned the Philosophical Society of the Slovak Academy of Sciences for having “publicly interfered in the affairs of the Polish United Workers' Party” in appealing to the government in Warsaw to explain sanctions against Polish academics. Vermeersch reminded listeners of Bismarck's famous dictum: “Who is master of Bohemia is master of Europe” and warned against German militarism. She tried to refute the oft-repeated argument that intervention was a bad decision because the masses had stood by the Czechoslovak leadership during the Prague Spring with the objection that “80 percent of the French had said ‘yes’ to de Gaulle, and Mao Tse-tung also had the majority on his side.”¹¹² Nonetheless, Vermeersch failed to win support within the FCP leadership. As a result, in October 1968 she stepped down from her posts in the Central Committee and the Politburo. Her views did not go unnoticed in Czechoslovakia. For instance, the historian Yvette Heřtová in the *Reporter* characterised Vermeersch as a “passionate advocate of Stalinist methods not only within the FCP leadership but also within the entire international communist movement.”¹¹³

Normalised Czechoslovakia: A Biafra of the Spirit?

Louis Aragon in his foreword to the French translation of Milan Kundera's novel *The Joke* defined the situation in post-intervention Czechoslovakia as a *Biafra*

109 On 28 August 1968, *Le Monde* published the interview given to the Czechoslovak Press Agency (compare PFEIL, U.: SED, PCF and the Prague Spring, p. 70).

110 The text of the interview was published in Garaudy's monograph *Toute la vérité*, pp. 96–107.

111 For the reception of the views of Roger Garaudy in Czechoslovakia compare OLŠÁKOVÁ, Doubravka: *Věda jde k lidu! Československá společnost pro šíření politických a vědeckých znalostí a popularizace věd v Československu ve 20. století [Science Goes to People! Czechoslovak Society for the Dissemination of Political and Scientific Knowledge and Popularisation of Sciences in Czechoslovakia during the 20th Century]*. Praha, Academia 2014, pp. 400–404.

112 *AD93*, Archives du PCF, f. Comité central, 261J2/44, Jeannette Vermeersch: Intervention sur la Tchecoslovaquie, CC 20 – 21 October 1968, Ivry.

113 HEŘTOVÁ, Yvette: *Boj o budoucnost francouzské komunistické strany [A Struggle for the Future of the French Communist Party]*. In: *Reportér*, Vol. 3, No. 44 (1968), pp. 17–19, quoted from p. 18.

de l'Esprit. He drew a parallel between developments in Czechoslovakia and the massacres that were at the time underway during the civil war in Nigeria.¹¹⁴ Aragon was not the only French communist intellectual to criticise the situation in “normalised” Czechoslovakia a number of whom spoke in the same manner as Roger Garaudy.

Solidarity with occupied Czechoslovakia sounded regularly in the pro-communist press as well. On 2 September 1968, for example, the editorial in *Les Lettres Françaises*, entitled *The Truth Shall Prevail*, explicitly expressed its backing for Czechoslovakia: “Brothers from Czechoslovakia, we support your struggle to salvage the future and socialism which your Party is worthy of. Our memory shall not be short just because Europe is experiencing détente and peace; from now on our social progress shall advance in line with the restoration of your sovereignty. Who can tolerate that the 30th anniversary of Munich found Czechoslovakia occupied?”¹¹⁵ Though the weekly was not an official channel of the FCP, it was published with financial support from French Communists. Following the intervention, *Les Lettres Françaises* generally adopted a highly critical attitude towards the Soviet Union, where a number of schools, universities and libraries had subscriptions to the revue. These were eventually cancelled and *Les Lettres Françaises* ceased publication in 1972 due to lack of funding.

The Editor-in-Chief of the communist monthly *Démocratie Nouvelle*, Pierre Noirot, experienced a fate similar to that of Garaudy. Noirot had been preparing a special issue on Czechoslovakia for October 1968 but under pressure from the FCP had to give up the plan. In response to the Czechoslovak events, he founded a new periodical, *Politique Aujourd'hui*, in January 1969. The FCP leadership and its daily *L'Humanité*, however, publicly condemned the new journal and the “heretic” Noirot was expelled from the Party.¹¹⁶

Grassroots Response

The leadership of the French Communist Party deemed it important to be aware of how rank and file FCP members viewed the intervention in Czechoslovakia and, particularly, of the official position adopted by the Party. Accordingly, Léo Figuères, one of the FCP leaders, analysed the attitude of French Communists in the Isère department.¹¹⁷ Figuères identified three types of response. The largest was composed of Communists who agreed with the official position of the Party leadership and condemned the invasion. The second quite sizeable group justified the intervention, maintaining that the Soviets were better informed about the situation than

114 See COURTOIS, S. – LAZAR, M.: *Histoire du Parti communiste français*, p. 355 n.

115 La vérité vaincra. In: *Les Lettres Françaises*, Vol., 27, No. 1247 (4–11 September 1968), p. 1.

116 See BRACKE, M.: *Which Socialism? Whose Détente?*, p. 301.

117 Léopold (Léo) Figuères (1918–2011), Communist politician and journalist, member of the CC FCP, managed the Communist revue *Cahiers du communisme* until 1976.

they were. The alternative argument was that prevention was always the preferred option. Moreover, some were none too pleased with the leadership for having voiced their disapproval publicly. The third and smallest group consisted of Communists who believed that the Party position on the Soviet Union was not critical enough.¹¹⁸ The Secretary General, Waldeck Rochet, put the proportion of those in agreement with the official position, formulated with his help, at about 40 percent. He estimated that roughly the same proportion consisted of those who, though approving of the intervention, remained loyal to the leadership. The remaining one fifth openly opposed the position.¹¹⁹

The French Communist Party could not afford to allow the events in Czechoslovakia to cause a split within the Party. It was therefore essential to buttress its official position with plausible arguments and to explain them to Party members. In October 1968, Gaston Plissonnier prepared a summary of the principal reasons for advocating “disagreement” with the intervention, to which the Party would adhere.¹²⁰ The aim was to demonstrate that “the leadership of our Party was perfectly informed about the different aspects of the situation.” This had to be constantly reaffirmed since the geopolitical distance from Czechoslovakia, and particularly from the Soviet Union, could have strengthened the position of those who claimed that it was simply impossible in France to fully comprehend the developments in Czechoslovakia. The main arguments Plissonnier cited in support of the Party’s official line were that the situation in Czechoslovakia was not counter-revolutionary; there were no anti-Soviet protests; the CPC leadership enjoyed massive public trust (with regard to the CPC’s condemnation of the *Two Thousand Words*, Plissonnier maintained that at that stage the manifesto no longer had the effect originally intended); the Czechoslovak situation could not be compared to that in Hungary in the autumn of 1956 (Czechoslovakia did not have such figures as Cardinal Mindszenty or Count Esterházy, nor were Party officials attacked); and, ultimately, the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia had always affirmed its allegiance to socialism and the Warsaw Pact.¹²¹ Similar arguments also appeared in the booklet about events in Czechoslovakia published by the FCP in early September 1968.¹²²

Political reports from the Czechoslovak Embassy in Paris also contained information about the opinions of grassroots French Communists. One account, filed in

118 AD93, Archives du PCF, f. Raymond Guyot, 283J31, Vol. 3 (Tchécoslovaquie, septembre 1968), Note sur le Comité fédéral de l’Isère, 28 August 1968.

119 See VIGREUX, Jean: *Waldeck Rochet: Une biographie politique*. Paris, La Dispute 2000, p. 281. BRACKE, M.: *Which Socialism? Whose Détente?*, p. 229.

120 Gaston Plissonnier (1913–1995), Communist politician, member of the CC FCP (1950–1990), Secretariat (1956–1990) and Politburo (1964–1990); the *éminence grise* of the FCP, responsible, *inter alia*, for relations with the CPSU.

121 AD93, Archives du PCF, f. Gaston Plissonnier, 264J14, p. 2 (Positions du PCF), Gaston Plissonnier aux membres du CC, aux [membres du] secr[étariat] gén[éral] sur la situation en Tchécoslovaquie, 24 October 1968.

122 *Bulletin de propagande*, No. 5 (September 1968), Appendix “Le PCF et les événements de Tchécoslovaquie: 2 septembre 1968.

October 1968, spoke of difficulties within the French Communist Party, “particularly among those members who believe that ‘the Soviet Union always knows well what it is doing and has to have valid reasons for its conduct, even if it cannot state them publicly.’” The author, Stanislav Kříž, the Czechoslovak Chargé d’Affaires in France, also referred to an “intensive internal campaign within the Party” and that criticism in the spirit of Roger Garaudy “reportedly was not sizeable and is altogether incomparable with the aforementioned criticism emanating from the opposite position.” On the other hand, Kříž asserted, “the authority of the FCP leadership has indeed risen among some members who first had a number of objections to the leadership deeming it to be ‘orthodox.’”¹²³

Czechoslovak readers could learn about the position of the French Communists on the August events from the article by Yvette Heřtová in the *Reportér* magazine mentioned earlier. She pointed out that two main factions existed within the French Party: on one side were the “French intellectual and artistic élites,” while on the other were the “group of older Party members whose opinions had been shaped by the pre-War situation, the anti-Fascist résistance and harsh social pressure.” She believed that the latter were “strongly linked to the conservative method of partisan work and propaganda.” In between the two was “a kind of ambiguous central group with conciliatory views.”¹²⁴ Heřtová estimated that the conservative faction led by Jeannette Vermeersch (i.e., those who “condemn the position of the CC FCP on Soviet intervention in Czechoslovakia and insist on the leading role of the CPSU in the international workers’ movement”) represent 25 to 30 percent of Party membership. Yet, she argued, they were not united but consisted of different assortments such as the “older conservative members” or “members of the young generation who disagree with the position of the CC FCP on the May turmoil in France” and “criticise the Party for indecisiveness and inability to assume leadership in the struggle against the Gaullist régime.”¹²⁵

Condemnation of Which Virtually Nothing Remained

The response by the French Communist Party to the Prague Spring and the subsequent intervention by Warsaw Pact troops was embodied particularly in the FCP Secretary General, Waldeck Rochet. In formulating his approach to the situation that had arisen, however, he had to take into account the position of the conservative faction within his Party.¹²⁶ Testimony by the French communist historian, Philippe

123 *AMFA CR*, f. Political reports from diplomatic missions, IV/6, France, Paris 1968, Political report No. 32 dated 10 October 1968.

124 HEŘTOVÁ, Y.: *Boj o budoucnost francouzské komunistické strany*, p. 17.

125 *Ibid.*, p. 19.

126 Jacques Duclos, for example, tended to support the intervention in Czechoslovakia, yet he decided to uphold the official position of the Party. Even though in his memoirs from the early 1970s he suggests that “anti-communist propaganda” might have spread across Czechoslovakia had it not been adequately countered, he also offers the mandatory expla-

Robrieux, confirms Rochet's limited power: "I am Secretary General of the French [Communist – author's note] Party, I cannot do anything. [...] I am Secretary General of the French Communist Party, I do all I can, not what I want," complained Rochet in conversation with Robrieux.¹²⁷ Rochet's health might also have played a role in weakening his standing within the Party leadership. Indeed, Georges Marchais, Rochet's successor, began to *de facto* run the Party when Rochet was still Secretary General. In February 1970 Marchais was appointed Deputy Secretary General and was elected Secretary General in December 1972. The period of the Prague Spring thus coincides with the last stage of Rochet's political career. While in 1968 he had been able to push through his condemnation of the intervention, during the months that followed – the period of his *fin de règne* – his influence on the political outlook of Party members began to wane. It was Georges Marchais who steered the course that relations between the French Communists and "normalised" Czechoslovakia and the Soviet Union took in the first years after the invasion.¹²⁸ This was the reason such politics became increasingly distanced from the original "disapproval" of or "disagreement" with the intervention.

Historiography most often interprets the position of the French Communist Party on the Prague Spring within the context of the subsequent development of relations with the Soviet Union.¹²⁹ From such a perspective disagreement with the intervention does not seem fundamental. After August 1968 the French Communists continued to retain good relations with their Soviet comrades. This was clearly evident, for instance, in June 1969 during the world conference of Communist Parties. Signs that relations between the two Parties were in no way significantly damaged were already apparent in early November 1968 during the visit of the French Communist Party delegation (composed of Waldeck Rochet, Jacques Duclos, Raymond Guyot,¹³⁰ Georges Marchais, and Jean Kanapa) to Moscow. Shortly before their departure for Moscow, *Rudé právo*, the Czechoslovak Communist Party daily, emphasised that, according to the principles adopted at the conclusion of the talks of the Central

nation of why it was right to condemn the intervention: the "brotherly parties" were there to assist Czechoslovakia by different, non-violent means. (Compare DUCLOS, Jacques: *Mémoires, 1959–1969: Du début de la V^e République à la campagne présidentielle*. Paris, Fayard 1973, p. 400.)

127 ROBRIEUX, Philippe: *Notre génération communiste: 1953–1968. Essai d'autobiographie politique*. Paris, R. Laffont 1977, p. 335 n.

128 In this respect, Rochet was supported by, for example, Jean Kanapa, Gaston Plissonnier, Benoît Frachon and, of course, Roger Garaudy. According to Pierre Daix, however, in August 1968 Marchais was already the FCP "No. 1 man" (compare DAIX, Pierre: *Tout mon temps: Révisions de ma mémoire*. Paris, Fayard 2001, p. 437).

129 Compare for example BARTOŠEK, K.: *Zpráva o putování v komunistických archivech*, p. 229 n.; ROBRIEUX, P.: *Histoire intérieure du Parti communiste*, Vol. 2, p. 646; LAZAR, M.: *Le communisme*, p. 40.

130 Raymond Guyot (1903–1986), Communist politician, member of the CC FCP Politburo; brother-in-law of the Czechoslovak Communist politician Artur London who was sentenced in the trial with Rudolf Slánský; lobbied Thorez as well as Czechoslovak politicians for London's release.

Committee of the French Communist Party in Ivry on 20 October 1968, “it is, first of all, obvious, that the FCP maintains its previous position on the issues in question. It means that it continues to disagree with the entry of Soviet and other troops on the territory of the CSSR.”¹³¹ However, decisive condemnation of the intervention by the French Communists did not sound in Moscow. The official communique from the meeting noted that “the two delegations exchanged views on the events in Czechoslovakia and expressed a desire for the situation in Czechoslovakia to be normalised within the framework of the accords between the CPSU and the CPC drafted by both parties on Marxist–Leninist foundations for the sake of further progress and the empowerment of socialism in this country.”¹³²

The final communique was the fruit of a compromise between the French and Soviet positions when the FCP delegation tried to avoid changing their assessment of the Soviet intervention and, at the same time, hoped to avert a breach with the Kremlin. Such an interpretation of the summit is also apparent from a report by the Czechoslovak Embassy in Paris which suggests that the French–Soviet talks were “difficult, hard and on the brink of a split,” and that the draft of the final communique was not easy to negotiate. The reserved nature of the relations between the French and Soviet Communists was also evidenced by the fact that, despite the urging of their hosts, the French delegation refused to remain in Moscow for the celebrations marking the October Bolshevik Revolution. Reportedly, rank and file members of the FCP saw the communique as a “concession” and a “capitulation.” Because of Soviet opposition, the French had been unable to insert what they wanted into the communique and what would have been in line with the October plenary session of the CC FCP.¹³³ The Czechoslovak Attaché, Stanislav Kříž, informed Prague of the “consternation” of an unidentified member of the Central Committee, someone close to Rochet, when the communique was published. After conversations with Rochet and Marchais, however, the individual concerned “came to the conclusion that, given the situation, it was impossible to have achieved more in Moscow, unless they wanted to go at it head-to-head, which even he did not see as a feasible

131 Vedení FKS bude jednat s KSSS [The FCP leadership will negotiate with the CPSU]. In: *Rudé právo* (22 October 1968), p. 6.

132 Návrat delegace FKS [The return of the FCP delegation FKS]. In: *Ibid.* (7 November 1968), p. 7; compare also VONDROVÁ, Jitka – NAVRÁTIL, Jaromír (ed.): *Mezinárodní souvislosti československé krize 1967–1970: Červenec–srpen 1968* [International Context of the Czechoslovak Crisis in 1967–1970: July – August 1968]. (Prameny k dějinám československé krize v letech 1967–1970, sv. IV/3 [Sources on the History of the Czechoslovak Crisis in 1967 – 1970, Vol. IV/3]) Praha – Brno, Ústav pro soudobé dějiny Akademie věd České republiky – Doplněk 1997, p. 177 n., Document No. 212 – Dispatch by the Czechoslovak Chargé d’Affaires in France, S. Kříž, about talks between the FCP and the CPSU in Moscow on 4–5 November 1968, 15 November 1968, Paris. The French text of the communique was published in the series: FABIEN, J. (ed.): *Kremlin–PCF*, pp. 213–216.

133 *AMFA CR*, f. Political reports from diplomatic missions, IV/6, France, Paris 1968, Political report No. 37 dated 14 November 1968.

option.”¹³⁴ Yvette Heřtová thought the same: “Rochet, Duclos, Kanapa and Guyot in Moscow probably settled for a compromise for the moment. They did not change their stance on the 21 August events, though they seemed to have agreed with the CC USSR position on all matters concerning the international workers’ movement.”¹³⁵

Stronger criticism by the FCP leadership of the Soviet Union dates only from the mid-1970s when Georges Marchais began to increasingly oppose political repression not merely in the USSR but across the Soviet Bloc in general.¹³⁶ At the end of the 1960s and the beginning of the following decade, however, Marchais was still cautious in his criticism of the Soviets. In the addresses, he made during this period he never omitted to emphasise that the French Communists understood the policy of “normalisation” in Czechoslovakia.¹³⁷ Such understanding reverberated with and earned recognition from the Czechoslovak “normalisers.” The CC CPC Secretary Vasil Biřak publicly thanked the “French comrades” for their “invaluable cooperation with his policy of normalisation,” a statement that became a target for criticism from French intellectuals condemning the “normalisation.”¹³⁸ The FCP was thus quick to forge “brotherly relations” with the “normalised” CPC. In the autumn of 1969, the French Communists received an invitation from the Husák leadership to visit Prague.

FCP Delegation in Czechoslovakia

The Czechoslovak leadership started to contemplate the possibility of inviting the FCP delegation as early as April 1969, after the visit to Prague of Jacques Denis, a member of the CC FCP.¹³⁹ Denis let the Czechoslovak Communists know Waldeck Rochet’s wish to “reconstitute comradesly relations with the CPC.”¹⁴⁰ This was heeded and a delegation comprising Étienne Fajon, Robert Ballanger,¹⁴¹ Lucien Lanternier¹⁴²

134 VONDROVÁ, J. – NAVRÁTIL, J. (ed.): *Mezinárodní souvislosti československé krize 1967–1970*, Vol. 3, p. 177, Document No. 212 – Dispatch by the Czechoslovak Chargé d’Affaires in France, S. Kříž, on talks between the FCP and the CPSU on 4–5 November 1968, 15 November 1968, Paris. For the record of the discussions between the French and Soviet delegations made by Jean Kanapa, see FABIEN, J. (ed.): *Kremlín–PCF*, pp. 169–201.

135 HEŘTOVÁ, Y.: *Boj o budoucnost francouzské komunistické strany*, p. 19.

136 See LAZAR, M.: *Le communisme*, p. 40.

137 See PACTEAU, S.: *Le P.C.F. face à l’intervention soviétique en Tchécoslovaquie*, p. 64.

138 AD93, Archives du PCF, f. Raymond Guyot, 283J31, Vol. 3, Letter by Roger Garaudy to the FCP cell Gabriel Péri, 3 May 1970.

139 Jacques Denis (1922–2008), a member of the CC FCP (1961–1997), in 1960–1964 Secretary to Maurice Thorez, worked in the FCP Foreign Policy Section (known as Posex).

140 NA, f. 1591, b. 103, arch. u. 170, Record from the 141st session of the CC CPC Presidium on 12 September 1969, point 17 – Invitation for the French CP to visit the CSSR.

141 Robert Ballanger (1912–1981), Communist politician, a Member of the French National Assembly, (1945–1981), from 1964 leader of the Communist parliamentary group.

142 Lucien Lanternier (1919–1995), Communist politician, from 1954 a member of the FCP leadership.

and Pierre Hentgès visited Czechoslovakia from 25 to 29 November 1969. The CPC delegation contained the Secretaries of the Central Committee, Vasil Biľak and Jan Fojtík, the Director of the Central Committee of the CPC Department of International Politics, Pavel Auersperg, and the Editor-in-Chief of *Rudé právo*, Miroslav Moc. The French Communists visited the steel works in Kladno and spoke with the Secretariat of the CPC District Committee in the city, the National Gallery in Prague, the *Rudé právo* newsroom, and also met members of the Agricultural Cooperative New Life in the village of Kačice outside Prague. The French delegation was finally received by the CPC Secretary General, Gustáv Husák, in the presence of the Prime Minister Lubomír Štrougal and the Secretary of the Central Committee of the CPC, Vasil Biľak.¹⁴³

During the visit, Étienne Fajon, Director of *L'Humanité*, commenting on the FCP response to the August events and the “normalisation,” maintained that “the FCP is guided in shaping its political opinion by three motives: to enhance solidarity and cooperation between the Parties, to support the measures the CPC continues to put in place to safeguard socialism, and to respect the principles of proletarian internationalism and non-intervention in the internal affairs of Czechoslovakia.”¹⁴⁴ At the same time, however, Fajon expressed the by then standard French Communist Party position of linking condemnation of the intervention with the desire for friendly relations with the Soviets: “After the 21/8 events the Politburo along with the Central Committee of the FCP disagreed with the entry of the armies. Nevertheless, they strengthened their resolve to enhance long-term friendly relations with the USSR, to fight against anti-Sovietism and exert effort to achieve unity within the international communist and workers’ movement.” Fajon also referred to the popular comparison with Hungary of 1956: “Had the CPC requested the brotherly country for military assistance to suppress counter-revolution as had been done by Com[rade] Kádár, we would have supported the action as we did in 1956. In the case of the CSSR we were guided by the fact that there were already ample forces available to defend socialism, with political support from the brotherly countries and Parties, and we took into account the fact that no institution had made such an appeal.”¹⁴⁵ Fajon, however, also stated that the French Communists did not want “a disagreement on one issue to become an obstacle in the joint struggle against the common enemy.” He promised that the French Communist Party would keep Prague informed of the activities of the Czechoslovak emigrants in Paris (namely the economist Ota Šik, the politician Artur London and the journalist Antonín J. Liehm).¹⁴⁶

143 *Ibid.*, k. 113, arch. u. 185, record from the 155th session of the CC CPC Presidium on 22 December 1969, point 8 – Report on the visit of the CC FCP delegation to Czechoslovakia, p. 1 n.; compare *Le séjour de la délégation du Comité Central du Parti communiste français en Tchécoslovaquie*. In: *L'Humanité* (1 December 1969).

144 NA, f. 1591, b. 113, arch. u. 185, point 8 – Report on the visit of the CC FCP delegation to Czechoslovakia, p. 3.

145 *Ibid.*, p. 4.

146 *Ibid.*, p. 5.

Major tension between the French and Czechoslovak Communists probably occurred when the text of the final communique was being drafted. The French delegation insisted on explicit mention of the fact that it retained its original position on the events of 21 August 1968, arguing that their disagreement with the intervention arose from “genuine conviction” expressed, *inter alia*, at the conclusion of the 19th congress of the French Communist Party. The Czechoslovaks, however, objected to any such avowal but the French contended that without this public affirmation of their dissent, they would be seen in France to be “abandoning a position that is generally known,” which would “put the masses of the French against the leadership and would enable enemies to claim that the FCP is becoming conformist and reverting to being under the ‘command of Moscow,’ etc.”¹⁴⁷ The end result was that no communique was issued at the end of the visit. What came out instead was “information stating that the talks went satisfactorily in a frank and comradely atmosphere, listing the agenda.”¹⁴⁸

In Support of “Brotherly Relations”

Information from the Czechoslovak Embassy in Paris throughout 1970 continued to reaffirm the establishment of “friendly relations” between the French and Czechoslovak Communists, as well as the positive attitude of the French Party towards “normalisation.” In August 1970, for example, Roland Leroy considered it appropriate to “informally express support for the CPC leadership led by Comrade Husák in his effort to reach a political solution to the crisis in the CSSR.”¹⁴⁹ Three months later, according to a report by Ambassador František Zachystal, René Piquet, a member of the CC FCP¹⁵⁰ “praised the role of Comrade Husák highly, his line, which he deemed to be the only way forward, and the entire Presidium of the C[entral] C[ommittee] of the CPC.” The positive assessment of the new Husák-led ruling power, however, did not prevent Piquet from insisting on condemnation of the intervention: “In a discussion here in 1968 he [Piquet – author’s note] was impressed by the query as to what it would have meant for the FCP had its leadership been in the hands of Garaudy and his followers, particularly in a situation where they were a governing party. At the same time, he continued to insist on the publicly familiar position of the FCP on the issues of August 1968.”¹⁵¹ In May 1971, when the 14th congress of

147 *Ibid.*, p. 6.

148 *Ibid.*, p. 7; compare Delegace FKS odcestovala [The FCP delegation left]. In: *Rudé právo* (1 December 1969), p. 1.

149 AMFA CR, f. Political reports from diplomatic missions, IV/6, France, T 1970–74, 052/111, 1970–71, Record of conversation with Comrade Leroy, member of the FCP Politburo, Paris, 13 August 1970.

150 René Piquet (b. 1932), a member of the CC FCP and in 1964–1990 of the CC FCP Politburo, Member of the European Parliament from 1979 to 1999.

151 *Ibid.*, Conversation with Com. René Piquet, a member of the CC FCP Politburo, Paris, 26 November 1970.

the CPC was underway, relations between both Parties were clearly “brotherly.” At least, that was the impression given by a report from the French delegation in Prague: “At the end of his address, Husák and Svoboda turned to R. Guyot to shake hands. This handshake, apparently unexpected by most delegates, was rewarded with affable applause.”¹⁵²

The reason why the leaders of the French Communist Party decided to support “normalised” Czechoslovakia was not only to avoid conflict with the Soviet Union. News coming from French communist informants in Prague might also have played a part. A report by Jacques Denis who was in Czechoslovakia in the spring of 1969, for instance, warned that “the intervention gave the reactionary, anti-socialist and anti-Soviet forces new ground for manoeuvres.” He pointed to alleged “confusion” and “scepticism” among workers, including Communists, which could only create an opportunity for “reactionaries to profit from.” The result was that the French Communist leadership endorsed the Czechoslovak Government: “In the situation, as it seems, the current leadership with Husák at the head represents the last hope and we [French Communists – author’s note] have to support it.”¹⁵³

Yet, the original declarations by the French Communist Party on August 1968 were not forsaken completely. Georges Marchais continued to maintain that condemnation (or disagreement) with Soviet intervention in Czechoslovakia was correct and that the Party stood by its viewpoint. He also stressed this at a CC FCP meeting in October 1969 when he stated that “we have to reaffirm our criticism of the intervention” and that there was no reason “for us to change our position.”¹⁵⁴ Almost three years after the invasion, Marchais still felt the need to remind his audience that “we shall continue stating and believing that the intervention was a mistake,” particularly because there were other options at hand to solve the problem.¹⁵⁵ Similarly, the report on the 14th congress of the Czechoslovak Communists concluded that even this event “will not make us change our position on the military intervention.”¹⁵⁶

Conclusion

The French Communist Party was far from united in its response to the Prague Spring. In terms of the Party leadership, the limited support offered was not allowed to break the bonds of friendship with the Soviet Union. This was the driving

152 AD93, Archives du PCF, f. Gaston Plissonnier, 264J14, Vol. 5 (Année 1971), Rapport sur le XIV^e Congrès du PCT.

153 *Ibid.*, Vol. 3 (Année 1969), Jacques Denis: Note sur mon voyage en Tchécoslovaquie.

154 *Ibid.*, f. Comité central, 4AV/651, Track 1, Address by Georges Marchais given at the CC FCP session on 13–14 October 1969.

155 *Ibid.*, 4AV/1885, Track 2, Address by Georges Marchais given at the CC FCP session on 3–4 June 1971.

156 *Ibid.*, f. Gaston Plissonnier, 264J14, Vol. 5 (Année 1971), Rapport sur le XIV^e Congrès du PCT.

force behind the diplomatic activities of Waldeck Rochet in July 1968 when he, as Secretary General of the French Communists, tried, albeit unsuccessfully, to act as a facilitator between the Czechoslovak and Soviet Communists and thus avert military intervention. Backing for the Prague Spring among French intellectuals was far more visible. Yet the enthusiasm with which they welcomed Czechoslovak “socialism with a human face” was in contrast with the impressions of rank and file FCP members who had direct personal experience of the event. They perceived it as a threat to socialism and were unpleasantly surprised at the idealisation of the West which they experienced among the people in Czechoslovakia. Despite the fact that the leadership of the French Communists first “condemned” the intervention by the five armies of the Warsaw Pact (though softening the original position by changing to the word “disagreement” the following day), their stance did not have any pivotal effect on relations with the Soviet Union. Indeed, the contrary was rather the case, since as interactions between the French and Soviet Communists developed, it became clear that cordial relations could progress despite disagreement with the intervention.

The position of French Communists on the events in August 1968 was dichotomous. On a declaratory level the Party maintained its initial stand (disagreement with the intervention), which, however, was not significantly manifested in practice. Nonetheless, such a posture was advantageous for the French Party: the instant condemnation of the invasion prevented a recurrence of the situation in November 1956 when a number of members left the Party in protest against its sanction of intervention in Hungary and the FCP found itself isolated on the French political scene. At the same time, by its response to affairs in Czechoslovakia in 1968 and over the coming years, the Party managed to avoid a split with the Soviet Union. This does not mean, however, that all French Communists supported the leadership on the issue. The official condemnation of intervention was not thought sufficient by many French intellectuals who subscribed to communist ideology. They called for greater solidarity with occupied Czechoslovakia. In the case of “ordinary,” grass-roots Party members, on the other hand, views differed but many would probably have approved the positive stance on intervention taken by Jeannette Vermeersch.

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Occupation, Friendly Assistance, Devastation

*The Soviet Army, 1968–1991, in the Memory
of the Czech People*

Marie Černá

The invasion of Czechoslovakia by the Warsaw Pact armies in August 1968 and the events in the immediate aftermath hold a lasting place in Czech collective memory and historiography. They are generally seen as important milestones in Czech history that violently interrupted the previous efforts aimed at liberalisation of the regime, commonly known as the Prague Spring, and ushered in the so-called process of “normalisation.” At the same time, the August invasion carries a strong emotional charge and this ranks it with other national tragedies, such as the German annexation of the Sudetenland in 1938, and the subsequent German occupation of the Czech Lands in 1939. The term “occupation” seems to be the most appropriate also for what transpired in August 1968, with the difference that in this case the foreign power was the Soviet Union. Perhaps, it can likewise be said that there is general agreement on the main connotations of this expression, which include power aggression, enforced domination and interference in internal affairs. The political meaning of “occupation” is clear, generally understood and undeniable. Today, the word is commonly used in relation to the two decades the Soviet Army was present¹ in Czechoslovakia following the invasion. However, the political

1 I am referring to the period between the signing of what was called the Agreement on the Temporary Stay (its full name: the Agreement between the Government of the Czechoslovak Socialist Republic and the Government of the Union of Soviet Social-

meaning of this presence is blurred and upon closer inspection it may even seem that there is no consensus on the matter. Let us begin with two examples.

Any visitor to the city of Vysoké Mýto with 14,000 inhabitants can read a plaque affixed to the city walls on which is written: “On 21 August 1968, Czechoslovakia was invaded by armies of five member states of the Warsaw Pact. A numerous Soviet occupation garrison, together with their relatives, was stationed here in Vysoké Mýto. The last soldier left the city on 16 July 1990. After 22 years, the native residents could start breathing freely again.” Like other local commemorative inscriptions, this one, too, serves to remind us of important events in the history of the town. In 1968, several thousand Soviet soldiers were settled here and their long-term presence clearly had tangible implications for the indigenous inhabitants. The message evoking the burden of this occupation and the relief attendant on its termination, should come as no surprise to anyone.

In contrast, a private website dedicated to the small West Bohemian town of Blovice recalls the presence of Soviet soldiers, stationed in the neighbouring garrisons of the then military area Brdy, in a somewhat different way. Their coexistence with the local people is described as mutually beneficial and enriching, almost idyllic. Ivan Bystrický, the author of two articles dating from 2009, shields himself by citing the memories of contemporary witnesses: “None of the old-timers who contributed to this article by sharing their experiences complained about coexistence with the soldiers.”² In support, he recalls meetings held on important anniversaries and official state holidays, joint hunting trips, voluntary work, the willingness of the Soviet soldiers to help the Czech inhabitants on various occasions, and unofficial ties which continued even after the soldiers had left. All this is illustrated by photographs from various social and cultural events.³ In a website discussion below the article, one reader accuses the author of distorting the facts and provides a list of the negative aspects of the occupation.⁴ Another accounts for the positive tone

ist Republics on the Conditions of the Temporary Stay of Soviet Troops in the Territory of the Czechoslovak Socialist Republic) in October 1968, which legitimised the presence of approximately 70,000 soldiers of the Soviet Army on Czechoslovak territory, and their withdrawal in 1990 and 1991 which was based on the Agreement between the Government of the Czechoslovak Socialist Republic and the USSR on the Withdrawal of Soviet Troops from Czechoslovakia, signed on 26 February 1990 in Moscow (see PEČKA, Jindřich (ed.): *Odsun sovětských vojsk z Československa 1989–1991: Dokumenty* [The Withdrawal of Soviet Troops from Czechoslovakia 1989–1991: Documents]. Praha, Ústav pro soudobé dějiny AV ČR [Institute for Contemporary History of the Academy of Sciences of the Czech Republic] 1996, p 110 n., Document No. 36).

2 [BYSTRICKÝ, Ivan]: Ruská armáda v oblasti Míšov–Borovno [The Russian Army in the Area of Míšov-Borovno], 1st part + photo. In: Info Blovice [online]. 13 November 2009 [cit. 2015-06-30]. Available at: <http://www.blovice.info/view.php?cisloclanku=2009110012>.

3 *Ibid.*; [BYSTRICKÝ, Ivan]: Ruská armáda v oblasti Míšov–Borovno [The Russian Army in the Area of Míšov-Borovno], 2nd part + photo. In: Info Blovice [online]. 15 November 2009 [cit. 2015-06-30]. Available at: <http://www.blovice.info/view.php?cisloclanku=2009110015>.

4 “We should repeat some basic facts. The Soviet Union has occupied us, breaching the principles of democracy, during the night of 21 August 1968 and has imprisoned the representatives

of the article by attributing it to the clear, leftist orientation of the author.⁵ When the argument turns to strategic-military features, traditionally linked to the former military zone of Brdy, the author defends himself: “You know, I do not deliberately write about arms or missiles. [...] we just wanted to offer an alternative to the current press coverage and inform our citizens about the life of soldiers, civilians and their relatives who lived here in our backyard for 20 years. And it is quite interesting that people like to talk about it and remember it, and not just Communists [...]”⁶

Let us put aside the stylistic and genre differences between official commemorative plaques and internet discussions, and focus instead on the information itself. What is important is that the meaning of occupation, which had seemed to be clear and unambiguous, gets complicated if stories told by contemporary witnesses, and differences between the period immediately after the August invasion and the ensuing stay of the Soviet Army are added. This becomes even more so when various aspects of the occupation (political, military-strategic, and social) and changes in popular orientation to particular situations over time, which in turn influence perceptions of the communist past, among other things, are taken into account. One is reminded of the trivial fact that memory – including remembrance of the Soviet occupation – reflects contemporary political and other values, and that all dominant memory, or its official version, has its counter-memory. It is not the aim of this article to define which of the images evoked in relation to the Soviet occupation are more accurate, nor even if the use of the word “occupation” itself is appropriate. Rather the aim is to look at the semantic content of the term “occupation,” see how this is negated or emphasised, what it relates to and what the main stories are that give it its meaning.

The memory of the occupation has its own turbulent history which is inevitably reflected in how we perceive it today. For example, it is influenced by the fact that memories are usually split into three separate themes or periods: the August invasion of the Warsaw Pact armies in 1968 and the events that immediately followed, the 20-year presence of Soviet troops, and finally their withdrawal in 1990 and 1991.⁷ These themes or periods tend to appear in the post-November remembrance

of a sovereign state, its soldiers have murdered dozens of innocent people and caused considerable damage to property. For more than 20 years they have behaved as if they were at home, devastated nature and the character of people. [...] They were and they are repugnant occupants and people who fraternised with them ought to be ashamed.” (Comments to the article: Ruská armáda v oblasti Míšov–Borovno, 2nd part + photo from 15 November 2009. Author: Úslavák. In: *Ibid.* [online]. 18 November 2009 [cit. 2015-06-30]. Available at: <http://www.blovce.info/comment.php?akce=fullview&cislocianku=2009110016>.)

5 “Comrades, many of them hunters, and comrades, members of JZD [Collective Farms] were kissing them, but Ivan does not mind, because he likes commies.” (Author: Úslavák, II. In: *Ibid.* [online]. 22 November 2009 [cit. 2015-06-30]. Available at *Ibid.*)

6 Author: Info Blovice [BYSTRICKÝ, Ivan]: Reaction. In: *Ibid.* [online]. 18 November 2009 [cit. 2015-06-30]. Available at *Ibid.*

7 The commemorative plaque in Vysoké Mýto is in this respect exceptional, because it refers to the invasion, the presence of Soviet troops, and their withdrawal. Most of the plaques and memorials commemorate the initial invasion, or alternatively its first anniversary in 1969,

culture and historiography with different degrees of intensity and clarity. The August invasion holds one of the most important places in that memory. It is a rather invariable and dominant story, with a main storyline, and good and bad characters. The withdrawal of Soviet troops has also earned a lasting place in our memory and is commemorated at both local and national level. Many former garrison towns and districts regularly celebrate this withdrawal with articles in the regional press. Jubilees are usually accompanied by thematic broadcasts, talks, exhibitions, happenings, celebrations and even big festivals. In contrast, the 20-year presence of the Soviet armed forces is the least visibly present in our memory, mainly with regard to its political meaning. This is also evident in historiography, which has a natural tendency to depict the more dynamic processes and changes brought about by far-reaching events, and therefore focuses on the beginning⁸ and end

mainly through victims. (See Pamětní místa na komunistický režim: Jak poznáváme a reflektujeme dobu nesvobody 1948–1989 a jak si toto období připomínáme na veřejných prostranstvích? [Memorial Places of the Communist Regime: How is the Era of Unfreedom (1948–1989) Being Discovered and Reflected and How Is It Being Remembered in Public Places?] In: Ústav pro soudobé dějiny AV ČR [online]. 2016 [cit. 2016-01-10]. Available at: <http://www.pametnimista.usd.cas.cz>.)

- 8 The invasion of Czechoslovakia by Warsaw Pact troops in August 1968, the events in the immediate aftermath as well as the wider context of the Prague Spring, is one of the best documented periods of Czech history. There is a wide array of editions of documents, memoirs, coffee table books, and studies on these issues, both Czechoslovak and foreign, and it is not possible nor practical to list them all here. I would rather refer the reader to the following bibliography: BŘEŇOVÁ, Věra: *Pražské jaro '68: Bibliografie* [Prague Spring '68: Bibliography]. Praha, Ústav pro soudobé dějiny AV ČR 2013. Regarding the invasion itself, the issues documented in greatest detail include the international political and military aspects of the invasion, together with its impact on the Czechoslovak People's Army: See for example BENCÍK, Antonín: *Operace Dunaj, aneb Internacionální vražda Pražského jara* [Operation Danube – An International Assassination of the Prague Spring]. Praha, Krutina Jiří–Vacek 2013; FELCMAN, Ondřej: *Invaze a okupace: K úloze SSSR a sovětských vojsk ve vývoji Československa v letech 1968–1991* [Invasion and Occupation: On the Role of the USSR and Soviet Army in the Developments of Czechoslovakia in 1968–1991]. Praha, Ústav pro soudobé dějiny AV ČR 1995; FIDLER, Jiří: *21. 8. 1968 – okupace Československa* [21 August 1968 – the Occupation of Czechoslovakia]. Praha, Havran 2003; MACÁK, Milan: *Tváří v tvář okupaci: Příběh čs. vojenské rozvědky v srpnu 1968* [Face-to-Face with Occupation: A Story of Czechoslovak Military Intelligence in August 1968]. Praha, Ministerstvo obrany ČR [Ministry of Defence of the Czech Republic] 2008; MADRY, Jindřich: *Sovětská okupace Československa, jeho normalizace v letech 1969–1970 a role ozbrojených sil* [The Soviet Occupation of Czechoslovakia, “Normalisation” 1969–1970 and the Role of the Armed Forces]. Praha, Ústav pro soudobé dějiny AV ČR 1994; PAUER, Jan: *Praha 1968: Vpád Varšavské smlouvy* [Prague 1968 – The Warsaw Pact Invasion]. Praha, Argo 2004; PECKA, Jindřich: *Sovětská vojska v československém vývoji 1968–1991* [The Soviet Army in Czechoslovak Development 1968–1991]. Praha, Ústav pro soudobé dějiny AV ČR 1998; POVOLNÝ, Daniel: *Vojenské řešení Pražského jara 1968, sv. 1: Invaze armád Varšavské smlouvy* [Military Solution of the Prague Spring 1968, Vol. 1: Invasion by the Warsaw Pact Armies]. Praha, Ministerstvo obrany ČR 2008; IDEM: *Vojenské řešení Pražského jara 1968, sv. 2: Československá lidová armáda v srpnu 1968* [The Military Solution of the Prague Spring 1968, Vol. 2: The Czechoslovak People's Army in August 1968]. Praha, Ministerstvo obrany ČR 2010.

of the occupation,⁹ and less so on the 20-year occupation itself.¹⁰ This issue remains marginal in academic texts despite its ability to trigger a lively polemic (as seen in our example), which shows that when it comes to political meaning, there is no general agreement on the Soviet occupation. However, this diversity of opinion does not necessarily mean that there is no dominant narrative regarding the issue. Such a narrative does exist, but it draws on sources other than purely political meaning.

This article seeks to identify changes in the communicated meanings relating to the Soviet Army presence in the Czech Lands after August 1968. It deals with the issue at its most general level, as it was disseminated mainly by the mass and publicly available media, including regional such as local newspapers and town

Separate studies were dedicated to the victims of the military invasion: BÁRTA, Milan – CVRČEK, Lukáš – KOŠICKÝ, Patrik – SOMMER, Vítězslav: *Oběti okupace: Československo 21. 8. – 31. 12. 1968* [Victims of the Occupation: Czechoslovakia 21 August – 31 December 1968]. Praha, Ústav pro studium totalitních režimů [The Institute for the Study of Totalitarian Regimes] 2008; FAJMON, Hynek: *Sovětská okupace Československa a její oběti* [Soviet Occupation of Czechoslovakia and Its Victims]. Brno, Centrum pro studium demokracie a kultury 2005.

9 PECKA, Jindřich: *Kronika odsunu sovětských vojsk z Československa (1989–1991)* [The Chronicle of the Soviet Withdrawal from Czechoslovakia (1989–1991)]. Praha, Ústav pro soudobé dějiny AV ČR 1993; IDEM (ed.): *Odsun sovětských vojsk z Československa 1989–1991: Dokumenty*; NAĐOVIČ, Svetozár – FOERTSCH, Hartmut – KARÁCSONYI, Imre – OSTROWSKI, Zdzisław: *The Great Withdrawal: Withdrawal of the Soviet-Russian Army from Central Europe 1990–1994*. Bratislava, Ministry of Defence of the Slovak Republic 2005.

10 Thus far, the most comprehensive attempt to chart the various aspects of the intervention and stay of Soviet troops in Czechoslovakia was the project “Stay of the Soviet Troops in the Czechoslovak Territory 1968–1991,” which was carried out in the first half of the 1990s at the Institute for Contemporary History of the Academy of Sciences of the Czech Republic. A collective of authors, led by Jindřich Pecka, published 16 volumes of studies on various themes – economic aspects of the invasion and stay of the troops, the participation of each member state of the Warsaw Pact in the operation, the military consequences of the invasion, material damage and victims. It also sought to assess the role of Soviet soldiers in the process of “normalisation,” as it was called. In various passages it provided evidence of direct interference by Soviet military leaders and local commandants in Czechoslovak internal politics. However, the authors themselves admit that the period best mapped was the phase which immediately followed the invasion. The most important result of the project, which chronicles the stay of Soviet troops in Czechoslovakia from beginning to end, is the publication: PECKA, Jindřich et al: *Sovětská armáda v Československu 1968–1991: Chronologický přehled* [The Soviet Army in Czechoslovakia 1968–1991: A Chronological Overview]. Praha, Ústav pro soudobé dějiny AV ČR 1996. This provides a brief summary of events, negotiations, meetings, and articles, which are related to the stay of the Soviet troops and which have been taken from various archival or press sources. The most recent contribution to the issue of the 20-year long stay of the Soviet Army in Czechoslovakia is closely focused on Czechoslovak victims who lost their lives as a result of the occupation: TOMEK, Prokop – PEJČOCH, Ivo: *Černá kniha sovětské okupace: Sovětská armáda v Československu a její oběti 1968–1991* [The Black Book of the Soviet Occupation: The Soviet Army in Czechoslovakia and Its Victims 1968–1991]. Cheb, Svět křídel 2015.

chronicles.¹¹ In the absence of a more systematic debate on some aspects of the Soviet occupation, it is the voice of the media that in all its stereotyping and repetitiveness prevails in the public sphere. And it is the stereotyped and repeated media image of the occupation and presence of the Soviet Army in Czechoslovakia, which reveals to us the contours of consensus about what is important and taken for granted in relation to it.

August 1968 – The Invasion

There is no need to repeat widely known facts. I will simply mention that based on available testimonies and historical records, the term “occupation” appeared immediately after the August invasion by the Warsaw Pact troops. For the majority of people, this term best expressed the situation that Czechoslovakia faced at that time: it semantically embraced both the military occupation of institutions and physical space, along with the act of political aggression by the Soviet Union, the blatant violation of Czechoslovak sovereignty, and the general threat to liberty and basic human rights. This is borne out by the number of proclamations made across all levels of society, including those by top representatives of the state government and Communist Party, as well as by other protest activities. The occupation was an intensely experienced and shared reality, which was also simultaneously documented and interpreted.¹² From the perspective of the society, it was not only a (politically hopeless) protest against the occupation, but also an emotional expression of national solidarity and unity. In this sense, we can find many parallels to the conceptualisation of the November 1989 revolution offered by the American historian James Krapfl.¹³

As in 1989, immediately after the August invasion a widespread national community, united against a common enemy, formed spontaneously and carried out frenetic and creative activities based on idealistic notions with the aim of transcending

11 Resources from *Vysoké Mýto* are slightly more represented among the selected material. My interest was awoken by the commemorative plaque cited, and therefore I originally focused on this place. However, since this is not a case study of one particular area, I have also included a number of examples from other localities. The articles published in the regional press from the latter half of the 1990s to the present were selected from the Newton media archive, using the keywords “Soviet Army.”

12 In the same year 1968, a work titled “The Black Book” was published, in which a collective of historians, led by Milan Otáhal and Vilém Prečan, documented the immediacy of the first days of the occupation: *Sedm pražských dnů 21.–27. srpen 1968: Dokumentace* [Seven Prague Days, 21–27 August 1968: Documents]. Praha, Historický ústav [The Institute of History] 1968. The book was re-edited and reissued, with Vilém Prečan’s afterword, by the publishing house Academia in 1990.

13 KRAPFL, James: *Revolúcia s ľudskou tvárou: Politika, kultúra a spoločnosť v Československu po 17. novembri 1989* [Revolution with a Human Face: Politics, Culture and Community in Czechoslovakia after 17 November 1989]. Bratislava, Kalligram 2009 (originally published in English).

the situation. The main principles shared by the community, both in August 1968 and in November 1989, were unity and non-violence, which led to a feeling of moral superiority in a political situation where the balance of power was upset. The occupation thus became not only a source of frustration, but also – though this may seem paradoxical – an impetus for national pride and a great moment in Czechoslovak, or Czech history, which even at that time was perceived as extraordinary.¹⁴ The occupation laid down clear criteria, which either included¹⁵ or excluded people from the newly redefined community. Along with the notion of occupier, its conceptual co-relative, collaborator or traitor, appeared on the scene, and these individuals had to be avoided since they could threaten the unity of the community. This was manifested in solemnly declared commitments such as “We shall not betray!” and in warnings against collaboration, as well as in various symbolic and practical sanctions imposed locally against people who had been labelled as traitors because of their overly friendly approach to the Soviet soldiers and commanders or for approving the invasion.

Stay of Soviet Troops

What followed in the months and years after the August invasion is also commonly known. Amongst other things, there was an unequal power struggle between constantly changing alliances over the political meaning attributed to occupation. It was the official interpretation of the military intervention in 1968 that played an essential role in the process of “normalisation.” Discrediting the Prague Spring as an attempted counter-revolution, something which the “normalisation” regime was built on, went hand in hand with enforcing the version of friendly help rendered

14 “However, it became apparent that [the occupation] has not destroyed the good qualities of our nations, quite the contrary, it has awoken them. The entire world admires our nations these days.” (*Zemědělské noviny* (27 August 1968), cited from the publication *Sedm pražských dnů 21.–27. srpen 1968: Dokumentace* [Seven Prague Days, 21-27 August 1968: Documents]. Praha, Academia 1990, p 286.)

15 The creativity of this redefinition was suggested in an entry by the chronicler from Vysoké Mýto: “The most active part of society was the long-haired and so often condemned youth. They have their political programme. There is a sense of justice and honour in it. The behaviour of the Warsaw Pact armies filled them with indignation [...]” (*Pamětní kniha 1961–1973* [Chronicle 1961–1973], p 292. The chronicle is available at the website of the Archives of Eastern Bohemia [cit. 2015-06-30]: http://vychooceskearchivy.cz/ebadatelna/zobrazeni-publikace-usti/?adresar=CZ_225204010_0381_x00002&nadpis=CZ_225204010_0381_x00002&strana=1.) A similar impression is given in a reference to the “unlikely alliances” by the American historian, Jonathan Bolton, where he discusses a memory of Václav Havel of the exceptional cooperation of the town hall of Liberec with local longhairs and tramps. BOLTON, Jonathan: *Světy disentu: Charta 77, Plastic People of the Universe a česká kultura za komunismu* [Worlds of Dissent: Charter 77, Plastic People of the Universe and Czech Culture during Communism]. Praha, Academia 2015, pp. 26–27 (originally published in English).

by the Soviet Union, and by extension by the Soviet Army in August 1968 to fight the alleged counter-revolution. Ongoing “normalisation” began to force the term occupation out of the public sphere¹⁶ to finally turn the socially constitutive story of August 1968 on its head. On the one hand, the official version was to give the presence of the Soviet troops a new political meaning by calling the invasion by the Warsaw Pact troops fraternal assistance in the fight against counter revolution. On the other, it was to belittle its political meaning by calling it a temporary *stay*.¹⁷ As a result, the local Soviet troops were at once celebrated as heroes,¹⁸ and at the same time politically trivialised by references to their inoffensiveness or even to the benefits they (supposedly) brought to the society.¹⁹

Under pressure, the original unity of the protest community fell apart and along with it the criteria for judging what was and what was not desirable in relation to the presence of the Soviet Army also disappeared. This can be illustrated, for example, by the sharp increase in membership of the Union of Czechoslovak-Soviet Friendship. The organisation’s central office and branches, which had not dissolved after the August invasion, were at first considered bastions of collaboration and, according to frequently voiced public opinion, the union itself was doomed to disappear. Yet in 1972, the union registered more than one million members²⁰

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- 16 The foundation of the Office for Press and Information in September 1968 can be marked as one of the key moments. This office immediately prohibited the use of the terms “occupation” and “occupier” in relation to the Warsaw Pact troops in the media (Předmluva k ediční řadě *Prameny k dějinám československé krize 1967–1970* [Foreword to the Editorial Series *The Sources on the History of the Czechoslovak Crisis of 1967–1970*]. In: HOPPE, Jiří (ed.): *Pražské jaro v médiích: Výběr z dobové publicistiky* [The Prague Spring in the Media: A Selection of Contemporary Journalism]. (Prameny k dějinám československé krize v letech 1967–1970 [The Sources on the History of the Czechoslovak Crisis of 1967–1970], Vol. 11) Brno – Praha, Doplněk – Ústav pro soudobé dějiny AV ČR 2004, p 16 n.).
- 17 See the Agreement between the Government of the Czechoslovak Socialist Republic and the Government of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics on the Conditions of the Temporary Stay of Soviet Troops in the Territory of the Czechoslovak Socialist Republic, which was signed in Prague on 16 October 1968.
- 18 To increase this effect, the Red Army, liberator in 1945, and the Soviet Army, saviour from the chaos of 1968, were symbolically linked. Thus, the commitment we were to feel forever towards the Red, or Soviet Army, could be emphasised. (See ČERNÁ, Marie: *Se Sovětskou armádou opět na věčné časy* [With the Soviet Army Forever, Again]. In: *Dějiny a současnost*, Vol. 36, No. 11 (2014), pp 13–16.)
- 19 The official press brought news about “twinning” social and cultural events, referred to concerts where Soviet Army orchestras performed, and the voluntary work of Soviet soldiers in collective farms and agricultural enterprises (see IDEM: From “Occupation” to “Friendly Assistance”: The Presence of Soviet Troops in Czechoslovakia after August 1968. In: *Hungarian Historical Review*, Vol. 4, Issue 1 (2015), pp 114–143).
- 20 See *VII. sjezd Svazu československo-sovětského přátelství: Dokumenty z jednání sjezdu. Praha, 16.–17. června 1972* [The 7th Congress of the Union of Czechoslovak-Soviet Friendship: Documents from the Congress Held in Prague between 16 and 17 June 1972]. Praha, Lidové nakladatelství 1972.

and this number continued to grow in the years that followed.²¹ After the redefinition of the threat to the newly established order, the term “collaborator” naturally disappeared from the scene following the logic that where there is no occupation, no collaboration exists. “Twinning” with Soviet soldiers became not only official state policy, but also an expression of political loyalty which was frequently expected of inhabitants. Those who insisted on the original story of occupation (and collaboration) were socially de-legitimised, intimidated, sanctioned in various manners, and bullied.

However, this does not mean that the earlier interpretation of events or the term occupation disappeared. The original political views on the occupation could still be shared in private, among emigrants, and among those dissenting, but they ceased to be a reality shared across the nation and communicated in public. Moreover, the initial understanding of the occupation was complemented by other experiences, either direct or indirect, as a consequence of the long-term presence of the Soviet Army and this brought with it new meanings for society.

Survey – Memories of the Soviet Soldiers’ Presence

As already mentioned, until 1989 the official image of the Soviet Army was predominately heroic or idyllic. As a result, although the local people were clearly aware of the numerous problems and conflicts related to the deployment of Soviet troops, it was something that could not be communicated in the media. People kept any negative occurrences to themselves, or demanded rectification by the authorities without any publicity. The same applied to local administrative bodies in their conflicts with Soviet garrisons. Retrospective surveys can offer some insight into how people felt about the presence of the Soviet military and the meaning they attributed to it. For example, in 2008²² a survey was organised among the inhabitants of the area by the regional museum in Vysoké Mýto, concerning their interaction with Soviet soldiers.²³ The available sample offers us a remarkable view of the range of experiences and appraisals, from positive statements to utterly

21 According to its data, the Union of Czechoslovak-Soviet Friendship had 2,241,617 members in 1977 (8. sjezd Svazu československo-sovětského přátelství: Dokumenty z jednání sjezdu. Praha, 12.–13. prosince 1977 [The 8th Congress of the Union of Czechoslovak-Soviet Friendship: Documents from the Congress Held in Prague between 12 and 13 December 1977]. Praha, Lidové nakladatelství 1978, p 22).

22 The survey was organised on the occasion of the exhibition “Close the Gate, Little Brother: 1968 and 20 Years of Soviet Occupation in the Pardubice Region.”

23 In the survey, people answered predetermined, open-ended questions which were related to their personal experiences with the stay of the Soviet Army, their attitudes, mutual contacts, forms of cooperation, etc. The completed questionnaires are stored in the museum and form part of the material collected on the history of the Soviet garrison in the region. This chapter of the history is being regularly commemorated through various events organised by the museum. I would like to thank Zdeněk Horák, an employee of the museum, for providing me with approximately 30 completed questionnaires. Despite the fact

negative ones: “During all this time I have not met any arrogant commander or witnessed any unsuitable behaviour. [...] In any case, the positive form of cooperation existed and prevailed.” (M. A.) “One cannot talk about disputes [...] they were invited as guests by many families.” (M. B.) – “In the village of Kerhartice, they did not bother anyone, because they did not use to go anywhere.” (W. A.) – “Personally I was constantly dissatisfied as a citizen – I perceived them as occupiers who were all around us and could not be ignored.” (M. C.) “Their stay became engraved in my memory, because it was not anything pleasant. I have unpleasant memories of it. [...] I still have unpleasant memories of how reality was distorted by the daily press, radio broadcasting, etc.” (W. B.)

This text is not intended to provide an in-depth analysis of similar viewpoints in a broader context. Attitudes were, of course, also determined by the professional and social status of the respondents, which, to a certain extent, influenced the form and scope of their interactions. The aim of this article is to show that the presence of the Soviet Army, and the meanings people attributed to it, potentially divided society. Some of the respondents describe specific dealings with the Soviets and evaluate them rather positively (the possibility of shopping in garrison stores, mutually beneficial trade, voluntary work carried out by soldiers). In contrast, others experienced the presence of the military base negatively (petty thefts by soldiers, goods being bought up by Soviet officers, transport accidents). Some perceived the presence of foreign forces in their former habitat in a wider political context, seeing them as representatives of power and as those who helped to maintain a certain political order. Others explicitly rejected this power-political framework. These various views led, understandably, to different appraisals of mutual contact between Czechs and Soviet officers and soldiers. Some inhabitants recall informal contacts and friendships with the families of Soviet officers which continued after the withdrawal of Soviet troops: “I also remember officer Vladimir P. [...] whose family used to come to visit. After they had left, they would send us letters from Odessa and invitations to visit.” (M. B.) More mentioned prescribed formal interactions: “As a grammar school student I had to attend various cultural events, mostly celebrated on the occasions of Soviet state anniversaries.” (W. C.) And yet others saw these imposed contacts as personal pragmatic decisions: “In the village of Červená Voda, there were some people who regularly attended the celebrations, because they could profit from it – they got refreshments and at the same time scored political points. [...] Mostly, however, people referred to the Soviets as ‘Russkies’ and ‘occupiers’ who were not welcome here.” (W. A.) Other respondents regarded such behaviour as a moral failure: “What bothered me most was how the Czechs changed and took the Soviet side.” (M. A.)

As mentioned before, since “twinning” was seen as a desired expression of political loyalty, the specific ways people interacted with Soviet personnel depended

that the names of the respondents are listed on some of the completed questionnaires, for the purposes of this article, I have used fictitious initials.

on their social status.²⁴ There was no clear definition nor general agreement on what was considered to be decent behaviour, a necessary evil or even indubitably immoral (e.g., collaboration) in relation to “twinning” with Soviet soldiers.²⁵ Without a doubt, these definitions have also significantly changed over time. However, what is apparent is that the presence of the Soviet Army raised potential questions of a moral character, which were asked with varying intensity and which had no clear-cut answers.

The local inhabitants also made clear distinctions between officers and the general soldiery: “Ordinary soldiers often assisted with agricultural work. [...] People did not mind them. But they did not like the officers and their wives. There was often this picture: an officer with his wife and behind them a soldier-servant with a big suitcase.” (W. D.) Soviet rank-and-file soldiers were often viewed as powerless and pitiful victims of an oppressive system who suffered much more under it than Czechs did. Stories of the cruel ways officers treated ordinary soldiers became legends which circulated among the people.²⁶ These stories on the one hand reinforced the solidarity felt towards the victimised and this sympathy was void of moral judgement regarding possible collaboration. However, this further complicated the perception of the Soviet Army as an occupying force, which was already somewhat ambiguous. On the other hand, it also reinforced the image of the Soviet military as an unscrupulous oriental tyrant, which turned against its own people. This unscrupulousness had yet another dimension on which the majority of the respondents agreed upon in hindsight. It was related to the Soviet Army’s behaviour towards the environment, towards the used space, buildings, and nature. It was exactly this aspect which played a key role in the subsequent phase of defining the meaning of occupation.

24 As one of the respondents succinctly summed up: “Whereas the officers had cultural and social contacts, ordinary people went to the stores in the towns of Červená Voda and Vysoké Mýto in search of goods short in supply.” (W. A.)

25 This is, of course, a rather general finding about the attitude towards the occupation army, as suggested for example by studies on the issue of postwar retributive justice: “The courts struggled with the definition of collaboration everywhere.” (DEÁK, István: Introduction. In: DEÁK, István – GROSS, Jan Tomasz – JUDT, Tony: *The Politics of Retribution in Europe: World War II and Its Aftermath*. Princeton (New Jersey), Princeton University Press 2000, p. 10.) Studies published in the Czech Republic come to similar conclusions. (See for example FROMMER, Benjamin: *Národní očista: Retribuce v poválečném Československu* [National Cleansing: Retribution in Postwar Czechoslovakia]. Praha, Academia 2010 (originally published in English); KMOCH, Pavel: *Provinění proti národní cti: “Malá retribuce” v českých zemích a Trestní nalézací komise v Benešově u Prahy* [Offences against the National Honour: “Small Retribution” in the Czech Lands and the Penal Discovery Commission in Benešov, Prague]. Praha, Academia 2015.)

26 “I lived across from a barracks where a military hospital was located and could often hear wailing coming from there, there were water barrels at the barracks square – in winter, as punishment, soldiers had to get into the barrels – at least that is what was said by people from Vysoké Mýto, who entered the barracks when delivering supplies.” (M. E.)

Departure, Departure, Departure

The very political existence of the representatives of the regime of “normalisation” was based on the story that the Soviet Army offered fraternal assistance in the fight against the counter-revolution in 1968. This was the version they held on to up to the last moment.²⁷ The events of November 1989, therefore, automatically opened up the issues of the invasion and the presence of Soviet troops. At that point, even the political structures then in power started to distance themselves from the existing political direction, publicly declaring a reinterpretation of August 1968.²⁸ The presence of Soviet troops in the country had become an unjustifiable relic of the pre-November policy. It was declared one of the “most pressing problems of our state”²⁹ and, as early as January 1990, discussions with the Soviets regarding their withdrawal began.³⁰ The “temporary stay” could again be called an occupation.

Until November 1989, Czech society had been divided in its position towards the Soviet Army, yet the demand for its departure became an important part of the national consensus, not only on the political level,³¹ but also across the entire society. However, to that end, the original meaning of the 1968 occupation (with all its moral claims and consequences) had to be reinterpreted to reflect the 20-year presence of Soviet troops in the country. Using it in its unchanged meaning in the year 1990 would have been an anachronism, threatening in addition national unity, because

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- 27 In August 1989, the Czechoslovak Federal Assembly still refused the apology of the Polish Sejm for its participation in the August invasion as interference in the internal affairs of the state (PECKA, J. a kol.: *Sovětská armáda v Československu 1968–1991*, p 140).
- 28 The need to redefine the events of 1968 was mentioned by the then Prime Minister of the Federal Government, Ladislav Adamec, as early as 29 November 1989. On 3 December 1989, the new cabinet appointed by him proclaimed that the August invasion was a “violation of normal relations between sovereign states” and took the first steps towards a discussion with the Soviets on the withdrawal of their troops. The Federal Assembly of the Czechoslovak Socialist Republic denounced the intervention of the Warsaw Pact armies on 12 December 1989. (*Ibid.*, p 142 n.)
- 29 PECKA, J. (ed.): *Odsun sovětských vojsk z Československa 1989–1991*, p 88, Document No. 22 – A suggestion made by the Deputy Michael Kocáb at the plenary of the Federal Assembly of the Czech and Slovak Federative Republic to declare the Treaty on the Temporary Stay of Soviet Troops in Czechoslovakia from 1968 invalid, 23 January 1990, Prague.
- 30 On the political negotiations regarding the withdrawal of Soviet troops, see *Ibid.*; ŠEDIVÝ, Jaroslav: *Černínský palác v roce nula: Ze zákulisí polistopadové zahraniční politiky* [The Czernin Palace in Year Zero: A Behind-the-Scene Look into Post-November Foreign Policy]. Praha, Ivo Železný 1997; KOSOVÁ, Jana: *Odchod sovětských vojsk z území Německa, Československa a Polska* [Withdrawal of Soviet Troops from Germany, Czechoslovakia and Poland]. Dissertation defended at the Institute of International Studies of the Faculty of Social Sciences, Charles University in Prague in 2012.
- 31 In relation to the withdrawal of the Soviet Army “the position of Czech politicians was unanimous. [...] Withdrawal was the last act of national consensus.” (KOCÁB, Michael: *Když nebyl čas na hraní: Vzpomínky na revoluci, odsun Sovětů, na Václava Havla, Franka Zappu, na sebe, na všechno možné* [When There Was No Time to Play: Memories of Revolution, the Soviets’ Withdrawal, Václav Havel, Frank Zappa, Myself, and All Sorts of Things]. Řitka, Daranus 2009, p 58 n.)

it would – like any other occupation – raise the issue of political collaboration.³² Not that the original meaning had disappeared altogether from the public sphere, it was rather broadened and overlapped with other meanings.

The main wave of local declarations and mass demonstrations demanding the immediate withdrawal of Soviet troops began after the government had initiated discussions on this issue in January 1990. During these demonstrations, people expressed their support for the government in negotiations held with the Soviets. At the same time, a new meaning was assigned to the occupation that most people could agree on, regardless of their previous relation to the Soviet Army. The main emphasis was placed on the usurpation of living space. The somewhat abstract political nuances of the term “occupation,” referring back to August 1968 and the subsequent “normalisation,” and a meaning related to security-strategic concerns³³ merged regionally with the material and environmental impact of the occupation. What came to the fore was the fact that Soviet soldiers were occupying territory, flats, and land, and that they were acting as though they were the owners, putting a strain on local resources, contaminating and disturbing the surroundings with military vehicles, buying up goods, and all of this had a significant effect on the lives of the population in the area. “For 20 years, the neighbours of this block of flats have suffered from the exhaust of army tanks which the Soviet soldiers sometimes run for several days. This means that people cannot open their windows and the flats still stink of fuel. Another problem is the noise which is certainly many times above acceptable standards,” the representatives of the Civic Forum in Trutnov wrote to the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Jiří Dienstbier, in February 1990.³⁴ In many different ways, the opinion is voiced that Soviet soldiers “cut a big piece of our pie.”³⁵ The new political situation enabled the transformation of the issue of the withdrawal of the Soviet troops into “a fair request” which needed no discussion. As the spokesman of the Civic Forum from the town of Benátky nad Jizerou expressed at a demonstration demanding the departure of the Soviet Army:

32 In the case of the Soviet occupation, all public attempts at retribution and related issues of criminal justice and moral co-responsibility were limited to a few representatives of the former regime. They were tried in connection with the so called “letter of invitation” (Vasil Bílak), to the formation of a “worker-peasant” government (Milouš Jakeš, Jozef Lenárt) or to the order to suspend the broadcasting of Czechoslovak Radio on the night of 21 August (Karel Hoffmann). All these functionaries faced accusations of high treason, but in the end it was only Karel Hoffmann who was condemned for sabotage. All these long, drawn-out cases received considerable media attention.

33 See BRABEC, Jan – SPURNÝ, Jaroslav: Sovětská vojska: Okupace neskončila [The Soviet Troops: The Occupation Is Not Over]. In: *Respekt*, Vol. 2, No. 6 (4–10 February 1991), p 4; BRABEC, Jan: Milovice, strategický bod: Výspa obrany socialismu [Milovice, the Strategic Point: A Defence Outpost of Socialism]. In: *Ibid.*, Issue No. 11 (11–17 March 1991), p 7 n.

34 *Kronika města Trutnova 1990* [Chronicle of the Town of Trutnov 1990], p 35 [cit. 2015-06-30].

35 Nechtějí už zlobit [No More Acting Up]. In: *Mladoboleslavsko*, 19 April 1990.

“After we leave this demonstration, we will have to think about this all the time, departure, departure, departure, there is no other way.”³⁶

For many garrison towns, the withdrawal of the Soviet Army provided an opportunity to put an end to their military history. They exerted pressure on their political representatives, demanding restitution of the occupied space and the transfer of military property, mainly flats used by Soviet officers, to civil administration.³⁷ This act can be interpreted as redress for all “the injustices that had been suffered.”³⁸ The vision of the return of occupied space, the promise of improved housing and the possibility of using the existing military installations for basic civil purposes related to health, education and public services, all represented an important mobilisation moment at the local level, which united people in active protest against the presence of the Soviet Army. At the same time, these aspirations were an expression of the hopes that people had for the future.³⁹

Devastation

With the focus on the material consequences of the long-term presence of the Soviet Army and questions pertaining to the administration and transfer of the used installations, the occupation gained yet another important meaning. The main theme, which started to be emphasised, was *devastation*. Regional and national media brought reports about the environmental situation in places where Soviet

36 PECKA, J. (ed.): *Odsun sovětských vojsk z Československa 1989–1991*, p 95, Document No. 27 – Interview by the town bulletin editor with the participants in the demonstration for the withdrawal of the Soviet Army from Czechoslovakia, 3 February 1990, Lysá nad Labem.

37 Jednoznačné požadavky obyvatel našeho okresního města [Clear Demands of Citizens of Our District Town]. In: *Mladoboleslavsko*, 31 January 1990; PECKA, J. (ed.): *Odsun sovětských vojsk z Československa 1989–1991*, p 91 n., Document No. 24 – Proclamation of the local Civic Forum on the withdrawal of Soviet troops, 30 January 1990, Lázně Bohdaneč; *Ibid.*, p 92, Document No. 25 – The proclamation of demonstrators demanding withdrawal of Soviet troops from the town, 31 January 1990, Jeseník; *Ibid.*, p 98 n., Document No. 30 – Call by the Civic Forum of Velká Bystřice for support of the demand to relieve the military zone of Libavá of all military activities and facilities, 8 February 1990, Velká Bystřice.

38 “No military garrisons will be stationed in Vysoké Mýto as redress for all the injustices suffered in the past.” (*Kronika města Vysokého Mýta 1987–1998*, p 65. [cit. 2015-06-30]: http://vycho-doceskearchivy.cz/ebadatelna/zobrazeni-publikace-usti/?adresar=CZ_225204010_0381_x00003&nadpis=CZ_225204010_0381_x00003&strana=1.)

39 In relation to former military installations, the media reported, for example, on a study of a “Finnish-type town” in the Central Bohemian garrison town of Milovice where along with the headquarters of the Central group of the forces also tens of thousands of Soviet soldiers and the family members of the officers were placed (Sověti předávají objekty [The Soviets Are Handing Over the Installations]. In: *Mladoboleslavsko*, 6 February 1991) and about “a student town” in the place of a former barracks in the north Moravian town Krnov, which was to have a “sufficiently large eating room, health centre, modern sports and cultural venues.” (Z kasáren studentské městečko [From Barracks to Student Town]. In: *Práce*, 27 April 1990.)

garrisons had been stationed and stories were written about the “20-year devastation of nature.”⁴⁰ Commissions, set up at various levels by citizens, politicians and experts monitored the position in the military installations and military zones of the Soviet bases which had been made accessible, recorded damage to Czechoslovak property, examined the extent of soil and groundwater contamination, investigated the scope and hazardousness of illegal dumps, quantified the cost of their rehabilitation, inspected buildings which had been built by Soviet soldiers, and so on.

On the one hand, the process of recording and assessing the harm caused by the Soviet Army fitted into the framework of “exposing” the crimes of the communist regime and into a more general image of a “ruined land,” thereby contributing to a distancing from the past. On the other, it also signified a separation from a culturally foreign element, often described in terms of (culture) shock: “The local people were shocked when they entered a forest close to the village of Mrklesy for the first time in many years. The first thing they tripped over was a half-buried petrol canister.”⁴¹ “The workers who went to look inside [a former Soviet school] were shocked – damaged furniture, smashed doors, hacked off plaster, totally damaged washrooms and workrooms.”⁴² In this context, rather than occupiers, the Soviets were called “uninvited guests” whose level of civilization was far lower than local standards: “After the necessary double insect disinfection, the electricians are the ones who are busy here. The Soviet tenants damaged the majority of the plug sockets – they simply ‘adapted’ them to their appliances by tearing out one of the socket pins.”⁴³ In relation to the Soviet Army, it was possible to resume the long-time tradition of depicting Russia and the Soviet Union as backward eastern civilizations, an image which during the communist rule had been officially replaced by the picture of a promised and progressive land.⁴⁴ Many perceived the damage and mess left behind by the Soviet soldiers as a manifestation of Soviet backwardness and lack of culture. This image resonated with the commonly shared conviction that the Czech nation had a relatively higher culture and was more developed than other communist countries.⁴⁵ “Soaked ceilings, windows full of hammered nails, leaking taps, if any were left at all, wiring, lining, ceramic tiles, closets, all fittings pulled out, the dining hall was considered by a Japanese journalist a cow

40 Plechy se uklidí... [Metal Waste Can Be Cleared Away...]. In: *Obrana lidu*, 17 March 1990.

41 Po nás potopa [After Us, the Deluge]. In: *Práce*, 5 March 1990.

42 Lesy zatím nepřístupné [Forests So Far Inaccessible]. In: *Ibid.*, 4 April 1990.

43 Z kasáren studentské městečko [From Barracks to Student Town]. In: *Ibid.*, 27 April 1990.

44 See HOLUBEC, Stanislav: *Ještě nejsme za vodou: Obrazy druhých a historická paměť v období postkomunistické transformace* [We Are not Yet Home and Dry: Images of Others and Historical Memory in the Period of Post-Communist Transformation]. Praha, Scriptorum 2015, pp 75–86.

45 Compare SNEGON, Tomáš: *Historie ve znovuzrozené volné soutěži: Česká a slovenská postkomunistická transformace a její dominantní historické příběhy* [History in Reborn Free Competition: Czech and Slovak Post-Communist Transformation and its Dominant Historical Narratives]. In: *Dějiny – Teorie – Kritika*, Vol. 6, No. 2 (2009), pp 200–231.

house. The soil soaked by petroleum, illegal structures all around, i.e., structures built without any consent from the local authorities. [...] We can see how the Communists influenced our thinking and behaviour over the 40 years of occupation, and yet we had been one of the most developed European nations. Therefore, we should not be surprised by people from the big Russian country, which has been under communist rule for over 75 years, and which was before that a backward feudal country.”⁴⁶

At a symbolic level, therefore, the taking back of areas and installations left by the Soviet Army was equated with saving them from (Soviet) chaos. The subsequent reconstruction and cleansing was a return to the higher civilizational order: “We can handle the horrors left behind by them.”⁴⁷ In this context, the withdrawal of the Soviet Army from Czechoslovakia may be perceived as the unequivocal closing of a chapter of the communist past and an important milestone for local political and social transformation. From the perspective of national and local policies, it was a success, which can be commemorated on each anniversary.

Legacy

The removal of Soviet soldiers marked an end to their operations in Czechoslovakia. The departure divided the associated memories of the country’s inhabitants into three, more or less, separate episodes – the dramatic invasion of the Warsaw Pact armies in August 1968, the long-term stay of Soviet forces in the country, and their withdrawal in 1990 and 1991. However, together with this, a new important chapter began, and that was the *legacy* of the Soviet Army. Any articles about the Soviet Army published in the press after 1990 and 1991 more often than not focused on this issue. Obviously, the problem had already come into public view with the leaving of the occupation army, when various secret chambers were opened, the damage caused by Soviet soldiers revealed, and the scope of the devastation investigated. It was already clear that the exit of the army did not spell the end of the story.⁴⁸ At the beginning of the 1990s, the whole issue was viewed with both concern and optimism. There was a general conviction that after they had gone we would somehow deal with the consequences and erase the traces of the Soviet Army. However, as time goes by and problems remain unresolved, the presence of the army is still noticeable, more than 20 years after the last Soviet soldier left Czechoslovakia.

Devastation remains a pivotal theme of this legacy. The link between destruction and the Soviet Army became an automatic and commonly shared notion which

46 *Kronika města Vysokého Mýta 1987–1998*, p 65.

47 *Ibid.*, p 57.

48 “Military objects will be handed over within three months, but that does not mean there will be fewer worries [...]” (Co s hlavní budovou kasáren 9. května [What to Do with the Main Building of 9 May Barracks]. In: *Mladoboleslavsko*, 20 February 1991.)

was not questioned nor did it need to be justified: “Valuable paintings were discovered during the reconstruction of the church, which had been devastated by the Soviet Army, stationed in Ralsko (former Soviet military zone in Bohemia) during the previous regime.”⁴⁹ “After years of devastation during the stay of Soviet soldiers stationed here at the castle, the sandstone fountain basins were damaged, one of them being completely destroyed.”⁵⁰ Only a reconstruction erasing traces of the Soviet Army⁵¹ can draw a thick line under the detrimental consequences of its presence in the country. Any areas and buildings which have not yet been similarly integrated (through a process of cleansing, decontamination, rehabilitation, reconstruction or destruction) are perceived as irritating relics of the Soviet Army and remain a disruptive and foreign element: “The block of flats ‘Na Lužci’ is currently turning into an orderly part of the town with many interesting objects [...]. The only sore spot in this block of flats, which before was the bastion of the occupation army, is now the former cultural house of the Soviet military.”⁵²

Therefore, the legacy of the Soviet Army is, to a great extent, a challenge for local politicians and, although there is pride in what has been achieved,⁵³ there are also long-term problems and frustration. The recent history of the former garrison towns is, amongst other things, interpreted in terms of their efforts to deal with the remnants of the Soviet Army’s presence, which have been either successful (Vysoké Mýto, Turnov, Frenštát pod Radhoštěm) or (so far) unsuccessful (Ralsko). Commemorative events on the occasion of the anniversary of the Soviet Army’s withdrawal usually recount what has changed since then. The reconstruction of areas and

49 V kostele, který zničila sovětská armáda, objevili vzácné gotické malby [Precious Paintings Were Discovered in the Church Destroyed by the Soviet Army]. In: *MF Dnes*, regional edition Liberec, 28 July 2014.

50 V děčínských kašnách zdevastovaných sovětskou armádou opět poteče voda [Water to Run Again in the Fountains of Děčín Devastated by the Soviet Army]. *MF Dnes*, regional edition Ústí nad Labem, 3 May 2013.

51 See titles of articles such as “Stopy po sovětské armádě budou konečně minulostí” [Finally, the Traces of the Soviet Army to Disappear]. In: *Teplický deník*, 22 March 2010.

52 Kulturní dům Sovětské armády snad přestane hyzdit sídliště na Lužci [The Cultural House of the Soviet Army Not to Be an Eyesore in the Housing Estate “Na Lužci” Anymore]. In: *Paradubické noviny*, 25 November 1998.

53 For example, participants in the celebrations marking the 10th anniversary of the Soviet Army withdrawal from Vysoké Mýto could visit, in a special charter bus, the area of the former Soviet garrison and get “a sense of what had been rehabilitated and improved.” (Město se hodně změnilo za deset let po odchodu sovětské armády [The Town Has Changed a Lot 10 Years After the Soviet Army’s Withdrawal]. In: *Orlický deník*, 28 August 2000.) The Festival of Freedom, which was organised to celebrate the 20th anniversary of the Soviet Army withdrawal, was presented as an opportunity to recall “the years of hard work and the remediation of damage.” The year 2010 was declared by the town’s top representatives “an important milestone in the history of Vysoké Mýto,” because there are no longer “any traces of the stay of the Soviet troops.” (KONÍČEK, Jiří: Festival jako oslava svobody [Festival as a Celebration of Freedom]. In: *Orlický deník.cz* [online], 9 March 2010 [cit. 2015-06-30]. Available at: http://orlicky.denik.cz/kultura_region/festival-jako-oslava-svobody20100309.html.)

buildings after the “uninvited guests,” or, in other words, their conversion to local technical and aesthetic norms, is almost always described as a transition from a lower cultural and civilizational form to a higher: “Currently, a part of the building known as ‘kachlíkárna’ [tile house] is being demolished. In the final phase it will be reconstructed as an apartment house with 28 flats.”⁵⁴ “We would like to greet hard-working labourers and praise the greenish tiles which were used to transform the dreadful toilets left here by the Soviet soldiers into modern toilets with access for wheelchairs.”⁵⁵ The often long and hard journey to effective reconstruction and revitalisation is also a story about the twists and turns of the post-November transformation.⁵⁶ However, the problematic legacy of the Soviet Army is always emphasised as well. It remains a key issue more than 20 years after the former Soviet zones and installations came under Czech administration and local management.⁵⁷

Life Alongside Soviet Soldiers

Considerably less attention has been paid to the issue of coexistence between the local population and Soviet soldiers. Nevertheless, there are several repeated patterns in the memories of contemporary witnesses that appear in the media. This is clearly also linked to how the occupation army was portrayed at the beginning of the 1990s. The most common themes include references to the difficulties of living beside Soviet garrisons, their occupation of physical space together with inappropriate and disturbing behaviour, the grime, the contamination of their surroundings, and the violation of various rules and norms, including those related to security. Retrospectively, this image of “uninvited guests” has been further reinforced by contemporary parallels with “unadjusted” citizens: “We can learn about the difficult coexistence with the Soviet Army from a document, sent to the editors of an Orlický daily by David Macků with the following note attached: ‘Some 25 years ago I met a girl from Vysoké Mýto and she gave me this document containing information

54 Obec opravila byty po Sovětské armádě [The Town Reconstructed the Former Soviet Army Flats]. In: *MF Dnes*, regional edition Pardubice, 21 September 2000.

55 Stopy po sovětské armádě budou konečně minulostí [Finally, the Traces of the Soviet Army to Disappear]. In: *Teplický deník*, 22 March 2010.

56 “Two prefabricated-panel houses, relics of the Soviet Army, which are the shame of Olomouc’s Nový svět district, and whose reconstruction was started but never finished by an entrepreneur after the revolution, may soon receive new tenants.” (Olomoucká radnice chce koupit domy po Sovětské armádě [Olomouc Town Hall Wants to Buy the Former Soviet Army Houses]. In: *Olomoucký den*, 6 December 2001.)

57 See for example Z Ralska zmizí jedy, které tu v zemi zůstaly po sovětské armádě [Soil Toxins Left by the Soviet Army to Disappear from Ralsko]. In: *MF Dnes*, regional edition Liberec, 11 July 2014; Turnov uklidí zbytky po sovětské armádě [Turnov to Clean Up Waste Left by the Soviet Army]. In: *Deník Pojizeří*, 23 May 2006. In both these cases, and in many others, the media also report on illegal dumps, which have spread across the former military zones in recent years. However, the headings and the key messages still primarily refer to the damage left by the Soviet Army.

about the settlement of disputes with unadjusted members of the Soviet Army and their families.”⁵⁸ Accordingly, different cultural and civilizational conventions, as well as the economic standards of Soviet soldiers, have been highlighted, some with peculiar characteristics: “The Soviets⁵⁹ built houses in their own style and they looked like it. There was no drainage in some of the flats and only one toilet on some of the floors. The walls were crooked and the rooms were sometimes built at different levels, with one floor lower and another higher.”⁶⁰ People repeatedly recall Soviet officers buying up all the goods in local shops, “officers’ wives” and “Russian women in fur coats,” the use of newspapers as an alternative to curtains, and military servants: “Russian women used to go to the towns, dressed in their fur coats, to buy up everything in the local shops. They always had enough money. The shopping was carried by rank-and-file soldiers, whom they treated as lackeys.”⁶¹ “The Soviets’ wives were always dressed-up and there was typically a heavy odour of perfume around them. Ordinary soldiers served as lackeys, carrying tons of shopping. The shops in towns were plundered.”⁶² People also recall the misery of the ordinary soldiers: “They even held a military parade for us. The soldiers lined up, many of them wearing military boots, which had seen better times. The commanders showed us the interior of a barracks. It was so miserable.”⁶³

The images of the Soviet Army evoked on various occasions are related to their different levels of culture, civilization, education and democracy, and serve to separate the Soviet soldiers as “others,” distinct from “us.” Visually, these representations are nourished by a series of photographs from the time of the army’s departure, which are regularly published by the media.⁶⁴ In the pictures, devastated military quarters, dirt and clutter combine with an aggressive aesthetic of political slogans and the lethargy of common soldiers. It all looks as if it is from another world.⁶⁵

58 1968–1990: Sovětská armáda ve Vysokém Mýtě [1968–1990: The Soviet Army in Vysoké Mýto]. In: *Orlický deník*, 21 August 2014.

59 In relation to the Soviet Army, the media generally report on the Soviets or Russians, and there is no differentiation, with few exceptions, as to their ethnic origin.

60 Ruská čtvrt v Olomouci byla za betonovou zdí [The Russian Quarter Was Behind a Concrete Wall]. In: *Český rozhlas Radiožurnál* [online]. 22 January 2011 [cit. 2015-06-30]. Available at: http://www.rozhlas.cz/radiozurnal/reportaze/_zprava/ruska-ctvrt-v-olomouci-by-la-za-betonovou-zdi--848611_

61 Sovětská armáda vnikla do okresu rovněž s tanky [The Soviet Army Invaded the District with Tanks]. In: *Bruntálský a krnovský deník*, 23 August 2006.

62 “Ivani” konečně šli: Před 25 lety začal ve Frenštátu odsun Sovětů [“Ivans” Finally Gone: The Soviet Withdrawal Began in Frenštát 25 Years Ago]. In: *ČT 24* [online]. 26 February 2015 [cit. 2015-06-30]. Available at: <http://www.ceskatelevize.cz/ct24/regiony/302880-ivani-konecne-sli-pred-25-lety-zacal-ve-frenstatu-odsun-sovetu/>

63 *Ibid.*

64 These are mostly photographs by Dana Kyndrová, Karel Cudlín and Vojta Dukát. See for example KYNDROVÁ, Dana: *Odchod sovětských vojsk 1990–1991* [The Withdrawal of Soviet Troops, 1990–1991]. Praha, Kant 2003.

65 In 2011, on the occasion of a photographic exhibition by Karel Cudlín, Vojta Dukát and Vojtěch Hönig, the media reported, in relation to the Soviet garrison in Milovice, on “an enclave of relocated territory with an autonomous political, economic, financial, architectonic, en-

Through this lens, the meaning of the Soviet military stay is seen primarily from an ethnographic, cultural and social viewpoint rather than a political one. And even though the stereotypes that Czechs apply to themselves are full of contradictions, and never short on scepticism and criticism, they come out better in popular ethnographic comparisons with Soviets and Russians. As mentioned earlier, from the outset of the 1990s, the Soviet Army has been portrayed as inferior in terms of culture and civilization. This continuity thus helps to support notions about traditional native culture, as well as the level of education and democracy of the Czech people.⁶⁶ “It was interesting to observe how the occupying nation adopted the higher culture of the nation which it was occupying,” said Milan Hořínek, the former Mayor of the city of Olomouc, in the Czech Television documentary *Běž domů, Ivane* [Go Home, Ivan].⁶⁷

Mutually beneficial exchanges of goods⁶⁸ and visits to “well supplied” Soviet garrison stores are other themes most often remembered by the local populations: “There were two stores – ‘univermags’ – that had everything. Or at least during ‘normalisation,’ we thought they did. Women would buy fridges, televisions, plimsolls and white t-shirts for kids...”⁶⁹ However, even these kinds of memories can sometimes fall under the category of the peculiar civilizational practices of Soviet soldiers which suggest their lower standards: “The soldiers were stealing whatever they could. They were also selling everything. [...] Once, they even came with a fuel tank truck during the day. The commander was collecting cash and smoking

vironmental and legal system” (Odchody – Karel Cudlín, Vojta Dukát, Vojtěch Hönic: Diapozitivy, video a fotografie [Departures – Karel Cudlín, Vojta Dukát, Vojtěch Hönic: Slides, video and photographs]. In: Školská 28: Komunikační prostor [online] [cit. 2015-06-30]. Available at: <http://www.skolska28.cz/odchody-karel-cudlin-vojta-dukata-vojtech-honig>). At the same time, the exhibitors, in line with the tradition of humanistic photography, express empathy with “ordinary soldiers,” who are “crushed by history,” live in terrible conditions and actually get our sympathy (see an interview with Dana Kyndrová at Czech Radio Vltava or the TV documentary about Vojta Dukát: Dana Kyndrová: Odchod sovětských vojsk 1990–1991 [Dana Kyndrová: The Withdrawal of the Soviet Troops, 1990–1991]. In: Český rozhlas Vltava [online]. 9 June 2010 [cit. 2015-06-30]. Available at: http://www.rozhlas.cz/mozaika/vytvarne/_zprava/744244; Žádní Brežněvové, prostě vojáci: Sovětská vojska v životě Vojty Dukáta [No Brezhnevs, Simply Soldiers: The Soviet Troops in the Life of Vojta Dukát]. In: ČT 24 [online]. 14 April 2014 [cit. 2015-06-30]. Available at: <http://www.ceskatelevize.cz/ct24/kultura/269593-zadni-breznovevove-proste-vojaci-sovetska-vojska-v-zivote-vojty-dukata/>).

66 See HOLÝ, Ladislav: *Malý český člověk a skvělý český národ: Národní identita a postkomunistická transformace společnosti* [The Small Czech Man and the Great Czech Nation: National Identity and Post-Communist Transformation of the Society]. Praha, Sociologické nakladatelství 2001.

67 *Běž domů, Ivane: Jak nás opouštěli ti, které jsme nevívali* [Ivan, Go Home: How We Were Left by Those Who Came Unwelcome]. In: ČT 1 [online]. 30 September 2010 [cit. 2015-06-30]. Available at: <http://www.ceskatelevize.cz/porady/10267429566-bez-domu-ivane/410235100021002/>.

68 “A litre of fruit wine could be bartered for one Russian petrol can.” (Kasárna obsadila před čtyřiceti lety sovětská armáda [Barracks Occupied by the Soviet Army 40 Years Ago]. In: *Bruntálský a krnovský deník*, 11 October 2008.)

69 Ruská čtvrt v Olomouci byla za betonovou zdí.

at the same time, throwing the butts on the ground.”⁷⁰ Similar exchanges can be viewed in a pragmatic way, but they may also raise moral concerns: “The chronicler, who after the revolution became the mayor of Červená Voda, did not visit the Soviet stores. The Soviet Army came to Červená Voda when he was 34 and teaching in a local school. He never accepted the occupation and therefore did not support the black-market deals.”⁷¹

Only rarely was publicity given to the political and social aspects of interaction between the local population and the Soviet Army, and only marginal references to this contact appear in the media, such as in a report broadcast by Radiožurnál [national Czech Radio] in April 2011: “[...] after 1972, members of the army were forced to participate in ‘twinning,’ which included activities such as organisation of joint tours, football matches, etc. One cannot speak about collaboration here.”⁷² We are likely to find some references to the various forms of “twinning” in the memories of former Soviet soldiers and their children that appear in the media now and then. “Personally, I was in touch with Czech people thanks to being appointed host for the Czechoslovak-Soviet ‘twinning’ evenings,” recalled a military doctor, Anatolij Karpus on Czech Radio years later.⁷³ However, these comments remain limited to single remarks that are not developed further. For more than 20 years, therefore, this aspect of the Soviet Army stay in Czechoslovakia has received little attention.

Conclusion

The original perception of the occupation of August 1968 fell apart in the face of the long-term presence of Soviet troops in the country. The truth about the unacceptable occupation of Czechoslovakia, which at the outset was generally accepted and obvious to everybody, was gradually replaced by the reality of forced friendship and “twinning.” The “normalisation” policy promoted several official meanings of the Soviet Army’s stay. People themselves sought other meanings, related to their personal situations, possibilities, ambitions and ideas, and they established their own criteria for what was and what was not morally acceptable. Was the presence of Soviet soldiers in the state still an occupation? And if so, what

70 Běž domů, Ivane! Před 25 lety odešli Rusové [Ivan, Go Home! Russians Left 25 Years Ago]. In: *Orlický deník*, 22 May 2015.

71 V Červené Vodě kvetl obchod s Rusy [Trade with Russians Flourished in Červená Voda]. In: Český rozhlas Radiožurnál [online]. 22 February 2011 [cit. 2015-06-30]. Available at: http://www.rozhlas.cz/radiozurnal/reportaze/_zprava/v-cervene-vode-kvetl-obchod-s-rusy--867756.

72 Se Sověty musela být družba [“Twinning” with Soviets Was Obligatory]. In: Český rozhlas Radiožurnál [online]. 30 April 2011 [cit. 2015-06-30]. Available at: http://www.rozhlas.cz/radiozurnal/reportaze/_zprava/se-sovety-musela-byt-druzba--891249.

73 Přijel jako okupant, odjel jako přítel Československa [He Came as an Occupier and Left as a Friend of Czechoslovakia]. In: Český rozhlas Radiožurnál [online]. 11 January 2011 [cit. 2015-06-30]. Available at: http://www.rozhlas.cz/radiozurnal/reportaze/_zprava/prijel-jako-okupant-odjel-jako-pritel-ceskoslovenska--843139

forms did this take and what were the consequences? Should the Soviet military be seen as the personification of Soviet policy? Were rank-and-file soldiers also occupiers? What position should one have taken regarding them? And what was collaboration – or in other words, what was considered to be inappropriate, incorrect, humiliating, pragmatic or advantageous in this respect? These were questions that Czechoslovaks could ask themselves and (still) find different replies. The variety of responses still persists in our memory, while in the media, diverse answers pile up side-by-side. This is nothing unusual. What is rather surprising, however, is that these coexist peacefully as if we have admitted that all of them can be true. Efforts, often of a political character, to imprint one essential meaning to the former presence of the Soviet Army – such as the commemorative plaque cited at the opening of this article, which portrays the inhabitants of Vysoké Mýto as passive victims of a malevolent occupation – are therefore undermined in every possible way. After all, the local museum of the very same town also stores testimonies which refer to quite dissimilar experiences.

In spite of this, a national consensus on the Soviet Army was reached again after November 1989. Regardless of the political meanings that people attributed to the presence of the army, and regardless of the practical and moral conclusions that they drew from them, most of the nation agreed that the Soviet Army had to leave our territory. The events of November 1989 brought back memories of August 1968 and together they formed an image of the Soviet Army as a power which had helped to establish the regime of “normalisation” in our country. Although the then leadership of the Soviet Army tried to convince Czechoslovak representatives that they would not interfere in the internal affairs of the state, military and strategic concerns naturally played a role in forcing the Soviet troops to leave. However, the main narrative, which had brought thousands of citizens from garrison towns onto the streets, was neither purely political nor strategic, but rather cultural and civilizational. For many people, forcing the withdrawal of the occupying army was a chance to free themselves of an inconvenient and burdensome neighbour, who was not only usurping part of their living space (flats, buildings, agricultural land), but also destroying it, and who was disturbing their environment through their behaviour, which was disrespectful of local norms. The issues of civilizational degradation and environmental devastation overshadowed the (original) political meaning of the presence of Soviet troops. Most Czechs perceived the occupying army as a culturally foreign and inferior element, and this is how it has remained in their (collective) memory, mostly media mediated, until now.

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The Strange Unity

*Gustáv Husák and Power and Political Fights Inside the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia as Exemplified by the Presidency Issue (1969–1975)*¹

Michal Macháček

“He was walking through the castle rooms and he must have been savouring the staggering fact that it was he, a Slovak from Dúbravka with a dubious biography, who was now in the seat of the Czech kings.”² This was how dissident Milan Šimečka tuned in to the mind of Gustáv Husák, three times (1975, 1980 and 1985) elected president and the only Czechoslovak president who held the office for 14,5 years, the longest-serving president after Tomáš Garrigue Masaryk. Seen from the perspective of the then existing hierarchy of political power, it was Husák’s position as General Secretary of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia which was more important; however, he strove for the presidency nonetheless, for reasons of prestige, and mainly to strengthen his own political position and to prevent anyone else from rising to this office. However, Prague Castle was the nexus of multiple lines of interest and the road to residency at this

1 The presented study was created under Charles University Research Development Scheme No. P12, “History in an Interdisciplinary Perspective,” Sub-programme “Society, Culture and Communication in Czech History.” A brief excerpt was published in the daily press: VLASÁK, Zbyněk (ed.): Historik Michal Macháček píše o Gustávu Husákovi: Boj o Hrad [Historian Michal Macháček Writes about Gustáv Husák: The Fight for the Castle]. In: *Právo*, supplement “Salon” (28 May 2015), p. 5.

2 ŠIMEČKA, Milan: *Konec nehybnosti* [The End of Immobility]. Praha, Lidové noviny 1990, p. 7.

lucrative address was not as straight as it might have seemed then and may seem now. Šimečka's quotation thus is not far from the truth.

Husák, Svoboda, “Realists” and the “Healthy Core”

Husák's name had already appeared in connection with the presidential election after the fall of Antonín Novotný, in March 1968,³ when Army General Ludvík Svoboda was ultimately elected; he and Husák had a cursory acquaintance with each other dating back to the first postwar years.⁴ They also had other things in common – their participation in the resistance movement and subsequent persecution during the 1950s. Early in April 1968, Svoboda appointed Husák as Deputy Prime Minister, although neither of them initially held a high post in the Party hierarchy. “The fact is that Svoboda behaved well to me. Perhaps the best of the whole bunch,” recalled Husák in the early 1990s. “He was a rare, earnest and humane person, and he also had a good attitude to the Slovak issue. He trusted me and after January 1968, when he became the President of Czechoslovakia, he would have elevated me to top positions.”⁵ Svoboda then was instrumental in Husák's participation in the Moscow negotiations in August 1968, during which the notorious Moscow Protocol was adopted, but he was also one of the principal supporters of Husák's involvement in top-level politics⁶ and Husák's election to the position

3 See FELCMAN, Ondřej (ed.): *Vláda a prezident: Období pražského jara (prosinec 1967 – srpen 1968)* [The Government and the President: The Prague Spring Period (December 1967 – August 1968)]. (Prameny k dějinám československé krize 1967–1970, sv. VIII/1 [Sources on the History of the Czechoslovak Crisis 1967–1970, Vol. VIII/1]) Praha – Brno, ÚSD AV ČR – Supplement 2000, p. 160, Document No. 33 – Record of the speech of Alexander Dubček at the meeting of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia on 28 March 1968; Kdo do funkce presidenta? [Whom for the President?]. In: *Rudé právo* (28 March 1968), p. 6. First Secretary of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Slovakia Vasil Biľak reported to the Soviets that it was possible to expect the candidacy of Ludvík Svoboda, and possibly of Josef Smrkovský and Gustáv Husák who “has the aura of a martyr and hero.” (*Rossiyskiy gosudarstvennyi arkhiv social'noy i politicheskoy istorii*, Moscow (hereinafter RGASPI), fund (f.) 495 (Komintern), opis (o. – inventory) 272, delo (d. – archival unit) 37, (personal file of Ludvík Svoboda), 2. tom (tome), part of the record of the conversation between the Soviet General Consul in Bratislava Ivan S. Kuznetsov and Vasil Biľak, 15 March 1968, p. 78.)

4 See *Archive of the Security Services*, Prague (hereinafter ABS), f. Ministry of National Security, sign. 62/2, box (b.) 208, file (fl.) 1–3, New Year's wish of Ludvík Svoboda to Gustáv Husák, 1 January 1949, p. 47.

5 PLEVZA, Viliam: *Vzostupy a pády: Gustáv Husák prehovoril* [The Rises and Falls: Gustáv Husák Speeches]. Bratislava, Tatrapress 1991, p. 93. In the 1970s and 1980s, Plevza was the official historiographer of Gustáv Husák. In the early 1990s, they discussed the book – a cross between a biography and memoirs – on several occasions. In the end, Husák disagreed with the text and did not authorise it; still, his statements seem to be authentic, as indicated by written records of the debates in the *Personal Archive of Viliam Plevza* in Bratislava.

6 See VONDROVÁ, Jitka – NAVRÁTIL, Jaromír (ed.): *Mezinárodní souvislosti československé krize 1967–1970: Zář 1968 – květen 1970* [The Czechoslovak Crisis 1967–1970 in an In-

of leader of the Communist Party instead of Alexander Dubček in April 1969. He and Husák created a political duo and they allegedly promised each other that they would not allow the return of political trials or the onset of “ultra-leftists,” which was a term coined for radical Communists summarily rejecting any of the reform efforts of the Prague Spring.⁷

However, President Ludvík Svoboda was becoming increasingly isolated from the summer of 1969. He fully respected the alliance with the Soviet Union, but more than once found that he was unable to identify with domestic political developments. Complaints by the “healthy forces” also targeted the advisory board of the president (in particular Svoboda’s daughter Zoe Klusáková-Svobodová), whose members were associated with the reformists and allegedly had a lot of influence on Svoboda. Moscow and Gustáv Husák were thus trying to exert influence on the president in times of uncertainty.⁸

ternational Context: September 1968 – May 1970]. (Prameny k dějinám československé krize 1967–1970, sv. IV/3 [Sources on the History of the Czechoslovak crisis 1967–1970, Vol. IV/3]) Praha – Brno, ÚSD AV ČR – Supplement 1997, p. 33, Document No. 177 – a despatch by First Deputy Foreign Minister of the Soviet Union, Vassily V. Kuznetsov, and the Soviet Ambassador to Prague, Stepan V. Chervonenko, concerning their visit to Ludvík Svoboda on 7 September 1968; *Rossyiskiy gosudarstvennyi arkhiv noveyshey istorii*, Moscow (hereinafter *RGANI*), f. 5 (Apparat CK KPSS), o. 109 (Mezhdunarodnyi otdel CK KPSS), d. 11 999 (personal file of Gustáv Husák), and from a recorded conversation with diplomat Milan Klusák, 10 September 1968, p. 130 (Klusák was also Svoboda’s son-in-law). Husák’s file kept at the Russian National Archives of Contemporary History comprises some 26 folders, altogether some 3,500 pages, which cover the period from 1936 to 1991 (Soviet interest in Husák increased rapidly from 1968 and decreased from the mid-1980s). The file contains mainly press releases and excerpts from various reports (also, though rarely, complete reports) pertaining to Husák in one way or another. Their authors were mainly staff members of the Soviet Embassy in Prague or the Soviet Consular Office in Bratislava. It is not always possible to exactly determine the author, the primary recipient or the date of the excerpts. (*RGANI*, f. 5, op. 109, d. 11997–12022.)

7 I use the term “ultra-left” to denote functionaries of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia grouped around organisations such as the Left Front, Tribuna Club or Kovarcs Group. The name is a purely auxiliary technical term. See also URBÁŠEK, Pavel: Jak “pancéřové divize” bránily socialismus: K úloze ultraradikální levice v letech 1968–1970 [How the “Panzer Divisions” Were Defending Socialism: On the Role of the Ultra-Radical Left in 1968–1970]. In: *Listy*, Vol. 36, No. 4 (2006), pp. 17–24. Also available online at: <http://www.listy.cz/archiv.php?cislo=064&clanek=040604>.

8 See VONDRŮVÁ, Jitka (ed.): *Mezinárodní souvislosti československé krize 1967–1970: Dokumenty ÚV KSSS 1966–1969* [The Czechoslovak Crisis 1967–1970 in an International Context: Documents of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union 1966–1969]. (Prameny k dějinám československé krize 1967–1970, sv. IV/4 [Sources on the History of the Czechoslovak Crisis 1967–1970, Vol. IV/4]) Praha – Brno, ÚSD AV ČR – Supplement 2011, p. 504, Document No. 165 – Minutes of a conversation between P. Ivashutin, diplomat from the Soviet Embassy in Prague, Václav Král, Director of the Czechoslovak-Soviet Institute, and his deputy Čestmír Amort on 28 November 1969; *Ibid.*, p. 481, Document No. 157 – Minutes of a conversation between Leonid M. Zamyatin, Head of the Press Department of the Soviet Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and Bohuslav Chňoupek, Director of Czechoslovak Radio on 22 July 1969; MADRY, Jindřich: *Sovětská okupace*

Husák started increasingly avoiding Svoboda and their relationship was getting colder. It is true that outwardly he demonstrated respect for Svoboda; however, there was also some contempt hidden beneath the official *façade*, and Husák could not stop himself from making insinuating remarks concerning Svoboda's advanced age. There is evidence that Husák spoke about Svoboda tactlessly, even shortly after the latter had been elected president, urging Ladislav Šimovič, the former Czechoslovak Ambassador to Belgrade, to accept the job of the president's chancellor: "What came as an unpleasant surprise for me was Husák's strange line of reasoning; as chancellor, I was expected to be able to control and sometimes even guide – which was what he emphasised most – the 'rather feeble-minded' actions of the 'senile coffin dodger' and inform the leadership well in advance," recalls Šimovič.⁹ However, it should be added that earthy and sarcastic expressions were commonplace in Husák's vocabulary.

Husák was bent on charting the political terrain and acquiring prestige. As leader of the Party, he held the most powerful position in the country, but the authority of his office had been undermined by the previous disunity of the Communist Party and critical Soviet attitudes toward his predecessor Alexander Dubček. On the other hand, President Svoboda enjoyed a lot of respect. This was why Gustáv Husák, and also Vasil Biľak, for example, put considerable effort into restoring the lost prestige of the office of the First Secretary of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia, which was manifested mainly at symbolic levels.¹⁰

This attitude was also illustrated by subsequent actions against Svoboda, which Husák did not initiate, but nonetheless accepted. In the second half of 1969, the advisory board of the president¹¹ was disbanded under Soviet pressure, and

Československa, jeho normalizace v letech 1969–1970 a role ozbrojených sil [The Soviet Occupation of Czechoslovakia, Its Normalisation, and the Role of the Armed Forces]. Praha, ÚSD AV ČR 1994, p. 125; *RGASPI*, f. 495, o. 272, d. 37, 2. tom, excerpt from the minutes of a conversation with Drahomír Kolder (on 23 April 1969), p. 27. Drahomír Kolder, who at that time had been removed from top Party slots by a decision of the so-called Vysočany Party Congress, divided the Communist Party leadership into the following factions: Dubčekists, pro-Dubčekists (Josef Smrkovský, Čestmír Císař), centrists (Oldřich Černík), the military faction led by President Svoboda, the moderates (Gustáv Husák and Lubomír Štrougal) and the "healthy forces."

9 ŠIMOVIČ, Ladislav: Gustáv Husák. In: *Listy*, Vol. 40, No. 5 (2010), p. 42; see also NOVÁK, Ladislav: *Kancléřem tří prezidentů* [The Chancellor of Three Presidents]. Praha, Petrklíč 2002, p. 107.

10 *RGASPI*, f. 495, o. 272, d. 37, 2. tom, an excerpt from the minutes of a conversation between Ambassador Stepan V. Chervonenko and Vasil Biľak (prepared on 26 January 1973), p. 13; SEMYONOV, Nikolay P.: *Trevozhnaya Praga: Vospominania sovetskogo vice-konsula v Chekhoslovakii (1968–1972 gg.)* [Disquieting Prague: Recollections of a Soviet Vice-Consul in Czechoslovakia (1968–1972)]. Moskva, Mezhdunarodnye otnoshenia 2004, p. 210; an audio recording of the author's conversation with Zoe Klusáková-Svobodová on 24 March 2015.

11 The Soviet Embassy came to the conclusion that Svoboda was under the negative influence of people close to him. "It would be very important to find a way to separate the right-wing, nationalist and liberalist elements from him. To this end, the people around the president

the publication of Svoboda's memoirs, *The Roads of Life*, which ideologues of the Party saw as an anti-Party work that hostile propaganda could make use of, was suspended in the spring of 1972. The president was naturally exasperated, allegedly venting his anger in the following words: "Bastards! They would not treat the lowest coach driver like they treat me, but I will put things in order!" He immediately summoned Gustáv Husák, who reacted to Svoboda's heated rebukes by an embarrassed explanation that the decision to suspend the publication had been taken by the Presidium of the Party. At the end of the day, the scapegoats were historians Miloslav Moulis, Oldřich Janeček and Karel Richter, who had been helping Svoboda with his memoirs.¹² "The situation with the publication of the first volume of your memoirs is unpleasant for us all. I firmly believe that the three collaborators mentioned above are responsible for it. Now we have to look for a way out, with an inevitable adherence to the principles of the Party line and, at the same time, show tact and respect to you and your Party and state roles," Husák then wrote to Svoboda. "I beg you to accept my letter with regard to the above and I assure you that this episode cannot change anything in my respect for you or in our long-standing friendly relations."¹³ Svoboda's memoirs were published only 20 years later. The affair weakened the president's influence, resulted in a further cooling of the relationship with Husák, and probably also left its marks on the president's health.

The game of various arrangements and speculations concerning the presidency was related to Svoboda's health, which was gradually deteriorating and also closely

of the country and the personnel of the president's office will have to be purged," were the words of a memorandum which Ambassador Stepan V. Chervonenko submitted to Konstantin V. Rusakov, Head of the Department of Cooperation with Communist and Workers' Parties of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, in mid-July 1969. (VONDROVÁ, J. (ed.): *Prameny k dějinám československé krize 1967–1970*, sv. IV/4, Document No. 155 – Memorandum on some essential issues of the domestic political situation of the Czechoslovak Socialist Republic.)

- 12 This is how Karel Richter recalls the event in his foreword to the second volume of Svoboda's memoirs (RICHTER, Karel: *Zakázané paměti* [The Banned Memoirs]. In: SVOBODA, Ludvík: *Cestami života* [The Roads of Life], Vol. 2. Praha, Prospektrum 1992, pp. 5–16, quotation p. 15). See also PERNES, Jiří: *Takoví nám vládli: Komunističtí prezidenti Československa a doba, v níž žili* [Those Were Our Rulers: Communist Presidents of Czechoslovakia and Their Time]. Praha, Brána 2010, pp. 297–300. Philosopher Zdeněk Vašíček confirmed that, based on his own experience, there had indeed been some machinations in connection with the president's memoirs on the part of historians (VAŠÍČEK, Zdeněk: *Aporetika jako koan* [Aporetic as a Kōan]. In: MUSIL, Jiří V. (ed.) et al.: *Josef Ludvík Fischer, 6.11.1894 – 16.2.1973*. Olomouc, Vlastivědná společnost muzejní 2001, p. 35 n.
- 13 *Personal archive of Zoe Klusáková-Svobodová* (Prague), a letter of Gustáv Husák to Ludvík Svoboda dated 5 April 1972, p. 3. Karel Richter also quotes the letter (*Zakázané paměti*, p. 15). However, the issue had been decided earlier (see *RGASPI*, f. 495, o. 272, d. 37, 2. tom, from a report of the Soviet Embassy in Prague dated 13 April 1972, p. 15). The Embassy criticised Svoboda's memoirs for being based on "right-wing and revisionist" attitudes. On the other hand, the memoirs were praised in Western and Czechoslovak exile media.

watched. Various conjectures fuelled by Western propaganda and spread by word of mouth were placed in the context of the president's health and the alleged power ambitions of Federal Prime Minister Lubomír Štrougal, and can be registered from the summer of 1969. Sometimes with a healthy dose of irony, Gustáv Husák tried to deny these "rumours" in his speeches: "So I ask him [Štrougal – author's note]: tell me at last when this is going to happen, I would welcome some rest. Various myths are being fabricated and thrown to people – that Svoboda will retire, that Husák will succeed him, that Štrougal will replace Husák, and I do not know what else, and I do not know how many different combinations there may be."¹⁴ "We are happy to have Comrade Svoboda where he is now, may God give him good health for a hundred years!"¹⁵ Husák spoke about the spreading of these rumours even at meetings of the Presidium of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia, allegedly embarrassing those present by doing so.¹⁶

I have not come across any sources confirming the alleged aspirations of Lubomír Štrougal, and he has also personally denied them. On the other hand, documents collected by the Department of Cooperation with Communist and Workers' Parties of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union indicate close cooperation and relations existing among the abovementioned persons; needless to say, Husák defended Štrougal as the Federal Prime Minister against the objections of the Soviets and "healthy forces" more than once, and he even visualised and promoted him as his successor. Yet Husák maintained a certain level of caution *vis-à-vis* Štrougal and kept some things for himself; he particularly avoided speaking about his relationship with the Soviets.¹⁷

14 Excerpt from G. Husák's speech at a meeting of North Moravian Communists in Ostrava, 3 July 1969. In: HUSÁK, Gustáv: *Projevy a stati: Duben 1969 – leden 1970* [Speeches and Articles: April 1969 – January 1970]. Praha, Svoboda 1970, p. 174.

15 The recorded speech of Gustáv Husák delivered at the Prague conference of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia on 17 April 1971, where the above statement was voiced, is available on the website of Czech TV: *Historie.cs* [online], episode *Husák the Messiah*, first run 25 April 2015 on the ČT 24 channel [cit. 6 February 2016]. Available at: <http://www.ceskatelevize.cz/porady/10150778447-historie-cs/215452801400016>.

16 RGANI, f. 5, o. 109, d. 12 008, an excerpt from a recorded conversation with the editor and chairman of the Czech Association of Journalists Josef Valenta, which took place in April 1972, p. 19.

17 See, for example, *Ibid.*, d. 12 009, from the minutes of a conversation between Sergey I. Prasolov, Legation Counsel of the Soviet Embassy, and Karel Hoffmann, Chairman of the Central Council of Trade Unions, on 25 July 1973, p. 112; *Ibid.*, d. 12 018, from the minutes of a conversation with Gustáv Husák (prepared on 10 December 1984), p. 73; see also the *Archive of the Institute for Contemporary History of the Academy of Sciences of the Czech Republic*, Prague (hereinafter AÚSD), the Collection of the Commission of the Government of the Czechoslovak Federative Republic for an analysis of events taking place between 1967 and 1970, R1, a recorded conversation with Lubomír Štrougal dated 21 February 1990, p. 18; audio recordings of conversations between the author and Lubomír Štrougal on 24 November 2014 and 17 June 2015. However, Štrougal also briefly and marginally appeared in April 1969, in connection with the search for Dubček's successor to the position of Communist Party leader.

The fact is that there were some voices criticising Husák among the “ultra-leftists” and the “healthy core,” which called for his isolation from pro-reform Communists and his close collaborators, particularly from the Presidium and members of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Slovakia (Viktor Pavlenda,¹⁸ Jozef Zrak, Samuel Falčan, Anton Ťažký and others), who constituted his devoted power buttress. Initially resisting, hesitating and making unsuccessful personal interventions, Husák finally yielded,¹⁹ and that meant an end to their position in the top slots and later also the end of their involvement in politics altogether, which, as a matter of fact, was the fate of more than 300,000 other people ousted from the Party. Step by step, Gustáv Husák also fully accepted the Soviet interpretation of the Czechoslovak events in 1968; the invasion of foreign troops was no longer “a tragic misunderstanding” for him, but rather necessary international assistance against the counterrevolution. Reform efforts were buried as well. In this way, Husák was purposefully, and ultimately successfully, courting the necessary trust of Moscow, which in turn eliminated criticism and the personal ambitions of the “healthy forces” and “ultra-leftists” whom it had previously been using as a pressure group. At the end of May 1971, at the 14th Congress of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia, Gustáv Husák was unanimously confirmed as General Secretary of the Party.²⁰

As time later showed, Husák failed to carry through a step-by-step or at least partial implementation of some key measures (economic reform, some withdrawal

18 In April 1969, Husák even expected, and promoted, Pavlenda to be a new Prime Minister of the Slovak government or his successor to the position of First Secretary of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Slovakia. (VONDROVÁ, J. (ed.): *Prameny k dějinám československé krize 1967–1970*, sv. IV/4, Document No. 140 – Minutes of a conversation between the Soviet Consul in Brno Vassily I. Malyavko and Director of the State Bank of Czechoslovakia František Mišeje on 11 April 1969.) Husák’s intentions were met with stiff resistance by the “healthy core” and Moscow.

19 *Ibid.*, pp. 457–459, Document No. 154 – Report of the Soviet Consul in Brno Vassily I. Malyavko on meetings in Bratislava on the situation in the leadership of the Communist Party of Slovakia at the end of June 1969, 11 July 1969; *Ibid.*, annexes, p. 113, Document No. 214 – Minutes of a conversation between First Secretary of the Soviet Embassy in Prague Marat P. Kuznetsov and Minister of Education of the Slovak Government Matej Lúčan on 11 July 1969.

20 For details on the April 1969–1971 period, refer to WILLIAMS, Kieran: *The Prague Spring and Its Aftermath: Czechoslovak Politics 1968–1970*. Cambridge, Cambridge University Press 1997, pp. 226–253; DOSKOČIL, Zdeněk: *Duben 1969: Anatomie jednoho mocenského zvratu* [April 1969: The Anatomy of a Power Reversal]. Brno – Praha, Supplement – ÚSD AV ČR 2006, pp. 272–348; ŠTEFANSKÝ, Michal: Gustáv Husák – prvý tajomník ÚV KSČ (1969–1970) [Gustáv Husák – the First Secretary of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia (1969–1970)]. In: *Historický časopis*, Vol. 63, No. 2 (2015), pp. 275–289. The title of Štefanský’s contribution is rather misleading, as it deals with political events directly rather than with Husák. On political developments in Slovakia, refer to SIKORA, Stanislav: *Po jari krutá zima: Politický vývoj na Slovensku v rokoch 1968–1971* [After Spring Comes Cruel Winter: Political Developments in Slovakia between 1968 and 1971]. Bratislava, Historický ústav SAV 2013, pp. 163–242.

of Soviet troops, or the re-instatement of ousted Party members)²¹ that he had initially planned to realise in the long term.²² It seems he overestimated his possibilities in the relationship with Moscow and became a victim of the illusion of the “temporary nature” of the prevailing situation he had himself helped create. At the end of the day, he completely reneged on his initial plans, succumbed to complacency, and became a symbol of the new regime.

Husák’s position was restricted by domestic factors. At the 14th Congress of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia, a Party leadership core was formed which survived practically until the late 1980s and in which two factions can be distinguished, albeit with some simplification. The first of them, the “moderates” or “realists,” included reform-oriented or at least mildly reform-minded officials who derived their positions in the power structure from developments of the Czechoslovak Spring of 1968 and who had adopted tactics of retreat after the occupation, gradually accepting the viewpoints of the Soviets (Prime Minister of the Slovak Government Peter Colotka, Deputy Prime Minister of the Federal Government and Chairman of the State Planning Commission Václav Hůla, Gustáv Husák, Secretary of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia and later Chairman of the Czech National Council Josef Kempný, Prime Minister of the Czech Government Josef Korčák, Secretary of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia and later Minister of the Federal Government holding the position of the President of the People’s Audit Committee František Ondřích,

21 In his report to the Soviets, Drahomír Kolder, at that time a minister of the Federal Government holding the position of President of the People’s Audit Committee, mentioned a conversation with Miloš Jakeš, Chairman of the Central Commission of Supervision and Auditing of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia, who had allegedly been asked by Husák in March 1972 whether some of the ousted Party members could not be taken back. Husák’s efforts failed to strike a positive note also among members of the Politburo, whom Husák approached one by one. (RGANI, f. 5, o. 109, d. 12 008, from minutes of a conversation with Drahomír Kolder (on 13 April 1972), p. 21.) At the end of October 1972, the issue was reopened at a plenary session of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia, which refused to give a “general pardon” to the ousted Party members. Husák advocated a “differentiated and delicate” approach; contrary to others, his speech was published in the *Rudé právo* daily in an abridged form and with a substantial delay, as late as 16 November. There was also an alleged clash over the issue between Husák and the “healthy core.” (See PLEVZA, V.: *Vzostupy a pády*, p. 131 (see Footnote 5); also *Rozpory o taktice: Po “ideologickém” plénu ÚV KSČ* [Disputes about Tactics: After the “Ideological” Plenary Session of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia]. In: *Listy*, Vol. 3, No. 1 (February 1973), pp. 5–7.) However, a stenographic record of the meeting does not confirm these allegations (*National Archives* (hereinafter NA), Prague, f. 1261/0/1 (initial fund designation Archives of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia) – meetings of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia 1945–1989, Vol. 243, archival unit 144, minutes of the meeting of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia ÚV KSČ held on 26 and 27 October 1972). If there were indeed any disputes in this respect, they must have taken place at the previous meeting for which, however, no stenographic record exists.

22 ŠTROUGAL, Lubomír: *Ještě pár odpovědí* [A Few Answers More]. Praha, EPOCHA 2011, p. 73 n.

President Ludvík Svoboda, Prime Minister of the Federal Government Lubomír Štrougal). The other group was the so-called “healthy core,” opponents of reforms and *a priori* advocates of Moscow’s opinions, most of them secretly collaborating with and enjoying the full trust of the Soviets as early as the Soviet occupation (Secretaries of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia Vasil Biřak and Jan Fojtík, Chairman of the Central Council of Trade Unions Karel Hoffmann, Speaker of the Federal Assembly Alois Indra, Chairman of the Central Commission of Supervision and Auditing of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia and later Secretary of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia Miloš Jakeš, Editor-in-Chief of the *Rudé právo* daily Miroslav Moc, Secretary of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia and later Moc’s successor Oldřich Švestka, Chief Secretary of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia in Prague Antonín Kapek, who gradually changed sides and joined the “realists”). The latter group may also be deemed to include Secretary of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Slovakia Miroslav Hruškovič and First Secretary of the Slovak Communists Jozef Lenárt, whose positions in political developments were not clearly defined (Husák was aware of Lenárt’s ties to the “pro-Brezhnev group,” i.e. the “healthy core,” which he had not initially known about, but most of his comments concerning Lenárt were otherwise positive).²³ All the above-named were also members of the Presidium, Secretariat, or at least the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia.

There was not much internal unity within any of the two factions, and the border between them was rather indistinct, with Gustáv Husák assuming an increasingly central position. Seen from the outside, the result was an almost impenetrable clientelistic system in which the parties kept each other at bay. In spite of the personal animosities that were present, obedience to the Soviet Union, enormous efforts to maintain unity (a 1968 syndrome), and a collective awkward past (participation in the consolidation policy, liquidation of the Prague Spring and its supporters) prevented any major disputes.²⁴ The acerbic, but fitting words of Gustáv Husák, which he voiced in December 1987 in front of other members of the Presidium, held true: “We do not have to love each other like gays, but we have to cooperate in a comradely fashion.”²⁵ Until that year, none of the factions had substantially

23 See PLEVZA, V.: *Vzostupy a pády*, p. 115.

24 On the Czechoslovak ruling elite of those days and Husák’s position, see, for example, RENNERT, Hans – SAMSON, Ivo: *Dejiny Česko-Slovenska po roku 1945* [The History of Czechoslovakia since 1945]. Bratislava, Slovak Academic Press 1993, pp. 128–129; ŠULC, Zdislav: *Psáno inkognito: Doba v zrcadle samizdatu (1968–1989)* [Written Incognito: The Time in the Mirror of Samizdat (1968–1989)]. Praha, ÚSD AV ČR 2000, pp. 17–23; ČERMÁK, Vladimír: *Operace listopad 1989: O putování české společnosti odnikud nikam a zpět a o jejím hledání cest jinudy a jinam* [Operation November 1989: On the Travels of Czech Society from Nowhere to Nowhere and Back and on Its Search for Other Ways to Other Places]. Praha, Naše vojsko 2012, pp. 112–117.

25 KOUDELKA, František (ed.): *Husákův pád 1987: Dokumenty k oddělení funkcí prezidenta ČSSR a generálního tajemníka KSČ a k nástupu Miloše Jakeše do čela KSČ* [Husák’s Fall: Documents on the Separation of the Positions of the President of the Czechoslovak Social-

prevailed over the other. As noted by historian Jan Wanner, the situation suited Moscow, which thus could often act as an arbitrator, thereby continuously augmenting its influence.²⁶ This fact was also reflected in the issue of the presidency, which became more topical at the beginning of the 1970s.

As a matter of fact, on 18 June 1972 President Svoboda suffered a cerebral haemorrhage at a reception held on the occasion of a state visit by Indian Prime Minister Indira Gandhi to Czechoslovakia. It was soon followed by others. They caused communication difficulties and memory lapses for the president; later, there were also blood circulation system failures.²⁷ It is thus hardly surprising that considerations as to who should succeed Ludvík Svoboda as president started to appear.

ist Republic and the General Secretary of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia and on the Assumption of the Latter Position by Miloš Jakeš]. In: *Soudobé dějiny*, Vol. 7, No. 3 (2000), p. 518, Document No. 4 – Minutes of a meeting of the Presidium of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia held on 9 December 1987. Husák attributed his demotion to the activities of the “healthy core,” and he addressed the following stern words to it (and particularly Bifak) after 1989: “He was a member of the fifth column which Brezhnev was cultivating here. He kept sucking my blood all the time. I had to keep him, because he was kept by Moscow. [...] He had many faces, but he always knew which of them to put on. He was pursuing his goals in a cunning and sly fashion. He and other pro-Brezhnev members of the Party leadership were playing a high-handed and secret game. Each of them was playing his own, and all of them were playing yet another. [...] Brezhnev saw our sectarian dogmatists as excellent politicians, and he kept urging me to strengthen cooperation with them. I would have welcomed if he had given me a hint – get rid of them, but neither he, nor Gorbachev did anything like that.” At the same time, Husák rejected the idea that there had been any “reform faction” within the presidium (PLEVZA, V.: *Vzostupy a pády*, pp. 123, 138, 145 and 158). Peter Colotka and Lubomír Štrougal gave similar answers (*Personal Archive of Viliam Plevza*, archival unit 218, *Kauza Peter Colotka: Dialóg pod Slavínom* [The case of Peter Colotka: A Dialogue below Slavín], p. 176 (the manuscript of a book of Viliam Plevza’s interviews with Peter Colotka, which took place in 1991); ŠTROUGAL, L.: *Ještě pár odpovědí*, p. 75). On the other hand, the memoirs of members of the “healthy core” generally contain positive evaluations of the cooperation within the Presidium, without any personal invective or mention of personal disputes. Jan Fojtík, for example, utterly denies the existence of “some factions,” claiming that he did not see anything like that at the time. In his opinion, the purpose of the statements of Štrougal and Colotka was to “make them look better” and to dissociate themselves from collective responsibility. As to the related statements published in *The Rises and Falls* by Plevza, he claims that “Plevza either wrote lies, or Husák went nuts in his old age.” (A record of the author’s conversation with Jan Fojtík on 27 October 2015.)

26 WANNER, Jan: *Brežněv a východní Evropa 1968–1982* [Brezhnev and Eastern Europe 1968–1982]. Praha, Karolinum 1995, p. 104 n.

27 KLUSÁKOVÁ-SVOBODOVÁ, Zoe: *O tom, co bylo* [About What Used to Be]. Praha, Mladá fronta 2005, p. 207.

The Postponed Abdication and Behind-the-Scenes Fight for Svoboda's Successor

Records of conversations with leading Czechoslovak Communist functionaries collected and kept by the Soviet Embassy in Prague offered Moscow a range of ideas concerning potential solutions of this issue and, at the same time, provide evidence about Husák's worsening position. Members of the "healthy core" were criticising him for not having found a way to them, putting on airs, making decisions in cadre-related matters without consultations, and not supporting "principled political solutions." This was why he was recommended for the presidency; it was also proposed to create an honorary position of Chairman of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia for him, so that he could vacate the seat of General Secretary of the Communist Party.

While members of the "healthy core" could come to an agreement in this regard, they were unable to do so with respect to the person of Husák's successor. The manifest aspirations of Vasil Biľak, who was supported by for example Miloš Jakeš, met with the displeasure of most members of the Presidium of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia. In this respect, the key role belonged to personal relations and the issue of nationalism. There was the obvious concern that the Czechs would not have put up with two Slovaks at the top of the state and Party totem poles. And Gustáv Husák was certainly not prepared to give up the position of General Secretary. The authoritarian behaviour of Vasil Biľak, which reflected his growing confidence and also his feeling of being underestimated, gradually alienated even his supporters among members of the "healthy core" and drove him into political isolation (his relations with Alois Indra, Karel Hoffmann and Foreign Minister Bohuslav Chňoupek were quite thorny).²⁸ On the other hand, the authority of Husák the centrist was growing; he was looking for a way to approach Biľak

28 In December 1971, Indra left his position as member of the Secretariat and Secretary of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia (he was replaced by František Ondříč). Although his new job was Speaker of the Federal Assembly, the change – in the then existing power hierarchy system – meant a demotion and personal humiliation for him. It also resulted in a deterioration of his relations with Biľak, who had not stood up for him. (See *Archive of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Bohemia and Moravia* (Prague), materials from the commission of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia pertaining to an in-house investigation of the activities of the former leadership of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia (1990), a written statement by Alois Indra dated 9 January 1990, on suspension of membership in the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia, p. 25; *RGANI*, f. 5, op. 109, d. 12 009, from a recorded conversation with Vladimír Trvala, Head of the Politico-Organisational Department of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Slovakia (on 25 July 1973), p. 81.) Biľak as Secretary of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia responsible for international relations was having conflicts with Chňoupek over competence and because of different opinions on how foreign policy issues should be approached (CHŇOUPEK, Bohuš: *Memoáre in Claris* [Memoirs in Claris]. Bratislava, Belimex 1998. pp. 46–49). As for Hoffmann, the cause was allegedly purely personal animosity (a record of the author's conversation with Jan Fojtík on 27 October 2015).

and had somewhat moderated his earlier animosity toward him. The same also applied *vice versa*, and it was also setting Biřak apart from his former allies. One of the reasons why Husák and Biřak were becoming closer was also the result of pressure from Moscow, since the Soviets saw their close cooperation as a guarantee of stability in the Czechoslovak political leadership. Biřak thus ultimately relented, accepted the “No. 2” position in the Party hierarchy, and became a leading supporter of Husák over this issue.²⁹

Soviet reports also contain information indicating that Miroslav Müller, Deputy Head of the International Department of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia, was lobbying for Husák’s departure to the Castle, with Miloř Jakeř potentially succeeding him as Party leader.³⁰ On the other hand, Jozef Lenárt, together with a few members of the Presidium, was pushing for the presidency of the side-lined Alois Indra, but his proposal also failed to garner broader support.³¹ Because of this, Husák’s relations with Lenárt were thought to be tense, and the former was allegedly trying to improve them by a change in his negative attitude to the development of the automotive industry in Bratislava.³²

The ailing Ludvík Svoboda repeatedly expressed his wish to resign from office; after a family meeting at the beginning of 1973, he wrote Husák a letter explaining his position. Husák notified only Lubomír řtrougal and Soviet officials of the matter,

29 RGANI, f. 5, o. 109, d. 12 010, from a recorded conversation with Karel Hoffmann dated 24 April 1974, p. 14; *Ibid.*, from a recorded conversation with řtrougal’s advisor Zbyněk Soják dated 24 April 1974, p. 16; *Ibid.*, d. 12 009, from a recorded conversation of Sergey I. Prasolov, Legation Counsel of the Soviet Embassy, and Miroslav Müller, Deputy Head of the International Department of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia dated 25 July 1973, p. 79 n.; *Ibid.*, from a recorded conversation with Ján Riřko, General Director of Czechoslovak Radio dated 28 November 1973, p. 107 n.; AÚSD, Collection of the Commission of the Government of the Czechoslovak Federative Republic for an analysis of events taking place between 1967 and 1970, R1, recorded conversation with ex-Prime Minister of the Federal Government Lubomír řtrougal dated 21 February 1990, p. 17; PLEVZA, V.: *Vzostupy a pády*, p. 145; see also a knowledgeable comment titled “Troubles with the President” in Rome’s *Listy*, Vol. 2, No. 5–6 (November 1972), p. 7 n.

30 RGANI, f. 5, o. 109, d. 12 007, an excerpt from the diary of Sergey I. Prasolov, Legation Counsel of the Soviet Embassy, on a conversation with Miroslav Müller (date of entry 24 November 1971), p. 149 n.

31 RGASPI, f. 495, o. 272, d. 37, 2. tom, an excerpt from a recorded conversation between V. A. Nikitin, a staff member of the Soviet Embassy in the Czechoslovak Socialist Republic and Vladimír Trvala, Head of the Politico-Organisational Department of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Slovakia (on 1 October 1973), p. 11.

32 RGANI, f. 5, o. 109, d. 12 008, an excerpt from a recorded conversation with Vladimír Trvala, Head of the Politico-Organisational Department of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Slovakia (on 14 and 28 December 1972), pp. 78 and 86. According to his own words, Lenárt had been attempting to promote the development of the automotive industry for a long time and with difficulties (see JANCURA, Vladimír – RABAY, Lubo (ed.): Jozef Lenárt (po troch rokoch) exkluzívne pre Pravdu [Jozef Lenárt (after Three Years) Exclusively for the Pravda Daily]. In: *Pravda* (31 December 1992), p. 4). As to more general aspects of the issue, see COLOTKA, Peter: *Vo víre času* [In the Maelstrom of Time]. Dolný Kubín, D plus gallery 2015, p. 250.

but the latter allegedly disagreed with Svoboda's resignation. Husák subsequently persuaded Svoboda to remain and run again for the office of president, as it was not clear who would succeed him.³³ Even Chairman of the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet Nikolai Viktorovich Podgorny came from Moscow to support the solution.³⁴ There must have been concerns that a potential dispute over the president's office might destabilise the Presidium of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia. Moreover, General Ludvík Svoboda continued to enjoy substantial public support, a fact contributing to the stability of the entire regime. In a private conversation in November 1972, Gustáv Husák said that Svoboda, whose health condition had improved since he slowed down his working tempo, would be nominated again for the office of president.³⁵ On 22 March 1973, Ludvík Svoboda was officially confirmed in office. The act took place in spite of worries that he would not be able to attend the ceremony in the Vladislav Hall of Prague Castle.³⁶ At the end of the day, it was Deputy Speaker of the Federal Assembly Ján Marko who, contrary to the usual practice, read the presidential oath instead of the re-elected Svoboda.³⁷ As a matter of fact, radio listeners could not miss the laborious and sometimes even robotic speech of Ludvík Svoboda delivering the traditional New Year welcome address on 1 January 1973.³⁸

Svoboda's second term in office was characterised by serious health problems. At the end of March 1974, he started treatment for a urinary tract infection at the State Clinic. However, when he was discharged for home care, a series of pulmonary embolism events ensued, accompanied by pneumonia in both lungs and pleural inflammation. Because of the application of heavy sedatives, the president even fell into a coma, which subsequently resulted in consciousness problems. Doctors concluded that Svoboda's disease was incurable and at the beginning of May even predicted his early death. "When handing over to the daytime shift, each of us was happy that the president had not died while he was on duty," recalls cardiologist Jiří Widimský, a member of the team of medical consultants monitoring Svoboda's condition. There were even rumours that the president's death had been kept secret

33 See ŠTROUGAL, Lubomír: *Paměti a úvahy* [Memories and Reflections]. Praha, Epocha 2009, p. 170 n.; see also PERNES, J: *Takoví nám vládli*, p. 301 (see Footnote 12).

34 An audio recording of the author's conversation with Zoe Klusáková-Svobodová on 24 March 2015.

35 RGASPI, f. 495, o. 272, d. 37, 1. tom, from a report of the Soviet Ambassador Stepan V. Chervonenko on Gustáv Husák's views dated 10 November 1972, p. 60.

36 *Ibid.* 2. tom, recorded conversation between Ambassador Stepan V. Chervonenko and Secretary of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia Vasil Biřak (on 26 January 1973), p. 13.

37 See VANĚK, Karel: Soudruh L. Svoboda znovu prezidentem [Comrade L. Svoboda Elected President Again]. In: *Rudé právo* (23 March 1973), p. 2.

38 The 1974 New Year welcome address of President Svoboda was read by an anchor-man; a year later, it was Gustáv Husák who read the address on Svoboda's behalf. Texts (and in some cases also audio recordings of presidential speeches are available on the website of Czech Radio 1 – Radiojurnal [online]. Available at: http://www.rozhlas.cz/radiojurnal/zpravy/_zprava/1436730.

in order not to disturb the May Day celebrations.³⁹ Some Communist functionaries literally started writing obituaries. Serious negotiations about Svoboda's successor commenced, with Husák being the most frequently mentioned name.⁴⁰

However, with time, the doctors, assisted by Svoboda's family, succeeded in stabilising the president's health condition to the extent of allowing him, in the summer of 1974, to be discharged for home care. Svoboda was, naturally enough, unable to carry out his presidential duties, which was why he allegedly repeatedly offered his resignation. After Svoboda's return from hospital, at the end of June 1974, the president's daughter, Zoe Klusáková-Svobodová, was asked by her father to write a letter of resignation. This, however, was not accepted. Husák said the president's resignation would have been undesirable, claiming that people would not have believed the president was acting of his own accord, and called for patience.⁴¹ He later claimed he had been hoping for Svoboda's recovery and his restored ability to perform at least some of his duties.⁴² Husák's statement corresponded with the opinion of the team of Soviet medical consultants, which had been set up at the request of Svoboda's family.⁴³ According to Lubomír Štrougal, Svoboda's views and the practical side of the matter continued to be taken into account, with a view to a legally clean solution.⁴⁴ This is also confirmed by other sources mentioned below.

39 ASCHERMANN, Michael (ed.): *Rozhovor s Jiřím Widimským: Cesta za poznáním srdce* [An Interview with Jiří Widimský: The Road to Knowing the Heart]. Praha, Galén 2006, pp. 150–152. The management of the State Clinic and the team of medical consultants countered the speculations by starting to provide information about the president's current condition to local media (see the *Rudé právo* daily issues from late April and early May 1974).

40 RGANI, f. 5, o. 109, d. 12 010, from a recorded conversation with Zbyněk Soják dated 24 April 1974, p. 16.

41 See KLUSÁKOVÁ-SVOBODOVÁ, Z.: *O tom, co bylo*, pp. 208–210; *Personal archive of Zoe Klusáková-Svobodová*, instructions of Pavol Pudlák, Director of the State Clinic, concerning the home care of Ludvík Svoboda, dated 25 June 1974; an audio recording of the author's conversation with Zoe Klusáková-Svobodová on 24 March 2015.

42 NA, f. 1261/0/1, File No. 266, archival unit 154, minutes of the meeting of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia held on 27 May 1975, p. 66 n.

43 Husák provided "oral" information and medical reports on the health condition of President Svoboda to the Presidium of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia on 22 and 29 March, 28 June and 16 November 1974, 31 January, 7 and 28 March and 16 May 1975 (see NA, f. 1261/0/6 (the original designation of the fund was Archive of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia, f. 02-1) – Presidium of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia 1971–1976). Moscow was also kept posted (RGASPI, f. 495, o. 272, d. 37, 1. tom, reports of the team of Soviet and Czechoslovak medical consultants on the health condition of Ludvík Svoboda dated 19 and 21 August 1974, pp. 29–33). Svoboda was again hospitalised because of pneumonia in the Central Military Hospital from early August 1974 until late March 1975 (Report on the health condition of the president of the republic. In: *Rudé právo* (9 August 1974 and 27 March 1975), p. 1).

44 An audio recording of the author's conversation with Lubomír Štrougal dated 17 June 2015.

In line with the constitution, it was the Federal Government that replaced or acted in lieu of the president during his ailment, i.e. from 28 March 1974 to 29 May 1975; it authorised Prime Minister Lubomír Štrougal to exercise the president's duties. Gustáv Husák was also kept posted about the discharge of the president's duties.⁴⁵ During this time, the situation was also being discussed behind the scenes by the Party, and various proposals on how to deal with it were presented. There was also a marginal opinion suggesting that the affair had in fact demonstrated the uselessness of the president's office, which could be cancelled and replaced by a collective head of state, as was the case, for instance, in the Soviet Union. However, respect for the tradition and authority of the president's office prevailed, since they could be made use of to further the interests of Party policy.⁴⁶

The efforts of Gustáv Husák for presidential office were continuously confronted with a general distaste for having one person holding both the president's office and the position of General Secretary of the Party, the so-called accumulation of posts, for which Antonín Novotný had been criticised in the past.⁴⁷ The factor of nationalism mentioned above also played a role. The Soviet Embassy in Prague reported to Moscow that many members of the Communist Presidium believed that the president should be a Czech and that the accumulation of posts should be avoided: "[...] they are not always open and direct about it, but they do not support Comrade Husák's intentions in their hearts."⁴⁸ Husák initially was not backed even by Lubomír Štrougal or Peter Colotka, otherwise his close allies, who felt he was afraid of a potential weakening of his position that might ultimately lead to his political demise (as things stood, he had some indirect control of the president's office through Ludvík Svoboda). Both of them later changed their opinion, assuming that the increased influence of Husák would strengthen his bargaining position

45 NA, f. Office of the General Secretary of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia Gustáv Husák, Box No. 246, file Office of the President of the Republic.

46 *Ibid.*, A proposal for an amendment of the constitution in connection with the presidential election, a letter of Deputy Prime Minister of the Federal Government Karol Laco to Gustáv Husák, dated 29 April 1975, p. 3; *Ibid.*, f. 1261/0/6, File No. 154, archival unit 158/0b, minutes of the discussion of the Presidium of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia held on 16 May 1975, pp. 3 and 9.

47 *RGANI*, f. 5, o. 109, d. 12 008, from a recorded conversation with Vladimír Trvala, Head of the Politico-Organisational Department of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Slovakia (on 26 July 1972), p. 49. Until January 1968, Antonín Novotný (1904–1975) was both the First Secretary of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia (since 1953) and the president (since 1957).

48 *Ibid.*, d. 12 010, from a recorded conversation with staff members of the Embassy of the German Democratic Republic in Prague, dated 26 March 1975, p. 73.

vis-à-vis Moscow.⁴⁹ On the other hand, Karel Hoffmann, Miloš Jakeš, Jozef Lenárt,⁵⁰ Alois Indra, and particularly Antonín Kapek proved to be stauncher opponents.

Their reservations were not merely ideological; some earlier disputes were revived as well. They, for example, contacted officers of the liaison office of the Committee for State Security (*Komitet gosudarstvennoy bezopasnosti* – KGB) in Prague to protest against Husák’s “attempts to push internationalist Communists out of their posts” (especially Alois Indra, whom Husák regarded as the most serious potential rival in the candidacy for the president’s office,⁵¹ and also Miloš Jakeš, in respect of whom Husák took a long time to forgive his activities related to an attempt to rehabilitate ex-Minister of the Interior Rudolf Barák).⁵² Miloš Jakeš and Miroslav Müller also repeatedly complained to the Soviets that Husák had ordered the telephones of top Party officials bugged, evaluating the recordings in the evenings. Husák’s right hand man was Radko Kaska, Federal Minister of the Interior, and, after his tragic death in February 1973, his successor, Jaromír Obzina, who had allegedly been directly tasked with breaking the opponents of Husák’s presidential

49 An audio recording of the author’s conversation with Lubomír Štrougal on 5 October 2015; a written record of the author’s conversation with Peter Colotka on 7 October 2015. Husák allegedly explained his aspirations to Colotka by a rhetorical question which also indicated concerns: “And what will happen if Biľak or Indra becomes president?”

50 See STÍSKAL, Ladislav: *Veci a vecičky Jozefa Lenárta* [Things Big and Small of Jozef Lenárt]. Bratislava, Agentúra IQ+ Janošovský 2003, p. 98.

51 NA, f. Office of the General Secretary of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia Gustáv Husák, Box No. 4, archival unit 44, Handwritten notes on speeches, Husák’s undated notes (probably written on 16 May 1975, judging from their content). According to Štrougal, Indra was a clear pretender for the president’s office, which was unacceptable both to Husák and to Biľak, who allegedly said, without further elaboration, that “Indra as president would be Husák’s end” (an audio recording of the author’s conversation with Lubomír Štrougal on 5 October 2015).

52 As Minister of the Interior in the 1950s, Rudolf Barák participated in Husák’s criminalisation. However, he was arrested himself in 1962, officially because of financial machinations, but the real reasons were political. At the end of the 1960s, Husák and Štrougal opposed his rehabilitation which Soviet security circles were allegedly interested in, contacting Miloš Jakeš in his capacity as Chairman of the Central Commission of Supervision and Auditing of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia. The latter visited Moscow to discuss the matter, whereupon he became the target of systematic criticism and ridicule by Gustáv Husák, who was extremely outraged by Jakeš’s action which took place behind Husák’s back. (JAKEŠ, Miloš: *Dva roky generálním tajemníkem* [Two Years as the General Secretary]. Praha, Regulus 1996, p. 34; *RGANI*, f. 5, o. 109, d. 12 005, from an information memorandum of the Soviet Embassy in the Czechoslovak Socialist Republic dated 4 February 1970, an excerpt concerning a conversation with Jan Piller, a member of the Presidium of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia, p. 66 (between 1968 and 1970, Piller was the chairman of the Party commission responsible for the political rehabilitation of people who had been unjustly sentenced during the 1949–1954 period); an audio recording of the author’s conversation with Miloš Jakeš dated 13 March 2015; see also TOMEK, Prokop: *Život a doba ministra Rudolfa Baráka* [The Life and Times of Minister Rudolf Barák]. Praha, Vyšehrad 2009, pp. 152–154; ANDREW, Christopher – MITROKHIN, Vassily: *Neznámé špiónážní operace KGB: Mitrochinův archive* [Unknown Espionage Operations of the KGB: The Mitrokhin Archive]. Praha, Rozmluvy – Leda 2008, p. 264.)

ambitions.⁵³ Moscow was exercising pressure as well, wishing to avoid a potential rift in the leadership of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia and its splitting into two power centres. The consensus over the issue of the presidency was achieved “not so much by the heart, but because of Party discipline and, first and foremost, taking into account the opinion of the Soviets,” which resulted in a “strange unity”; this was how Chairman of the Czech National Council Evžen Erban later described his conversation with Vasil Biřak and Alois Indra to Soviet representatives.⁵⁴

Husák naturally consulted the General Secretary of Soviet Communists, Leonid Ilyich Brezhnev, on the topic of the presidency. Brezhnev had no objections to Husák’s ambitions and allegedly told him that the Soviet leadership had also been seriously considering the issue of accumulation of top political posts.⁵⁵ The matter was discussed during Husák’s brief visit to Moscow on 3 March 1975, when both Party leaders had a private conversation lasting four hours.⁵⁶ Moreover, Brezhnev allegedly promised Husák that part of the Soviet troops stationed in the territory of Czechoslovakia would be withdrawn in connection with Husák’s election, an act that was expected to improve Husák’s image among Czechoslovak citizens. At the end of the day, however, the withdrawal did not take place, allegedly because “Soviet marshals were against it.”⁵⁷

53 ANDREW, Ch. – MITROCHIN, V.: *Neznámé špionážní operace KGB*, p. 276 n.; RGANI, f. 5, o. 109, d. 12 007, an excerpt from the diary of Sergey I. Prasolov, Legation Counsel of the Soviet Embassy, on a conversation with Deputy Head of the International Department of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia Miroslav Müller (date of entry 24 November 1971), p. 147 n.; when compared with documents from the International Department of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, Mitrokhin’s records seem credible.

54 RGANI, f. 5, o. 109, d. 12 011, from a recorded conversation with the Chairman of the Czech National Council Evžen Erban dated 30 July 1975, pp. 16–17. Biřak had allegedly spoken about Husák as future president as early as April 1974. At the same time, he had voiced the expectation that he would become his “deputy” in the Party leadership and also assume the post of Head of the Politico-Organisational Department of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia. (*Ibid.*, d. 12 010, a recorded conversation with Karel Hoffmann dated 24 April 1974, p. 14.) See also footnote 63.

55 See the author’s notes on a conversation with Husák’s son Vladimír on 28 January 2015. After the ousting of Khrushchev in October 1964, the Soviet Politburo committed itself to a collective leadership principle and a division of top political posts. Brezhnev, who replaced Khrushchev, became “only” the Party chief. A change came in June 1977, when he became the Chairman of the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR, i.e., the official head of state, succeeding Nikolay V. Podgorny. (Regarding this subject, see GRISHIN, Viktor V.: *Ot Khrushcheva do Gorbacheva: Politicheskie portrety pyati gensekov i A. N. Kosygina. Memoary* [From Khrushchev to Gorbachev: Political Portraits of Five General Secretaries and A. N. Kosygin. Memoirs]. Moscow, Aspol 1996, p. 42 n.)

56 RGANI, f. 5, o. 109, d. 12 010, a report on the visit of Gustáv Husák to Moscow dated 4 March 1975, p. 67; see also Setkání soudruhů [The Meeting of Comrades]. In: *Rudé právo* (4 March 1975), p. 1. The reason for the meeting was kept secret from the public.

57 “In 1975, I asked Brezhnev to withdraw at least some of the Soviet troops. He promised to withdraw an aviation regiment, I guess from Olomouc. But they withdrew shit.” *Personal Archive of*

At the same time, Husák was conducting talks with individual members of the Communist Presidium, gathering support and probably also offering “*quid pro quos*” in various matters. The Soviet Embassy reported that Husák and the “healthy core” had been becoming closer; members of the “healthy core” were allegedly pleased that Husák had publicly appreciated their work, opposed Alexander Dubček,⁵⁸ and proven his “position of principle” by getting rid of his former collaborators of the Prague Spring period. In addition, there were concerns that having anyone else but Husák in the president’s seat might cause a split in the Party leadership, as well as a conviction that this solution would help maintain stability. According to the opinion of the Embassy, it would have been desirable to emphasise to Husák that he should focus more on the “healthy core,” in particular Biřák, fully involve its members in work, and strengthen their positions.⁵⁹

Husák’s Triumph

The key unravelling of the issue of the presidency took place at a meeting of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia held on 16 May 1975, where Lubomír Štrougal reported that any improvement in the health condition of President Svoboda was not possible and proposed the candidacy of Gustáv Husák as the “only possible” solution.⁶⁰ The minutes of the ensuing discussion indicate that the election had already been internally agreed to and technically arranged in advance. All participants emphasised the personal authority of Gustáv Husák, who was also to keep the post of General Secretary. The arrangement was presented as the only and, at the same time, “temporary solution,”⁶¹ which ultimately survived

Viliam Plevza, archival unit 1580, Gustáv Husák on 21 August 1968 and its consequences, p. 3 (conversations of Viliam Plevza and Gustáv Husák dated 8 April and 10 May 1990).

- 58 Husák reacted very emotionally to the activities of Dubček, whose complaints about human rights violations and his own experiences in Czechoslovakia during the “normalisation” period were published in the Western media. The Swedish Prime Minister Olof Palme publicly supported Dubček. (See the speech of G. Husák at the joint meeting of the Central Committees of the National Fronts of the Czechoslovak Socialist Republic, the Czech Socialist Republic and the Slovak Socialist Republic on 16 April 1975. In: *Rudé právo* (17 April 1975), p. 1 n.) The letters of Alexander Dubček to the Presidium of the Federal Assembly of the Czechoslovak Socialist Republic and the Slovak National Council were published and commented on in Rome’s *Listy* in April 1975 (see ŽATKULIAK, Jozef – LALUHA, Ivan (ed.): *Alexander Dubček: Od totality k demokracii. Prejavy, články a rozhovory. Výber 1963–1992* [Alexander Dubček: From Totalitarianism to Democracy. Speeches, Articles and Interviews. Selection 1963–1992]. Bratislava, Veda 2002, pp. 234–246).
- 59 *RGANI*, f. 5, o. 109, d. 12 011, from a report of the Soviet Embassy in Czechoslovakia (on 16 September 1975), p. 42; *Ibid.*, d. 12 010, from a recorded conversation with Zbyněk Soják dated 24 April 1974, p. 16 n.
- 60 *NA*, f. 1261/0/6, File No. 154, archival unit 158/0b, minutes of the discussion of the Presidium of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia held on 16 May 1975, p. 4.
- 61 See JAKEŠ, M.: *Dva roky generálním tajemníkem*, p. 65.

for more than 12 years. The general extolling of Husák's virtues was disturbed only by Miloš Jakeš and Antonín Kapek; the latter being the only participant adamantly opposing the proposed solution.⁶² They reiterated their well-known objections, not forgetting to add that the collective leadership was "a long, long way" from being perfect (there had been some internal critical remarks to the effect that Husák was solving the most important issues only with Biřak, Štrougal and Kempný even before). Biřak made a resolute statement against the objections and in support of Husák.

Husák thanked the Committee for its confidence and acknowledged the sensitive nature of the question of nationalism, stating that it would be necessary to strengthen national unity all round and educate people towards a common Czechoslovak awareness, issues he claimed that had been neglected (needless to say, Husák was the "spiritual father" and implementer of the federalisation of Czechoslovakia). As to concerns about the increased political dominance of the Slovaks, he argued that the Czechs had a majority in the Presidium of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia, and denied any further changes in the central Party apparatus were contemplated in this respect.⁶³ He also downplayed the weight

62 Lubomír Štrougal later stated that there had been one nay vote (KOUDELKA, F. (ed.): *Husákův pád 1987*, p. 485, Document No. 1 – Minutes of the meeting of the Presidium of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia held on 19 November 1987). Antonín Kapek made the following comment regarding the stand he had taken at that time: "I was against the accumulation of posts and I was a black sheep." (*Ibid.*, p. 500, Document No. 2 – Notes of the Editor-in-Chief of the *Rudé práva* daily Zdeněk Hoření from the meeting of the Presidium of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia held on 19 November 1987). On the other hand, Vasil Biřak told Erban that Kapek had ultimately voted for Husák, but had been making improper innuendos regarding the issue of the presidency at a meeting of the Presidium of the City Committee of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia in Prague, for which he would have deserved political demotion (RGANI, f. 5, o. 109, d. 12 011, from a recorded conversation with the Chairman of the Czech National Council Evžen Erban dated 30 July 1975, p. 16 n.). The resolution adopted on the issue of the presidency states that the Presidium of the Central Committee of the Communist Party "unanimously agrees" with Husák's candidacy. Contemporary witnesses recall that voting at meetings of the Presidium of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia was absolutely exceptional.

63 One of the matters that was heavily emphasised in the political backstage in connection with the issue of the presidency was the position of František Ondřích who had held, *inter alia*, the post of member of the Secretariat and Secretary of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia since December 1971, and was also Head of the Politico-Organisational Department of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia. The "healthy forces" criticised Ondřích for his close ties to Štrougal and his considerable influence over Husák's decisions in cadre-related matters. They requested his replacement, and it was allegedly Biřak who was most interested in the post. The Soviet Embassy in Prague saw the matter as a clash between Biřak's and Štrougal's groups, and also reported to Moscow that the assumptions predicting that Husák would hand over one of his existing agendas to someone else after being elected to the presidential office had not materialised. On the contrary, Husák took over the post of Head of the Politico-Organisational Department of the Central Committee of the Communist Party

of the president's office. He mentioned that the Party leadership played a more important role and that there was thus actually not much to be excited about. He resolutely denied that he wanted to concentrate power in his hands. "I see no risk that things would go to my head," he said. However, he repeatedly asked to be warned if such trends did indeed appear. "It is not a pleasant moment, having such a solution, but I do not think there is any other way," was Husák's dry summary of his victory.⁶⁴

In this respect, one can come across information indicating that Ludvík Svoboda, having partly recovered, "was stubbornly refusing to resign from his office," which was the reason why the constitution was changed. The author of the statement, the historian Jiří Pernes, also writes, in his book on Czechoslovak Communist presidents, that there exist "indications suggesting that the regime was trying the help the course of nature" and "expedite" the death of Ludvík Svoboda. Moreover, the authors set the above statements in the context of the fact that Gustáv Husák, accompanied by Lubomír Štrougal, regularly visited the Central Military Hospital to receive information about the president's health.⁶⁵ The truth is, as we already know, that there were various guesses and rumours concerning Svoboda's health even at that time. There was also some speculation concerning a newspaper photograph showing Ludvík Svoboda and the newly elected President Gustáv Husák together.⁶⁶

of Czechoslovakia in July 1975, and he further strengthened his position by having Václav Hůla co-opted as a member of the Presidium of the Central Committee of the Communist Party. In April 1976, Ondřích finished as Secretary/member of the Secretariat of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia, his new post being "only" that of a government minister and the President of the People's Audit Committee. (See *RGANI*, f. 5, o. 109, d. 12 009, from a recorded conversation with František Ondřích dated 23 July 1973, pp. 76–78; *Ibid.*, d. 12 010, from a recorded conversation with Karel Hoffmann dated 24 April 1974, p. 14; *Ibid.*, d. 12 011, from a recorded conversation with Josef Vrba, assistant (*pomoshchnik*) of František Ondřích, dated 2 July 1975, p. 1; *Ibid.*, from a recorded conversation with Rudolf Peška, member of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia, dated 17 July 1975, p. 9; *Ibid.*, from a recorded conversation with Josef Mevald, Chief Secretary of the West Bohemian Regional Committee of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia, dated 30 July 1975, p. 13.)

64 NA, f. 1261/0/6, File No. 154, archival unit 158/0b, minutes of the discussion of the Presidium of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia held on 16 May 1975, pp. 4–12.

65 PERNES, J.: *Takoví nám vládli*, p. 301 (see Footnote 12). Pernes' statements are based on the evidence of Svoboda's attending physician, Head of the 1st Department of Internal Medicine of the Central Military Hospital in Prague Vladimír Dufek (a recorded conversation of the author with Jiří Pernes dated 14 September 2015; the book cited above does not mention this source). Dufek's statement, which, however, does not support the assumption, also appeared in the second episode of the TV documentary *Those Were Our Rulers*, which Czech TV produced in 1999. According to physician Jiří Widimský, the president's condition "called for his resignation," Widimský's impression being that the president's family "was trying to keep him in office" (see the author's correspondence with Jiří Widimský dated 8 February 2016).

66 Prezident udělil členu PÚV KSČ Ludvíku Svobodovi třetí čestný titul Hrdina ČSSR [The President Awarded a Third Honorary Title Hero of the Czechoslovak Socialist Republic to Member

As a matter of fact, the photo seemed to confirm the hypothesis that the sequence of events occurred against Svoboda's will, prompting the logical question – why did he not resign himself? The change in Prague Castle was perceived as yet further proof of “Husák's lust for power and perfidy”; as the exile *Listy* journal noted, the re-accumulation of top political posts removed the last vestige of the outcome of the January 1968 plenary session of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia.⁶⁷ The question thus arises whether Svoboda was indeed forced to resign involuntarily.

At the 16 May 1975 discussion of the Presidium of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia already mentioned above, a medical report was presented which stated that any improvement in Svoboda's health that would allow him to properly discharge his duties, or, at the minimum, meet the requirements of the normal resignation procedure, was impossible. Lubomír Štrougal and Gustáv Husák, who had visited the president, provided more detailed information about his health. Štrougal expressed his firm conviction that Ludvík Svoboda had not recognised them, had not been able to maintain a conversation, and had been reacting only by nods. Acting in unison with Štrougal, Husák reported that the president “is unable to submit his own resignation. It is not even possible to talk about it with him. He can neither sign nor read the document. If we chose this option, we would be cheating, after a fashion. Consequently, the only solution is to amend Section 64 of the Constitutional Act.”⁶⁸ Svoboda's term of office was prematurely terminated pursuant to Constitutional Act No. 50/1975 Coll., adopted precisely for the above purpose; it stipulated that if the president is unable to discharge the duties of his office for a period exceeding one year, the Federal Assembly may elect a new president for the next term.⁶⁹

of the Presidium of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia Ludvík Svoboda]. In: *Rudé právo* (31 May 1975), p. 1.

67 Svoboda neabdikoval [Svoboda Did Not Resign]. In: *Listy*, Vol. 5, No. 6 (August 1975), p. 3.

68 NA, f. 1261/0/6, File No. 154, archival unit 158/0b, minutes of the discussion of the Presidium of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia held on 16 May 1975, p. 2. It is also confirmed by recorded conversations of the author with Miloš Jakeš (13 March 2015), Zdeňka Klusáková-Svobodová (24 March 2015), Lubomír Štrougal (17 June 2015), Jan Fojtík (27 October 2015) and František Šalda, then a member of Husák's secretariat (9 November 2015).

69 The explanatory memorandum reads as follows: “In the event that the duration of such a situation exceeds one year, the constitutional act draft of the government gives the Federal Assembly of the Czechoslovak Socialist Republic a constitutional mandate to elect a new Czechoslovak president, even if the president's seat has not been vacated yet and understandably also including a situation when the president of the Czechoslovak Socialist Republic is unable, for whatever reason, to lawfully show his will to resign.” The memorandum also referred to the 9 May 1945 Constitution which dealt with this issue and emphasised that it was necessary to ensure the exercise of all constitutional offices and competencies of the supreme state authorities. (*Joint Czecho-Slovak Digital Parliamentary Library* [online], Federal Assembly of the Czechoslovak Socialist Republic 1971–1976, Prints, Print No. 91 [cit. February 2016]. Available at: http://www.psp.cz/eknih/1971fs/tisky/t0091_00.htm; see also GRONSKÝ, Ján (ed.): *Komentované dokumenty k ústavním*

The person responsible for drafting an amendment to the constitutional act which was given the nickname *Lex Svoboda* was Deputy Prime Minister of the Federal Government and Chairman of the Legislative Council of the Government Karol Laco, Husák's close collaborator since the time of the preparation of the federation. Preserved correspondence between Husák and Laco demonstrates the sensitivity of the matter and efforts for a legally clean and unchallengeable solution.⁷⁰ Still, the selected option found itself in contravention of constitutional principles. As a matter of fact, the constitutional amendment was applied retroactively during the presidential election of Gustáv Husák (or, in other words, because of the shorter term of office of Ludvík Svoboda). Under the circumstances, it was a wilful and unconstitutional political act, but – as with most retroactive legal acts – it posed a minimum risk of harm to society.⁷¹

The end of May 1975 saw literally a marathon of approvals. On 27 May, there was a meeting of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia, where the nomination of Husák submitted by the Presidium was approved. Even before that, the Central Committee received the partly anonymous reactions of lower-echelon Party functionaries expressing their disagreement with both top posts of the state being held by a Slovak and with the accumulation of these posts.⁷² The Central Committee of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia, just like the Presidium and Husák himself, dealt with the matter in their own peculiar way; when explaining its decision, it stated that lessons learnt in the past indicated that the accumulation or division of posts always depended on the situation at hand and that the nomination of Gustáv Husák “matches the specific conditions and needs of the current phase of the development of our Party and society.”⁷³ Husák expressed his thanks for the confidence and stated that his candidacy was the result of a year of cultivation of opinions among members of the Presidium and that he had ultimately “also accepted this opinion.” He also reacted to internal criticism: “Sometimes, I would say, there is the spectre of the issue of accumulation, dating back to 1967–1968. It has become a fetish of sorts. Some people, even good-hearted ones, look at the matter in this way. Others, perhaps not so very good-hearted ones, may be hiding some other goals,” was his general statement, and he finally

dějínám Československa 1960–1989 [Commented Documents on the Constitutional History of Czechoslovakia 1960–1989], Vol. 3. Praha, Karolinum 2007, p. 314.)

70 NA, Office of the General Secretary of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia Gustáv Husák, Box No. 246, the proposed amendment to the constitution in connection with the presidential election, a letter from Karol Laco to Gustáv Husák dated 29 April 1975, p. 2 n.

71 See the author's correspondence with constitutional lawyer Ján Gronský dated 30 November 2015.

72 *RGANI*, f. 5, o. 109, d. 12 010, from a recorded conversation with František Ondřích dated 21 May 1975, p. 100.

73 NA, f. 1261/0/1, File No. 266, archival unit 154, minutes of the meeting of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia held on 27 May 1975, pp. 10–11 and 75.

repeated that it was always about the situation at hand. He also mentioned Klement Gottwald as a positive example of the accumulation of top posts.⁷⁴

There was some astonishment at the fact that Vasil Biľak made no direct show of support for Husák at the meeting of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia; it was attributed to his previous criticism of the accumulation of posts in the person of Antonín Novotný and also incorrectly interpreted as tacit disagreement. Also worth mentioning was the fact that, after long years, Gustáv Husák referred to Novotný as a “comrade.”⁷⁵ On the next day, the Federal Assembly voted for the abovementioned constitutional act which took effect immediately; the Central Committee of the National Front of the Czechoslovak Socialist Republic accepted the proposal of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia to nominate Husák for the president’s office, which was backed up in the ensuing discussion by Otakar Rytíř, President of Svazarm, Marie Kabrhelová, Chairwoman of the Central Committee of the Czechoslovak Union of Women, and actor Štefan Kvietik.

Finally, in the morning hours of 29 May, a meeting of the Federal Assembly began, where the deputies voting in secret ballot unanimously elected the only nominee, Gustáv Husák, as President of the Czechoslovak Socialist Republic. The outcome was announced by the Speaker of the Federal Assembly Alois Indra. His announcement was followed by the traditional fanfare from Smetana’s *Libuše* and the ceremonial arrival of the new president who took the presidential oath, for the first time in Czechoslovakia’s history in the Slovak language. The one-and-a-half-hour meeting concluded with the national anthem and Alois Indra’s speech in which he congratulated Husák. The new president then accepted felicitations, attended a military parade in the third yard of the Castle, and subsequently received various delegations arriving with yet more greetings.⁷⁶

“Unanimously, in accordance with the people’s will,” was the title of the leading article in which the *Rudé právo* daily commented on the event.⁷⁷ However, most ordinary citizens learnt about the new head of state just a few days before the election; as a matter of fact, they did not have any official information about Svoboda’s health condition.⁷⁸ Capturing the public opinion of those days is difficult, and there

74 *Ibid.*, pp. 64–70. Klement Gottwald (1896–1953) was a longtime leader of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia (1929–1953) and also President of Czechoslovakia (1948–1953).

75 *RGASPI*, f. 495, o. 272, d. 37, 2. tom, excerpts from a report of the Soviet Ambassador in Czechoslovakia on the events accompanying the presidential election and taking place between 27 and 29 May 1975, pp. 8–9. Husák was unfairly imprisoned in the 1950s, at the time of Novotný’s rule, who was in addition against his rehabilitation. Accordingly, Husák participated in the offensive campaign against Novotný during the Prague Spring.

76 On the ceremony and the course of the presidential election, see *NA*, f. Office of the General Secretary of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia Gustáv Husák, Box No. 246, Election of the President of the Czechoslovak Socialist Republic in 1975.

77 *Rudé právo* (30 May 1975), p. 1.

78 In this respect, I came across just one piece of official information published in the media since mid-1974, namely that Gustáv Husák and Lubomír Štrougal congratulated Svoboda

has not been any research project on this issue. However, there are some preserved reports about the reactions of citizens whose opinions were reflected, to some extent, in letters addressed to the new president. Most of their authors generally stated that the concentration of power in Husák could have been expected, as he ranked among the most capable people in the party leadership.

The aspect of nationalism produced ambivalent reactions. The fact that a Slovak had become the Czechoslovak president for the first time ever was particularly appreciated. There were also Slovak views which compared the event to “the glory of Great Moravia.”⁷⁹ On the other hand, there were growing feelings in Czech society that the Slovaks were ruling the Czechs, as illustrated by jokes from the period, such as: “Štúr gave the Slovaks their language; Hlinka and Tiso gave them their state; and Husák attached Bohemia and Moravia to it.” The Party leadership refrained from ventilating this issue in public too much.

Gustáv Husák was also aware of the sensitivity of the matter, and so he, *inter alia*, tried to speak both Slovak and Czech. However, he only earned another batch of jibes and anecdotes such as “he has not learnt to speak correct Czech, and he has forgotten to speak Slovak” from both nations for his efforts and for occasionally mixing both languages, which was nicknamed “Husákspeak.”⁸⁰ Husák reacted to his slips of the tongue and questions about his Czech with the ironic excuse that he had started learning Czech in Pankrác and Ruzyně where no Czech grammar textbooks were available.⁸¹ Internally, he argued that Klement Gottwald, too, had

on his 79th birthday on behalf of the Presidium of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia in the Central Military Hospital in Prague and that the health condition of the president continued to require hospital care. There was no photograph attached to the article. (Blahopřání prezidentovi [Congratulation to the President]. In: *Rudé právo* (25 November 1974), p. 1.) In his New Year’s speech in 1975, Husák greeted the public and wished it well also on behalf of “the ailing President of the Republic” (Novoroční projev generálního tajemníka ÚV KSČ a předsedy ÚV NF ČSSR soudruha Gustáva Husáka [New Year’s Speech of the General Secretary of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia and Chairman of the Central Committee of the National Front of the Czechoslovak Socialist Republic]. In: *Ibid.* (2 January 1975), p. 1). The speech prompted speculation that Husák is a pretender for the president’s office. As a matter of fact, it would have been more logical if the speech had been delivered by Federal Prime Minister Lubomír Štrougal, who was the official stand-in for the ailing president. The issue was also repeatedly reflected in the foreign media. (See *Archive of the Office of the President of the Republic* (Prague), Protocol 200 000, Election of G. Husák, 1975, File No. 201401/75.)

79 *Literary archive of the Slovak National Library* (Martin), sign. 153 AB 40, Draft of the congratulation by writer Šárka Alexyová on Husák’s election to the president’s office.

80 See NÁBĚLKOVÁ, Mira: *Slovenčina a čeština v kontakte: Pokračovanie príbehu* [The Slovak and Czech Language in Contact: The Story Continues]. Bratislava – Praha, Veda 2008, pp. 122–123.

81 O novém státoprávním uspořádání s Dr. Gustávem Husákem [On the New Constitutional Structure with Dr Gustáv Husák]. In: *Reportér*, Vol. 3, No. 26 (26 June – 3 July 1968), p. VII. Pankrác and Ruzyně are prisons in Prague, where Gustáv Husák was imprisoned in the 1950s.

spoken both languages.⁸² Husák's second New Year speech produced a negative reaction among part of the Slovak population, as it was again delivered in Czech. (From then on, Husák regularly alternated Slovak and Czech.)

There were also voices saying that Husák should have been elected after the end of the regular term of office of Ludvík Svoboda, whose credit was continuously extolled during these events. The ex-president was awarded the honorary title of Hero of the Czechoslovak Socialist Republic, including the right to wear its Golden Star. The 4th "Ružomberok-Tatry" tank division, the Military Academy of Ground Forces in Vyškov, and many public places were named after him. He was also granted material benefits, which were advocated mainly by Alois Indra.⁸³

Until the 15th Congress of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia in April 1976, Ludvík Svoboda formally remained a member of the Presidium of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia, and, until his death on 20 September 1979, a member of the Central Committee.⁸⁴ Svoboda received a state funeral, but his successor Gustáv Husák did not want the funeral procession to set out from Prague Castle. It was Štrougal who eventually stepped in and made Husák reconsider his opinion.⁸⁵ An estimated 300,000 to 350,000 people lined the route of the funeral cortège; 8,000 to 10,000 came to the Spanish Hall of Prague Castle to say goodbye to the General of the Army and ex-president.⁸⁶ The next, and until now the last, state funeral of a Czechoslovak president was that of Husák's successor Václav Havel.

The Czech version of this article, entitled Podivná jednota. Gustáv Husák a mocenskopolitické zápasy v KSC na příkladu prezidentské otázky, was originally published (together with four relevant documents) in Soudobé dějiny, Vol. 22, No. 3–4 (2015), pp. 299–347.

82 A recorded conversation of the author with historian Viliam Plevza dated 13 June 2011.

83 NA, f. 1261/0/6, File No. 155, archival unit 161/0a, resolution of the Presidium of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia dated 6 June 1975, p. 13 n.

84 See ŠTVERÁK, František: *Schematismus k dějinám Komunistické strany Československa (1921–1992): Základní informace o ústředních orgánech a biografické údaje o vedoucích představitelích strany* [Schematism on the History of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia (1921–1992): Basic Information on Central Bodies and Biographic Data of Leading Representatives of the Party]. Praha, National Archives 2010, p. 412.

85 Audio-recorded conversations of the author with Zoe Klusáková-Svobodová (24 March 2015) and Lubomír Štrougal (17 June 2015).

86 NA, f. Office of the General Secretary of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia Gustáv Husák, Box No. 246, Information on the final meeting of the working commission for the organisation of the state funeral of Ludvík Svoboda, 28 September 1979, p. 3.

Prague Chronicle

Life's Jubilee of Professor Mečislav Borák

Dušan Janák

Earlier this year, Professor Mečislav Borák, a well-known historian, museologist and university lecturer, but also a journalist and scriptwriter, celebrated his 70th birthday. Born on 31 January 1945 in Růžďka near Vsetín, he spent most of his childhood and youth in Frýdek-Místek, where he finished a general secondary school. Having graduated from the Faculty of Social Sciences of Charles University in Prague, he returned to the region of Ostrava; as a fresh journalist, he did not want to participate in the “normalisation,” which was just beginning at that time, and chose to work as a psychologist and social worker for the artisans’ cooperative “Zlatník” in Ostrava. In 1972, he received a doctoral degree at his *alma mater* for a work on the history of Catholic press in the Czech Lands, definitely not a preferred topic in those days. Since the mid-1970s, he worked as a historian specialising in modern history for the Silesian Land Museum in Opava, and later also at the Silesian Institute of the Czechoslovak Academy of Sciences (Academy of Sciences of the Czech Republic) in Opava, where he received his “Candidate of Historical Sciences” degree for a work on anti-Nazi resistance in the region of Těšín/Czieszyn, Silesia. After November 1989, he lectured at Ostrava University, the Silesian University in Opava, and Palacký University in Olomouc, where he habilitated in 2001. In 1993, he started working for the Silesian Land Museum again; in 2000, he began cooperating with the Documentation Centre for Property Transfers of Cultural Assets of Second World War Victims, at that time a part of the Institute for Contemporary History of the Academy of Sciences of the Czech

Republic. In 2004, he joined the Faculty of Philosophy and Science of the Silesian University in Opava, where he was appointed Professor of Czechoslovak and Czech history five years later. He now works in the Institute of Central European Studies of the Faculty of Public Policies of the Silesian University in Opava, and is still active in the Silesian Land Museum as well as in the Documentation Centre for Property Transfers of Cultural Assets of Second World War Victims in Prague.

Borák's research and publication activities¹ have typically focused on the historical region of Těšín and the Czech part of Silesia; however, he has successfully stepped out beyond the regional boundaries and linked the regional dimension with the nationwide and international context, just as he has done with different micro- and macro-historical aspects. He has always been interested in fate of ordinary, "small" people, seemingly forever lost in "grand" history, and he managed to set their life stories into a more general framework of the "grand" history in an attractive and even novel-like manner. He keeps coming back to topics that caught his attention earlier, each time presenting new facts and insights to review and expand his previous conclusions and existing knowledge of history.

The above mentioned characteristics were demonstrated as early as during the research of the Životice tragedy and Nazi crimes committed in the region of Těšín, starting at the turn of the 1970s and 1980s and continuing in the following decades, which ranked Mečislav Borák among historians specialising in the occupation and resistance movement.² His professional interest gradually expanded to include the entire occupied region of Ostrava and the Czech part of Silesia in a broader context of Czech Lands and Central Europe.³ In this respect, he also devoted his attention to the 1938–1939 period, from the clarification of the controversial topic of the Polish

1 Publication and partly also other activities of Mečislav Borák are described in biographic medallions and articles published on various occasions, the most recent list of which is presented in: FRIEDL, Jiří: Profesor Mečislav Borák jubilující [Professor Mečislav Borák's Jubilee]. In: *Slovanský přehled*, Vol. 101, No. 1 (2015), pp. 234–237; JANÁK, Dušan: K jubileu profesora Mečislava Boráka [On the Jubilee of Professor Mečislav Borák]. In: *Slezský sborník*, Vol. 113, No. 1 (2015), pp. 174–188. The latter contains probably the most detailed analysis of Professor Mečislav Borák's activities; I will therefore mention only his most important works in this article.

2 See, for example, BORÁK, Mečislav: *Zločin v Životicích* [The Crime in Životice]. Ostrava, Profil 1980 and 1984 (2nd edition); IDEM: *Na příkaz gestapa: Nacistické válečné zločiny na Těšínsku* [As the Gestapo Commands: Nazi War Crimes in Těšín, Silesia]. Ostrava, Profil 1990; IDEM: *Svědectví ze Životic: Těšínsko za druhé světové války a okolnosti životické tragédie* [A Testimony of Životice. The Těšín Region during the Second World War and the Circumstances of the Životice Tragedy]. Český Těšín, Muzeum Těšínska 1999.

3 See, for example, IDEM: *Odboj proti nacistickým okupantům na Ostravsku v letech 1939–1945* [The Resistance against Nazi Occupiers in the Region of Ostrava between 1939 and 1945]. In: *Ostrava: Příspěvky k dějinám a výstavbě Ostravy a Ostravska* [Ostrava: A Contribution to the History and Development of Ostrava and Its Region], No. 16. Ostrava, Profil 1991, pp. 30–54; IDEM: *Evropská dimenze dějin Slezska v letech 1938–1945* [A European Dimension of the History of Silesia 1938–1945]. In: JIRÁSEK, Zdeněk et al.: *Evropská dimenze slezských dějin* [The European Dimension of Silesian History]. Opava, Slezská univerzita v Opavě 2009, pp. 97–101.

occupation of the region of Těšín⁴ to Czechoslovakia's defence of Ruthenia. His principal results included analyses of the state and tasks of research and historical syntheses of the period between 1938 and 1945.⁵ However, Mečislav Borák also introduced a number of hitherto unknown stories and events from this period.⁶ Between 2001 and 2006, as a member and the Chairman of the Appellate Committee for the Compensation of Forced Labourers by the Czech Council for Victims of Nazism and the Czech-German Fund for the Future, he prepared essential studies on forced labour of the Poles in the Third Reich and on so-called *Polenlagers*.⁷ However, his works also clearly reflect other topics related to the region of Těšín in different periods of time, for example the Czechoslovak-Polish border dispute of the region

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- 4 See, for example, IDEM (ed.): Zábor Těšínska v říjnu 1938 a první fáze delimitace hranic mezi Československem a Polskem: Výběr dokumentů [The Annexation of Těšín in October 1938 and the First Phase of the Delimitation of the Border Between Czechoslovakia and Poland: A Selection of Documents]. In: *Časopis Slezského zemského muzea, série B*, Vol. 46, No. 3 (1997), pp. 206–248; IDEM: Starcie zbrojne polskiego i czechosłowackiego wojska pod Czacą 25 listopada 1938 roku. In: KOWALSKI, Robert (ed.): *Od Zaolzia po Jaworzynę: Rewindykacje graniczne jesieni 1938 roku*. Nowy Targ, Polskie Towarzystwo Historyczne 2004, pp. 69–100; IDEM: Obrana Podkarpatské Rusi (říjen 1938 – březen 1939) [Defence of Ruthenia (October 1938 – March 1939)]. In: GONĚC, Vladimír (ed.): *Československá historická ročenka 1997* [Czecho-Slovak Historical Yearbook 1997]. Brno, Masaryk University 1997, pp. 165–178.
- 5 See, for example, IDEM: Těšínské Slezsko v rámci okupovaného pohraničí v letech 1938–1945 [Těšín Silesia as Part of the Occupied Border Regions 1938–1945]. In: RADVANOVSKÝ, Zdeněk (ed.): *Historie okupovaného pohraničí 1938–1945* [History of the Occupied Border Regions 1938–1945], Vol. 11. Ústí nad Labem, Univerzita J. E. Purkyně 2006, pp. 83–135; IDEM: České Slezsko 1938–1945 [Czech Silesia 1938–1945]. In: GAWRECKI, Dan et al. *Dějiny Českého Slezska 1740–2000* [History of Czech Silesia 1740–2000], Vol. 2. Opava, Slezská univerzita v Opavě 2003, pp. 369–404.
- 6 IDEM: Oskar Schindler ve službách abwehru na Ostravsku [Oskar Schindler in the Service of the Abwehr in the Region of Ostrava]. In: *Ostrava. Příspěvky k dějinám a současnosti Ostravy a Ostravska* [Ostrava: A Contribution to the History and Development of Ostrava and the Region of Ostravsko], No. 21. Ostrava, Profil 2003, pp. 246–262; IDEM: Rozvědčík z Ostravy u Hitlerova “Vlčího doupěte”: Neznámé válečné osudy Jana Borovce (1923–1944?) [A Spy from Ostrava in Hitler's “Wolf's Lair”: Unknown War Fates of Jan Borovec (1923–1944?)]. In: *Ostrava: Příspěvky k dějinám a současnosti Ostravy* [Ostrava: A Contribution to the History and Development of Ostrava and the Region of Ostravsko], No. 26. Ostrava, Profil 2012, pp. 50–81, etc.
- 7 IDEM: Nucené nasazení Poláků na práce do Říše v letech 1939–1945 (s přihlédnutím k Polákům z Těšínska) [Forced Labour of the Poles in the Reich in 1939–1945 (Taking into Account the Poles from Těšín)]. In: *Slezský sborník*, Vol. 99, No. 2 (2001), pp. 95–108; IDEM: Tábor pro Poláky ve Slezsku (1939, 1942–1945) [Camps for the Poles in Silesia (1939, 1942–1945)]. In: PAŽOUT, Jaroslav – KOKOŠKA, Stanislav – KOKOŠKOVÁ, Zdenka (ed.): *Museli pracovat pro Říši: Nucené pracovní nasazení českého obyvatelstva v letech 2.světové války. Sborník ze semináře konaného ve Státním ústředním archivu v Praze dne 2.dubna 2004* [They Had to Work for the Reich: Forced Labour of the Czech Population during the Second World War. A Collection of the Seminar Held in the National Archive on 2 April 2004]. Praha, Národní archiv 2004, pp. 124–137.

of Těšín in 1918–1920,⁸ or transformations of Czechoslovak-Polish and Czech-Polish relations in the region of in question.⁹

After 1989, Mečislav Borák has become one of the most prominent figures of research projects studying political repressions of the population since the late 1930s till the mid-1950s in Czechoslovakia and also in Central and Eastern Europe in general. He participated in the research of internment forms of political persecution in Czechoslovakia after the Second World War, in particular of various forms of internment camps and camp systems.¹⁰ He became the pioneer of research of the so-called retribution justice and his extensive monograph of 1998 was the first-ever comprehensive work on the issue in Czech historiography and is still used as a fundamental source for any research project examining the People's Courts.¹¹ A specific thematic circuit was represented by his research of the Holocaust and various forms of persecution of the Jewish population, including the first deportations of European Jews in transports from Moravská Ostrava to Nisko on the San between 1939 and 1940.¹² Another key topic of Borák was the Katyń crime of 1940 and its victims originating from the Czech Lands, in particular the Poles from or with a relation to Těšín, Silesia. After the publication of the first Czech monograph on the crime and an extensive work

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- 8 BORÁK, Mečislav – ŽÁČEK, Rudolf: *Ukradené vesnice: Musí Češi platit za osm slovenských obcí?* [Stolen Villages: Must the Czechs Pay for Eight Slovak Villages?]. Český Těšín, Těšínské muzeum – Sfinga 1993; BORÁK, Mečislav: Der polnisch-tschechische Konflikt um das Teschener Schlesien. Die "tschechische" Perspektive. In: BAHLCKE, Joachim – GAWRECKI, Dan – KACZMAREK, Ryszard (Hrsg.). *Geschichte Oberschlesiens. Politik, Wirtschaft und Kultur von den Anfängen bis zur Gegenwart*. Oldenbourg, De Gruyter 2015, pp. 631–638. (Schriften des Bundesinstituts für Kultur und Geschichte der Deutschen im östlichen Europa, Band 61.)
- 9 See, for example, IDEM: Památník letecké tragédie v Těrlicku – symbol proměn česko-polských vztahů na Těšínsku v letech 1932–1938 [Memorial of the Air Tragedy in Těrlicko – a Symbol of the Changes of the Czech–Polish Relations in Těšín Silesia 1932–1938]. In: *Časopis Slezského zemského muzea, série B*, Vol. 51, No. 3 (2002), pp. 269–288.
- 10 BORÁK, Mečislav – JANÁK, Dušan: *Tábory nucené práce v ČSR 1948–1954* [Forced Labour Camps in Czechoslovakia 1948–1954]. Šenov u Ostravy, Slezský institut Slezského zemského muzea v Opavě – Tilia 1996; BORÁK, Mečislav: Interniční tábor "Hanke" v Moravské Ostravě v roce 1945 [The Internment Camp "Hanke" in Moravská Ostrava in 1945]. In: *Ostrava: Příspěvky k dějinám a současnosti Ostravy a Ostravska* [Ostrava: A Contribution to the History and Development of Ostrava and the Region of Ostravsko], No. 18 (1997), pp. 88–124; IDEM: Fenomén tzv. vojenských táborů nucené práce v Československu a jeho mezinárodní souvislosti [The Phenomenon of the So-Called Military Camps of Forced Labour in Czechoslovakia and Its International Context]. In: *Slezský sborník*, Vol. 98, No. 1–2 (2000), pp. 78–92.
- 11 IDEM: *Spravedlnost podle dekretu: Retribuční soudnictví v českých zemích a Mimořádný lidový soud v Ostravě 1945–1948* [Justice by Decree. Retributive Justice in the Czech Lands and the People's Court in Ostrava (1945–1948)]. Šenov u Ostravy, Tilia 1998.
- 12 IDEM: *Transport do tmy: První deportace evropských Židů* [Transport into the Darkness: The First Deportation of European Jews], with a foreword by Václav Havel. Ostrava, Moravskoslezský den 1994; IDEM: *První deportace evropských Židů: Transporty do Niska nad Sanem (1939–1940)* [The First Deportation of European Jews: Transports to Nisko on the San (1939–1940)], 2nd reworked edition. Ostrava – Šenov u Ostravy, Tilia 2009.

on the victims of Katyń in Polish,¹³ the search for and registration of the victims went on, along with the work on a series of subtopics presented in a number of articles and studies, carried out as part of the research into Czechoslovak victims of political persecutions in the Soviet Union, which started in 2000.¹⁴ In 2011, the outcome of the work was presented in a monograph containing biographies of almost 500 people shot in 1940 by members of the People's Commissariat for Internal Affairs (NKVD) in Katyń, Kharkov, Tver, Bykoven in Ukraine, and other places in the Soviet Union.¹⁵ Of particular importance was the founding role of Mečislav Borák in research into political persecution of Czechoslovak citizens in Soviet Russia and later in the Soviet Union between 1918 and 1956, in which historians from Opava and Prague were participating. Results have so far been published in several collections and monographs and dozens of studies.¹⁶ These issues show how Borák's work intertwines different topics and how different angles of view or new sources bring about more and more questions. The continuity becomes even more apparent in the latest of his

13 IDEM: *Vraždy v Katyňském lese* [Murders in the Katyń Forest]. Ostrava, Petit 1991; IDEM: *Symbol Katynia: Zaolziańskie ofiary obozów i więzień w ZSRR*. Czeski Cieszyn, Polski Związek Kulturalno Oświatowy, Zarząd Główny 1991.

14 See, for example, IDEM: *Katyn dans la mémoire des Tchéques et des Polonais de Silésie*. In: *La Nouvelle Alternative*, No. 32 (December 1993), pp. 28–31; IDEM: *Zločin v Katyni a jeho české a slovenské souvislosti* [The Katyń Crime and Its Czech and Slovak Context]. In: ŠESTÁK, Miroslav – VORÁČEK, Emil (ed.): *Evropa mezi Německem a Ruskem: Sborník prací k sedmdesátinám Jaroslava Valenty* [Europe between Germany and Russia: A Collection of Works Published on the Occasion of the 70th Birthday of Jaroslav Valenta]. Praha, Historický ústav Akademie věd České republiky 2000, pp. 505–522.

15 IDEM: *Ofiary Zbrodni Katyńskiej z obszaru byłej Czechosłowacji*. Opava, Slezské zemské muzeum 2011.

16 See, for example, IDEM: et al.: *Perzekuce občanů z území dnešní České republiky v SSSR* [Persecution of Citizens from the Territory of Today's Czech Republic in the USSR]. Praha, Ústav pro soudobé dějiny Akademie věd České republiky 2003, pp. 7–205; IDEM: *České stopy v Gulagu: Z výzkumu perzekuce Čechů a občanů ČSR v Sovětském svazu* [Czech Traces in the Gulag: From the Research on the Persecution of Czech and Czechoslovak Citizens in the Soviet Union]. Opava, Slezské zemské muzeum 2003 (2nd reworked edition); IDEM: *Formy i rozmiar represji wobec Czechów i mieszkańców ziem czeskich w Związku Radzieckim do 1956 r.: Stan badań*. In: ROGUT, Dariusz – ADAMCZYK, Arkadiusz (ed.): *Represje sowieckie wobec narodów Europy 1944–1956*. Żelów, Atena 2005, pp. 323–341; IDEM: (ed.): *Perzekuce československých občanů v Sovětském svazu (1918–1956)* [Persecution of Czechoslovak Citizens in the Soviet Union (1918–1956)], Part 1: *Vězni a popravení* [Prisoners and the Executed]; Part 2: *Váleční zajatci a internovaní* [Prisoners of War and Internees]. *Sborník studií* [Collection of Studies]. Opava, Slezské zemské muzeum – Slezská univerzita v Opavě 2007. IDEM: *Moskevská pohřebiště: Češi a českoslovenští občané popravení v Moskvě v letech 1922–1953* [Moscow Burial Sites: Czechs and Czechoslovak Citizens Executed in Moscow 1922–1953]. Opava, Slezská univerzita v Opavě, 2013; IDEM: *Zatajené popravy: Češi a českoslovenští občané popravení na sovětské Ukrajině. Z historie Velkého teroru na Volyni a v Podolí* [Secret Executions: Czechs and Czechoslovak Citizens Executed in Soviet Ukraine. From the History of the Great Terror in Volynia and Podolia]. Opava, Slezská univerzita v Opavě, 2014; IDEM: *Ruská literatura o politických represích. Z fondů Knihovny Slezského zemského muzea v Opavě* [Russian Literature on Political Repressions. From the Funds of the Library of the Silesian Land Museum in Opava]. Opava, Slezské zemské muzeum 2015.

research interests – the situation of the Polish minority and inter-ethnic relations in the context of historical and present Czechoslovak- or Czech-Polish relations.¹⁷

It must be noted that a substantial part of the abovementioned activities of Professor Borák has been associated with the Institute for Contemporary History of the Academy of Sciences of the Czech Republic. Cooperation started in the 1990s, when Professor Borák appeared at a number of conferences and other events organised by the institute in concern and devoted to topics such as the resistance movement and occupation, the Holocaust, or political repression. At the turn of the millennium, Borák was participating in a research project focusing on Jewish issues and anti-Semitism in retribution justice funded by the Grant Agency of the Academy of Sciences of the Czech Republic, the outcome of which consisted of two extensive collections of works.¹⁸ However, cooperation developed to the fullest only in the following decade, when Mečislav Borák worked as a researcher of the Institute's Documentation Centre for Property Transfers of Cultural Assets of Second World War Victims. He played a major role in key activities of the Centre, including methodological and heuristic issues related to the search for and restitution of lost property,¹⁹ expert assistance, or presentation

17 See, for example, IDEM: *Očima Poláků: Historie a současnost československo-polských vztahů a polská menšina v Československu v zrcadle polského tisku na Těšínském Slezsku v letech 1989–1992: Komentovaná bibliografie* [Through Polish Eyes: The History and the Present of the Czechoslovak-Polish Relations and the Polish Minority in Czechoslovakia in the Mirror of Polish Press in Těšín Silesia 1989–1992. A Commented Bibliography]. Opava, Slezská univerzita v Opavě 2010. (Acta historica Universitatis Silesianae Opavien-sis – Supplementa, Vol. 9.)

18 IDEM: (ed.): *Poválečná justice a národní podoby antisemitismu: Postih provinění vůči Židům před soudy a komisemi ONV v českých zemích v letech 1945–1948 a v některých zemích střední Evropy. Sborník příspěvků* [Postwar Judiciary and National Forms of Anti-Semitism: Sanctions for Wrongdoing against Jews before the Retribution Courts and Commissions of the District People's Committee in the Czech Lands in 1945–1948 and in Some Countries of Central Europe. Collection of Contributions]. Praha – Opava, Ústav pro soudobé dějiny Akademie věd České republiky – Slezské zemské muzeum 2002; IDEM: (ed.): *Retribuce v ČSR a národní podoby antisemitismu: Židovská problematika a antisemitismus ve spisech mimořádných lidových soudů a trestních komisí ONV v letech 1945–1948. Sborník příspěvků* [Retributions in the Czechoslovak Republic and National Forms of Anti-Semitism: Jewish Issues and Anti-Semitism in the Files of People's Courts and Penal Commissions of National District Committees 1945–1948]. Praha – Opava, Ústav pro soudobé dějiny Akademie věd České republiky – Slezské zemské muzeum 2002.

19 See, for example, IDEM: *Verspätete Gerechtigkeit: Die Restitution von enteigneten Kulturgut in Tschechien*. In: *Osteuropa*, Vol. 56, No. 1–2 (2006), pp. 247–262; IDEM: *Některé možnosti muzejní identifikace předmětů patřících obětem holocaustu* [Some Possibilities of Museum Identification of Articles Belonging to Victims of the Holocaust]. In: IDEM: (ed.): *Ztracené dědictví: Příspěvky z "kulatých stolů" na téma dokumentace, identifikace a restituce kulturních statků obětí II. světové války* [Lost Heritage: Contributions from the "Round Tables" on the Documentation, Identification and Restitution of Cultural Assets of Second World War Victims]. Praha – Šenov u Ostravy, Documentation Centre for Property Transfers of Cultural Assets of Second World War Victims – Ústav pro soudobé dějiny Akademie věd České republiky – Tilia 2006, pp. 76–82; IDEM: *The Identification of Works of Art Belonging to Holocaust Victims and the Possibility of Restoring Them to Their Original*

of the results achieved by the Centre at conferences and other events, but mainly many collections of works he has been the editor of since the foundation of the Centre until now.²⁰ As a member of the Scientific Board of the Institute for Contemporary History of the Academy of Sciences of the Czech Republic between 2000 and 2006, he also participated in resolving conceptual issues concerning the Institute's activities and future outlooks.

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Apart from 20 or so specialised publications and more than 150 studies and articles, Professor Borák's extensive research and creative activities also include participation in almost 40 research projects and tasks, study visits and internships in many countries, as well as extensive editorial, consulting and expert assistance activities, an organic part of which is also journalistic and popularisation work. He has published over 500 articles in newspapers and magazines, appeared in more than 100 television programmes and 70 radio programmes, familiarising the Czech and Polish public in an appealing way not only with the results of his research, historical events or tabooed topics, but also with experiences from historical expeditions and visits that spanned two decades and took place mostly in Central and Eastern Europe; however, one of them took him as far as Latin America.²¹ As a screenwriter and moderator, he prepared about 15 documentary films, among them *A Crime Named Katyń* of 2007, which won many awards at international film festivals, or *Secret Executions* released two years later, which dealt with the mentioned 500 Czech and Czechoslovak citizens executed in the Soviet Union

Owners (Using the Example of the Silesian Regional Museum). In: *Website of the Government of the Czech Republic* [online]. EU2009CZ: Holocaust Era Conference. Prague, June 26–30 2009, HEA Conference Proceedings, pp. 1–7 [cit. 2015-10-10]. Available at: http://www.holocausteraassets.eu/files/200000251-1b938a2d36/WG_LA_12.pdf.

- 20 Between 2005 and 2014, Borák was the editor of 15 publications; see, *inter alia*: BORÁK, Mečislav (ed.): *The Lost Heritage of Cultural Assets: The Documentation, Identification and Repatriation of the Cultural Assets of Second World War Victims*. Praha – Šenov u Ostravy, Documentation Centre for Property Transfers of the Cultural Assets of Second World War Victims – Ústav pro soudobé dějiny Akademie věd České republiky – Tilia 2005; IDEM: (ed.): *“The West” Versus “the East” or the United Europe? The Different Conceptions of Provenance Research, Documentation and Identification of Looted Cultural Assets and the Possibilities of International Cooperation in Europe and Worldwide: Proceedings of an International Academic Conference Held in Poděbrady on 8–9 October 2013*. Praha, Documentation Centre for Property Transfers of the Cultural Assets of Second World War Victims 2014.
- 21 Let us mention at least the Great Valachian Expedition in the summer of 1995, during which he and his two companions crossed the Carpathians Mountains on foot, following a 1,600 km long route from the Banat on the Danube through Romania, Ukraine, Poland and Slovakia to the Moravian-Silesian Beskydy Mountains, to verify the migration theory on the origin of the Valachs, or the “DAY in Mexico” expedition, which started in the early spring of 1997, followed the footsteps of Czech exiles in Mexico and also established contacts with the local Czech minority.

at the time of the so-called “Great Terror.” Indeed, both of the documentaries enjoyed extraordinary reception.²² The public also knows him as the author of about 20 exhibitions and museum installations in the implementation of which he took part (e.g. museum installations in Havířov – Životice or in the Second World War Memorial in Ostrava – Hrabyně, or the “Katyń – Pamięć Narodu Polskiego/Katyń – Memory of the Polish Nation,” installed, *inter alia*, also in the Senate of the Polish Republic in Warsaw in May 2011). He has received more than 20 awards for his professional and publication activities both at home and from our northern neighbours, including the Golden Officer Cross of the Order of Merit of the Polish Republic, bestowed upon him in July 2001 by the Polish President.

The multifaceted and diverse activities of Mečislav Borák are amazing not only because of their scope, but especially because of their inter-dependency and continuity, which enable him to find new and unexpected connections. They are characterised by Borák’s never-ending search for historical truth, by uncovering the mechanisms of persecution and the long-forgotten fate of their victims, by attempts to bring to light their memories and thus return them to their families and descendants, by a search for the roots of current conflicts in historical memory, and the effort to solve them. Borák’s work combines erudition and deep knowledge of each topic or issue examined with the fervour of a reporter approaching the “crime scene,” and the ability to capture in special, engaging ways the results of the study of the past. In present Czech historiography, he is the founder of internationally renown research on persecution of the population of Central and Eastern Europe in the 20th century, and an expert on the issue of compensation to their victims, a prominent expert on the Holocaust and the restitution of lost Jewish assets. At the same time, he is a tireless advocate and promoter of the discovered knowledge, aiming at its practical use, including their embedding in the legislation – an expert to whom people and organisations may turn for help and on whom they can truly rely. It is this “feedback” based on the thousands of hours of intense work which is not particularly visible that often prompts or provides a stimulus for further research. Let us believe that all of the above will continue in the same way in the years to come and that we may look forward to Borák’s future creative achievements and cooperation with him. For that, we would like to wish him good health, strength, and enthusiasm in the coming years.

The Czech version of this article, entitled Životní jubileum profesora Mečislava Boráka, was originally published in Soudobé dějiny, Vol. 22, No. 3–4 (2015), pp. 596–604.

22 The documentary film *Zločin jménem Katyň* [A Crime Named Katyń] was awarded the prize of the “Dějiny a současnost” magazine at the Academia Film Olomouc International Festival in 2007, the main prize Grand Prix 2007 at the 7th International Festival in Bar, Montenegro, and the annual prize of the Trilobit film presentation; in 2008, it won the main award “Visegrád Sign” at the 3rd Festival of Branch Studios of Public TVs of the Visegrád Four countries and was accepted at many international festivals and film presentations. The Centre of Documentary Production in Ostrava received an honorary commendation of the Czech Film and TV Association (FITES) for the *Secret Executions* documentary at the Trilobit Beroun 2009 film presentation.

Review

Germans in Postwar Czechoslovakia

*A Unique Edition of Documents from the Czech Archives
Is Bringing Down Established Legends*

Eva Hahn

ARBURG, Adrian von – STANĚK, Tomáš (ed.): *Vysídlení Němců a proměny českého pohraničí 1945–1951: Dokumenty z českých archivů* [Expulsion of the Germans and the Transformation of the Czech Border Regions 1945–1951: Documents from the Czech Archives].

Vol. I: *Češi a Němci do roku 1945: Úvod k edici* [Czechs and Germans until 1945: Introduction to the Edition]. Středokluky, Zdeněk Susa 2010, 373 pages, ISBN 978-80-86057-67-5;

Vol. II/1: *Duben–srpen/září 1945: “Divoký odsun” a počátky osidlování* [April–August/September 1945: The “Wild” Expulsion and the Beginnings of Resettlement]. Středokluky, Zdeněk Susa 2011, 957 pages + CD ROM, ISBN 978-80-86057-71-2;

Vol. II/3: *Akty hromadného násilí v roce 1945 a jejich vyšetřování* [Acts of Mass Violence in 1945 and Their Investigation]. Středokluky, Zdeněk Susa 2010, 332 pages + CD ROM, ISBN 978-80-86057-68-2.

Czechoslovakia at the end of the Second World War can be pictured in many different ways. We can tell stories of a suffering country inhabited by the traumatised

victims of concentration camps and members of the resistance movement, or emphasise the fate of the persecuted and of “quislings” adjusting to new conditions. We can focus our attention on the *élan* of the re-constructors trying to restore normal living conditions, concentrate on the international, domestic, and power policy aspects of the developments taking place, or present the postwar period as the cradle of the subsequent dictatorship of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia. The prevailing picture of Czechoslovakia in historical literature and journalistic opinion in the last two decades is that of a country which was murdering and expelling its German population. Czech versions of the topic tend to refer to the mindset of the Czech nation at the time, which was formed by their own direct experience. In foreign literature, postwar Czechoslovakia has been most frequently mentioned in connection with so-called ethnic cleansing. It is an “in” term used to denote the expulsion and to explain the postwar hardships suffered by the German minority as a consequence of nationalist blindness and vindictiveness on the part of the Czechs. As foreign authors generally tend to be more interested in the Germans than in the Czechs, it is hardly surprising that they accept the narrative of postwar German misery more readily than actual information from Czech history. However, this alone does not account for the fact that postwar Czechoslovakia is now being stigmatised as a nation which allegedly committed crimes comparable to those of Nazi Germany or why President Edvard Beneš appears alongside Adolf Hitler as if both politicians were of the same mould.

Comparisons of the situation in postwar Czechoslovakia with experiences from the Nazi era can be found in Czech period discourse, in which, for example, so-called “gestapoism” – then a common term used to describe the brutal treatment of people labelled as Nazis, traitors or “quislings” – was an object of criticism. That a link would be made with Nazism is understandable enough, since reference to recent historical experience as a metaphor to interpret current events is commonplace everywhere. This, of course, does not mean that the use of such images is necessarily fitting. The comparison of Czechoslovakia with Nazi Germany is a case in point. During the period in question, the Czechs knew no more about the operations of the Nazi regime, the workaday reality of life under their heel, or the scope of crimes committed than what came from their own direct experience of occupation. It is true that the question on whom responsibility for Nazism and its concomitant depravities should be pinned – i.e., whom to treat as a “Nazi” – was then highly topical but without any definitive answer forthcoming throughout Europe. Indeed, as we know from the later history of both states in occupied Germany, this issue has continued to haunt even the Germans themselves until now.¹ However, analogies with postwar Czechoslovakia are not formulated as a result of comparative

1 Compare, for example, HENKE, Klaus-Dietmar – WOLLER, Hans (ed.): *Politische Säuberungen in Europa: Die Abrechnung mit Faschismus und Kollaboration nach dem Zweiten Weltkrieg*. München, Deutscher Taschenbuch Verlag 1991; FREI, Norbert (ed.): *Transnationale Vergangenheitspolitik: Der Umgang mit deutschen Kriegsverbrechern in Europa nach dem Zweiten Weltkrieg*. Göttingen, Wallstein 2006.

empirical studies of similarities and differences. Nowadays, they emerge, first and foremost, from the current popularity of the concept of ethnic cleansing in international historiography and literature.

The phrase “ethnic cleansing,” so much in vogue at present, is not really new. The expression was initially used in political rhetoric to signify the violent and forced removal of opposing or suspect people from their traditional habitat (e.g., Stalin’s expulsions). After the Second World War, the term became notorious under its French form, *épuration*, denoting the punishment of “quislings,” and was used in a similar sense in postwar Czechoslovakia. In the latter case, however, it bore a significant ethnic connotation because of the collaboration of a large part of the German population in Czechoslovakia with the Nazi regime before the war and with the occupation authorities during the war. It was, for example, a favourite term of Prokop Drtina, then Minister of Justice, who in a speech delivered on 17 May 1945 declared that the primary task in the restoration of the state was “to completely clear the whole republic of all Germans.” This, he maintained, was the “command of the moment for each of us” and the “historical task of our generation.” Whatever it took, the goal must be reached: “To achieve our objective, we must start expelling the Germans from our lands immediately, right now, using all means available; we must not be stopped by anything and we must not hesitate.”² In current usage, the term “ethnic cleansing” became fashionable as a label for the historical interpretation of the expulsions that followed the fall of the communist dictatorships. Its origin is often associated with the names of the German historian Hans Lemberg³ and the American historian Norman M. Naimark whose best-selling book *Fires of Hatred: Ethnic Cleansing in Twentieth-Century Europe* helped him win international popularity.⁴ It is with this model in mind that a German national museum of “flight and expulsion” (*Flucht und Vertreibung*) is now being built in Berlin. According to an Internet presentation of its underlying concept: “The permanent exhibition presents the causes, course and consequences of ethnic cleansings in Europe to the general public, its main focus

2 ARBURG, A. von – STANĚK, T. (ed.): *Vysídlení Němců a proměny českého pohraničí 1945–1951* [Expulsion of the Germans and the Transformation of the Czech Border Regions 1945–1951] [hereinafter EGTCBR], Vol. II/1, p. 292 n., Document No. 47 – Speech of Prokop Drtina in Prague’s Lucerna Hall, 17 May 1945. The abbreviation EGTCBR (in Czech VNPČP) has been coined and used by the authors/editors themselves.

3 LEMBERG, Hans: “Ethnische Säuberung”: Ein Mittel zur Lösung von Nationalitätenproblemen? In: *Aus Politik und Zeitgeschichte*, Vol. 40, No. 46 (1992), pp. 27–38 (the journal is a supplement of *Das Parlament* weekly).

4 NAIMARK, Norman M.: *Fires of Hatred: Ethnic Cleansing in Twentieth-Century Europe*. Cambridge (Massachusetts) – London 2001. See also the following reviews: KŘEN, Jan: Odsun, vyhnání či etnická čistka? Na příkladu jedné knihy. [Resettlement, Expulsion or Ethnic Cleansing? On the Example of One Book]. In: *Literární noviny*, Vol. 15, No. 35 and No. 36 (2004), pp. 1–3; STANĚK, Tomáš: Norman M. Naimark über “Ethnische Säuberungen” im 20. Jahrhundert: Rezension und Anmerkungen zum “Fall” der Tschechoslowakei. In: *Bohemia*, Vol. 45, No. 2 (2004), pp. 485–497.

being on the flight and expulsion of the German population and its integration into a new society.”⁵

At first sight, this would seem to suggest that the expulsion of the German minority from Czechoslovakia is perceived not as a consequence of particular circumstances that led to isolated decisions by Czech political representatives or as a specific manifestation of Czech national consciousness, but as set in a broader historical framework, part of pan-European developments. Proponents of the so-called ethnic cleansing construct claim that the expulsion was the realisation of a desire, allegedly shared by all Europeans, to ethnically homogenise nations and states through forced resettlement. They offer in support of this theory the fate of the Armenians in the Ottoman Empire during the Great War, the outcome of the Greco-Turkish War (1919–1922) and the Treaty of Lausanne signed on 24 July 1923, or refer to various forms of resettlement in the Soviet Union (although these latter in fact took place within national borders, and cannot therefore be classified as ethnic homogenisation of the state). Texts on “ethnic cleansing” also tend to mention Nazism and the Holocaust, but the primary focus is on the expulsion of Germans from regions of Central and Eastern Europe, which allegedly affected 11 to 15 million German nationals. Needless to say, the use of the term “expulsion” (sometimes expanded to “flight and expulsion”) confuses and clouds the disparate experiences Germans from various countries underwent between 1939 and 1949. The blanket term covers not only the resettlement of German minorities and the forced evacuations carried out by the Nazis themselves, the voluntary flight and chaotic expulsions of Germans in the months leading up to and immediately after the ending of hostilities, but also the resettlement of somewhat less than 5 million Germans from Poland, Czechoslovakia and Hungary, which was legitimised under international law at the Potsdam Conference in the summer of 1945 and implemented in cooperation with the governments of the United States, the United Kingdom and the Soviet Union.

The authors of the texts dealing with the so-called ethnic cleansing cite the different forms of resettlement in support of their theses with little or no attempt to tease out the specifics of these diverse situations. In the case of Czechoslovakia, for instance, its postwar history is glossed over or ignored as are the arguments which the representatives of the Allies put forward to justify their decision concerning the resettlement. The name of President Edvard Beneš as the supposed mastermind behind the expulsion is thus found in surprising line-ups of various personalities. Hans Lemberg, for example, included him among a strangely concocted group of “morally corrupt” statesmen of the 20th century, “be they called Hitler or Stalin, Beneš or Churchill.”⁶ Another author, the Austrian historian Arnold Suppan, published his work on “the conflict, war and genocide in Central- and South-Eastern

5 Concept of activities of the Flight, Expulsion and Reconciliation Foundation and essential considerations concerning the planned permanent exhibition. In: Stiftung Flucht, Vertreibung, Versöhnung [online]. Berlin [cit. 2014-12-22]. Available at: http://www.sfvv.de/sites/default/files/downloads/koncepce_2012_sfvv.pdf.

6 LEMBERG, Hans: Mehr als eine Wanderung: Eine Einführung. In: FRANZEN, K. Erik: *Die Vertriebenen: Hitlers letzte Opfer*. Berlin – München, Propyläen 2001, p. 12–33, here p. 12.

Europe” under the title *Hitler – Beneš – Tito*.⁷ In fact, it is Suppan’s contention that all three were responsible for the final destruction of the Austro-Hungarian multicultural idyll between 1938 and 1948, since, allegedly, “war conflicts of this decade were primarily connected with the names of Adolf Hitler, Edvard Beneš and Josip Broz-Tito.”⁸

The concept of so-called ethnic cleansing pays scant attention to empirical research and to the political aspects of the individual resettlement programmes; instead, it builds, on the basis of a superficial similarity in the measures adopted, an inclusive picture of universally misled Europeans in the 20th century. This approach results not only in accusing various governments and nations of motives and objectives, ostensibly shared across the continent as a whole, but also in relativising the historical uniqueness of the Nazi regime. The reduction of the expulsion to fit the concept of “ethnic cleansing” makes it appear that postwar Czechoslovakia had indeed carried out what Prokop Drtina, as mentioned earlier, had called for – and, moreover, in a manner that matched his words. The statements of Czech politicians such as Drtina are used to imply that the expulsion was similar to the Nazi final solution to the Jewish question, which means that the Nazi regime and postwar Czechoslovakia stand out as two particularly gruesome (and hence most attested to) examples of ethnic cleansing. It is true that some authors, though by no means all, point to a difference between killing and resettlement, while others emphasise “ethnic hatred” as the root cause for both the Holocaust and the expulsion, and still more see the occurrence as stemming from the German occupation and Czech vengefulness. However, such nuances are seldom taken into account when painting generalised historical pictures, and the names of Hitler and Beneš have thus become linked as the best-known personification of ethnic cleansing in the type of literature and opinion journalism already referred to.

However, a study of historiographical accounts of the event in the last seven decades indicates that making a parallel between postwar Czechoslovakia and the Nazi regime is not new and is not based on any actual empirical research. In fact, it is merely a variation of the pronounced traditionalism in the German interpretation of the history of postwar Czechoslovakia and the expulsion.⁹ Moreover, freshly available documents from the Czech archives demonstrate that this chapter of Czech history is, even yet,

7 SUPPAN, Arnold: *Hitler – Beneš – Tito: Konflikt, Krieg und Völkermord in Ostmittel- und Südosteuropa*. Wien, Verlag der Österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften 2014.

8 *Ibid.*, p. 1724.

9 An extensive account of the German history of remembrance of the expulsion is provided in: HAHN, Eva – HAHN, Hans Henning: *Die Vertreibung im deutschen Erinnern: Legenden, Mythos, Geschichte*. Paderborn, Schöningh 2010. The book is featured in: ŠAFAŘÍK, Petr: “Mýty a legendy o nuceném vysídlení Němců: Zásadní analýza německého ‘vzpomínání a zapomínání’ [Myths and Legends about the Forced Expulsion of the Germans: An Essential Analysis of the German ‘Remembrance and Forgetting’]. In: *Soudobé dějiny*, Vol. 20, No. 3 (2013), pp. 415–444 (see also in: *Recensio.net* [online]. Feb 20, 2014 [cit. 2014-11-24]. Available at: <http://recensio.net/rezensionen/zeitschriften/soudobe-dejiny/2013/3/ReviewMonograph251417734?searchterm=petr+safarik>).

often interpreted without consideration of basic source information. After the fall of the communist regime, when the fate of the Germans in postwar Czechoslovakia became the subject of extensive debate, little new was added to the arguments of either side but rather the old, established legends were requisitioned and propounded once again. Only a few historians availed of the opportunities that had been opened for empirical research to bring fresh accessible information into the public domain. In this respect, the most eminent example is the publication *Vysídlení Němců a proměny českého pohraničí 1945–1951* [Expulsion of the Germans and the Transformation of the Czech Border Regions 1945–1951], for the most part a joint work by the Swiss historian Adrian von Arburg and his renowned Czech colleague Tomáš Staněk.

Tracing the Source for the Image of the German Expulsion from Czechoslovakia in the Eyes of the International Public

The first collection of reports on postwar Czechoslovakia was presented to the international community by the former Social Democratic member of the National Assembly, Wenzel Jaksch (1896–1966), in July 1945 in London under the title *Evidence on the Reign of Racialism in Czecho-Slovakia*.¹⁰ This booklet was published as a special issue of the exile journal *Der Sozialdemokrat*, under whose auspices Jaksch had been organising, since the summer of 1944, a protest movement against the widely-known plans of the allied governments to resettle German minorities from Poland and Czechoslovakia. He also founded the Democratic Sudeten Committee (*Das Demokratische Sudetenkomitee*),¹¹ with a view to promoting the traditional Sudeten German aspiration for self-determination and to achieving a situation whereby the Czechoslovak border regions would be occupied by “impartial allied troops.”¹² Jaksch’s efforts failed, but after the war he succeeded in laying the foundation stone for the currently still popular picture of postwar Czechoslovakia as a country where racialism prevailed and with it “a policy of unbridled vengeance toward 3.2 million Sudeten Germans and 700,000 Hungarians.”¹³

Jaksch’s publication contains 16 densely printed pages with headings such as “The Revenge for Lidice is the Expulsion,” “The Expulsion of the Ideals of T. G. Masaryk from Czechoslovakia” and “Toward Totalitarianism?” Apart from his own construal of these captions, there are also eyewitness accounts, statements from Czechoslovak politicians and the text of an anti-German poster issued

10 JAKSCH, Wenzel (ed.): *Evidence on the Reign of Racialism in Czecho-Slovakia*. London, Sudeten German Social Democratic Party 1945 (a special issue of the journal *Der Sozialdemokrat* of July 1945).

11 See, *inter alia*, HOFFMANN, R. J. – HEISSIG, K. – KITTEL, M. (ed.): *Odsun* [The Expulsion]/*Die Vertreibung der Sudetendeutschen*, Vol. 2, pp. 465 and 467 n..

12 BRANDES, Detlef: *Cesta k vyhnání 1938–1945: Plány a rozhodnutí o “transferu” Němců z Československa a z Polska* [The Road to the Expulsion 1938–1945: Plans and Decisions to “Transfer” Germans from Czechoslovakia and Poland]. Praha, Prostor 2002, p. 371.

13 JAKSCH, W. (ed.): *Evidence on the Reign of Racialism in Czecho-Slovakia*, p. 1.

by the Local National Committee of the 12th district of Prague, which, according to the historian Johann Wolfgang Brügel, had indeed been put up but was removed just a few hours later because of complaints.¹⁴ The last page contains quotations from the report dated 21 September 1938, which Lord Runciman had prepared for the British government, including his recommendation to immediately grant the Sudeten Germans the right of full self-determination, with comments referring to the participation of the British government in the decision made in Munich: “Now the entire Sudeten population, no matter whether guilty or not, has been made a scapegoat for the much broader ‘Munich’ guilt.”¹⁵ The style of the tract is that of a legal suit and contains a comparison – still very popular – of postwar Czechoslovakia with Nazi Germany.

At the same time, Wenzel Jaksch instructed Almar Reitzner (1923–1988), who was then 22, to travel to Czechoslovakia “to reveal the mendacious propaganda of the Czech big shots and to inform the whole world about this tragedy.”¹⁶ This is what we learn from Reitzner’s later memoirs, although his account at the time purportedly had been prepared by a chance traveller in the region. In his book titled *I Flew to Prague: A Report on the Crimes against Humanity in Czechoslovakia* published in 1948, Reitzner wrote how his message had been received in London: “In London, I first contacted the Chairman of the Democratic Sudeten German Committee Wenzel Jaksch, to report on the old homeland. The small house in the suburbs of London was the centre of resistance against the expulsion from Czechoslovakia. Unless being received at the Foreign Ministry, the House of Commons or by leading English representatives, Wenzel Jaksch was sitting, day and night, at his desk or telephone during his last valiant attempt to prevent this crime. After the meeting, which lasted several hours, he opened the way to the British Foreign Ministry and some MPs he knew for me.”¹⁷ Jaksch’s lobbying in the United Kingdom and the United States was successful; his appeals to human rights and humanistic ideals mobilised numerous intellectuals and politicians.¹⁸ At the time, no verification of the claims disseminated by Jaksch was available and his portrayal of Czechoslovakia as a country where

14 Compare HAHN, E. – HAHN, H. H.: *Die Vertreibung im deutschen Erinnern*, p. 363 n.

15 JAKSCH, W. (ed.): *Evidence on the Reign of Racialism in Czecho-Slovakia*, p. 14.

16 REITZNER, Almar: *Das Paradies läßt auf sich warten: Erinnerungen eines Sozialdemokraten*. München – Wien, Langen Müller 1984, p. 65.

17 IDEM: *Ich flog nach Prag: Ein Tatsachenbericht über die Verbrechen gegen die Menschlichkeit in der Tschechoslowakei*. München, Hessen-Verlag – Hermann Essel 1948, p. 21. See also HAHN, E. – HAHN, H. H.: *Die Vertreibung im deutschen Erinnern*, pp. 401–405, for an analysis of Reitzner’s information, both true and false.

18 Refer to KUKLÍK, Jan – NĚMEČEK, Jan: *Osvobozené Československo očima britské diplomacie: Zprávy britské ambasády z Prahy v roce 1945* [Liberated Czechoslovakia through the Eyes of British Diplomacy: Reports from the British Embassy in Prague in 1945]. Praha, Karolinum 2010, pp. 187–227, for a comprehensive account of postwar British attitudes to Czechoslovakia and the expulsion; see also FRANK, Matthew: *Expelling the Germans: British Opinion and Post-1945 Population Transfer in Context*. Oxford, Oxford University Press 2008; HAHN, E. – HAHN, H. H.: *Die Vertreibung im deutschen Erinnern*, pp. 297–389.

“Beneš’s clique has taken over Hitler’s racial ideology”¹⁹ quickly took root among the international community.²⁰

In October 1945, a new report, titled *Deportation Drama in Czecho-Slovakia: The Case of a Dying People* was published,²¹ in which Jaksch asserted that the deportation by the government of Dr Beneš in Czechoslovakia cost many more lives than the atomic bomb dropped on Hiroshima had (where about 100,000 people died within two months). In support of this charge he offered what he termed a “very conservative estimate” to the effect that the death toll from the Czechoslovak expulsion policy and the associated internment camps had reached at least 300,000 victims by autumn 1945.²² Reports from an unnamed camp in Moravia, as well as from Karlovy Vary [Carlsbad], from Děčín, and from “Ústí – a new and bigger Lidice,” where, it was maintained, a massacre on 31 July claimed the lives of from 2,000 to 4,000 Germans,²³ were at the core of a still existent labyrinth of unsubstantiated statistical data concerning German victims of postwar events in Czechoslovakia. In his relatively extensive article, Jaksch depicted the still popular Edvard Beneš as the guiding star of the expulsion, a cunning schemer who had achieved his goal by misleading the superpowers.²⁴ The final part of the publication contains excerpts from the British and American press, which indicate that the author’s lobbying was successful.

In Czechoslovakia, these developments were watched with astonishment. As is well known, Pavel Tigrid did not rank among the rabid nationalists and anti-German campaigners, but even he aired the issue in the periodical *Obzory* on 20 November 1945: “Those who have an opportunity to regularly read the foreign press are amazed by the hateful campaigns which have been targeting the new Czechoslovak Republic in

19 JAKSCH, Wenzel: *Europas Weg nach Potsdam: Schuld und Schicksal im Donauraum*. Stuttgart, Deutsche Verlagsanstalt 1958 (the title of the abridged Czech version is: *Cesta Evropy do Postupimi: Vina a osud v podunajském prostoru* [Europe’s Way to Potsdam: Guilt and Destiny in the Danube Region]. Praha, Institut pro středoevropskou kulturu a politiku 2000, here p. 334).

20 For examples see HAHNOVÁ, Eva – HAHN, Hans Henning: Peter Glotz a jeho obrazy dějin [Peter Glotz and His Images of History]. In: *Soudobé dějiny*, Vol. 11, No. 1–2 (2004), pp. 178–187; ID: (Ne)patříčné poznámky k jednomu německému bestselleru: Alfred de Zayas o vyhnání Němců [(In)Appropriate Comments on one German Bestseller: Alfred de Zayas on the Expulsion of Germans]. In: *Ibid.*, Vol. 17, No. 1–2 (2010), pp. 153–172 (both contributions are available online in the electronic archive of the journal, on the website of the Institute of Contemporary History of the Academy of Science of the Czech Republic, www.usd.cas.cz); ID: Alte Legenden und neue Besuche des “Ostens”: Über Norman M. Naimarks Geschichtsbilder. In: *Zeitschrift für Geschichtswissenschaft*, Vol. 54, No. 7–8 (2006), pp. 687–700.

21 JAKSCH, Wenzel (ed.): *Deportation Drama in Czecho-Slovakia: The Case of a Dying People*. London, Sudeten German Social Democratic Party 1945 (special issue of the *Der Sozialdemokrat* journal of October 1945).

22 *Ibid.*, p. 2.

23 *Ibid.*, p. 9.

24 *Ibid.*, pp. 11–14.

the last few months.”²⁵ When Jaksch and his collaborators contacted the signatories of the Potsdam Conference and the United Nations in 1947 with the request that the postwar decisions of the superpowers be revised and that the territorial and property claims of Sudeten Germans be heard, disquiet was felt at even the highest levels in Czechoslovakia. The publication of documents connected with postwar Czechoslovakia shows that the concerns were caused mainly by the fact that the petition “contained circumstances related to the deportation of Germans and descriptions of events of the post-revolution period, which are now being investigated by a special commission of the Security Committee of the ÚNS [Constitutional National Assembly].” The public, however, was not informed of the measures taken by the government on the matter: “It is necessary to investigate, in a *confidential manner*, the events described in the petition so that the outcome can be reported to the investigation commission of the ÚNS and to obtain facts that will allow the allegations to be disproved.” Czech representatives were clearly afraid of both the potential consequences of Jaksch’s actions and the anticipated results of their own investigation. “I request that all necessary steps be taken to prevent the publication of this piece of writing since greater publicity would only strengthen the position of W. Jaksch. The content of the petition clearly shows that the group of *émigrés* is monitoring the Czechoslovak press and makes use of some of its articles to support its allegations. Consequently, the investigation should be entrusted only to very reliable officers who should not be familiarised with the entire content of the publication, but acquainted simply with the part they are to investigate,” was the substance of an urgent memo from the official of the Ministry of the Interior responsible for the investigation.²⁶ The objective was to obtain “as much material as possible to clarify the whole situation and, first and foremost, to disprove the false allegation accusing the Czech people of inhumane treatment of Germans and of brutal expulsion methods.” The outcome of the investigation was a report on the allegations, “chronologically reacting to the articles referred to or published in Jaksch’s petition.”²⁷ As became clear then and as we know now,

25 Here cited according to: TIGRID, Pavel: Odsun Němců, Západ a my [The Expulsion of Germans, the West and Us]. In: DRÁPALA, Milan (ed.): *Na ztracené vartě Západu: Antologie české nesocialistické publicistiky z let 1945–1948* [An Abandoned Post of the West: An Anthology of Czech Non-Socialist Journalism 1945–1948]. Praha, Prostor 2000, pp. 195–199, here p. 195.

26 EGTCBR, Vol. II/3, p. 101 n., Document No. 23 – Memo of Head of VII Department of the Ministry of the Interior, Colonel František Janda, to the Head of the Land Office of State Security in Prague, Major Jaroslav Prosser, on the investigation of allegations mentioned in the petition of Wenzel Jaksch, 3 October 1947, Prague (emphasised in the original document).

27 *Ibid.*, pp. 278–291, here p. 278, Document No. 95 – Comprehensive report submitted by the Head of the Land Office of State Security in Bohemia, Major Jaroslav Prosser, to VII Department of the Ministry of the Interior (Colonel František Janda), containing the results of the investigation of some “post-revolution” events mentioned in the so-called Jaksch petition (excerpts), 27 October 1947, Prague.

the information circulated by Jaksch was not entirely untrue.²⁸ However, the statements quoted above and the titles of his publications show that Jaksch was also intent on spreading anti-Czechoslovak propaganda and seeking not only reconsideration of the postwar decision of the superpowers to expel the German population, but also the fulfilment of the pre-war requirement of the Sudeten Germans regarding their right to self-determination. Neither Wenzel Jaksch nor his later followers from the organisations of the expellees in the Federal Republic of Germany achieved their revisionist objectives, but the controversy surrounding postwar Czechoslovakia has survived until now.

Hitherto Published Editions of Historical Sources on the Expulsion

The accounts and statements of eyewitnesses from a particular period can be used to prove just about anything. Apart from isolated published documents, there have so far been three voluminous editions on the fate of the Germans in postwar Czechoslovakia. In 1951, the organisation *Arbeitsgemeinschaft zur Wahrung sudetendeutscher Interessen* [Work Community for the Protection of the Interests of Sudeten Germans], published in Munich a work called *Documents on the Expulsion of the Sudeten Germans*, whose 586 pages contained a historical overview of almost 30 pages and 369 eyewitness (with a few exceptions) accounts by expellees. It portrayed the experiences of the Germans in postwar Czechoslovakia as genocide, and used them to support a demand for the return of the so-called Sudeten German lands under the administration of the expellees, compensation for damage sustained, and the punishment of those responsible for the expulsion.²⁹

28 See, *inter alia*, the following studies: STANĚK, Tomáš: *Poválečné "excesy" v českých zemích v roce 1945 a jejich vyšetřování* [Postwar "Excesses" in the Czech Lands in 1945 and Their Investigation]. Praha, Ústav pro soudobé dějiny Akademie věd České republiky 2005; STANĚK, Tomáš – ARBURG, Adrian von: *Organizované divoké odsuny? Úloha ústředních státních orgánů při provádění „evakuace“ německého obyvatelstva (květen až září 1945). Část 1: Předpoklady a vývoj do konce května 1945* [Organised Wild Expulsions? The Role of the Central Government Authorities in Implementing the "Evacuation" of the German Population (May to September 1945). Part 1: Prerequisites and Developments by the End of May 1945]. In: *Soudobé dějiny*, Vol. 12, No. 3–4 (2005), pp. 465–533; Část 2: *Československá armáda vytváří "hotové skutečnosti," vláda je před cizinou legitimizuje* [Part 2: The Czechoslovak Army Produces "Ready Facts," the Government Legitimises Them for the International Community]. In: *Ibid.*, Vol. 13, No. 1–2 (2006), pp. 13–49; Část 3: *Snaha vlády a civilních úřadů o řízení "divokého odsunu"* [Part 3: Efforts of the Government and Civil Authorities to Control the "Wild Expulsion"]. In: *Ibid.*, Vol. 13, No. 3–4 (2006), pp. 322–376 (the whole study is available in the journal's online archive at www.usd.cas.cz).

29 TURNWALD, Wilhelm (ed.): *Dokumente zur Austreibung der Sudetendeutschen*. München, Arbeitsgemeinschaft zur Wahrung sudetendeutscher Interessen 1951. For a more detailed account of the history of the work, see WEGER, Tobias: *"Volkstumskampf" ohne Ende? Sudetendeutsche Organisationen 1945 bis 1955*. Frankfurt/M. – Berlin – Bern – Bruxelles – New York – Oxford – Wien, Peter Lang 2008, p. 94 n.

Another large compilation of documents on the expulsion was published at the turn of the 1950s and 1960s by the Federal Ministry for Displaced Persons, Refugees and War Victims. The edition was titled *Documentation on the Expulsion of Germans from East-Central Europe* and comprised eight sections; two volumes of the fourth part were devoted to Czechoslovakia. The first presented a 178-page historical account, the remainder (pp. 181–317) contained the texts of official documents, mainly of Czechoslovak provenience (acts, decrees, regulations, political resolutions, protocols, etc.); the second, 815 pages, consisted of 137 documents in the form of the depositions of witnesses.³⁰ According to information provided by the publishers, the work relied on materials gathered by the authors of the previous edition.³¹

The third edition was published in 2000 and again in 2010 by the Sudeten German Archive in Munich. It is a much more extensive, bilingual (Czech-German) edition, the declared objective of which was to clarify the causes, planning and implementation of “ethnic cleansing” in Central Europe. The name of the first volume can be translated as *From the Awakening of Nations and Nationalist Quarrels 1848/49 to the Munich Agreement in 1938 and the Establishment of the “Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia” in March 1939 until the Official End of the Expulsion at the end of 1946*.³²

30 SCHIEDER, Theodor (ed.): *Dokumentation der Vertreibung der Deutschen aus Ost-Mitteleuropa*. Bonn, Bundesministerium für Vertriebene, Flüchtlinge und Kriegsgeschädigte 1953–1962; a new, unchanged edition München, Bundesministerium für Vertriebene, Flüchtlinge und Kriegsgeschädigte 2004. The whole edition comprises eight tomes, three supplementary booklets, and an index of toponyms. For the history and content of the edition, see HAHN, E. – HAHN, H. H.: *Die Vertreibung im deutschen Erinnern*, pp. 460–475.

31 SCHIEDER, T. (ed.): *Dokumentation der Vertreibung...*, Tome VI/1, p. VI n.

32 *Odsun/Die Vertreibung der Sudetendeutschen/Vyhnání sudetských Němců: Dokumentation zu Ursachen, Planung und Realisierung einer “ethnischen Säuberung” in der Mitte Europas, 1848/49–1945/46/ Dokumentace o příčinách, plánování a realizaci “etnické čistky” ve střední Evropě, 1848/49–1945/46* [The Expulsion of the Sudeten Germans: Documentation on the causes, planning and implementation of “ethnic cleansing” in the centre of Europe, 1848/49–1945/46]. Vol. 1: HOFFMANN, Roland J. – HARASKO, Alois (ed.): *Vom Völkerfrühling und Völkerzwist 1848/49 bis zum Münchner Abkommen 1938 und zur Errichtung des “Protektorat Böhmen und Mähren” 1939/Od probuzení národů a národnostních hádek 1848/49 k Mnichovské dohodě 1938 a zřízení “Protektorátu Čechy a Morava” 1939* [From the Awakening of Nations and the Nationalist Quarrels 1848/49 to the Munich Agreement in 1938 and the Establishment of the Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia in 1939]. München, Sudetendeutsches Archiv 2000; Vol. 2: HOFFMANN, Roland J. – HEIßIG, Kurt – KITTEL, Manfred (ed.): *Von der Errichtung des “Protektorats Böhmen und Mähren” im März 1939 bis zum offiziellen Abschluß der Vertreibung Ende 1946/Od zřízení “Protektorátu Čechy a Morava” v březnu 1939 do oficiálního ukončení odsunu na konci roku 1946* [From the Establishment of the Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia in March 1939 until the Official End of the Expulsion at the End of 1946]. München, Sudetendeutsches Archiv 2010; see also supplements to the second volume of the edition: HOFFMANN, Roland J.: *Supplementum zum zweiten Band der deutsch-tschechischen Dokumentation 1939–1946: Von der Errichtung des “Protektorats Böhmen und Mähren” im März 1939 bis zum offiziellen Abschluss der Vertreibung Ende 1946*. In: Sudetendeutsches Archiv [online]. München 2012 [cit. 2014-11-24]. Available at: http://www.sudetendeutsches-archiv.de/web/manus/odsun/Odsun_Supplement_Band_2_Juni_2012.pdf. The first volume comprises 944 pages, the second 891 pages with a 217-page supplement.

The richly illustrated book offers readers 2,000 pages of excerpts from books and newspaper articles, political speeches, diplomatic reports and the depositions of witnesses concerning, with a few exceptions, the history of Czech-German relations. The expulsion is presented in a rhetorical form attuned to the time of the work's origin, and has the stated objective "to condemn the expulsion as a violation of basic human rights and international law" and to contribute to its redress: "The expulsion must therefore be condemned and expiated." The edition thus has, apparently, an important future role.³³

The German public perceives these three works as scientifically sound proof of the accuracy of common images pertaining to postwar Czechoslovakia, although they were written to further political objectives that had been openly declared. They are related to the milieu of Sudeten German organisations, show a quantitative increase in material over time, and contain significant differences in the rhetorical devices used, in line with different periods and environments. At the same time, however, all show marked similarities in historical interpretation. Each presents a picture of the expulsion analogous to that offered by Wenzel Jaksch as early as 1945 – nothing less than genocide perpetrated by the Czech nation and the Czechoslovak government on the Germans in their midst, a charge purportedly confirmed by the accounts of witnesses affected by the expulsion and the acts and statements of contemporaneous Czech political representatives.

The recent edition of Adrian von Arburg and Tomáš Staněk, its title in translation being *Expulsion of the Germans and the Transformation of the Czech Border Regions 1945–1951*, is a publication of a different order, although it deals with the same historical experience of the German population. The authors do not use emotionally loaded rhetorical techniques with the purpose of inculpating postwar Czechoslovakia and their work does not pursue any political objectives. They weigh all the information known to them and refer to hitherto unclarified circumstances regarding the events they are describing. The attempt to elucidate rather than condemn is demonstratively more convincing in documenting the hardships the German population endured than the propagandistic interpretations and allegations of Wenzel Jaksch or the German publications mentioned above, and, at the same time, it calls into question the veracity of their historical picture of postwar Czechoslovakia.

A New Approach to Historical Sources

The aim of the *Expulsion of the Germans and the transformation of the Czech border regions 1945–1951* is not to present evidence for the prosecution but to cast light on the past. As its title shows, the work focuses on exploring one segment of Czechoslovakia's postwar history, namely migration, in the context of population change,

For details on the work, the contextual framework of its origin and other bibliographical data, see the commentary by the authors of the EGTCBR, Vol. I, pp. 224–229 and 254–256.

33 *Ibid.*, Vol. 1, p. 6 (the author has made the original translation more accurate).

particularly in the Czech border regions. Both editors are well-known experts on the subject. The Swiss historian looks up to his Czech mentor and colleague Tomáš Staněk, who, since the 1990s, has been contributing solid information to the debate about postwar Czechoslovakia, with reverence. Their publications are rated as the main source of empirically confirmed scholarship today; however, the present publication is a unique work. This is the first time readers have been given the opportunity to examine postwar Czechoslovakia for themselves and make up their own minds about the events that took place. In addition, the work has been meticulously prepared; apart from making new documents available, information from older publications and sources is assessed and the reader is helped to find his or her way through the data by thorough footnotes and bibliographical references. Moreover, the printed version contains a digital annex permitting full-text searches and offering a large number of supplementary documents. That the end product is an exemplary editorial feat goes without saying.

The work is divided into six units and will comprise eight volumes in all. The first unit consists of a historical introduction to the theme and a clarification of methodological aspects. The second is devoted to the year 1945. Because of the large number of relevant documents, this unit is made up of three separate volumes. The first unit and two volumes of the second have been published so far. With regard to the four units remaining, the third will cover 1946: the year of the transfer; the fourth the period 1947–1951: the final phase of the migrations and the new reality in the border regions; the fifth the outcome of the migrations and the resulting situation of minorities as well as cultural and social conditions; while the sixth will be concerned with the press of the period from 1945 to 1951. As the authors state on the website dedicated to the project, the main objective is “to document not only the course of the forced displacement of the German population after 1945, but also the parallel resettlement of regions until then inhabited mainly by Germans” in the context of changes in the “social, political, economic and cultural conditions prevailing in the mostly border regions since the war until 1951 [...]”³⁴ “Systematic research was carried out in 60 Czech archives (central and regional state archives, as well as in various specialised archives). [...] Documentary material from more than 300 different archival collections, comprising approximately 4,000 boxes and files, was researched and evaluated. It is estimated that more than half of the documents had until then never been used for historical research purposes.”³⁵

The *Expulsion of the Germans and the Transformation of the Czech Border Regions 1945–1951* differs from previous publications in two main aspects. The first significant distinction is the fact that documents from the Czech archives, until now completely overlooked and neglected in the debate concerning the expulsions, have for the first time been made available. As they say themselves, the editors hope

34 Profile of the edition. In: EGTICBR edition [online]. [Cit. 2014-11-24.] Available at: <http://www.vnpcp.cz/Pages/OEdiciVNPCP/ProfilEdice>.

35 Practical implementation. In: *Ibid.* [Cit. 2014-11-24.] Available at: <http://www.vnpcp.cz/Pages/OEdiciVNPCP/PraktickaRealizace>.

to facilitate access to primary sources and to offer a broad factual base for reflection on a topic that has been the cause of controversy based on inaccurate information for many generations.³⁶ This applies to both the Czech and German sides in the debate. The editors point to deficiencies in the Czech media in this regard, while, at the same time, they praise the progress of Czech historiography since November 1989.³⁷ In their view, numerous partial studies focus predominantly on regional events and tend to neglect the nation-wide context in which these occurred.³⁸ They are more critical in the case of German treatment of the subject, although the Germans have been grappling with the issue for much longer than their Czech counterparts, who for long decades were constrained by lack of freedom: “Nevertheless, no thoroughly prepared publications based on systematic archival studies, consistent as to their contents and dealing with the process of the forced deportation of the Germans and their living conditions in postwar Czechoslovakia have hitherto been published in the German environment.”³⁹ On the other hand, this is not altogether surprising given the difficulties that German discourse in this field has been struggling with.

Until 1989, both Czech and German historians were to all intents and purposes debarred from access to the Czech archives. This restriction was not perceived as an obstacle in German academic circles, however, where, disregarding the French historian Marc Bloch’s cautionary advice that even the most naïve policeman realises that witnesses cannot be believed to the letter, German scholars generally accepted the testimony of contemporaneous witnesses at face value.⁴⁰ The allegations were taken as proof of what had actually happened – as well as where and when – without submitting them to any process of verification.⁴¹ Staněk and von Arburg are aware of this problem and regularly refer to documents contained in earlier publications. On-the-spot witness testimony is viewed as a fruitful source of knowledge into what took place but one that must be subjected to critical appraisal and evaluated against what other information is at hand.⁴² The cause of German shortcomings in this approach, so essential for historiographical analysis, is not clear. In short, the stories

36 EGTCBR, Vol. I, pp. 10–12.

37 In a 2013 interview, Tomáš Staněk offered the following comment: “I daresay that Czech historiography has made significant progress in this field and has something to offer at the international level as well.” (BLAŽEK, Petr – ZEMAN, Pavel: Nechat mluvit fakta: S historikem Tomášem Staňkem o nuceném vysídlení Němců z Československa, jeho odborné práci a studiu dějin česko-německých vztahů [Let the Facts Speak: With Historian Tomáš Staněk on the Forced Expulsion of Germans from Czechoslovakia, His Professional Work and Study of the History of Czech-German Relations]. In: *Paměť a dějiny*, Vol. 7, No. 2 (2013), pp. 63–72, here p. 64. The journal is available online on the website of the Institute for the Study of Totalitarian Regimes, www.ustrcr.cz.)

38 EGTCBR, Tome I, pp. 229–238.

39 *Ibid.*, p. 245.

40 BLOCH, Marc: *Obrana historie aneb Historik a jeho řemeslo* [The Apology of History, or the Historian’s Craft]. Praha, Argo 2011, p. 79.

41 See numerous examples in the book by Eva Hahn and Hans Henning Hahn, *Die Vertreibung im deutschen Erinnern*.

42 EGTCBR, Vol. I, p. 254 n.

of eyewitnesses concerning postwar Czechoslovakia have become embedded in a broader German myth of German expulsion from Eastern Europe, a tale that has been told and re-told for generations in rhetorically embellished format but whose core content has seldom if ever been questioned. This accounts for the disparate findings, even in the professional literature, emanating from those countries involved in the events as to what actually occurred with the lack of clarity extending even to the number of victims and expellees. For this reason, too, the legends about Czechoslovakia disseminated by Wenzel Jaksch as early as 1945 are still in circulation. The scant interest in documents from the Czech archives that German historians have displayed may not be completely surprising. More tellingly, however, is the fact that Adrian von Arburg and Tomáš Staněk clearly show that the German public still harbours distorted notions of postwar Czechoslovakia.

Another remarkable dissimilarity between writings on the event published so far and the *Expulsion of the Germans and the Transformation of the Czech Border Regions 1945–1951* is the concept of a territorial-historical view on migration in postwar Czechoslovakia, which the new publication is based on, contrary to the hitherto common pictures of the expulsion as incriminatory evidence against the Czechs. Adrian von Arburg and Tomáš Staněk treat the documents as sources of historical knowledge about occurrences in postwar Czechoslovakia that affected most of the border regions. Their study presents a comprehensive picture of what happened from the perspective of all the participants, thus drawing attention to the main drawback in German accounts. In the documents which von Arburg and Staněk make available, the Czechs appear as a community of people with different interests and attitudes in a very complex situation – a marked contrast to the common German portrayal of the postwar Czech nation as a society that for months was collectively blinded by anti-German hatred and the lust for vengeance who stole German property, murdered its owners or expelled them from the country. This territorial contextualization of the German experience overcomes the problem of ethnic sensitivity generally found in the testimony of German eyewitnesses, scholarly publications, and German depictions of postwar Czechoslovakia.

In an interview for the *Dějiny a současnost* journal some time ago, Adrian von Arburg said: “We approach the matter territorially, not ethnically, which is, in our opinion, crucial. The ethnic filtering of the issue is a 19th century approach – i.e., an approach which has been *passé* for some time, and we should finally get over it also in historiography.”⁴³ By focusing their attention on migration and its consequences in Czechoslovakia, the authors have shown that the postwar traumas of the German

43 COUFALOVÁ, Iveta: “Je to širší příběh...” Rozhovor s historikem Adrianem von Arburg o změně pohledu na vysídlení Němců z českých zemí, o peripetiích při přípravě dosud nejfundovanější edice k tomuto tématu i o tom, jakou výhodou může být švýcarský původ při zkoumání dějin střední Evropy [“It is a Broader Story...” An Interview with Historian Adrian von Arburg on a Changed View of the Expulsion of Germans from the Czech Lands, on Problems Related to the Preparation of the Most Thorough Treatment of This Issue to Date, and on the Advantages of Being of Swiss Descent when Studying the History of Central Europe]. In: *Dějiny a současnost*, Vol. 33, No. 12 (2011), pp. 24–27, here p. 27.

population, the expulsion, and the resettlement of border regions are three different, yet closely linked thematic areas of historical study. This approach enables the fate of the Germans to be set in the context of domestic politics, and thus also casts light on the dramatic developments unfolding in the country as a whole during the early postwar months, with the authorities engaged in a step-by-step restoration of law and order in the normal sense from the chaotic situation left behind by the defeated Nazi regime. The dual focus on the expulsion while at the same time on the process of resettlement enables the one to shed light on the other. At the same time, it helps to understand problems resulting from an excessive concentration of the Czech political representation of the vision of expulsion while underrating the circumstances. The resettling of a major segment of the country's population in an organised and humane manner, which was the common term used in those days, in territories devoid of a functioning state or public administration, while simultaneously taking care of deserted villages and towns in the affected regions, restoring agricultural and industrial production facilities, and refurbishing the infrastructure was *a priori* a task impossible. The authors have shown that the reduction of the postwar German experience to a mere chronicle of Czech wrongdoing divorced from context is a misrepresentation and contributes nothing to an understanding of what actually occurred.

New Information Brought by the Edition

In addition to the first unit with its account of the “major demographic changes that took place in the territory of the Czech Lands, particularly in the first third of the 20th century and which are closely related to the theme of the EGTCBR edition”⁴⁴ and an explanation of the methodology used by the authors, we now have two volumes of documents dedicated to the two most frequently mentioned phenomena of postwar Czechoslovakia: in the first volume of the second unit, the reader is made acquainted with the circumstances of the flight and expulsion of the German population during the early postwar months, while the other volume examines the acts of mass violence perpetrated on so-called “publicly unreliable individuals” in 1945. These are the events which are now often referred to as the “wild expulsion” and the “excesses,” during which Germans were driven out of their homes in a brutally violent manner and which were characterised by countless individual crimes, although rarely *en masse*.⁴⁵ The editors, however, are not particularly fond of the term “wild expulsion,” since archival documents indicate that it was not a spontaneous eviction or murderous onslaught on the part of the Czech nation. The documents cast light on a comprehensive series of incidents that took place over a relatively short period

The interview is available online in the archive on the journal's website at www.dejinyasoucasnost.cz.

44 EGTCBR, Vol. I, p. 28.

45 See, *inter alia*, STANĚK, T.: *Poválečné “excesy” v českých zemích v roce 1945 a jejich vyšetřování*.

of time and under historically unique circumstances in a much more detailed and precise way, both quantitatively and qualitatively, than has been the case until now. The vast corpus of documents on offer is not just a compelling picture of this chapter in Czech history, but a monumental fresco of almost *Michelangeloesque* proportions, full of meticulously presented details, which defies short description. The historiographical methods used by the authors are far removed from the crude rhetorical tools employed by Wenzel Jaksch in the summer of 1945, and which were subsequently adopted in most German writing on the issue. On the one hand, language is used as a means of opening the past to disinterested inspection and bring to light what can be retrieved; on the other, language is made to serve a partisan cause and becomes a mere tool for political propaganda.

The following examples of summarising formulations give some idea of the linguistic techniques applied by the editors of the *Expulsion of the Germans and the Transformation of the Czech Border Regions 1945–1951*. They write, for instance, that the so-called excesses “took place in more or less indirect relation to the mass exodus of the German population across the border (according to the latest estimates, some 700,000 to 820,000 people, including nationals of the German Reich and refugees from the East, left the country by various routes or were deported with the direct involvement of the Czechoslovak authorities or elements that were temporarily substituting for them) and also to the preparations for retribution and the application of a number of restrictive regulations, in which ethnic criteria were clearly prominent.”⁴⁶ The authors claim that under these circumstances there might have been at least 10,000 deaths “more or less directly related to the repressive forms of treatment meted out to German civilians” between the early postwar weeks and the end of 1945 – apart from suicides the official number of which in 1945 (i.e., including the period from January to May) was around 5,600. At the same time, it may be deemed probable that at least half of the above number died in internment camps and prison facilities.⁴⁷

These carefully-worded sentences show that the seemingly incomprehensible crimes took place under circumstances which are now difficult to imagine. The turn of phrase pertaining to the Czechoslovak authorities or elements that were temporarily substituting for them reminds us of the administrative vacuum prevailing at the time; the reference to the different groups of people that made up the migration draws attention to the fact that it was not only the local German population that was present in the territory of Czechoslovakia in those days; and the carefully noted statistical information indicates that in the absence of functional state officials, accurate records on the make-up, stay, and departure of large multitudes of people were not preserved. However, the passage quoted also indicates that the situation at the time was

46 STANĚK, Tomáš: Akty hromadného násilí na tzv. státně nespolehlivém obyvatelstvu v českých zemích po roce 1945 a jejich vyšetřování [Acts of Mass Violence against So-Called Publicly Unreliable Individuals in the Czech Lands after 1945 and Their Investigation]. In: EGTCBR, Vol. II/3, p. 19.

47 *Ibid.*, p. 29.

not chaotic and that a careful examination of extant sources permits the tracking down of a lot of information that refutes the legends, still being promulgated, about the numbers of victims and deaths. A close reading of the documents in the *Expulsion of the Germans and the Transformation of the Czech Border Regions 1945–1951*, will clarify the uniqueness of the situation at that time and help us understand why looting took place, why and how humans beings were incarcerated in makeshift prisons and internment camps under deplorable conditions, and the whys and wherefores of those heinous crimes that were committed. At the same time, the study details the various reactions of Czech eyewitnesses, who, by and large, when confronted with such abusive behaviour voiced their disapproval. The myth of an over-riding, all-encompassing Czech hatred of all things German and the unscrupulous objectives of Czech political representatives is shown to be false, and unsubstantiated musing on the emotional mindset of the Czech nation no more than a speculative curtain thrown over the events that occurred. Indeed, it is only now that one can comprehend the developments that led to a restoration of public order in a mere few months.

The documents made available illuminate not only the broad spectrum of attitudes and conflicts within Czech society at the time, but also the heretofore neglected role of the United States and the Soviet Union in postwar Czechoslovakia, where both had troops stationed, notwithstanding the fact that Czechoslovakia was not an occupied state. In this context, too, the work explores the power politics at play, the various positions, attitudes, and conflicts that cooperation with the burgeoning Czech administrative authorities assumed. The self-important and sometimes ambivalent statements made by Czech public officials on government initiatives, allegedly undertaken off their own bat but in reality the outcome of daily interaction with representatives of the military units, and also the fretfulness and anxieties engendered by the Jaksch campaign and its impact on the Anglo-American standpoint are all examined. The imbalance in the relationship between the timorous Czechoslovak functionaries and their powerful allies was considerable, although this was by no means evident in the voluble assertions made by Czechoslovak politicians for public consumption. The relocation of most of the Germans assigned for deportation in 1946 was carried out in direct cooperation with the allied powers and in an orderly, organised and controlled manner; however, we still have to wait for the publication of the relevant documents by von Arburg and Staněk on this operation. Nevertheless, it is possible to conclude even at this stage that the postwar experience of Germans in Czechoslovakia cannot be adequately understood in separation from the domestic political situation and also from the international political context, where the resettlement project tended to be presented in a way different from that offered to a Czech audience. Communications with the allied powers avoided words and phrases such as retribution, punishment for the crimes of the Nazi regime, or collective guilt, which were then reverberating among the Czech public. On the other hand, there is no indication that the allied governments had any particular liking for the notion of ethnic homogenisation, as now claimed; their goal was simply to avoid any repetition along the borders of postwar Germany of the problems that had thrown Europe

into the Second World War rather than to accommodate Czech or Polish aspirations.⁴⁸ This international dimension, however, is an area that has yet to be fully examined by the authors and it is hoped that this will soon be accomplished in as thorough and meticulously executed a manner as what has already been completed.

The *Expulsion of the Germans and the Transformation of the Czech Border Regions 1945–1951* shows that the contemporaneous Czech discourse on so-called “publicly unreliable individuals,” which referred mainly but not exclusively to Germans and Hungarians, was not of itself the catalyst for the events in postwar Czechoslovakia. However, it did, unquestionably, aggravate an already complicated situation. According to the documents now available, the main failing in postwar Czech society was not the loss of the consciousness of common legal values, but the rhetoric produced and disseminated by members of intellectual elites, in particular politicians and journalists. The uncritical acceptance of far-reaching decisions made by leading politicians on so-called revolutionary changes in the order of the state, and the expulsion of the German (and Hungarian) population, went hand in hand with a similarly uncritical acceptance of and adaptation to the rhetoric in which these were couched. The nuanced language soon developed into a canon of set phrases declaimed on every political occasion with modulated variations in idiom and emotionality and masking reality under a morass of non-transparent, verbal layers. Reminders of the traditional norms of law and order were heard only as the fading wailing of conservatives alienated from the times they were living in. The new jargon cloaked urgent current problems under speculative visions of the future and limited the search for practical solutions to calls for better, more honest, more qualified and more selfless people instead of adopting an analytical approach to structural issues of a social and political nature. The endless patter of platitudes and slogans served to blunt the voice of all those aware of the pressing difficulties and seeking solutions.

While the statements of numerous public officials from those days may seem repulsive today, they were not responsible for the situation in postwar Czechoslovakia nor were they the expression of the collective soul of the Czech nation. They cannot, however, be ignored, not least because of similarities and dissimilarities with the language employed in the anti-expulsion publications of Wenzel Jaksch. The predilection for metaphorical expression and simile is shared by both and is reflected in references to Munich, Lidice, and some of the more ruthless deeds of the Nazi regime. The lack of interest in conveying empirically supported information is clear enough. It is hardly surprising therefore that the planned sixth unit of the project, dedicated to press articles from the 1945–1951 period, is eagerly awaited, since traces of the rhetoric from those days can still be found in Czech language use today as well as in the corresponding German milieu. This is why in current debate about postwar Czechoslovakia reference is made to Munich and Lidice more frequently than to the actual events which took place in the country in those years and which those volumes already published detail in depth

48 For details see HAHN, E. – HAHN, H. H.: *Die Vertreibung im deutschen Erinnern*, pp. 297–347.

The documents now on view present a new picture of postwar Czechoslovakia. At the end of the war, the Czechoslovak government took over control of a shattered state with no standard public and state administration bodies at its disposal, which is why it cannot be held responsible for the conditions in which the German population found itself. The underlying cause of the problems faced by German people in the early postwar months was the administrative vacuum and the chaos left behind by the Nazi regime. The government policy of retribution, property confiscation and deportation, generally assented to by the Czech public, complicated the restoration of law and order and the routine sententious pronouncements by politicians exasperated the situation even more. However, scarcely anyone approved of the “excesses” or the barbaric treatment of the so-called “publicly unreliable individuals”; on the contrary, they were vehemently criticised, both at home and abroad, and were eliminated in a relatively short time. The pages of the *Expulsion of the Germans and the Transformation of the Czech Border Regions 1945–1951* prove that the still current 1945 allegation of Wenzel Jaksch to the effect that Czechoslovakia resembled the Nazi regime is not only misleading but downright false.

On the other hand, this work by von Arburg and Staněk also stands in the way of any attempts to downplay the postwar problems and the folly and inhumaneness of the resettlement project. Whoever still doubts Jaksch’s claims that Germans were the victims of brutal treatment and serious crimes in Czechoslovakia during the period after the war will find more evidence of this preserved in the Czech archives and now collated and in print than Jaksch ever offered, with a clarification as to why these occurrences actually took place added as a bonus. With the new documents now available, no blanket charge against the Czech nation can be seriously considered. It would instead be advisable to focus the attention of further studies on the variety of Czech reactions to the difficulties confronting the Germans, the unwise public rhetoric and an analysis of who did (or did not do) what and how it was done (or not done) with respect to the restoration of law and order. As for the now fashionable debate on the so-called reconciliation with the past, i.e., collective accusation and national apology, the work makes clear that Czechs were not responsible for the harsh conditions in postwar Czechoslovakia, that they were jointly responsible for the implementation of the resettlement project, and that responsibility for the crimes committed should be levelled at the perpetrators, since the Czechoslovak government managed to restore public law and order in the span of a few months. The situation in postwar Czechoslovakia had nothing in common with the Nazi regime. The Nazi dictatorship in Germany wilfully dismantled democratic government in the Weimar Republic, Austria and Czechoslovakia, unleashed an expansionist war and destroyed any semblance of law and order, particularly in the Eastern part of Europe, where it also committed historically unparalleled crimes. Any comparison with what occurred in Czechoslovakia in the early postwar months is null and void.

An Obstacle Course to Knowledge

The *Expulsion of the Germans and the Transformation of the Czech Border Regions 1945–1951* provides abundant material for anyone who wants to create his or her own picture of postwar Czechoslovakia. Historical research has clarified a lot over the past 20 years, but this study offers a new and much more comprehensive insight into what has been a misunderstood and, all too often, distorted chapter of Czech history, and thus also makes exciting reading even for those already well-versed in publications on the subject. The relatively modest reaction to the first three volumes is therefore all the more surprising. They were generally acclaimed as a work of great historical significance, but the fresh insights they bring have as yet not been the subject of much animated discussion. Even more startling is a message on the project's website to the effect that "after publication of the third EGTCBR volume in 2011, the future of the project is seriously threatened," since "it is not receiving sufficient funding and the demanding work involved has been able to continue only as a result of private donations and the 'voluntary' cooperation of editors and other participants" in the last few years.⁴⁹

In the introduction to their work, the editors offer thanks for the assistance they received from dozens of archivists and museum staff, numerous historians internationally (e.g. Hans Lemberg, Włodzimierz Borodziej, Arnold Suppan, Eduard Mühle and Detlef Brandes), and a long list of Czech colleagues. They also acknowledge the support of Franz Olbert, long-time General Secretary of the Sudeten German Catholic Association *Ackermann-Gemeinde* in Munich, the Institute for the History and Culture of Germans in Eastern Europe of the Heinrich Heine University in Düsseldorf, and the Historical Institute of the Faculty of Arts of Masaryk University in Brno. Another somewhat mysterious appreciation reads as follows: "Between 2007 and 2009, two additional institutional partners became involved in the project. The two foundations, one German, the other Czech, which sponsored our work from 2004 and 2009 and from 2004 to 2005, respectively, by, *inter alia*, granting stipends to some of our editors, do not want to be mentioned here. However, we feel a moral obligation to wholeheartedly and sincerely thank these two benefactors." The introduction mentions, further, the backing of the Silesian Land Museum in Opava and of the publishing house of Associate Professor Dr Zdeněk Susa in Středokluky, "for its excellent cooperation in the finalisation and publication of the manuscripts."⁵⁰ The roll-call of institutions and individuals who have aided the project is long, but it is obvious, even at first glance, that the names of some institutions which might be expected to have been involved are missing.

The difficulties were described by Adrian von Arburg in a 2011 interview given to the *Dějiny a současnost* journal, in which he complained about "scientific policy and established official structures" and concluded: "Our experience with them was

49 Pokračování Edice VNPČP není zajištěno [The Continuation of the EGTCBR Project Is Not Assured]. In: EGTCBR Edition [online]. [Cit. 2014-11-24.] Available at: <http://www.vnpccp.cz>.

50 Acknowledgment, In: *EGTCBR*, Vol. I, p. 309.

very bad, they unfortunately failed in our case,” and this was why “we provisionally started funding the whole project – including typesetting, graphic design, printing and various licenses – completely from our own funds, and also with the assistance of our families. The final costs finally amounted to some 25,000 euros.”⁵¹ The project’s website, moreover, offers a documented insight into a dispute between the authors of the *Expulsion of the Germans and the Transformation of the Czech Border Regions 1945–1951* project and the Munich institute for Czech studies Collegium Carolinum dating back to 2009–2012,⁵² which gives the impression that this leading German institution for Czech studies is what now hinders the completion of at least the initially planned German version. In light of the above, the apparent lack of interest on the part of the community of Czech historians is to be regretted all the more. The public can only speculate about the motives for this. Perhaps it is a result of the fact that our times prefer catchy slogans to sound information; perhaps it comes from mistaking disputes on historical interpretation for politically motivated arguments over national identity whose protagonists have never been particularly interested in seeking out empirical historical facts. Whatever the reason, it is difficult to suppress the impression that little has changed in the indifferent attitude of Czech elites to efforts aimed at educating the nation since the times of the patriots of the Enlightenment period. However, the prospect of the project not receiving every possible support to enable completion is too sad to succumb to resignation and not to ask the good old question: What to do?

The Czech version of this article, entitled Němci v meziválečném Československu. Jediněčná edice dokumentů z českých archivů boří tradované legendy, was originally published in Soudobé dějiny, Vol. 21, No. 4 (2014), pp. 635–653.

51 COUFALOVÁ, I.: “Je to širší příběh...,” p. 25; see also SCHULZE WESSEL, Martin: Ad rozhovor s Adrianem von Arburg [Re the Interview with Adrian von Arburg]. In: *Dějiny a současnost*, Vol. 34, No. 5 (2012), p. 7; ARBURG, Adrian von: Dichtung und Wahrheit aneb Deset bodů o autorském právu a etické praxi [Dichtung und Wahrheit or Ten Points about Copyright and Ethical Practice]. In: *Dějiny a současnost* [online], Vol. 34, No. 6 (2012). [Cit. 2014-11-24]. Available at: <http://dejinyasoucasnost.cz/archiv/2012/6/dichtung-und-wahrheit>.

52 For a comprehensive account of the dispute of the project’s editors and authors with Collegium Carolinum, see the correspondence with Martin Schulz Wessel. In: EGTCBR Edition [online]. [Cit. 2014-11-24.] Available at: <http://www.vnpcp.cz/Pages/DaS/DaS>.

Review

History in the Service of a Story

On Igor Lukeš's Book "On the Edge of the Cold War"

Petr Mareš

LUKEŠ, Igor: *On the Edge of the Cold War: American Diplomats and Spies in Postwar Prague*. New York, Oxford University Press 2012. 279 pages, ISBN 978-0-19-516679-8. / IDEM: *Československo nad propastí: Selhání amerických diplomatů a tajných služeb v Praze 1945–1948*. Praha, Prostor 2014, 383 pages, ISBN 978-80-7260-292-6.

Lukeš's book on the activities of American diplomats and spies in Prague in the first years after the end of the Second World War is remarkable in many respects. Studies dealing with similar topics have hitherto been few and far between. However, the exceptional nature of the book does not lie only in the weak competition from works on the issue at hand. The author has succeeded in creating a very attractive text, compact in terms of its style and the ideas it contains, a colourful canvas capturing institutional confusion and errors, personal enthusiasm and disappointment, rare victories and frequent losses, all of which Lukeš uses to illustrate the beginning of a lengthy and often painful transformation of US diplomacy from a policy of isolationism run by an elite club of former schoolmates monitoring events taking place in the world from a safe distance to a mass organisation tasked to promote and further the interests of a global superpower. It is hardly surprising that also the Czech translation of Lukeš's book was received with a lot of interest.

The book under review is the outcome of extensive research in all the most important relevant American and Czech archives. This is, of course, a must for any work like the one under scrutiny. Lukeš's extraordinary merit lies in the numerous interviews he conducted with those who were involved in the events analysed in the book, and in his use of a collection of unpublished manuscripts provided by contemporary witnesses. The latter represents a very rich source of information that would unquestionably have been lost without Lukeš's efforts. Lukeš draws from the source very heavily. This allows him to enrich his text with many details and personal reflections in contrast to the more usual practice of constructing a picture of events from rather terse official documents. Igor Lukeš has inhabited his book with living people, which adds to its appeal.

In my opinion, rather paradoxically, the greatest strength of Lukeš's text lies in the passages devoted to the activities of the Czechoslovak security services against representatives of the United States in Prague. Lukeš has been occupied for quite some time with the secret services and related issues¹ and has studied an impressive volume of documents dealing with the topic, both in the Archive of the Ministry of the Interior of the Czech Republic (now stored in the Archive of the Security Services) and in the Archive of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia (stored in the National Archive of the Czech Republic). The scope of the operations against the US Embassy and the people associated with them which he has managed to convincingly bring to light is stunning. It says a lot about the focus of the Czechoslovak secret services long before the Communist *coup d'état* and is yet further proof that even at this stage they had already been under full control of the Communist Party. At the same time, it clearly attests to the true orientation of the Communist Party – whom they regarded as their enemies and what their attitude was to postwar cooperation among the Allies. Needless to say, Lukeš's research also casts a fresh light on the activities of the US secret services. The words of the US historian, Timothy Snyder, on the jacket of the Czech edition, namely that the findings show “everything the Americans had to learn to become

1 See his publications on this topic: Walter W. Birge in Prague, 1945–1948. In: *Journal for Intelligence and Security Studies*, Vol. 6, No. 2 (2012), pp. 49–62; KÁMEN: Studenoválečnická akce s americkým rozměrem [A Cold War Action with an American Dimension]. In: *Historie a vojenství*, Vol. 60, No. 3 (2011), pp. 40–46; The Rozvedka Dossier on a Defector “Who Knew Too Much.” In: *Journal for Intelligence and Security Studies*, Vol. 3, No. 2 (2009), pp. 127–134 (with Siegfried Beer); Selhání tajných služeb: Československo 1945–1948 [The Failure of the Secret Services: Czechoslovakia 1945–1948]. In: *Securitas imperii*, Vol. 15, No. 1 (2009), pp. 12–41; The Czechoslovak Special Services and Their American Adversary during the Cold War. In: *Journal of Cold War Studies*, Vol. 9, No. 1 (Winter 2007), pp. 3–28; Ein nachrichtendienstliches Versagen. Die Amerikaner und die kommunistische Machtergreifung in der Tschechoslowakei 1948. In: *Vierteljahrshefte für Zeitgeschichte*, Vol. 55, No. 2 (2007), pp. 201–236; The GPU and GRU in Pre-World War II Czechoslovakia. In: *The International Journal of Intelligence and Counterintelligence*, Vol. 8, No. 1 (1995), pp. 91–104; The Czechoslovak Intelligence Service and Western Reactions to the Communist *Coup d'État* of February 1948. In: *Intelligence and National Security*, Vol. 8, No. 4 (1993), pp. 73–85.

a great power,” apply mainly to Chapter 8 (Great Expectations and Lost Illusions) and Chapter 11 (The Schönborn Palace under Siege).

As already mentioned, the work under review is a book that will attract many to open its pages. However, the reader sometimes pays for this readability by being provided only with information that is free of any details which might complicate the narrative flow. The process of distillation into a format that dovetails smoothly with the story takes several forms, sometimes surprisingly direct, on other occasions rather sophisticated. Whatever the case, any reviewer who wishes to draw attention to them may seem no more than a boring nitpicker, particularly so when, unable to detail all, he or she is necessarily forced to be selective and those examples that are chosen will inevitably appear as insignificant details when compared to the whole picture. However, they cannot be ignored.

On the Withdrawal of the US Army from Czechoslovakia

Lukeš is very secretive about his information sources. He generally does not use any introductory sentences such as “On (date) and in (place), XY said that [...].” As he makes extensive use of interviews with contemporary witnesses and their unpublished notes, his approach sometimes leads to very problematic results. If he claims, for example, that after Hitler’s invasion of the Soviet Union, Laurence Steinhardt, then the US Ambassador to Moscow, “dismissed the view that the Soviet system would collapse” (p. 76) or that “[f]alling back on historical precedents, he thought that Russia would eventually beat back the Nazi onslaught” (p. 75) – which would include him in the handful of diplomats and politicians who read the situation correctly at that time – the reader is entitled to know that he does so only on the basis of the recollections of Steinhardt’s daughter, who was then 16, which were recorded a long time after the events actually took place. Finding a connection between the source which the author is referring to and the information he submits is sometimes beyond the reader’s ability. For example, it will probably always remain a mystery as to how a July 1945 report from the Analytical Department of the *Office of Strategic Services* helped Lukeš find that Steinhardt’s counter-candidate for the position of US Ambassador to Prague had been George F. Kennan (p. 80, n. 86). An explanation would also certainly do no harm when the author characterises the atmosphere at the US Embassy in Moscow at the turn of the 1930s and 1940s on the basis of an article published in the exile *Čechoslovák* magazine in 1945 (p. 73 n. 43) – although, given the nature of the source, it would have been much better if the author had entirely avoided any comments on this issue.

Assertions based on inadequate sources are not the only problem in Lukeš’s text. They are accompanied by factual inaccuracies, minor omissions, and intentional interpretation shifts, which are often concatenated into problematic segments. A case in point is Lukeš’s version of the departure of US troops from Czechoslovakia. He divides the story into two acts and assigns the leading role in the first to *Alfred W. Klieforth*, who had been *chargé d’affaires ad interim* at the US Embassy

in Prague from July 1945. The tale begins at the end of June when a Czechoslovak government delegation returned from Moscow. According to Lukeš, one of its members, State Secretary at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs Vladimír Clementis, allegedly contacted – “behind the back of President Beneš” – the US Embassy with a demand for the withdrawal of the US Army from Czechoslovakia. The call represented “a classic instance of the asymmetrical Soviet approach to international relations, and Klieforth was unwilling to tolerate it.” He thus sent a cable to Washington, in which he analysed the implications of such a unilateral withdrawal. His dispatch “carried the day.” In just a few hours, a response from the US War Department arrived in Prague, which said that the US soldiers would stay in Czechoslovakia. “Klieforth used the event to the Americans’ advantage,” Lukeš tells the reader, and proceeds to the text of the “reply to Clementis,” which sent a clear message that “[...] the United States had no intention of abandoning Czechoslovakia.” Here the author closes the first act of the drama with a sigh: “Unfortunately, Klieforth served for less than six months in the Schönborn Palace” (pp. 63–64).

Essential documents dealing with the departure of US units from the Czechoslovak Republic, including most of those that Lukeš refers to, have been readily available for more than half a century in the standard edition *Foreign Relations of the United States*. However, by simply reading them we obtain a version of the proceedings which is somewhat different from that presented by Lukeš. First and foremost, they clearly indicate that the United States did not just react to the actions of the Czechoslovak side. The State Department (Ministry of Foreign Affairs) was aware of the political importance of having US troops in Czechoslovakia and of maintaining the line they had advanced to by the end of the war in Europe.² The period of time the State Department believed necessary to keep this position was always related to the presence of the corresponding Soviet units. Materials for the American delegation participating in the Big Three conference in Potsdam contain the following comment on the issue: “The withdrawal of the American and Russian armies should take place as soon as possible to enable the Czechoslovak people to reorganise their own national life. A simultaneous withdrawal is necessary to prevent Czechoslovakia from coming under the apparent control of any one Allied power.”³

The Czechoslovaks had started discussing the withdrawal of US units before the government delegation returned from its June trip to Moscow. In fact, the Soviets had been exerting pressure through their Ambassador Valerian Zorin as early as May, and the Czechoslovak government had discussed the matter at its meetings on 7 and 19 June. At the very first such meeting, the decision was taken to send the Americans a diplomatic note requesting the departure of their troops. During the second, Clementis informed the government that President Edvard Beneš was convinced it

2 *Foreign Relations of the United States: Diplomatic Papers, 1945 (FRUS, 1945)*, Vol. IV: *Europe*, Washington D.C., US Government Printing Office 1968, Memorandum by Grew, Washington, 14 May 1945, p. 453.

3 *Ibid*, Memorandum, Washington, 23 June 1945, p. 464.

would be appropriate to demand a simultaneous withdrawal of both the American and Soviet forces. On the basis of the subsequent discussion the note to the US government was ultimately formulated.⁴ It was handed to Klieforth on 21 June, i.e. a few days before the departure of the Czechoslovak delegation to Moscow, and although its contents could hardly have been interpreted in any other way, it did not contain an explicit request for a complete withdrawal of the US Army from the territory of Czechoslovakia. Rather it provided a fairly extensive account of the difficulties the republic had to deal with as a result of the presence of both armies – American and Russian – on its territory.⁵ It was on the basis of this note that the Americans reacted to all subsequent communications. After his return from Moscow, Clementis followed up with yet another note, dated 3 July, in which he informed the Americans of the decision of the Soviet authorities to withdraw “the major part of the Soviet forces” and directed the United States “to hand over the territory until now occupied by American forces into the hands of Czechoslovak public bodies.”⁶ This note was ignored in Washington.

The reaction of the Interim Head of the American Mission, Alfred Klieforth, to the situation was consistent with the high capabilities of this seasoned diplomat who had managed to develop extraordinarily good contacts both within the diplomatic community and among top-level Czech politicians during his short stint in Prague. Thanks to them, he was able to notify Washington in good time of Beneš’s attitude to the government’s initiative concerning the withdrawal of US troops.⁷ His comments on the Czechoslovak notes of 31 June and 3 July were very sharp indeed and gave Washington strong arguments for refusing the Czechoslovak demand.⁸ With all due respect to the *chargé d’affaires*, however, it is not possible to agree with Lukeš’s statement that it was Klieforth’s analysis that led Washington to the decision to maintain US forces in Czechoslovak territory. As a matter of fact, Klieforth’s dispatch crossed paths with a cable from the State Department reacting to the Czechoslovak notes and containing the answer which the Embassy was enjoined to hand over to the Czechoslovak Ministry of Foreign Affairs.⁹ The State

4 See VORÁČEK, Emil: Pobyť sovětských vojsk na území Československa v roce 1945 [The Stay of Soviet Armies in the Territory of Czechoslovakia in 1945]. In: *Euserver* [online]. 14 May 2014 [2015-10-14]. Available at: <http://www.euserver.parlamentnilisty.cz/Articles/1565-historik-vyvraci-manipulace-kolem-pobytu-sovetske-armady-po-osvobozeni-ceskoslovenska-zminuje-zasadni-fakta-o-kterych-skoro-nikdo-nevi.aspx>.

5 *FRUS, 1945*, IV, Stránský to Klieforth, Prague, 21 June 1945, pp. 460–462.

6 *Ibid.*, Klieforth to Byrnes, Prague, 4 July 1945, pp. 468–469.

7 *Ibid.*, Klieforth to Byrnes, Prague, 24 June 1945, p. 464. Klieforth’s dispatch mentioned Beneš’s conversation with the British Ambassador Phil Nichols through whom the president sent the Americans a message to make use of the Czechoslovak government’s request and call upon the Soviets to make a simultaneous withdrawal of troops.

8 *Ibid.*, Klieforth to Byrnes, Prague, 6 July 1945, pp. 473–474. A winsome argument concluding Klieforth’s dispatch is worth mentioning: “Madame Beneš told me that her husband’s present insomnia can be cured the minute I am able to give her husband the ‘right answer’” (p. 474).

9 *Ibid.*, Byrnes to Klieforth, Washington, 6 July 1945, pp. 472–473. The instruction was sent at 6:00 pm Washington time, while Klieforth’s dispatch arrived in Foggy Bottom at 11:35 pm.

Department had already prepared its response to the Czechoslovak request before its experts could appreciate the strength of the arguments of their Prague-based colleague. The answer was indeed, as Lukeš (p. 64) writes, “deft and unequivocal,” but Klieforth was not its author. He only handed it over at the Černín Palace on 9 July 1945, as instructed.¹⁰

Lukeš is certainly right in regarding the answer as proof of “the United States having no intention of abandoning Czechoslovakia.” However, why does he give so much credit for this to Klieforth? The explanation is simple. As mentioned above, Lukeš concludes Act 1 of the story about the withdrawal of US troops from Czechoslovakia at this moment. His intention in so doing is to bring the main protagonist of his book, Laurence A. Steinhardt, onto the stage. The sideshow turns into the main story and the purpose of highlighting the qualities and merits of the departing *chargé d'affaires* is to make a dramatic contrast with the shortcomings and failings of his successor. However, before we start to analyse the overall portrait of the main character, let us first conclude the critical summary of the side story which the previous paragraphs focused on.

Lukeš finishes the episode concerning the departure of US forces only after some 50 pages filled with chapters characteristically named “Ambassador Steinhardt’s Delayed Arrival” and “A Chronicle of Wasted Opportunities.” As with the first part, he does not dwell on details to any great extent and paraphrases some documents in a very idiosyncratic fashion.¹¹ In this respect, I would also like to draw attention to another problem with this part of his text. The whole book deals with “a failure of American diplomats and secret services in Prague,”¹² but gives only marginal consideration to the sources of their professional procedures and the processes which formed or influenced the policy implemented in Prague. At the same time, it should be noted that the principal factor deciding the future fate of the US units stationed in West and South Bohemia was Washington and American domestic policy.

10 *Ibid.*, p. 472.

11 On occasion it is difficult to find an explanation for the reasons that led Lukeš to make certain statements. For example, in connection with the positive reply of the War Department to a request for an extension of the stay of the American units, which Secretary of State Byrnes sent to Prague, Lukeš writes: “Secretary of State Byrnes authorised Steinhardt to read the text – classified top secret – verbatim to President Beneš. Steinhardt did it immediately. (In the English original the last sentence is different: “When he did, Beneš expressed his keen satisfaction,” p. 147.) Nothing like this, however, can be found in any of the documents which Lukeš refers to in this context. Byrnes’s instruction to Steinhardt reads as follows: “You may in your discretion communicate this message to President Beneš.” (*FRUS, 1945, IV, Byrnes to Steinhardt, Washington, 2 November 1945, p. 507.*) Steinhardt then replies: “I have conveyed to President Beneš the substance of Dept’s 357.” Moreover, it is downright comical that Steinhardt’s cable starts with an apology for delivering the contents of the cable from Washington *too late* because of problems during its decryption. (*Ibid.*, Steinhardt to Byrnes, p. 507.)

12 *A Failure of American Diplomats and Secret Services in Prague, 1945–1948* is the subtitle of the Czech version of the book. In the English version the subtitle is slightly different: *American Diplomats and Spies in Postwar Prague*.

From the moment the issue of the withdrawal of American troops was raised, the key feature was the polemic between the State Department and the War Department, i.e. between diplomats and soldiers, with the former generally wanting the units to stay, the latter seeking their departure. While Lukeš mentions this fact on several occasions, he never examines or explains it – or, more precisely, the explanation he provides is remarkably flat and shallow. At the end of the first act of this episode, he wonders why American diplomats “needed to explain to the generals the political significance of the US Army presence in Czechoslovakia in June 1945” (p. 66). In the Czech version of the book, he indignantly states: “At times it seemed that some army commanders had not even noticed the growing tension between the East and the West.”¹³ I believe it would have been useful if the author himself had noticed (and reminded his readers) the fact that the war with Japan was still in progress at this time, with its conclusion nowhere in sight, and American generals wanted every man wearing a uniform to be moved to the Pacific theatre of operations.

Nevertheless, the decisive duel between the State Department and the Pentagon over American policy on Czechoslovakia occurred only after the surrender of Japan at the end of summer. Lukeš correctly mentions the main motivating factors behind the clash, but again fails to analyse the substance of the dispute. The quarrel thus appears utterly illogical, although the underlying explanation is neither complex nor revolutionary. The unwillingness by top-level army officers to accommodate the requirements of Foggy Bottom diplomats was not due solely to the traditional aversion of American military professionals to politicians meddling in their trade and the distaste of local American commanders in West and South Bohemia for the methods employed during the expulsion of the local German population, which Lukeš mentions elsewhere in the book. The generals were under constant pressure from their superiors in Washington who were demanding a reduction in the number of mobilised soldiers. Once the war in the Pacific had ended, the call for a fast and thorough demobilisation played the key role. This was expressed by the “Bring the boys back home” slogan, which resonated among the American public regardless of social status, political affiliation or region of origin, and was articulated by elected representatives in Washington. Any slowing down of the demobilisation process was heavily criticised, both in the media and on the floor of Congress.¹⁴ It was a situation which every American politician, including the president, had to take into account.

The War Department was, naturally enough, the first target of criticism. Its chiefs, Henry Stimson (until September 1945) and later Robert Patterson, were doing their best not to be held solely responsible by the public for the pace of demobilisation.

13 LUKEŠ, Igor: *Československo nad propastí*, p. 93.

14 In January 1946, a subcommittee tasked to examine the demobilisation process was established under the powerful Senate Committee on the Armed Services (see TRUSSEL, C. P.: Inquiry Is Ordered on Demobilisation. In: *The New York Times*, 11 January 1946, p. 1). A fortnight later, General Dwight Eisenhower himself was called to account by Congress on the issue (Giving Congress the Facts on Demobilisation. In: *Ibid.*, 16 January 1945, p. 14).

Imagining that the minister would face questions from congressmen and senators as to why boys from their constituency or state were still stuck somewhere near Carlsbad must have been a nightmare for the political advisors at the War Department. As a matter of fact, the only convincing answer would have been the true one – keeping our soldiers in Czechoslovakia is the only lever we have to get their Soviet counterparts out, and we want them out because we already know that democracy is over wherever they remain. The bulk of the American public and politicians, however, were not ready for an answer like this. The Soviet Union was still an ally, the US public was only slowly and gradually learning about the conflicts that had happened in the past, and the major ones were still to come. In the autumn of 1945, an explanation like this would have been tantamount to political suicide.

State Secretary James F. Byrnes, who assumed office right at the moment when the dispute about the evacuation of American troops from Czechoslovakia flared up, also had no intention of committing political *hara-kiri*. He was all too aware that he would not be able to delay the withdrawal decision for very long without publicly resorting to arguments that would recoil upon himself. Under the circumstances, the State Department realised, as Lukeš points out, that “it would have to take firm action” (p. 107). The State Department acted resolutely and the notable outcome was a letter from the President of the United States to Stalin, in which Truman notified the Soviet dictator of his intention to pull US troops out of Czechoslovakia and called upon him to do the same.¹⁵ Lukeš is correct in stating that, faced with the pessimistic forecast of George F. Kennan, US Ambassador to Moscow, as a benchmark, “nobody knew how the mysterious master of the Kremlin was going to react” (p. 108). State Secretary Byrnes himself was very cautious when discussing the issue with his government colleagues, the Secretaries of War and the Navy, saying that “there was just a chance” that Stalin would agree to the proposal.¹⁶ However, here it should be noted (and this is something that Lukeš has not done) that the authors of the letter themselves did not harbour any exaggerated expectation of a successful outcome. In fact, it was the other way around – Stalin’s refusal was part of their calculations. Dean Acheson, the new No. 2 man at Foggy Bottom under whose auspices the letter had been drafted,¹⁷ wrote about it to his boss who was at the time attending the first meeting of the Council of Foreign Ministers in London: “[W]e should consider giving full publicity to our efforts if the Soviets refuse to withdraw or if they agree to withdraw but utilise familiar delaying tactics to keep their forces in Czechoslovakia after our withdrawal.”¹⁸ Experts from

15 *National Archives and Records Administration*, Washington (hereinafter *NARA*), RG 59, 860.01/11-245, Truman to Stalin, 11 November 1945.

16 *FRUS, 1945, IV*, Minutes of the meeting of State Secretary James F. Byrnes, Secretary of War Robert P. Patterson, and Secretary of the Navy James V. Forrestal, Washington, 16 October 1945, p. 496f.

17 *Ibid.*, Acheson to Stimson, Washington, 17 September 1945, pp. 493–494.; *Ibid.*, Acheson to Byrnes, Washington, 19 September 1945, p. 494.

18 *Ibid.*, Acheson to Byrnes, Washington, 28 September 1945, p. 495.

the State Department ended the letter with an understandable, implied caution about this possibility.¹⁹

Truman's letter to Stalin was an attempt to find a solution to what looked like squaring the circle – to accommodate calls demanding that the American boys return home, not to lose face while so doing, and to create circumstances in which the Soviets might decide to pull out their troops as well. It was in fact a very successful gambit. Harry Truman was a seasoned poker player²⁰ and this bluff turned out excellently for him. Stalin agreed to the proposal and the Red Army did indeed withdraw from Czechoslovakia at the end of 1945, albeit to return in full glory less than 23 years later. Igor Lukeš, however, does not feel any admiration for this American diplomatic achievement. While he regards the July reply of the State Department to the Czechoslovak government as proof of “the United States having no intention of abandoning Czechoslovakia,” as already mentioned, he does not offer any evaluation of the Truman's letter to Stalin, the result of which was the actual accomplishment of what the first document had only indicated; instead, he starts speculating about Stalin's motives. In his opinion, the dictator came to the conclusion that “he could take the risk of leaving now, in the hope of reaping benefits in the future.” And he was right, Lukeš opines: “The withdrawal would strengthen the CPC [Communist Party of Czechoslovakia], add to its legitimacy, and make it a more effective tool for gaining absolute power in Prague” (p. 109).

Let us leave Lukeš's probe into the soul of the wily Georgian²¹ aside; however, a comment on the unbalanced assessment of Acts 1 and 2 of the story of the withdrawal of American units from Czechoslovakia is necessary. Under its new boss, the Prague Embassy contributed to the formulation and implementation of the American position on this matter at least as much as in Act 1, when it was under Klieforth's leadership. Steinhardt not only “strenuously opposed a US pullout” (p. 106), as Lukeš notes, but he did everything he could to prevent it. He continuously wrote dispatches to Washington and had meetings with Czechoslovak politicians and

19 “I hope that you can give consideration to my proposal and that, in withdrawing our forces simultaneously, we can announce to the world our intention of removing any obstacle which delays the recovery of the Czechoslovak state.” (NARA, RG 59, 860.01/11-245, Truman to Stalin 1 November 1945.)

20 See GESELBRACHT, Raymond H.: Harry Truman, Poker Player. In: *Prologue Magazine* [online], Vol. 35, No. 1 (Spring 2003) [2015-10-14]. Access: <http://www.archives.gov/publications/prologue/2003/spring/truman-poker.html>.

21 Let us just note that the atmosphere in Moscow was not exactly conducive to such thoughts as late as the end of September. At that time, George Kennan, in whose judgment Lukeš rightly believes, notified Washington of the Kremlin's requirement that the Czechoslovak authorities provide supplies for 400,000 soldiers during the coming winter. He said he had discussed the matter with a foreign observer “who is generally sympathetic to the Soviets and is more familiar with Czech affairs than anyone else in the Moscow foreign colony.” According to him, the high number was due to “a conviction on the part of the Czech Communists that they cannot maintain their position in the coming period without the presence of large Soviet armed forces in the country.” (NARA, RG59, 860.01/9-2345, Kennan to Byrnes, Moscow, 23 September 1945.)

US commanders on the issue. His arguments were clearly taken very seriously by Foggy Bottom, since they appear in key documents that the State Department prepared on the matter, including a memorandum that Byrnes ultimately passed on to the president and on the basis of which Truman decided to sign the letter to Stalin.²² However, there is no praise for the ambassador himself in Lukeš's book.

One or Two Steinhardts?

This brings us to one of the most problematic parts of the book – the passages in which Igor Lukeš draws a portrait of Laurence Adolph Steinhardt, the first US Ambassador to postwar Czechoslovakia. To this end, he has accumulated an impressive amount of materials. Apart from the Steinhardt Papers (Library of Congress, Manuscript Division), already known but not systematically exploited very much, and documents pertaining to the ambassador's diplomatic posting and activities in Prague, most of which are kept in the National Archives and Records Administration, Washington, he made extensive use of the recollections of Steinhardt's collaborators and close relatives. As mentioned above, this material is of unquestionable benefit, in many cases providing almost intimate and very readable information. The problem, however, is that Lukeš often relies on these sources uncritically, even in areas where he had an opportunity to compare them with archival documents. With the assistance of the details obtained from contemporary witnesses in particular, he draws the main contours of a portrait which has – without any exaggeration – Jekyll- and Hyde-like features. Lukeš divides Steinhardt's diplomatic career into two phases. In the first, he introduces a hard-working, motivated diplomat who, he maintains, “appeared to be a good choice for the post” of US Ambassador to Prague (p. 79).²³ However, before he could take up this position, he suffered a dramatic shock that changed him entirely. Lukeš claims that upon arrival in Prague, “he was no longer as single-minded, determined, or focused on his diplomatic duties as he had once been” (p. 80). His attention was concentrated much more on his law practice than on his ambassadorial role which, according to Lukeš, “dismayed the regular Foreign Service officers waiting for him at the Schonborn Palace” (p. 80). In the Czech version, Lukeš does not even hesitate to say that “he openly preferred his own benefit to service for the United States and the president.”²⁴

When describing the key moment which he claims changed Laurence Steinhardt's approach to his duties so significantly, Lukeš shows what a dramatic story means for him and manifests his literary talent. “The events that brought the Steinhardts

22 *FRUS, 1945, IV*, Acheson to Stimson, Washington, 17 September 1945, pp. 493–494.; *Ibid.*, Acheson to Byrnes, Washington, 19 September 1945, p. 494; *Ibid.*, Acheson to Byrnes, Washington, 28 September 1945, pp. 495–496.

23 As in many other cases, here too the Czech version of the text is more categorical: “The entire career of Steinhardt promised that he would be an excellent candidate [...]” (LUKEŠ, Igor: *Československo nad propastí*, p. 110.)

24 *Ibid.*, p. 111.

to their next diplomatic post,” he writes, “started to unfold in February 1945 in front of one of the ancient fortresses on the Rumeli shore.” Without giving any prior warning, Steinhardt allegedly told his family to get into a car and they set off for an unknown destination – “[a]s the sun began to set, the Steinhardts sped south from Istanbul.” By nightfall they reached the coast of the Sea of Marmara, where they sat down. “Suddenly, they saw the silhouette of an impressive ship that seemed to appear out of nowhere. They all stood up and watched the majestic vessel sailing before them.” Steinhardt told his family that the ship was taking President Roosevelt to the Crimea, for a meeting with Stalin and Churchill. And then it came. The ambassador started cursing his enemies in Washington whom he blamed for his not being aboard the ship with the president. His daughter “had never seen her father so angry, bitter, and dejected.”²⁵ Steinhardt saved a further surprise for the return trip during which he disclosed to his wife and daughter that President Roosevelt was sending him to Prague to serve there as ambassador (pp. 78–79).

Let us leave aside the question as to why the Rumelian Fortress on the European side of the Bosphorus appears in the story at all, apart from the fact that Dulcie-Ann, the ambassador’s daughter, attended a school located nearby. Let us not ask about the ship the Steinhardts were gazing at in awe, as Lukeš himself correctly mentions in a footnote that it could not have been either of the two US vessels participating in Operation Argonaut. Let us not wonder why they had to drive to the coast of the Sea of Marmara to see the ship, although the Rumelian Fortress, i.e. the Steinhardts’ starting point, does offer the best view of vessels sailing through the Bosphorus. Let us not seek an explanation as to why Steinhardt did not tell his family earlier that he had been appointed US Ambassador to Prague, although he had known about this since 20 December 1944, and why he decided to wait until the crazy trip to the south in February to disclose the news. All of the above are questions which Saturnin’s Office for Putting Novel Stories Right would be more than pleased to handle. However, there is one question that should be asked. No matter what its causes were and where it took place, was there really such a dramatic turn in Steinhardt’s career? In my opinion, the answer is clear – available documents do not provide any indication of such a crisis and the case presented by Lukeš does not prove there was one. On the contrary – it is possible to mention a number of arguments supporting the conclusion that Steinhardt was not as good as depicted by Lukeš before the trip, and he was not so bad after it.

In spite of his comments concerning Steinhardt’s previous career, Lukeš does not examine his performance in his first two diplomatic posts at all. As for his Swedish stint, he only offers a story about sympathies expressed to him by the renowned Soviet Ambassador Alexandra Kollontai and a statement that he “did well” there, the latter based on Lukeš’s favourite article published in the January 1945 issue of the *Čechoslovák* exile weekly in Moscow (p. 70). There is no mention of Steinhardt’s posting to Peru. Lukeš provides a somewhat more detailed description of the two years and a quarter that Steinhardt spent as the Head of the Moscow

25 In the Czech version Lukeš continues: “[...] as if he had lost all hopes.” *Ibid.*, p. 110.

Embassy, but for this he draws mainly on his interviews with contemporary witnesses and the recollections of the ambassador's daughter. What he appreciates most in the Steinhardt of those days is that the ambassador understood the horrendous nature of the Soviet regime and that "he saw clearly enough that it was a country ruled by terror, a country where anyone could be arrested anytime and executed" (p. 72). He describes the ambassador's harassment by the Soviet authorities and the unwelcome attention of the People's Commissariat for Internal Affairs (NKVD). Without furnishing any evidence other than the memories of contemporary witnesses, he claims that Steinhardt had valuable contacts at the German Embassy thanks to whom he even accurately predicted the date of the German invasion of the Soviet Union (p. 70). However, not all of those who witnessed Steinhardt's performance in Moscow remember him with such respect. Lukeš quotes Charles Bohlen, one of the stars of the then rising American community of experts, who characterised Steinhardt as "vain and highly egocentric" and "being more focused on 'publicising himself' than conducting diplomacy to advance the interests of the United States" (p. 72). The British Ambassador Sir Stafford Cripps described Steinhardt as "a typical bumptious USA business-lawyer type" and was very satisfied to see him called away.²⁶

Steinhardt is an easy target for a historian. He was a typical political nominee who brought all the pros and cons of his former profession to diplomacy. He was intelligent, energetic, with very good organisational capabilities, ostentatiously self-assured, and quick to orientate himself when it came to new issues. He was rich and knew how to enjoy his wealth, which produced mixed feelings in many people. His snap judgments often betrayed insufficient knowledge of a problem in hand. From the viewpoint of historians, his most dangerous practice was to note down these judgments, derive very specific forecasts of future developments from them, and send these conjectures to headquarters. All of the above are actions which a career diplomat cautiously avoids. However, this did not apply to Steinhardt. He, for example, made his debut as the new US Ambassador to Moscow by predicting, in a cable notifying headquarters of his initial audiences with Foreign Minister Vyacheslav Molotov and with the Chairman of the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR dated 16 August 1939, that "the Russians" would protract negotiations with France and Great Britain, but only for the purpose of having a stick to threaten Hitler. Steinhardt expected the Russians would wish to continue negotiations in order to prevent war from breaking out as early as autumn. "I am beginning to seriously doubt," he communicated to Washington on the eve of WWII, "the intention of the Soviet government to take any affirmative action in Europe other than of a purely defensive nature."²⁷

In describing Steinhardt's time in Moscow and his subsequent two and a half years at the US Embassy in Turkey, Lukeš either ignores such particulars, or just

26 See MAYERS, David: *FDR's Ambassadors and the Diplomacy of Crisis: From the Rise of Hitler to the End of World War II*. Cambridge, Cambridge University Press 2013, p. 210.

27 *FRUS, The Soviet Union 1933–1939*, Steinhardt to Hull, Moscow, 16 August 1939, p. 778.

takes note of them but does not develop them further. On the other hand, the opposite is the case when he is writing about Steinhardt's time in Prague. I have already pointed out that Lukeš's interpretation of sources is rather loose. Insofar as Steinhardt is concerned, there are even some gross misinterpretations. Let us mention the most significant examples here:

"Unfortunately, it took Steinhardt more than 200 days to take over the post in Prague," writes Lukeš, adding that "it played into the hands of the Communists in Prague" (p. 80). This total of 200 days, however, can be arrived at only if the count begins from the date of Steinhardt's appointment to his post in Prague, i.e. 20 December 1944. Yet, it should be stated, Steinhardt was still in Turkey at that time, and formally concluded his mission there only on 2 April 1945.²⁸ As indicated in available correspondence, he nevertheless showed interest in moving to London, to the Czechoslovak exile government, as early as the beginning of 1945. The State Department assured him that there was no reason to hurry.²⁹ In April, the process for the departure of new ambassadors was complicated by the death of President Franklin D. Roosevelt. Nominations had to be approved and credentials signed by the new president. Truman did so very quickly. In the case of Laurence Steinhardt and four other ambassadors, the White House returned the signed documents to the State Department on 19 April.³⁰ Judging by the speed of the approval, the signature seems to have been a purely formal act, but Steinhardt clearly was not so sure. At the time when Truman was deciding whether to sign the documents or not, Steinhardt felt it necessary to lobby Admiral William Leahy, a man who then had an exceptionally strong influence on the president.³¹

April 19 is thus the latest date from which the calculation of "Ambassador Steinhardt's delayed arrival" in Czechoslovakia can begin. Accordingly, the number of days that remained until he handed over his credentials at Prague Castle on 20 July is much smaller than Lukeš's figure of 200. However, this is not the only detail that needs to be put right. As a matter of fact, Lukeš claims that Steinhardt not only unnecessarily delayed his departure to Prague for 200 days, but during this time he also "failed to focus on the mission entrusted to him" (p. 80).³² Given that the author worked with Steinhardt's estate, this statement is difficult to excuse.

28 US Department of State. Office of the Historian. Department History. Chiefs of Mission for Turkey [online]. [2015-1014.] Access: <https://history.state.gov/departmenthistory/people/chiefsomission/turkey>.

29 *Library of Congress*, Washington (hereinafter *LOC*), Manuscript Division, Laurence Steinhardt Papers, Box 47, Riddleberger to Steinhardt, Washington, 26 January 1945.

30 *Harry S. Truman Library and Museum*, Independence (Missouri) (hereinafter *HSTL*), WHCF: Official File 317-A, Memorandum for the president, 17 April 1945.

31 *LOC*, Manuscript Division, William Leahy Papers, Diary, 16 April 1945. In line with the customary practice in Washington, the new ambassadors sent the new president their resignations, and so did Steinhardt. (*Ibid.*, Manuscript Division, Laurence Steinhardt Papers, Box 47, Steinhardt to Truman, Washington, 18 April 1945.) On the other hand, he did not forget to visit Leahy first and make sure that it was indeed just a formal procedure.

32 In the Czech version, the wording is again more expressive: Steinhardt "did not pay any attention" to his office. (LUKEŠ, Igor: *Československo nad propastí*, p. 112.)

The ambassador's correspondence shows beyond any doubt that he was very actively interested in his new post. From not later than the beginning of 1945, he had been receiving copies of letters exchanged between Washington and the US representation with the Czechoslovak exile government. He himself was busy corresponding with the recently established Division of Central European Affairs of the State Department and with the US Ambassador to Moscow, Averell Harriman. His estate also contains many copies of documents from the US military command. It was Steinhardt who first told Washington that the Czechoslovak government was going to move to the liberated part of Czechoslovakia via Moscow.³³ He remained involved even after his return to the United States, and managed, *inter alia*, to be received by the new president as early as 3 May.³⁴

Evidence of Steinhardt's lack of interest in his new post is difficult to find. However, Lukeš needs this for his story – and so he himself sometimes helps to make up for the deficiency. For example, when describing the arrival of the new ambassador at his office in Prague, he writes that included in the correspondence waiting on his desk was “a long letter from the Division of Central European Affairs reminding him that Prague was ‘one of the key spots in Europe and perhaps the best testing ground for our future relations with the Soviet Union.’ This was meant to be,” continues Lukeš, “a subtle nudge that the ambassador should get on, finally, with his diplomatic business. It failed to make its intended impression” (p. 85). However, if we actually read the four-page letter, we will see that the content is substantially different. It is a very friendly missive from Francis Williamson, Deputy Head of the Division of Central European Affairs, and obviously follows on previous contacts between the two diplomats. The segment quoted above comes from the first, courtesy paragraph, in which Williamson conveys regards from all the personnel in the division, says that the ambassador must be happy to be reunited with his family in Prague and also expresses his belief that Steinhardt's new post is one of the key spots, etc. Then he continues: “We are convinced that you are, in view of your experience, best qualified to meet the complicated problems which now exist and which will arise in the future.” The remaining pages are devoted to operational matters concerning the re-opened embassy, the reinforcing of its staff, and the principal political issues which were on the agenda of Czechoslovak-US relations at that time. Williamson does not feel it necessary to elaborate on any

33 Steinhardt obtained this information from his Czechoslovak counterpart in Ankara, Michael Hanák (*LOC*, Manuscript Division, Laurence Steinhardt Papers, box 47, C, Hanák to Steinhardt, Ankara, 18 January 1945). On the basis of his information, the State Department started taking steps designed to move diplomat John H. Bruins “either together with the Czech government, or as close as possible behind it.” *NARA*, 860F.01/1-2045, Grew to Steinhardt, Washington, 24 January 1945, (Personal from Matthews and Riddleberger).

34 *HSTL*, President's Secretary's Files, President's Appointments File, *Daily Sheets*, April – May 1945.

of the above items; it is thus clear that Steinhardt has familiarised himself with them and has already discussed many of them with Williamson.³⁵

Lukeš's approach is similar in other instances where he seeks to demonstrate the scant attention Steinhardt was paying to events in the country in which he was representing the interests of the United States. In particular, Lukeš condemns the ambassador's regular overseas trips home. It is not difficult to accept Lukeš's opinion that the absences were too long (just as it is possible to agree that the position of the Czech non-communist political parties would have been better if Steinhardt had arrived in Prague a month earlier in the spring of 1945). However, it is impossible to accept the biased manner in which Lukeš develops the issue. When describing Steinhardt's trip home in the early months of 1947, Lukeš immediately knows what he was doing there – devoting time to his law firm in New York, and travelling to Washington just once or twice. "It is difficult to comprehend," Lukeš remarks in wonderment, "why the Department of State allowed it" (p. 164), although in fact he knows very well – as he himself mentions it in a footnote to this segment of the text – that the State Department not only tolerated Steinhardt's trip, but made use of the opportunity to award him the Medal of Merit.³⁶ Similarly, when studying Steinhardt's estate, he must have noticed that the ambassador spent quite a lot of time on official matters while in the United States. The sheet of paper on which Steinhardt wrote the names of people whom he wanted to meet in Washington contains an almost complete list of all those who had anything to do with foreign policy – the only reproach that may be made against him is an underestimation of sorts of Congress.³⁷ To some extent, he made up for this by a phone call to Senator Arthur Vandenberg, the most powerful Capitol man in the field of foreign policy. The contact had been arranged by John F. Dulles, the future State Secretary in Eisenhower's administration, who, having met with Steinhardt, wrote to Vandenberg that the ambassador had told him "some extremely interesting things about Czechoslovakia."³⁸ Even while in New York, Steinhardt did not occupy himself exclusively with the legal affairs of his firm. In mid-February, he delivered a lecture for what was then perhaps the most influential forum for foreign policy discussion, the *Council on Foreign Relations*.³⁹

It is evident that Lukeš's construct of a sudden turn in Steinhardt's approach to international politics is next to untenable. It was the same Steinhardt who had previously been in Moscow and Ankara, and who then, with all his pros and cons,

35 LOC, Manuscript Division, Laurence Steinhardt Papers, Box 47, Williamson to Steinhardt, Washington, n/d.

36 In this respect, John H. Bruins, No. 2 at the Prague Embassy, wrote from Prague that the medal was certainly an expression of the president's approval of Steinhardt's performance in Prague, thus strengthening the position of the Prague Embassy, although the official citation referred to the ambassador's stint in Turkey. (*Ibid.*, box 54, Bruins to Steinhardt, Prague, 17 February 1947.)

37 *Ibid.*, Box 55, People to see in Washington.

38 *Ibid.*, Box 54, Dulles to Vandenberg (copy), Washington, 3 February 1947.

39 *Ibid.*, Mallory to Steinhardt, New York, 19 February 1947.

arrived in Prague. The latter were many and Lukeš of course does not forget to show them to the reader. This may be amusing in many cases, but the information is basically irrelevant in terms of Steinhardt's performance as an ambassador. It does not make much sense to reproach Steinhardt for the fact that "[w]hile he lived in the style of an early 19th-century European prince, the regular Foreign Service officers faced real hardship in Prague" (p. 89). He used his own money to live in this fashion. Also questionable are Lukeš's rebukes concerning the effort he invested in acquiring a truly prestigious residence (pp. 87–89). With the acquisition of the Otto Petschek villa, Steinhardt obtained an excellent base for diplomatic activities, which the Americans have been using ever since. Lukeš shows obvious incomprehension when criticising Steinhardt for devoting too much time to issues related to nationalised American property in Czechoslovakia. In this context, he even claims (without giving the source that the statement is based on) that "some of his colleagues privately wondered whether he was still a US ambassador fully committed to serving the president or a rich attorney torn between public service and private interest" (p. 93). As a matter of fact, Steinhardt did not have much choice. Dozens of people were asking the Embassy for help in disputes with the Czechoslovak government, and the avalanche of requests was threatening to paralyse the work of the office.⁴⁰ It is difficult to imagine any American ambassador who would not have the protection of the property of US citizens as his or her top priority. Failure to do so would be career suicide.

One can agree with much of the criticism that Lukeš levels at Steinhardt's performance in Prague without any major misgivings. Perhaps one of the most serious is that concerning the limited range of the ambassador's contacts in Czechoslovakia (p. 100), which inevitably led to shortfalls in his information about events taking place in the country. Absent from those for whom Steinhardt's door was always open were not only young people, students, artists, and intellectuals, which Lukeš mentions, but also, for example, people from the lower echelons of political parties. Lukeš, in addition, rightly censures the ambassador's stubborn crusade against granting the loans which Czechoslovakia sought in the United States after the war and which were the most frequent topic of bilateral negotiations (pp. 124–130).⁴¹ Also appropriate are the numerous reminders of errors and blunders in intelligence gathering, and the exaggerated optimism in the forecasts he was sending to Washington, which are spread throughout the book. All of the above are serious transgressions against the professional principles applicable to any ambassador's work. However, I am afraid that Steinhardt would not find grace in Lukeš's eyes even if he had been able to avoid them. As a matter of fact, Lukeš expects much more of Steinhardt than merely a high standard of professionalism and initiative. He

40 Comp.: *Ibid.*, Box 50, Williamson to Steinhardt, Washington, 11 January 1946.

41 This topic has been most extensively examined by the Slovakian historian Slavomír Michálek: MICHÁLEK, Slavomír: *Nádeje a vytriezvenia: Československo-americké hospodárske vzťahy v rokoch 1945–1951* [Hopes and Sobriety: Czechoslovak-American Economic Relations between 1945 and 1951]. Bratislava, Veda 1995.

admits that the biggest share of responsibility for what happened in Czechoslovakia after the war “rests with the Czechs,” but he also adds that “[t]he United States Embassy was expected by the president in Washington and the Department of State to promote American interests, protect the democratic cause, and engage the Soviet adversary” (p. 16).⁴² It seems that in Lukeš’s view the American ambassador should have been not just a diplomat representing his government and supporting a broad spectrum of contacts between the United States and Czechoslovakia, but also a source of inspiration for the Czechoslovak non-communist politicians, maybe even their charismatic leader. On this score, Steinhardt simply had to disappoint, thereby leading Lukeš to formulate two horrendous questions: “But what cause was there to defend? What star to follow?” (*Ibid.*) There is just one appropriate comment here: if indeed Czechoslovak democrats did not know what to fight for after the war – and I admit that I cannot rule out the possibility that this was the case with many of them – then they could not have been helped even if the Americans had sent a reincarnation of Thomas Jefferson himself to the US Embassy in Prague.

Czechoslovakia as a Testing Ground?

The exaggerated expectations concerning the American ambassador are related to an equally exaggerated view of Czechoslovakia’s importance for US foreign policy. Lukeš develops his big story about the *failure* of American diplomats and secret services in Prague (whose original English version was a story about American diplomats and spies in Prague) against the notional background of a clearly formulated US policy *vis-à-vis* Czechoslovakia, and of Czechoslovakia’s place in the foreign policy of the United States in general. According to Lukeš, a consensus on the exceptional importance of Czechoslovakia existed among the principal institutions of the American executive, with the country being viewed as a testing ground where the initial battles between the West and the East would take place. Lukeš both opens and concludes his book with a statement of this idea. “The Department of State, the White House, and the intelligence community understood that the outcome of the crisis in Prague was important, as it might shape the fortunes of Finland, Norway, and perhaps France, and the status of Berlin,” he writes at the beginning (p. 12). “Such was the inauspicious end to Washington’s plan to treat Czechoslovakia as ‘master key to Europe’ and a testing ground for the contest with Stalin,” he states in the final chapter (p. 229).

Lukeš builds his key concept on the simple reproduction of two documents rather than on an analysis of the decision-making processes in US foreign policy. The first is a memo on a spring 1944 presentation that Charles Bohlen made to one of the many subcommittees which the State Department had established for the purpose of planning postwar arrangements. In the presence of leading experts, Bohlen suggested,

42 “[...] build a barrier against the plans of Moscow” in the Czech version (LUKEŠ, Igor: *Československo nad propastí*, p. 30).

during a debate on Soviet policy in postwar Europe, that Czechoslovakia would be a better testing ground than Poland for the implementation of whatever Soviet plans had been devised, given that the Czechoslovaks had gone to the limits of the possible in their efforts to gratify Stalin (p. 10). In the Czech version of the book, Lukeš continued to develop this narrative, concluding that Bohlen's analysis, because of the reputation its author enjoyed, "moved Czechoslovakia to the group of countries which will be in the focus of American diplomacy in the postwar period."⁴³ The second key source is a document from the Office of Strategic Studies titled "Report on Czechoslovakia: Pivot Point of Europe" and dated July 1945. Its authors quote the well-known dictum of Bismarck on the strategic position of Bohemia and introduce the term "testing ground," urging the United States to be "firm and strong with the Czechs and Russians" (p. 10). This document provided the cement for Lukeš's entire book, which contains 10 direct references to it as well as countless paraphrases of the statements mentioned above spread throughout the text. Lukeš juggles them in every manner possible. In one reference to the document, for instance, he offers the following comment on the nomination of Laurence Steinhardt for the post of US Ambassador to Prague: "In choosing him FDR and the State Department concurred with the view that the United States needed to come to postwar Prague 'firm and strong with the Czechs and Russians'" (p. 80).

The influence of Bohlen's comments and the analysis of the Office of Strategic Studies on the formation of American foreign policy would merit a separate study. In any case, Lukeš neither presents any evidence indicating that their conclusions were accepted as a common platform by all the institutions responsible for formulating US foreign policy, nor even attempts to do so. The documents that he refers to only indicate that Bohlen and the Office of Strategic Studies held this particular opinion at that time. The same approach could be very easily used to provide evidence to the contrary. I will allow myself to make two small contributions to a potential further discussion of this topic. In the framework of an oral history project in the early 1970s, James Riddleberger recalling the period when he had been Head of the Central European Division in the first weeks after the war, made the following confession: "You can imagine in those days Czechoslovakia was something I couldn't devote much attention to. [...] I had one fellow on it who knew the language and was very good and so forth. But, apart from begging Truman to let us get into Prague, well, I didn't have the time really."⁴⁴ The State Department made an indirect reference to the importance of Czechoslovakia in a brief document issued at the end of 1946. At that time, Deputy Secretary of State Dean Acheson made a classification of embassies for the purpose of determining ambassadors' salaries, dividing them into four categories. The first group included Buenos Aires, London, Mexico City, Moscow, Ottawa, Paris, Peking, Rio de Janeiro and Rome. The second had, *inter alia*, Ankara, The Hague, Madrid and Warsaw.

43 LUKEŠ, Igor: *Československo nad propastí*, p. 23.

44 *HSTL*, Oral History Interview, Richard D. McKinzie and Theodor A. Wilson, interview with James W. Riddleberger, 24 June 1971, pp. 23–24.

Prague was listed in the third category, together with, for example, Athens, Budapest, Montevideo and Vienna.⁴⁵

The problem with Lukeš's concept of the key position of Czechoslovakia in Washington's postwar policy does not lie only in his inability to prove that this was accepted as widely as he claims. An even bigger problem is the fact that the framework of the book he has built on this problematic concept is utterly static. There are few periods in history in which international relations developed as dynamically as they did in the first years after the war. Specific actions on the part of the American diplomatic mission in Prague were part of the process whereby US foreign policy reacted to and tried to influence dramatic postwar developments. The notion of Czechoslovakia as a test case for the honesty of Stalin's declarations on the necessity of postwar cooperation was born from the increasingly conflictual nature of the discussions between the Western allies and the Soviet Union in 1944 over the question of Poland. It is possible to assume that this was becoming more and more important since the Americans were gradually finding out that they were not able to modify the position adopted by the Soviets on the Polish issue. Very strong formulations about the importance of Czechoslovakia for *continuing cooperation* between the Western powers and the Soviet Union are used in a memorandum cited by Lukeš, which the State Department sent to President Truman on 4 May 1945.⁴⁶ Czechoslovakia maintained this high rating throughout 1945, a view which, in my opinion, is proven by the approach adopted by Washington in connection with the negotiations concerning the withdrawal of American and Soviet troops from the country.

The situation, however, started to change as early as the following year. Lukeš correctly notes the embarrassment caused to the Americans by the pace and extent of the nationalisation process as well as by the behaviour of Czechoslovak representatives at various international forums (pp. 101–104 and 127–128). Even more importantly, people in Washington began to take note of the descending Iron Curtain. Step by step, they stopped thinking about how to preserve the war alliance with the Soviets and commenced planning on how best to oppose their aggression. "There are very dark days ahead," the *Washington Post* warned in March.⁴⁷ American foreign policy no longer needed testing grounds for verifying the possibilities for cooperation with the Soviets; it started to search for allies against them – and Czechoslovakia, where the Communist Party had just scored a crushing victory in the elections, did not look like one. The measures resulting from the strategic debate on US foreign policy in 1947 confirmed that the demand for bridges between the West and the East was over for good. The Americans gave the Europeans

45 *Ibid.*, WHCF: Confidential File, State Department, Correspondence 1946–47, "Classification of Positions of Chiefs of Mission," 29 November 1946.

46 *Ibid.*, President's Secretary's Files, Foreign Affairs File, Memorandum by Joseph C. Grew, "Political Situation in Czechoslovakia," 4 May 1945. Lukeš cites the document as "bearing the date of 5 May" (p. 66).

47 ALSOP, Joseph – ALSOP, Stewart: Matter Of Fact: On The Eve Of Crisis. In: *The Washington Post*, 15 March 1946, p. 9.

a choice as to which side of the Iron Curtain they wanted to be on. The discussion on whether Czechoslovakia had a chance to take up the offer will probably never reach a definite conclusion. However, what is certain is that the political representation of those days made no serious attempt to do so. It is true that Steinhardt wrote to Washington as late as May 1947 that the Communists were worried that their opponents could ask, on the basis of the Truman Doctrine, for American help,⁴⁸ but that of course never happened and, as far as I know, was never even considered.

I believe that it was the inability of the Czechoslovak non-communist politicians, led by Edvard Beneš, to react to the dynamic developments taking place all over the world that steered Czechoslovakia towards the “Bloc of Peace and Socialism,” or – to put it in a different way – brought Czechoslovakia there in a manner which one cannot really be proud of. It is a pity that Lukeš did not pay more attention to the wider, outside context in his book. By concentrating on the activities of American diplomats and spies in Prague, and on the interactions between them and their Czechoslovak partners and adversaries, he has offered the reader a vast quantity of extraordinarily valuable and heretofore unpublished material. However, by failing to complement his text with a fully-fledged section detailing the international context, he has created the impression that the events in Prague unfolded of their own accord. Nevertheless, his book is a very significant contribution to the existing literature on how Czechoslovakia aligned itself behind the Iron Curtain. It is a book about the failures of democracy in duels with totalitarianism in general, about the partial failures of American foreign policy in the duel for Czechoslovakia, and about the utter failure of Czechoslovak democratic policy in the duel for everything. It is a major publication from which the reader will get a very good idea of what preceded and, to some extent, what followed the coup d'état in February 1948. However, it should also be noted that the picture presented is neither complete nor fully balanced with regard to colour and proportion. I will take the liberty of paraphrasing a statement by Josef Škvorecký excerpted from one of his literary feuilletons aired by the Voice of America: It is a very good book, but it is a pity it is not even better.

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48 NARA, RG59, 860F.00/5-2347, Steinhardt to Marshall, Prague, 23 May 1947.

Review

Refugees of the Greek Civil War in Czechoslovakia and the World

Three Books on Similar Themes

Dalibor Vácha

DANFORTH, Loring M. – BOESCHOTEN, Riki van: *Children of the Greek Civil War: Refugees and the Politics of Memory*. Chicago – London, University of Chicago Press 2012, 329 pages, ISBN 978-0-226-13598-4;

KRÁLOVÁ, Kateřina – TSIVOS, Konstantinos et al.: *Vyschly nám slzy... Řečtí uprchlíci v Československu* [Our Tears Dried Up... Greek Refugees in Czechoslovakia]. Praha, Dokořán 2012, 331 pages, ISBN 978-80-7363-416-2;

TSIVOS, Konstantinos: *Řecká emigrace v Československu (1948–1968): Od jednoho rozštěpení ke druhému* [Greek Emigration in Czechoslovakia (1948–1968): From One Split to Another]. Praha, Fakulta sociálních věd Univerzity Karlovy [Faculty of Social Sciences of Charles University] – Dokořán 2011, 277 pages, ISBN 978-80-7363-404-9.

In the following book review, I focus on a theme that bridges the history of Greece and Czechoslovakia (and hence also the history of the Czech Republic as its successor state) in a way which may be unknown to the younger generation and hidden from the older generation under the ideological dust. The Greek Civil War, which

broke out just as the German-Italian occupation was nearing its end, was one of the bloodiest conflicts that marked the beginning of what is called the Cold War. Armed clashes and terrorist operations developed into a brutal fratricidal partisan war between the Greek communist guerrillas on one side, backed by the Soviet Union and Yugoslavia (until the Soviet-Yugoslav split), and the pro-monarchist Greek army on the other side, relying mainly on the assistance of Great Britain. A collection of essays, entitled *Greece at the Crossroads*, and the book *The Struggle for Greece* by C. M. Woodhouse, a Commander of the Allied Military Mission to Greek Resistance during the Second World War, offer an excellent introduction to the political and military events related to the fascist occupation of Greece and the Greek Civil War. Another work that deserves attention is a book edited by Mark Mazower, entitled *After the War Was Over: Reconstructing the Family, Nation, and State in Greece, 1943–1960*, which also describes the long-term consequences of the war and developments in the country until the end of the 1950s.¹ The Greek exodus from the civil war, which also left a significant mark on the postwar history of Czechoslovakia, is a common theme of the following three titles, all published in recent years. The Anglo-American monograph, *Children of the Greek Civil War: Refugees and the Politics of Memory* provides a comprehensive picture of Greek emigration, whereas the two Czech publications *Vyschly nám slzy... Řečtí uprchlíci v Československu* [Our Tears Dried Up... Greek Refugees in Czechoslovakia] and *Řecká emigrace v Československu (1948–1968): Od jednoho rozštěpení ke druhému* [Greek Emigration in Czechoslovakia (1948–1968): From One Split to Another] focus specifically on the Czechoslovak flow of Greek emigrants and their settlement here (both publications are linked by Konstantinos Tsivos as author of the latter book and one of the authors and editors of *Vyschly nám slzy...*).

The first reviewed publication is a result of the long-term research of an event from Greek history, which in its time stirred up great controversy (including appeals to the UN), but which, nevertheless, gradually faded from the memory of people. Both authors of the book – Loring M. Danforth, Professor of Cultural Anthropology and Epistemology at Bates College in Lewiston, Maine, and Riki van Boeschoten, Professor of Social Anthropology and Oral History at the University of Thessaly, Greece – attracted considerable attention at the end of the 1990s when they reopened research into this issue on an international scale. This is because many of the eye-witnesses and direct participants in the event, which was labelled (according to political sympathies) either as an “abduction” or “evacuation,” were and indeed still are alive. In the spring of 1948, Greek communist partisans relocated approximately 25,000 children between the age of 3 and 14 from northern Greece

1 See IATRIDES, John O. – WRIGLEY, Linda (ed.): *Greece at the Crossroads: The Civil War and Its Legacy*. University Park, Pennsylvania State University Press 1995; WOODHOUSE, C. M.: *The Struggle for Greece 1941–1949*. Ivan R. Dee 2002; MAZOWER, Mark: *After the War Was Over: Reconstructing the Family, Nation and State in Greece, 1943–1960*. Princeton, Princeton University Press 2000. See also, for example CLOSE, David H.: *The Greek Civil War: Origins of Modern Wars*. New York, Routledge 1995.

to Central and Eastern European satellite countries.² (Later, thousands of defeated partisans followed the children.) Out of this number, roughly 3,000 children ended up in then communist Czechoslovakia and became part of the local large Greek minority. However, the evacuation organised by the Communists was not a one-off case. One year before that, in 1947, the Greek Government decided to evacuate some 18,000 children from the North of Greece to protect them from the devastating consequences of the civil war, and placed them in families in the southern part of the country.

The book *Children of the Greek Civil War* is divided into three sections. The beginning of the first part, entitled “Histories,” outlines the broader context of events. The authors describe organisations that began to deal with the issue of refugees after the Second World War and/or were involved in the war evacuation of children in Europe in the 1930s and 1940s. They also touch on other issues such as the Spanish Civil War, the Holocaust, and the evacuation of Finnish children to Sweden. In a similar way, they sketch the history of the Greek Civil War, the geography of the country, and the rhetoric Greek Communists and the central government used to inform about the relocated children. While the rhetoric of the government was nationalist and religious (with references to Herod), the Communists resorted to humanitarian (saving the children from the war) and social rhetoric. Ultimately, however, both groups declared the same goal: to save the children (both Greek and Macedonian) who lived near the northern border of the Greek Kingdom and to ensure their well-being. According to the authors, the evacuation could therefore be used as a means of pressure on parents, regardless of whether it was organised by the Communists or the Greek Government (p. 46).

The book is valuable for analysing different views on the issue, including the different rhetoric of the warring sides, whereby the event was labelled either as an “evacuation” or “abduction.” The authors also point out the fact that a smaller number of children entered Yugoslavia in a disorganised manner, when fleeing the devastated and bombarded villages close to the Yugoslav border. However, the biggest question is whether the departure of the majority of the children from the North of Greece was voluntary or whether it was forced. There were even some speculations that the relocation of children was a “Slavic conspiracy with the aim of annihilating the Greek race” (p. 58). With regard to the communist discourse, perhaps the most controversial fact is that some of the older relocated children were later recruited and sent back home, already as soldiers of the communist Democratic Army of Greece.

The following chapter deals with the evacuation of Greek children to the countries of Central and Eastern Europe. Fierce fighting and deteriorating living conditions in the North of Greece prompted the local Communist Party to elaborate a plan for the evacuation of children. During the first wave of evacuation, which was announced at the beginning of March 1948, 4,874 children were to travel in groups

2 Although data on this number differ in various sources and works, authors generally tend to quote the stated number.

of 25 to Poland, Czechoslovakia, Romania and Yugoslavia, accompanied by a female teacher (or another female adult). Their first stops were Albania, Yugoslavia and Bulgaria. Considering the number of children and the lack of supplies, these countries were put under considerable strain, leading to humanitarian crises, mainly in poor Albania. The main focus of the chapter is on the description of the Greek children's arrival in countries of the Eastern Bloc and the commencement of their lives there. Upon arrival at their destinations, some of the children who were worst affected by the journey (ill and malnourished) had to be sent to health resorts in Poland and Romania. In Czechoslovakia, some 30 children's homes were gradually founded, which was the highest number among the participating states. There was a set of rules for daily life in such a children's home, in which political indoctrination of the wards played a significant role. However, education of children was complicated by the fact that some 50 to 60 percent of the children were illiterate (p. 73), so they had to be taught to read and write first of all. At the same time, they had to learn the language spoken in their new host country. The pupils then continued with their studies at local schools. Some of them even completed their university studies; others started to work after completing their apprenticeships.

The third chapter of the first section, entitled "Paidopoleis of Queen Frederica," gives an account of the situation from the other, monarchist side, personified by Greek Queen Frederica. From approximately 1947 onwards, the Queen sought solutions to the humanitarian crisis in northern Greece. The Queen's campaign was both efficient and effective in convincing public opinion at home and abroad, promoting her image as well. The key component of her campaign was the establishment of children's homes for the evacuated children, known as *paidopoleis*. In total, 54 *paidopoleis* were founded throughout Greece. These institutions provided the children with education, food, clothing and work. Here the book examines everyday life of the wards and compares it with the lives of the children evacuated to Central and Eastern European countries. This was a peculiar "race." In the spring of 1948, in reaction to the communist "evacuation" (and in line with a plan from the previous year), the government authorities relocated 14,000 children from the North to the more peaceful and loyal South. Needless to say, the education in these institutions was based on anti-communist and royalist principles. The institutions did not aim to offer higher education to the children. Once the situation became peaceful, the children were expected to return to their villages. There was no intention to form a specific group of urban society and the scope of education was clearly adapted to this prerogative. The authors point to the (understandable) differences between the reality of that time, the memories of the children and the idealised image of the evacuation organised by Queen Frederica and her supporters. In the same way, they compare reality to the "media" image of the children's evacuation by the communist Democratic Army in the previous chapter.

The second section of the book, based on oral history, is aptly entitled "Stories" and consists of memories of people, who as children had undergone all the aforementioned rigmarole. To the reviewer, the first chapter, "Child Refugees in Eastern Europe," is definitely the most interesting part of the book. It is obviously just

a representative sample of the interviews, rather than a complex edition of all the collected material. One of the women also recalls her stay in Czechoslovakia, specifically in the town of Mikulov in southern Moravia. The chapter, “Children from *Paidapoleis*,” then focuses on the group of children sent for education by royalists from northern Greece to the southern part of the country. In the third chapter, entitled “Ethnography,” the authors seek to summarise information from the two previous chapters using modern ethnographic methods (even though this is not very precise terminology), the most recent oral history methods and methods of collective memory studies.

The authors skilfully complement information obtained from administrative sources and secondary literature with the information based on interviews with those who, as children, had been relocated from northern Greece. The “sources” of the second section are listed in the centre of the book, which is somewhat confusing, as it negatively affects the compactness of the text. Perhaps the sources should have been listed as part of the annexes at the end of the book. The book also contains photographs, including images from former Czechoslovakia.

The book expressively entitled *Vyschly nám slzy...* was published in the Czech Republic in 2012, in the same year as the Anglo-American book. Its publication is clearly related to the renewed interest in refugees and this allows the informed reader to compare both approaches. The Czech publication is a collective monograph, structured in 12 more or less independent chapters. The texts were written by 11 authors and edited by 2 of them, Kateřina Králová and Konstantinos Tsivos. First of all, it should be noted that the book suffers from the typical disease of collective monographs: some of the information is repeated several times, often in a similar way and in similar words.

Still, it can be said that the reader will find the variety of perspectives interesting and enriching. The chapters are ranked chronologically, in order to offer a continuity in the description of everyday life of Greeks escaping the civil war, starting from its outbreak to the present time. The specific themes that the texts deal with are suggestively “announced” in their titles. These consist of two parts: usually an expressive quotation from the sources and an explanatory subtitle. The first chapter entitled “Everybody to War! Everything for Victory!” offers an excellent factual introduction to the issue. The authors of this text, Kateřina Králová and Konstantinos Tsivos, outline both the overall picture of the Greek Civil War and the Greek emigrants who were heading to former Czechoslovakia. However, already the following chapter by Karin Hofmeisterová (“It Was a Beautiful Life Before the War Came and Marked All of Us: Greece in the Memories of the Refugees”) reveals the pitfalls of the source material used – the sources based on oral history research are powerful and as such can be extremely misleading. It is to the credit of the majority of authors that they were able to maintain a critical distance in this respect.

What makes the publication all the more interesting is the effort of the participating researchers to describe the events that preceded the arrival of the Greek

refugees (the main focus was on child refugees) in Czechoslovakia. There are three chapters dealing with this – apart from Chapter 2, also the following chapters by Lucie Kadlecová and Markéta Sošáková (“Hard Times Are Not Easily Forgotten: Life in Greece During the War”) and again by Lucie Kadlecová (“We Were Looking Forward to Escaping the War: Child Refugees on the Route Greece – Czechoslovakia”). Therefore, it is apparent that Greek refugees (those who were evacuated) did not materialise in Czechoslovakia out of nowhere and their complicated routes from Greece to the heart of Europe are illustrated by a number of telling examples.

The chapters written by Martina Macáková (“From the Children’s Home Friends for Life: Children’s Homes for Greek Children in Czechoslovakia”) and Petr Balla (“The Chairman Came to See Us, He Pulled My Ears and Said: ‘You Will Study.’ Education, Work and Leisure Time of Greeks in Czechoslovakia”) follow the chronological order of the collective monograph and aim to recapitulate, through the eyes of the Greek “children” (of course, after the notable lapse of time in which the interviews were held), their day-to-day life and their arrival in Czechoslovakia. Jan Procházka’s text (“I Rushed into the Coach and Yelled: ‘People, Rejoice, They Speak like Us Here!’”) focuses on a theme which, to a certain extent, differs from the other themes in the book, but is all the more interesting. It appears that the issue of the Macedonian minority among the refugees has long been overlooked, despite being definitely important to the members of that minority.

The following two chapters written by Tereza Vorlová (“We Greeks Are Schizophrenic, Our Hearts Belong There, Our Bodies Belong Here: We and They – Coexistence of Greek Refugees with Czech Society”) and Vladimír Kadlec (“I Liked the Previous System, It Seemed More Just to Me: Greek Emigration in the Czech Republic and Its Political Views”) analyse how the children perceived the contradiction between their physical stay in Central Europe, complicated by the desire to go back home, and the wait for this return. Even years after the “evacuation,” most of the refugees were convinced that they would eventually return to their homeland. For decades, they perceived their stay in Czechoslovakia as temporary. Kateřina Králová’s text (“They Were Such Fanatics because They Put Their Hearts into It: Greek Politics and KKE”) is perhaps the most factually interesting. Only a few readers will have any knowledge of the political organisation of the Greeks in exile and of the related problems. It should be explained that the abbreviation “KKE” signifies the Communist Party of Greece (*Kommounistikó Kómma Elládas*).

The chapter by Konstantinos Tsivos (“We Were Like Uprooted Trees... Emigration – Repatriation – Re-Emigration”) reflects on the problems of people who, after the “normalisation” of the situation, started to yearn for their old home and decided to return to Greece. However, they were not able to adapt to their new lives there and eventually returned back to Czechoslovakia, thus becoming multiple emigrants. For such people, the issue of identity and feeling anchored (both socially and geographically) is extremely complicated and repeatedly disrupted by their relocation, returning to their homeland and leaving it again. The recapitulating text by Janis Koreček (“In My Life I Have Lived through Three Crises – Now

I Am Living the Third One: Greeks in Our Country, Across Generations”) completes the entire publication.

The third reviewed book was published in 2011, one year before the other two publications, and shares one of the same authors, Konstantinos Tsivos, with the previous book under review. In this case, however, Tsivos is the only author; the book is a published version of his dissertation. The book is complementary to the previous two, if only because it is, to a certain extent, different in the focus and method used. It can be classified rather as a factual work with social history overtones and this may be the reason for some readers to start reading it first. It is structured into an introduction (containing the necessary outline of the literature and sources used), five chapters and a conclusion. Each of the chapters is divided into between three and nine thematic subchapters.

The first chapter, “The Greek Civil War and Origins of Greek Emigration in Czechoslovakia,” introduces the reader to the most important information on the period before the outbreak of the Greek Civil War, with an emphasis on the often neglected and ominous role of British politicians and troops. After this, the author swiftly moves to the description of the social structure of the Greek emigrants (both adults and children), traces the routes of their escape and gives detailed information about the places where the most numerous or most politically influential exile communities were formed. The description of the big, ideologically crucial and very compact (at least in the beginning) group in Soviet Tashkent is probably the most interesting. However, quite naturally, Tsivos, who is a lecturer at the Institute of Greek and Latin Studies at the Faculty of Arts of Charles University in Prague, is primarily concerned with Czechoslovakia. He is interested in the political background of the whole operation, negotiations on the arrival of the refugees and plans for their short-term settlement. No one expected that the armed communist opposition in Greece would lose the civil war and that, for many of its sympathisers, their exile in Czechoslovakia or, for example in Tashkent, would practically become a lifelong reality. The erroneous belief that the stay of Greek refugees in Czechoslovakia would only be temporary also influenced the negotiations on their settlement and education (or more precisely, their political indoctrination). Naturally, the main partner of the Greeks was the “fraternal” Communist Party of Czechoslovakia.

After 1956, it became clear that the temporary stay was slowly turning into a long-term process. In the chapter, “Political Life of Greek Emigration in Czechoslovakia (1956–1967),” Tsivos analyses the conflicts that flared up in Tashkent and which later led to the deposition of Nikos Zachariadis, the then leader of the Greek communist movement. Political disputes over Zachariadis, who had supposedly been venerated as Stalin by the Greek refugees, were clearly related to the critique of the cult of personality across the countries of the Communist Bloc in the latter half of the 1950s. These conflicts were also reflected in Czechoslovakia, where the leadership of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia had to take a stand on this volatile and unpleasant situation. Everything eventually resulted in the resignation of Zachariadis from leadership of the organisation and in the first political

split of the thus far united Greek community. In Czechoslovakia, these events were accompanied by what was called the “letter war” and also by the politically motivated murder in the Central Bohemian town of Beroun. However, these problems were not comparable with the unrest within the Greek community in Tashkent, where Soviet militias, and ultimately also the army, had to be called up. The end of the chapter describes the (not very subtle) efforts of the Czechoslovak Ministry of the Interior to pacify the Greeks in Czechoslovak territory, so as to prevent any possible recurrence of incidents.

The following chapter, “Identity of Political Emigrants and Their Social Life in the 1960s,” falls within a similar period. Here, the author goes back to the information that had to be left out in the previous chapter. It describes inter-party rivalry within the emigrant community. In the 1960s, a large group of refugees, who had come to Czechoslovakia as children or teenagers, had already grown up and started to engage in the social life of the community. In his description, the author (apparently) also seeks to outline the mental and social tendencies among the uprooted Greeks in relation to the changes that the Czechoslovak majority society was going through at that time. While the social and political life of the Greek community did not have any practical influence on their Czechoslovak surroundings, the converse was not true. After all, even the aforementioned conflicts between the Greek communist factions eventually had to be intervened in by their governing Czechoslovak comrades.

The penultimate chapter, “Slavic Macedonians as Part of the Greek Emigration or ‘Minority’ Emigration,” sheds some light on an issue which has long been disregarded – the identity of Macedonians of Slavic origin, called (not only in Czechoslovakia) “Slavic Macedonians.” This chapter reveals the heterogenic social and nationalist stratification of a specific group of emigrants who were at the centre of attention of all three publications. And it is evident that the differences between the Slavic Macedonians and other Greek refugees led to many conflicts and disputes, not only within the group which “ended up” in former Czechoslovakia, but also within the broader Greek emigration.

“The Prague Spring and the Second Split of the KKE and Greek Emigration in Czechoslovakia” is the theme of the last chapter of Tsivos’s book. This second split is clearly related to both faces of the process called the “Prague Spring” – to the more rapid democratisation in the country, as well as to the occupation of Czechoslovakia by the “fraternal” troops and subsequent establishment of the “normalisation” regime. Part of the members of the Czechoslovak section of the Greek exile Communist Party made use of the arrival of occupiers and the establishment of a new and stricter regime as an opportunity to settle their own accounts, related to the never-ending inter-political rivalry and personal conflicts. Tsivos mentions a number of denunciations against those Greeks who (even if just casually) condemned the arrival of the Soviet tanks. Still, according to research conducted by the author, the majority of Greek emigrants, including more than half of the Party members, backed the original Czechoslovak reforms. The Greek Communist Party in Czechoslovakia

was also the only Greek exile communist organisation to oppose the standpoint of its Moscow central, which logically supported the invasion.

Tsivos's dissertation (and book) is written from the perspective of social history and in many parts of the text it literally overflows with facts. However, is this a problem? As in many aspects a conservative historian, I believe that without similar texts, many revealing and inspirational research methods or results would, to some degree, lack in meaning and would drown in extensive editions of acquired material or purposeless analyses of personal memories. Fortunately, both presented books (*Children of the Greek Civil War* and *Vyschly nám slzy...*) are written for readers who are not well versed in the issue of Greek emigration to countries of Central and Eastern Europe. And those readers who wish to obtain more insight into the issue of Greek emigrants in Czechoslovakia can always reach for Tsivos's book edition of his dissertation.

The three reviewed books describe the same events, yet they are not easily comparable. The first two titles work with methodologically similar set of sources, whereas the third is, to a great extent, of a different character. If we compare the first two publications, the English language book definitely makes better use of the possibilities of oral history and offers a better analysis of these sources than the Czech publication. This should not come as a surprise. Oral history in the Czech Republic, despite some publishing successes, still tends to be viewed as a kind of a fashionable approach, rather than as an elaborate and innovative method. On the other hand, it may seem that social scholars using oral history in the Anglo-Saxon world (mainly the younger, new generation) meander through some complex methodological twists when interpreting the sources. With hindsight, the results of their works may be considered questionable. That being said, the authors of both reviewed publications also draw on other sources and this contributes to the credibility and *practicability* of the research results. In terms of theoretical contribution, the foreign publication is more valuable. Mainly the three chapters of the last part of the book ("Refugees, Displacement and Impossible Return"; "Communities of Memory, Narratives of Experience"; "The Politics of Memory: Creating a Meaningful Past") provide great methodological inspiration to all who deal with oral history on an academic level or are interested in it. Unlike the English book, the Czech publication does not employ any modern methods in working with existing source material and, in this respect, can be considered rather as a slightly above-average work, based on the memories of contemporary witnesses. It should also be emphasised that in both publications there are plenty of arguments to be found by the supporters, as well as opponents of oral history. However, it is difficult to imagine that research on this theme, or any other similar theme on modern (and not only) European history, could be carried out without an extensive implementation of oral history. Compared to the first two publications, Tsivos's book *Řecká emigrace v Československu* works predominately with sources of an institutional character. This is not to say that the author ignores personal sources, but he uses them rather for illustrating the overall political and socio-historical description.

Naturally, none of the reviewed books is “floating in a vacuum,” as is evidenced by a number of thematically related book titles and articles listed in the bibliography section (in several languages). Out of the reviewed publications, I personally value most the Czech publication *Vyschly nám slzy...* In my opinion, it meets its unspoken aim to offer a geographically limited insight into a broader issue better than the English book succeeds in its attempt of a compact synthesis of a theme, which is both specific and complex, and at the same time difficult to grasp. It is certainly a pity that these two books inspired by oral history cannot be traced for signs of mutual influence (they were published in the same year), as it could have been equally enriching for both of them. However, perhaps this is why they are all the more complementary. Therefore, it can only be recommended to read them at the same time, together with Tsivos’s work, which can provide them with the necessary political, factual and socio-historical background.

The Czech version of this review, entitled Řeční uprchlíci před občanskou válkou ve světě a v Československu. Tři knihy na podobné téma, was originally published in Soudobé dějiny, Vol. 21, No. 4 (2014), pp. 671–679.

Review

The TV, the Self-Service Store and the Superwoman

Martin Franc

BREN, Paulina: *Zelinář a jeho televize: Kultura komunismu po pražském jaru 1968* [The Greengrocer and His TV: The Culture of Communism after the 1968 Prague Spring]. (Translated from English by Petruška Šustrová) Praha, Academia 2013, 458 pages, ISBN 978-80-200-2322-3.

I recall very well the feeling of embarrassment I was experiencing during the late 1990s debates on issues connected to the contribution of foreign historians to research into the latest Czech (or Czechoslovak) history of the latter half of the 20th century. Even at that time, there were still voices claiming that no one from the West could understand what had been happening here before 1989, and if anyone attempted to do so, he or she would have only introduced some typically Western quasi-problems into his or her interpretation, without any link or connection to the pre-1989 reality. Let us hope that opinions like this are now a thing of the distant past; nowadays the contribution of foreign historians studying the most recent Czech history is increasingly respected and indeed appreciated. Being personally detached from the Czech environment and past helps them not to be drowned in a flood of various details and attractive digressions which may be very treacherous for a historian. Keeping their distance, they better recognise

some basic features which frequently remain hidden to an “insider.” As a rule, they are also capable of making attractive comparisons of certain phenomena of Czech (Czechoslovak) history to developments in other regions, including the Soviet Union which Czech historians usually are not too well-versed in. Prominent academics involved in Czech studies also enrich the Czech historical discourse with new topics and theoretical approaches. The best of them can thus expose entire, however yet unfathomed areas of research and view the development of Czech society from a new and tremendously inspiring angle. Of course, criticism that is not and need not necessarily be self-criticism, sometimes hurts surprisingly painfully, but we have to learn to live with this.¹

The book by American historian Paulina Bren, now also published in Czech, is exactly a contribution to Czech history which we should wholeheartedly welcome.² We can find extraordinarily interesting observations, an original grasp of an entire novel topic, sketched comparisons and analogies not only with the Soviet reality and events taking place in other countries of the Eastern Bloc, but also with developments in Western Europe and the United States. The study is written in an essay-like style, which is still something the Czechs are not quite accustomed to, without any massive descriptive load and a lot of data. Emphasis is placed on individual ideas, without the heavy-handed positivistic effort to synthesise all facts, no matter whether great or small, pertaining to the issue at hand, which is relatively very broad. This approach helps create a smooth and fairly captivating picture which, however, impresses most only in a dialogue with an active reader. It is a book that opens rather than concludes a discussion. And we still miss books like this in Czech historiography, especially in the case of contemporary history.³ However, texts like this must be appropriately received, which means we should react to the stimuli they contain and finally start discussing and also arguing. Unfortunately, discussions and polemics are often perceived as decidedly hostile acts against the authors and or disrespect to his or her work. This makes the position of books like *The Greengrocer and His TV* rather complicated, because they cast light only on a single facet of a complex polyhedron of the issue at hand, no matter how intensive the light may be. Strong propositions are sometimes supported

1 In this respect, I cannot help recalling a German booklet published around the year 2000, which I leafed through a few years ago. It was a guidebook of sorts for communicating with members of various nations. As for the Czechs, the book contained, *inter alia*, an interesting comment: they like joking about their history, but a comment on these issues from a foreigner (particularly a German) can easily be a deadly insult in their eyes.

2 Original edition: BREN, Paulina: *The Greengrocer and His TV: The Culture of the Communism after the 1968 Prague Spring*. Ithaca (New York), Cornell University Press 2010.

3 Domestic examples of works based on a similar concept include, in my opinion, the book by Michal Pullmann *Konec experimentu: Přestavba a pád komunismu v Československu* [The End of the Experiment: Perestroika and the Demise of Communism in Czechoslovakia] (Praha, Scriptorium 2011), or the work by Rudolf Kučera *Život na příděl: Válečná každodennost a politiky dělnické třídy v českých zemích 1914–1918* [Living on Rations: War Everydayness and Politics of the Working Class in the Czech Lands 1914–1918] (Praha, Nakladatelství Lidové noviny 2013).

only by a narrow section of materials and require a verification in the form of their challenging. At the same time, a possibility that some of them may not pass muster cannot be ruled out, which is of course no tragedy or shame for the author. So, if I argue with some conclusions of or comment on some errors or omissions in the book in my review, the purpose is not to question its major contribution to knowledge of Czech society of the “late communist” period (to use the term coined by the authoress). On the contrary – I do so being deeply convinced that I help develop its qualities so that they can be made full use of. Indeed, can a creatively written historical book get a better reception than provoking a discussion and making its readers do their own thinking about each statement it contains? However, I must add that I agree with the principal conclusions of the book as they are basically consistent with what I have learned from documents other than the ones that the reviewed book is based on. I also believe that attitudes of “common citizens” were determined by a desire for peace⁴ rather than immediate fear, and I agree with most characteristics of specific features of the consumption culture in the Czech Lands during the 1970s and 1980s and comments on the role of women in the society at that time.

Nevertheless, I also believe that the picture outlined by Paulina Bren provides only a partial answer to some questions, and in a few cases even none at all. I have already described in a rather verbose way pros of having foreign historians studying contemporary Czech history, but I cannot also ignore the cons, which are often the reverse side of the pros. Perhaps the most striking deficiency is somehow limited knowledge of the cultural background and certain insensitivity to connotations which only someone who has been living here all the time can perceive. Even the most industrious researcher cannot absorb the entire broad context of events in the past, and some nuances are simply missing in the sources. They are a part of certain historical awareness and enable an intuitive interconnection of seemingly disparate facts. On the other hand, this space is often rife with stereotypes and *clichés* of which a foreign person focusing on Czech studies is spared. However, the easier he or she succumbs to errors carried forward in secondary literature and is prone to various factual mistakes, particularly in areas not directly related to the subject of his or her interest.

It is actually the last stumbling block which is the reverse side of Paulina Bren’s book. A meticulous reader can find a number of factual errors there, and some of them prompt a question why they have not been detected by the book’s translator Petruška Šustrová or editor Viktor Dobrev. From an American viewpoint, they are naturally nonessential trifles, but Czech readers, who have at least some

4 In the light of the latest discussions taking place in Czech historiography, the statement may seem almost banal, but we must consider when Paulina Bren’s book was published for the first time. However, it is possible to expect even today that publicists in particular will continue to prefer more attractive and more action-containing images of a nation intimidated by permanent repression and continuously and irreconcilably opposing a narrow clique that it is brutally terrorised by.

knowledge of the overall context and whom the book is intended for, could – and in some cases even should – have been spared of some of the lapses. For example, Gustáv Husák indeed did not hold the post of the Czechoslovak Prime Minister as of 30 April 1968, as the legend to the photograph on page 85 says; Jaromír Hrbek was not the Minister of Culture even for a short time, although the authoress claims so on page 96. Similarly, Jiřina Švorcová did not chair the Czech Union of Theatrical Artists – the name of the organisation was the Union of Czech Dramatic Artists. And Ladislav Zápotocký, father of President Antonín Zápotocký, was not an oppressed farmer (p. 403), but a worker in a tailor's shop (and a Social Democratic activist). I have detected a number of other errors in Paulina Bren's book, but I cannot see any reason why I should list all of them here in detail.

The book also contains some *clichés* and misinterpretations. For example, the authoress claims that expressions used in a song and referring to “gleaming Chryslers” and “sluts” “produced mental images of the opulent lifestyle of black marketeers and Party bosses” (p. 434). However, I daresay that a purchase of a Chrysler and having a mistress (or even maintaining regular contacts with prostitutes) would have made a Party official's career significantly complicated. It would probably be appropriate to finally drop the long-lived concept of Communist Party apparatchiks as principal users of Western-style consumerism delights. It was not and could not be so, one of the reasons being that most paid Communist Party apparatchiks did not have a legal and easy access to Western currencies and their lifestyle was fairly closely watched. In addition, in my opinion, the interpretation of the greengrocer character from Havel's essay *Power of the Powerless* is very questionable. Paulina Bren sees him as an “ordinary normalisation citizen” whom the regime did not provide “capitalist-style consumerism, but rather means to live a higher-quality socialist lifestyle” (p. 378). However, the “greengrocer” definitely did not represent “an ordinary citizen” in the literary and TV production of those days; on the contrary, he was enjoying an income and opportunities that were well above the standard (just like taxi drivers or butchers). It was this population segment that epitomised most the society's turn to consumerism. To claim that Jaroslav Dietl addressed the greengrocer as his typical spectator is an impressive, but not quite accurate simplification.

The authoress herself states that she had studied “normalisation” TV series even before they became a common part of everyday popular culture, for example as low-priced DVDs. This can of course explain some factual errors, although I do not understand why she did not make, also with respect to the abovementioned change, at least a basic factographic review. The latter seems necessary, also with a view to the fact that Petruška Šustrová, who translated the book, is not exactly an expert on Czech TV series of the 1970s and 1980s. As a matter of fact, the authoress' decision not to make any modifications in the Czech edition of the book rather surprised me. I must repeat once again that errors which an American (or, more generally, English-speaking) reader probably will not notice at all stick out in the Czech translation. This applies, in particular, to errors concerning the subject matter of the book. An American researcher will probably accept that the photograph

from the TV series *Engineers' Odyssey* (p. 318) shows “engineer Zbyněk during an important conversation with a Western businessman,” while a Czech, who has seen the TV series quite a few times, immediately knows that Zbyněk is in fact talking with the father of his then girlfriend, a rather traditionalist and snobbish retired lawyer (impersonated by Svatopluk Beneš). The interior of the room where the conversation is taking place, full of antiquities, is in line with his character. Similarly, any spectator who has seen the long line of the Czechoslovak “normalisation” TV series knows that Vašek, another character from the same series, is not “a son of a long line of engineers” (p. 316). On the contrary – this character demonstrates the possibility of social mobility through university studies; his father can – because of inadequate education – be “only” the foreman of the prototype workshop, while his son Vašek works his way up to the post of the factory’s director. However, this is perhaps a translation problem, because the Americans perceive the term *engineer* more generally, as denoting a technician rather than an expression connected with a university degree.

Nevertheless, these shortcomings should not dissuade the reader, or conceal the inspiration contained in many observations of the authoress, in particular those concerning the position of women in Eastern Bloc countries. For example, her reference to the connection between the evolution of the position of women in the “normalisation” society and the attitude to private consumption and an emphasis on the family as “the foundation of the state” is, in my opinion, particularly important. The concept of women as an element stabilising society and also steering consumption toward moderation and modesty certainly deserves special attention of all historians studying Czech society of the 1970s and 1980s and its day-to-day practices. In this respect, a reference to the situation in the Soviet Union, where the role of women in the functioning of the family and indeed of the whole society was even greater, would not be amiss.

What I see as more controversial is the authoress’ musings about the attitude of the “normalisation” political elite to issues of consumerism and self-realisation in society. I believe that genuine effort to present socialist lifestyle as a full-fledged alternative in which certain limits in the field of consumption are more than outweighed by greater opportunities of self-realisation and all-round personal development was more characteristic for the previous period, the 1960s. On the other hand, “Husák’s regime” (again a term coined by the authoress, perhaps a bit debatable) was not, in my opinion, trying too hard to come up with a new definition of the economic ideal. This is not to say that essays on this issue were not appearing in the official press of those days at all, but most of them were just chewing over earlier thoughts, and even their authors harboured no illusions about their convincing power. They definitely believed in their own ideas and statements less than their predecessors of the 1960s who by that time were viewing these issues from fairly different angles, as émigrés or dissidents.

It will certainly be interesting to watch whether the parts of the book dedicated to the “king of the Czech TV soap operas” from the time of the so-called normalisation, Jaroslav Dietl, will provoke more discussions. Here too the fact that

the authoress is focusing only on a part of Dietl's works and utterly ignoring many of them can be somewhat disturbing for a Czech reader. At the same time, she does not provide a clear enough explanation of her selection; perhaps it is due to availability, or unavailability, of some of the TV series. The authoress only outlines the ambivalence and controversial character of the key person of the Czechoslovak TV production of the 1970s and 1980s rather than providing a thorough analysis, and the difficult task is thus left to other researchers. In my opinion, the very attractive issue of the relation of the dissent (in particular the Charter 77 circle) to the consumerisation of life in the "normalisation" Czechoslovakia, including the TV culture phenomenon, also requires a deeper submersion. Was a significant anti-consumerism element not in line of thinking of many dissidents one of the reasons why they were not succeeding in rallying up a broader opposition against the regime? It was, after all, the reason of the failure of most of the dissidents in practical politics after November 1989.

The authoress could also give more space to the origin of specific works of Dietl and the extent of interventions of political bodies into their final form and look. In this respect, she limits herself to hints which are not too firmly supported by archival documents, although this is a key issue which also concerns the importance of Jaroslav Dietl as an author. Was he just retelling instructions provided from above in a creative and captivating form, or was he also able to put through some ideas and concepts of his own? Was his role not in the forming of desirable models of behaviour in the socialist society greater than we are willing to admit? It seems obvious that the attitude to the "68-ers" he recommended to political leaders was not too convenient to at least a part of the political elites. Similarly, it is legitimate to ask how Dietl's personal opinions and attitudes influenced the picture of a socialist woman in his TV series work. It is definitely not possible to expect that Communist Party officials were submitting refined and sophisticated instructions how to manipulate the society through TV soap operas. As a matter of fact, Paulina Bren's book does not contain any suggestion to this effect, but it also does not dwell in detail on potential interventions into Dietl's work.

However, Paulina Bren's book contains, apart from factual errors, many more interesting and often inspiring observations, and my list is a purely subjective one. Actually, I have mentioned only those which have embedded themselves particularly deeply in my mind. Nevertheless, I sometimes have some doubts whether the radiant thoughts are supported by adequate knowledge of available sources. There is thus a fairly obvious risk of research dead-ends. Still, the approach chosen by Paulina Bren is, in my opinion, significantly better than a meticulously accurate description without a trace of an idea. We can only hope that her future publications will manage to provide a substantially better combination of creative thinking and careful heuristics. She would then certainly be able to produce titles ranking among the golden fund of historiographic literature on (not only) Czech studies.

Apart from providing inspiration for thoughts concerning the role of consumerism and consumer culture in Czech society of the 1970s and 1980s, Paulina Bren's book should also provide an impulse to give some thought to how foreign titles

on Czech studies are translated and published in Czech. As I mentioned earlier, I do not think the authoress' decision not to make any fundamental modifications in the Czech edition of her book was particularly fortunate. Of course, I understand that it is a thankless task requiring a lot of time and bringing the authors hardships and feelings of futility rather than satisfaction or recognition. On the other hand, it is necessary to take into account that the environment for which the translation into Czech is intended is considerably different from the English-speaking academic community and places different requirements on the publication. Under the circumstances, it is worth considering whether translators and editors of similar titles should not play a substantially greater role in their adaptation for the Czech environment. They could eliminate at least some of the factual errors, the more so that most of the latter are commonly known facts. However, I am not sure whether they are prepared for a similar approach to their work, and I doubt whether publishing houses are prepared to reflect the above in the fees they pay to their translators and editors.

The Czech version of this review, entitled Televize, samoobsluha a superžena, was originally published in Soudobé dějiny, Vol. 22, No. 1–2 (2015), pp. 186–191.

Summaries

Essays and Articles

Human Rights between Political Identity and Historical Category *Czechoslovakia and East Central Europe in a Global Context*

Michal Kopeček

The essay deals with the global historical development of the human rights doctrine and its role in modern politics from a Czech, Czechoslovak and East-Central European point of view. It draws on recent revisionist historiography of human rights the main characteristic of which, described at the beginning of the essay, is the reconstruction of the human rights doctrine as an epiphenomenon of major historical political conflicts. Then, the author turns to the comeback of human rights as a universalistic concept during the Second World War and the Allied struggle against Nazism. He continues with tracing down the general development during the Cold War leading to the promotion of human rights as a part of binding international law since the mid-1970s. Further, the Czechoslovak postwar situation is analysed starting with the Stalinist Constitution of 1948 up to the dissident struggle for human and civil rights during the last two decades of the communist dictatorship. The last part of the essay examines the rise of liberal internationalism and humanitarian interventionism in the post-1989 period and strives to specify the Czechoslovak and Czech development within a broader context, finishing with a plea for understanding human rights as a space for political deliberation, dialogue and contest.

Between Two Suns***Czechoslovakia and the Sino-Soviet Dispute over the International Communist Movement (1953–62)***

Daniela Kolenovská

In this article, the author traces the changes in the Czechoslovak position in the international Communist movement after the Communist Party took power in Czechoslovakia. She concentrates on the Party's relations with the Soviet and the Chinese Communists, which from the 1950s onwards represented two competing centres of power in world Communism. She argues that in Czechoslovak foreign policy the Communists subordinated the defence of State interests to the international solidarity of the workers, and, in keeping with that ideological guideline, the tasks of Czechoslovak foreign policy were set mainly according to the Soviet agenda and its vaguely defined aims for the international Communist movement. Prague became dependent on Moscow for personnel, information, and material, and lost the ability to act independently in international politics both outside and inside the Soviet bloc. Amongst Prague's priorities were efforts to achieve the unity of the Soviet system of alliances and, beginning at the latest in 1956, it considered military intervention a suitable instrument in the event of a threat to that system.

A comparative analysis of records for the ten years from 1953 to 1962, from the Archive of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Czech Republic and from the Czechoslovak Communist Party leadership, which are deposited in the National Archive, Prague, demonstrate that Czechoslovak foreign policy was actually formed by way of inter-Party contacts. The Soviet Communists were paramount in the hierarchy; in the eyes of the Czechoslovak Communists, the Soviet position remained unchallenged by any Chinese attempts to provide an alternative to Soviet methods and plans to develop the international Communist movement in the late 1950s and early 1960s. Indeed, at multilateral talks amongst dozens of Communist Parties in Moscow in November 1957 and in 1960, where Chinese objections were discussed, Czechoslovak Communists arrived after having been instructed by their Soviet comrades, and from this position they rejected all Chinese activities, despite Czechoslovak efforts to establish friendly and close ties with their Beijing comrades after 1948. As a result of this linking of Czechoslovak Party and State matters, Czechoslovak-Chinese collaboration ceased in the early 1960s, and the Soviet Union promised to compensate for any damages that thus accrued to the Czechoslovak economy.

In between Sympathies and Loyalty
The French Communist Party and the Prague Spring

Michaela Kůželová

The French Communists' official reactions to the Soviet-led military intervention by five Warsaw Pact countries in Czechoslovakia in August 1968 are generally considered to mark the first time in history that the French Communist Party decided not to show public support for an international operation by the Soviet Union. As the author demonstrates with an analysis of records from the Archive of the French Communist Party and the central Czechoslovak archives, French Communist support for the Czechoslovak reform movement was not exactly straightforward; nor was subsequent French Communist condemnation of the August military intervention consistent. The French Communist Party leaders' attitude to Alexander Dubček (1921–1992) and the Prague Spring can, according to the author, be reasonably described as limited support, which did not go beyond the limits of friendship with the Soviet Union. The diplomatic activity of the General Secretary of the French Communist Party, Waldeck Rochet (1905–1983), also stemmed from this attitude: in July 1968, he tried, unsuccessfully, to act as a broker between Prague and Moscow and thus prevent the military intervention. By contrast, amongst French Communist intellectuals, like Roger Garaudy (1913–2012) and Louis Aragon (1897–1982), sympathies for the Prague Spring were much more visible. In contrast to the enthusiasm with which these intellectuals welcomed 'Socialism with a human face' in Czechoslovak, however, were the impressions of the French Communist Party rank-and-file who had experienced the Prague Spring in person – they perceived it as a threat to Socialism and were unpleasantly surprised by manifestations of Czech and Slovak idealization of the West.

Although the French Communist Party initially 'condemned' the intervention in Czechoslovakia, the next day its leaders moderated their negative response, expressing 'disagreement'. Ultimately, this position had no real influence on the French Party's relations with the Soviet Union. Indeed, according to the author, it would be more accurate to talk of a certain buttressing of those relations, since it turned out that they could be further developed regardless of the French Party's not agreeing with the intervention. The attitude of the French Communist Party leadership after August 1968 was therefore of a dual nature: the Party declared that it stuck to its original position of disagreement with the intervention, but that was not really manifested in their politics in practice: in fact, they maintained friendly relations with both the Soviet Communists and the 'normalized' Czechoslovak Communist Party. But not all French Communists agreed with this stance. For many French Communist intellectuals, the official condemnation was insufficient, and they appealed for greater solidarity with occupied Czechoslovakia. Nor amongst the rank-and-file of the French Communist Party was opinion unanimous; probably many members agreed with the intervention in Czechoslovakia.

Occupation, Friendly Assistance, Devastation
The Soviet Army, 1968–91, in the Memory of Czech Society

Marie Černá

In this article, the author raises the question of what now, more than twenty years later, the ‘stay’ (*pobyt*, as it was officially called), of the Soviet Army in Czechoslovakia means to the inhabitants of the country. How, she asks, is it recalled in the public space and the mass media, and what images are most frequently evoked in this connection? Whereas the Soviet-led intervention by troops of the Warsaw Pact countries in August 1968 holds a lasting place in Czech memory and historiography, the subsequent stay of Soviet troops in the country has far fuzzier contours. Though in this connection the term ‘occupation’ (*okupace*) is regularly used today, there is no simple agreement about its political meaning. In the article, the author seeks to indentify the changes in the communicated meanings of the occupation, when the original nation-wide consensus of its rejection was squeezed out by the reality of officially imposed friendship and the ‘twinning’ (*družba*) of Czechoslovak and Soviet towns. Under its façade, by contrast, people developed variously accented and motivated attitudes, such as keeping their distance or being accommodating, the plurality of which has largely survived in the collective memory unchallenged to this day. The author, however, points mainly to the fundamental shift in the perception of the stay of the Soviet Army, which took place after the Changes beginning in mid-November 1989, when, the degradation of the buildings occupied by the Soviets and the land that they stand on, and the gradual rectification of this, have become the main topics, rather than related aspects of political power.

The Strange Unity
Gustáv Husák and Power and Political Fights Inside the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia as Exemplified by the Presidency Issue (1969–75)

Michal Macháček

This article presents an analysis of Czechoslovak political history of the first half of the 1970s and the question of who would succeed General Ludvík Svoboda (1895–1979) as Czechoslovak President. The emphasis is on the role of Gustáv Husák (1913–1991), who emerged from the political crisis of 1968–69 as the most powerful actor, and was, at the 14th Congress of the Czechoslovak Communist Party, confirmed as General Secretary of the Party. Using Soviet archives, the author points to differences between the individual members of the Party leadership, and particularly to the lack of unity amongst the so-called ‘healthy forces’. According to him, it is fair to talk about the disintegration of this bloc, which had been formed during the Prague Spring, into several smaller groups. The secretary of the Central Committee of the Czechoslovak Communist Party, Vasil Biľak (1917–2014), was, in consequence of this and Soviet pressure, forced to abandon any ambitions to

stand at the head of the Party, and had to be satisfied, instead, with the position of Number Two in the Party. The Soviet leadership derived social stability in Czechoslovakia from the firmness of the Czechoslovak Communist Party leadership, and in particular counted on the collaboration of Husák and Biřák, and it made this clear to both men. Svoboda's failing health prevented him from properly discharging his duties as President of Czechoslovakia, but he did not even try to hold on to the presidency, even though, in the interest of political stability, he was confirmed in office in March 1973, and remained something of a temporary solution. The article does not seek to challenge or confirm the hypothesis that he was forced to step down in May 1975; although, in any event, Svoboda was in no condition to have taken this step himself. Husák's efforts to become President kept running up against the question of the accumulation of offices and also the Czech-Slovak national factor, even though, thanks to centrist Czechoslovak policy and support from Moscow, he succeeded in achieving a 'peculiar unity' over this question in the CPCz leadership, so that on 29 May 1975 he became the first, and also the last, Czechoslovak President who was a Slovak. In Czech eyes, however, he remained a Slovak who had, after August 1968, considerably participated in the unfortunate re-imposition of hard-line Communism known as 'normalization', whereas for the Slovak nation he increasingly became a turncoat, a 'Prague Slovak'.

Prague Chronicle

Life's Jubilee of Professor Mečislav Borák

Dušan Janák

The author looks back at the career of the historian Mečislav Borák (b. 1945) on the occasion of his seventieth birthday, and discusses a large selection of his publications. He emphasizes Borák's well-rooted regional interests in Těšínsko (Cieszyn Silesia, Těšín Silesia, or Teschen Silesia) and Czech Silesia, which, however, Borák has successfully moved beyond to precisely include the Czechoslovak and international context, as well as linking together micro- and macrohistory. He has always been interested in ordinary people, whose life stories he has put into the larger framework of 'big' history in an interesting and original way. He has repeatedly returned to topics that have interested him, each time coming up with new facts and views, allowing him to review and expand previous conclusions, and to add considerably to our knowledge of these histories. Before the Changes of late 1989, Borák focused on topics of the German occupation and the resistance to it. Later, he expanded his areas of interest to include research on acts of political oppression against the people of Czechoslovakia and, more broadly, central and eastern Europe, from the late 1930s to the mid-1950s. He was a pioneer in research

on the courts of retribution. A distinctive area of his research was his work on the history of the Shoah and various forms of persecution of the Jews. Another of his later key topics was the Katyn massacre and its victims from the Bohemian Lands. From here Borák proceeded to search for, record, and make sense of cases of the political persecution of Czechs and Slovaks in the Soviet Union. His most recent field of research is the Polish minority and inter-ethnic relations in the context of Czechoslovak-Polish and Czech-Polish contemporary history. His academic career has long been connected with the University of Ostrava, the University of Silesia in Opava, the Silesian Museum, also in Opava, and the Institute of Contemporary History, in Prague. Professor Borák has published two dozen specialist books and more than 150 articles. He has participated in at least three dozen research projects, worked extensively as an editor, expert, and consultant, and also written works of journalism and popular history. Of the more than a dozen documentary films he has worked on as a screen-writer and narrator, the film *Zločin jménem Katyň* (A Crime Called Katyn), was particularly well received, and won a number of prizes at international film festivals.

Book Reviews

Germans in Postwar Czechoslovakia

A Unique Edition of Documents from the Czech Archives Is Bringing Down Established Legends

Eva Hahn

ARBURG, Adrian von – STANĚK, Tomáš (ed.): *Vysídlení Němců a proměny českého pohraničí 1945–1951: Dokumenty z českých archivů* [Expulsion of the Germans and the Transformation of the Czech Border Regions 1945–1951: Documents from the Czech Archives].

Vol. I: *Češi a Němci do roku 1945: Úvod k edici* [Czechs and Germans until 1945: Introduction to the Edition]. Středokluky, Zdeněk Susa 2010, 373 pages, ISBN 978-80-86057-67-5;

Vol. II/1: *Duben–srpen/září 1945: “Divoký odsun” a počátky osídlování* [April–August/September 1945: The “Wild” Expulsion and the Beginnings of Resettlement]. Středokluky, Zdeněk Susa 2011, 957 pages + CD ROM, ISBN 978-80-86057-71-2;

Vol. II/3: *Akty hromadného násilí v roce 1945 a jejich vyšetřování* [Acts of Mass Violence in 1945 and Their Investigation]. Středokluky, Zdeněk Susa 2010, 332 pages + CD ROM, ISBN 978-80-86057-68-2.

This is a review of the three volumes published so far in a large project called The Expulsion of the Germans and Changes in the Czech Borderlands, 1945–51, the

work mainly of the Swiss historian Adrian von Arburg and his Czech colleague Tomáš Staněk. The reviewer discusses their research and the resulting publications in the context of the wider discourse on mass migrations (including the transfers and expulsions) of peoples of Europe after the Second World War. She criticizes the concept of ethnic cleansing as it has been interpreted and explained to the general readership particularly by the American historian Norman M. Naimark (b. 1944, Professor of Eastern European Studies at Stanford). This concept, she argues, ignores the empirical research on the special aspects of the historic situations, particularly the political factors of various forms of migration, and it instead constructs, on the basis of superficial similarities between the migrations, a generalizing picture of the overall misguidedness of Europeans in the twentieth century. Through this lens, some authors have then also used the misleading comparison of the repressive practices of the Nazi regime and the post-war Czechoslovak regime, as personified by Adolf Hitler and the Czechoslovak President Edvard Beneš. From what she has discovered in her own research, the reviewer argues that these scholarly approaches often merely revive, or keep alive, legends and stereotypes that have been passed on in German interpretations of the expulsion of the Czechoslovak Germans and the events leading up to them. She illustrates this with examples from the propagandistic post-war writings of the head of the Sudeten German Social Democrats, Wenzel Jaksch (1896–1966), and his adherents, which were formulated for the international public. The reviewer also provides an overview of published editions of historical sources on the expulsion of the Czechoslovak Germans, and she emphasizes the newness of Staněk and von Arburg's approach. Though they consider the same historical events, the works by these two scholars do not, unlike other editions, use emotionally coloured rhetoric, nor do they pursue political ends; rather than judge, they explain, and thanks to that, offer evidence on the arduous experiences of the Czechoslovak Germans which is more persuasive than propagandistic interpretations. In addition to systematically making hitherto forgotten documents from dozens of Czech archives and eyewitness statements accessible for the first time, Staněk and von Arburg critically compare them with other available information. One more essential difference between the publications in this series and other works on the topic is that that they look at migration in post-war Czechoslovakia geographically unlike the hitherto usually historical but outmoded ethnic view. This enables them to explain the expulsion of the Germans and the resettlement of the lands they had occupied as two complementary, interconnected processes, and to offer a comprehensive picture of relations in the Czechoslovak borderlands at that time. The reviewer provides a summary of the new information contained in these volumes, which, she argues, changes the established picture of post-war Czechoslovakia. In conclusion, she points to serious obstacles standing in the way of completing the series.

History in the Service of a Story

On Igor Lukeš's Book "On the Edge of the Cold War"

Petr Mareš

Lukeš, Igor. *Československo nad propastí: Selhání amerických diplomatů a tajných služeb v Praze 1945–1948*. Trans. from the English by Jan Jiráček and Ladislav Köppl. Prague: Prostor, 2014, 383 pp., ISBN 978-80-7260-292-6. / IDEM: *Československo nad propastí: Selhání amerických diplomatů a tajných služeb v Praze 1945–1948*. Praha, Prostor 2014, 383 pages, ISBN 978-80-7260-292-6.

The review of Igor Lukeš's book and its recent Czech translation is conceived on the broader plan of an analysis of US-Czechoslovak relations in the years immediately after the Second World War. The book, according to the reviewer, is the result of extensive research in all of the important American and Czech archives. Moreover, it is to the author's great credit that he conducted numerous interviews with people involved in the described events and has made use of the unpublished manuscripts they provided him with. He offers a highly attractive, indeed gripping, account, thanks to which the reader gets a very good idea of what it was that led to the Communist takeover in late February 1948.

But this picture is neither complete nor balanced. In this work about the failure of US diplomats and the US secret services in Prague, its greatest strength, according to the reviewer, is, somewhat paradoxically, the revealing passages about the activities of the Czechoslovak intelligence services against the US Embassy and its representatives in Czechoslovakia. What is problematic, however, is the interpretations based on insufficient sources, factual imprecision, and careless interpretation or even intentional shifts, which the reviewer exposes by analysing the withdrawal of the US Army from Czechoslovakia, the role of Czechoslovakia in post-war US policy, and the character of the US Ambassador to Czechoslovakia, Laurence A. Steinhardt (1892–1950). Lukeš, according to the reviewer, too readily accepts the idea that Czechoslovakia was of great importance as an American 'testing ground' to determine the possibilities of maintaining friendly relations with the Soviet Union, while he fails to take into account essential shifts in developments. Above all, however, he presents a contrived portrait of Steinhardt as an originally capable and responsible diplomat who, in consequence of professional failures in his Prague mission, ceased to take an interest in Prague events, paying more attention to his private affairs than his ambassadorial duties.

Refugees of the Greek Civil War in Czechoslovakia and the World*Three Books on Similar Themes*

Dalibor Vácha

DANFORTH, Loring M. – BOESCHOTEN, Riki van: *Children of the Greek Civil War: Refugees and the Politics of Memory*. Chicago – London, University of Chicago Press 2012, 329 pages, ISBN 978-0-226-13598-4;

KRÁLOVÁ, Kateřina – TSIVOS, Konstantinos et al.: *Vyschly nám slzy... Řečtí uprchlíci v Československu* [Our Tears Dried Up... Greek Refugees in Czechoslovakia]. Praha, Dokořán 2012, 331 pages, ISBN 978-80-7363-416-2;

TSIVOS, Konstantinos: *Řecká emigrace v Československu (1948–1968): Od jednoho rozštěpení ke druhému* [Greek Emigration in Czechoslovakia (1948–1968): From One Split to Another]. Praha, Fakulta sociálních věd Univerzity Karlovy [Faculty of Social Sciences of Charles University] – Dokořán 2011, 277 pages, ISBN 978-80-7363-404-9.

The author of this review compares and contrasts three publications on the exodus of refugees from northern Greece to the countries of the Soviet bloc in consequence of the Greek Civil War, from 1946 to 1949. Whereas the Danforth and van Boeschoten publication concentrates on the children evacuated from areas threatened by war at that time, and seeks to chart out these events to their full extent, the two Czech works limit themselves to a consideration of the wave of Greek children and adult refugees to Czechoslovak and their later life in the host country. The first two publications make extensive use of the recollections of eyewitnesses, though the publication by Danforth and van Boeschoten is more advanced in the application of the latest methods of oral history and is theoretically more useful. Nevertheless, the essay collection by Kateřina Králová, Konstantinos Tsivos, and others, whose title translates as 'We have no tears left to cry: Greek refugees in Czechoslovakia', achieves its aim of providing a vivid, if incomplete, picture of research on the topic. Both in its aims and in its methods the work authored by Tsivos alone is markedly different from the other two books under review. It is a historical study based on fact with a distinctive undercurrent of social history, and ignoring oral-history sources.

The TV, the Self-Service Store and the Superwoman

Martin Franc

BREN, Paulina: *Zelinář a jeho televize: Kultura komunismu po pražském jaru 1968* [The Greengrocer and His TV: The Culture of Communism after the 1968 Prague Spring]. (Translated from English by Petruška Šustrová) Praha, Academia 2013, 458 pages, ISBN 978-80-200-2322-3.

According to the reviewer, this publication, a Czech translation of *The Greengrocer and His TV: The Culture of Communism after the 1968 Prague Spring* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2010) by the American historian Paulina Bren is exactly the kind of contribution to Czech history from abroad that Czechs have to welcome with open arms. It contains extremely interesting observations, an original grasp of a whole previously untouched topic, sketched-out comparisons and analogies not only with Soviet life and events in other countries of the Eastern Bloc, but also with developments in western Europe and the United States of America. It is written in a rather essayistic style, which is still quite unusual for Czech readers, and is free of the burden of great amounts of descriptive information. The emphasis is on individual ideas and the book is entirely free from any clumsy positivistic endeavour to present a synthesis of all the facts, large and small, related to the considerably wide topic. That then makes allows the author to create a coherent and rather gripping picture, which, however, does not fully make its impact until it enters into dialogue with the active reader. This is a book that does not close a debate, but, on the contrary, initiates it. And it is precisely such books that are still lacking in Czech historiography, particularly in the field of contemporary history. None the less, on some particular points the picture sketched out by the author only partly corresponds to reality and sometimes even completely misses it. That shortcoming stems from a lack of knowledge of the deeper cultural background of certain adopted clichés and misinterpretations, but also from a number of factual errors, which could have been corrected by the translator or the editor.

Authors

Marie Černá (b. 1972), a sociologist, is a Senior Researcher in the Institute for Contemporary History, Prague. Her chief research interest is the history of Czech society from 1945 to 1989, particularly the subject of vetting in the Communist system. She is a co-author of *Prověrky a jejich místo v komunistickém vládnutí: Československo 1948–1989* [Screenings and Their Role in Communist Rule: Czechoslovakia, 1948–1989] (Prague, 2012). In recent years she has been involved in the ‘Czechoslovakia 38–89’ project, making computer programmes presenting students with milestones in Czech and Czechoslovak contemporary history.

Martin Franc (1973) is a senior researcher in the Masaryk Institute and Archive, Prague, and the Institute for Contemporary History, Prague. He is also Editor-in-Chief of *Kuděj*, a periodical of cultural history. His main research interests are the cultural history of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, particularly the history of dining and consuming and the history of ‘lifestyles’ after 1945. Apart from a number of articles, his publications include *Řasy, nebo knedlíky? Postoje odborníků na výživu k inovacím a tradicím v české stravě v 50. a 60. letech 20. století* [Algae, or Dumpings? Attitudes of Nutrition Experts to Traditions and Innovation in Nutrition in the Czech Lands in the 1950s and 1960s] (Prague, 2003) and *Ivan Málek a vědní politika 1952–1989 aneb Jediný opravdový komunist?* [Ivan Málek and Scientific Policy, 1952–1989] (Prague, 2010). Together with Jiří Knapík, he published the two-volume *Průvodce kulturním děním a životním stylem v českých zemích 1948–1967* [Guidebook to Cultural Development and Lifestyle in the Czech Lands in 1948–1967] (Prague, 2011) and the monograph *Volný čas v českých zemích, 1957–1967* [Leisure Time in the Czech Lands, 1957–1967] (Prague, 2013).

Eva Hahn (b. 1946) was born in Czechoslovakia but has been living in the Federal Republic of Germany since 1968. She currently works as a free-lance historian and journalist, specializing in the history of Communism, modern nationalism, modern Czech political thought, and the history of the Sudeten Germans and their relations

with the Czechs. On the last-named topic she has published *Sudetoněmecký problém: Obtížné loučení s minulostí* [The Sudeten-German Problem: A Difficult Parting with the Past] (Prague, 1996; Ústí nad Labem 1999) and, together with Hans Henning Hahn, *Sudetoněmecká vzpomínání a zapomínání* [Sudeten-German Remembering and Forgetting] (Prague, 2002) and *Die Vertreibung im deutschen Erinnern: Legenden, Mythos, Geschichte* (Paderborn, 2010), which looks at Germans as minorities and German migration in the twentieth century. Her most recent publication is an anthology of texts, *Od Palackého k Benešovi: Němci o Čechách, Němcích a českých zemích* [From Palacký to Beneš: The Germans on Czechs, Germans and the Czech Lands] (Prague, 2015).

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Daniela Kolenovská (b. 1976) teaches in the Institute of International Studies at the Faculty of Social Sciences, Charles University, Prague. As part of her doctoral programme, she has worked in the Institute for Contemporary History, Prague. Her areas of specialization include the history of Russian historiography, Russian and especially Soviet history and foreign policy and their influence on the foreign policy of Czechoslovakia after the Second World War. Together with Michal Reiman, Bohuslav Litera, and Karel Svoboda, she published *Zrod velmoci: Dějiny Sovětského svazu 1917–1945* [Birth of a Great Power: The History of the Soviet Union, 1917–1945] (Prague, 2013).

Michal Kopeček (b. 1974) is a Senior Researcher at the Institute for Contemporary History, Prague, where he heads the department for research on late State Socialism and post-Socialism. He is also a co-director of Imre Kertész Kolleg at the University of Jena. His central research interest is the comparative history of political and social ideas in twentieth-century central Europe, the history and theory of historiography, the democratic transformation of post-Socialist society, and political memory. In addition to numerous articles, he is the author of *Hledání ztraceného smyslu revoluce:*

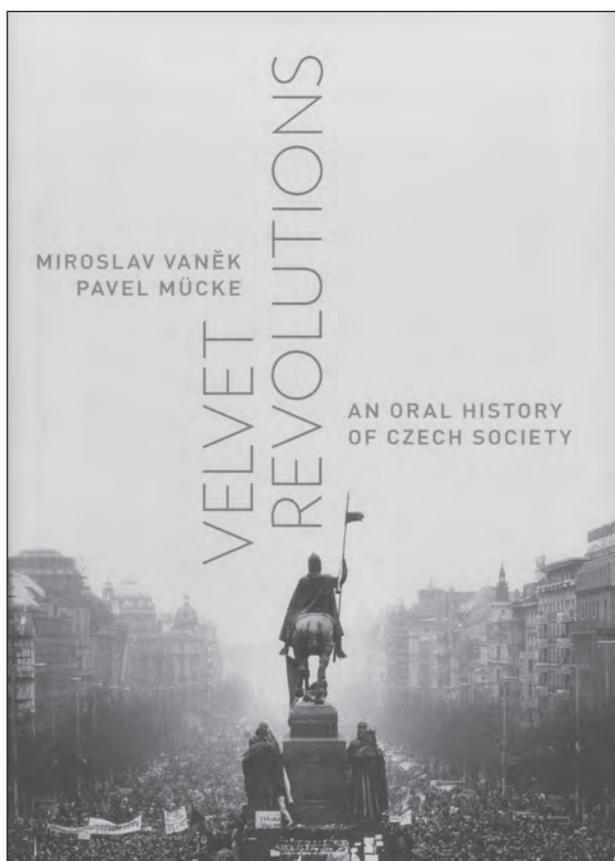
Zrod a počátky marxistického revizionismu ve střední Evropě 1953–1960 [Quest for the Revolution's Lost Meaning. Origins of the Marxist Revisionism in Central Europe 1953–1960] (Prague, 2009), co-author, with Adéla Gjuričová, Petr Roubal, Jiří Suk, and Tomáš Zahradníček, of *Rozdělení minulosti: Vytváření politických identit v České republice po roce 1989* [Divided by the Past. Formation of Political Identities in the Czech Republic after 1989] (Prague, 2011), co-editor, with Zdeněk Kárník, of the five-volume *Bolševismus, komunismus a radikální socialismus v Československu* [Bolshevism, Communism and Radical Socialism in Czechoslovakia] (Prague, 2003–05), and is a co-author of *A History of Modern Political Thought in East Central Europe*, vol. 1: *Negotiating Modernity in the 'Long Nineteenth Century'* (Oxford, 2016).

Michaela Kůželová (b. 1985) is a doctoral student of modern history in the Institute of International Studies at the Faculty of Social Sciences, Charles University, Prague. Her research is mainly on the relations between the French Communists and the countries of Central Europe after the Second World War and the history of science and scholarship in central Europe until late 1989. She is the author of *Francouzští komunisté a Polsko v roce 1956* [French Communists and Poland in 1956] (Prague, 2012).

Michal Macháček (b. 1986) is a doctoral student at the Institute of Czech History, the Faculty of Arts, Charles University, Prague. His main research interests are the Communist movement and Czecho-Slovak relations in the twentieth century, particularly the life and work of Gustáv Husák, about whom he has written a book, which is forthcoming.

Petr Mareš (b. 1953), is a historian, diplomat, and former politician. He currently serves as the Czech Consul General in Istanbul. In the 1980s and 1990s, he worked as a historian, archivist, and then as head of the Department of American Studies at the Institute of International Studies, the Faculty of Social Sciences, Charles University, Prague. From 1998 to 2002, he was a member of the Czech parliament, and from 2002 to 2004 he was Deputy Premier of the Czech Government and Chairman of the Freedom Union party. He then worked in the diplomatic service, including a posting as Ambassador to the Netherlands and Special Envoy for the Eastern Partnership. As a historian he is concerned chiefly with the history of US foreign policy, the Cold War, and film. In addition to many articles, he published, with Jiří Fidler, *Dějiny NATO* [A History of NATO] (Prague, 1997).

Dalibor Vácha (b. 1980) is a PhD student in the Institute of History at the University of South Bohemia, České Budějovice, and he teaches at two schools in that city. His principal research interests are the history of everyday life, the history of comics, and the mind-set and lives of the Czechoslovak legionaries in Russia. The legionaries are the subject matter of his novel *Červenobílí* [The Red-Whites] (Prague, 2014), which received the Knižní klub prize.



Miroslav Vaněk – Pavel Mücke: *Velvet Revolutions An Oral History of Czech Society*. Oxford Oral History Series. Oxford University Press, 2016.

The Velvet Revolution in November 1989 brought about the collapse of the authoritarian communist regime in what was then Czechoslovakia. It also marks the beginning of the country's journey towards democracy. This book examines what the values in so-called real socialism were, as well as how citizens' values changed after the 1989 collapse. In *Velvet Revolutions*, Miroslav Vanek and Pavel Mucke analyze and interpret 300 interviews on citizens' experience of freedom and its absence, the value of work, family and friends, education, relations to public sphere and politics, the experience of free time, and perception of foreigners and foreign countries. The interviewees are drawn from a wide range of professions, including manual workers, service workers, farmers, members of the armed forces, managers, and marketing personnel. All of the interviewees were at working age during the last twenty years of the communist regime and during the post-revolutionary transformation. From this rich foundation, the book builds a multi-layered view of Czech history before 1989 and during the subsequent period of democratic transformation.

THE ENVIRONMENT IN HISTORY: INTERNATIONAL PERSPECTIVES: 10

IN THE NAME OF THE GREAT WORK

Stalin's Plan for the Transformation of Nature
and Its Impact in Eastern Europe



Edited by Doubravka Olšáková

OLŠÁKOVÁ, Doubravka (ed.): *In the Name of the Great Work. Stalin's Plan for the Transformation of Nature and its Impact in Eastern Europe*. New York: Berghahn, 2016.

Contents: Introduction. The Stalin Plan for the Transformation of Nature and the East European Experience (Paul Josephson); Chapter 1. Kafkaesque Paradigms: The Stalinist Plan for the Transformation of Nature in Czechoslovakia (Doubravka Olšáková and Arnošt Štanzel); Chapter 2. Untamed Seedlings: Hungary and Stalin Plan for the Transformation of Nature (Zsuzsanna Borvendég and Mária Palasik); Chapter 3. The Conspiracy of Silence: Stalinist Plan for the Transformation of Nature in Poland (Beata Wysokińska); Conclusion: Environmental History, East-European Societies and Totalitarian Regimes (Doubravka Olšáková)

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1 In this context, the standardized page numbers 1 800 characters including spaces.

2 Two printed pages are usually equal to three pages as defined in footnote 1.



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