

Vol. VII (2019)

CZECH JOURNAL
of CONTEMPORARY
HISTORY

Czech Journal of Contemporary History
ISSN 2336-3134 (On-line)
ISSN 2336-3142 (Print)
ISBN 978-80-7285-217-8

Published by
Institute for Contemporary History
of the Czech Academy of Sciences
Vlašská 9
118 00 Prague 1
Czech Republic

Envelope Aleš Lederer, David Weber
Translations Jiří Mareš, Blanka Medková, Tereza Jonášová, Kathleen Geaney
Resumé Derek Paton
Typesetting David Weber
Printed by Tiskárna Protisk, s.r.o., České Budějovice

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**CZECH JOURNAL
OF CONTEMPORARY HISTORY
Vol. VII (2019)**

THE INSTITUTE FOR CONTEMPORARY HISTORY



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Ten Propositions about Munich 1938

On the Fateful Event of Czech and European History – without Legends and National Stereotypes

Vít Smetana

The Munich conference of 29–30 September 1938, followed by forced cession of border regions of Czechoslovakia to Nazi Germany and subsequently also to Poland and Hungary, is unquestionably one of the crucial milestones of Czech and Czechoslovak history of the 20th century, but also an important moment in the history of global diplomacy, with long-term overlaps and echoes into international politics. In the Czech environment, round anniversaries of the dramatic events of 1938 repeatedly prompt emotional debates as to whether the nation should have put up armed resistance in the autumn of 1938. Such debates tend to be connected with strength comparisons of the Czechoslovak and German armies of the time, but also with considerations whether the “bent backbone of the nation” with all its impacts on the mental map of Europe and the Czech role in it was an acceptable price for saving an indeterminate number of human lives and preserving material assets and cultural and historical monuments and buildings all around the country. Last year’s 80th anniversary of the Munich Agreement was no exception. A change for the better was the attention that the media paid to the situation of post-Munich refugees from the border regions as well as to the fact that the Czechs rejected, immediately after Munich, humanist democracy and started building an authoritarian state instead.¹ The aim of this text is to deconstruct the most widespread

¹ See, for example: ZÍDEK, Petr: Po Mnichovu začali Češi budovat diktaturu [The Czechs started building a dictatorship after Munich]. In: *Lidové noviny* (29 September 2018), p. 1.

errors and stereotypical views that are generally connected with the history of Munich 1938 and, at the same time, to briefly examine the whole comprehensive issue of its causes and long-term consequences using a different optics than the traditional nationalist one.

1. The events of the Sudeten crisis together with the gradually growing interference of West European powers tend to be termed the “Munich betrayal” in Czech debates. The label has been used throughout the 80 years that have elapsed since then – starting with the time of exile from 1939 to 1945, through the short-lived period of the so-called Third Republic (1945–48), the 42 years of the communist regime, and the three decades since 1989. In communist propaganda and ideologized historiography, the term also included the betrayal of Czechoslovak people all of whom – if we are to believe this narrative – wanted to fight for their country. Yet, ultimately they were not allowed to do so – by the bourgeoisie.² However, the term “betrayal” as a dominant label of the actions of the two West European democratic powers has remained a constant in Czech socio-historical discourse, all changes of political regimes notwithstanding.³ It should be noted that the term not only contains an inappropriate emotional charge, which complicates the process of learning about the “causes” of the denouement of the Sudetenland crisis in 1938, but is also very problematic from a material and factual point of view. Britain, as the chief moderator of the crisis, was not bound to Czechoslovakia above and beyond the framework of the Covenant of the League of Nations in any way, i.e. it had the same position as any other member of the organization. This means that, at least as far as Britain was concerned, a “betrayal” was definitely out of the question. And France? It would have indeed violated the alliance treaty if Germany had attacked and it would not have come to Czechoslovakia’s help. However, such a situation did not materialize. The French and the British governments “merely” applied strong pressure to make Czechoslovakia agree, on 21 September, i.e. eight days prior to Munich, with the French-British plan for the cession of territories with Germans accounting for more than 50 percent of the population.⁴ However, when Hitler was threatening, at the end of September, that he would attack Czechoslovakia anyway, he was warned by both French and British diplomats that, should that happen,

2 FIERLINGER, Zdeněk: *Zrada československé buržoasie a jejích spojenců* [The treason of the Czechoslovak bourgeoisie and their allies]. Praha, Mír – Družstevní práce 1951.

3 See, for example: HOŘEC, Jaromír: *Cesty zrady* [The ways of treason]. Praha, NV 1957; KŘEN, Jan: *Mnichovská zrada* [The Munich betrayal]. Praha, Státní nakladatelství politické literatury 1958; NOVÁK, Miloslav: *Munich Pact 1938: Betrayal of Collective Security*, Prague, International Organisation of Journalists 1988; CHALUPA, Tomáš et al.: *Mnichovská zrada: 1938. Výstava: osmičky v čase* [The Munich betrayal: 1938. Exhibition: Eights in the course of time]. Praha, Městská část Praha 6 2008; BÍČ, Jindřich: *Zrada v Mnichově: Mnichov 1938* [The betrayal in Munich: Munich 1938]. Praha, Czech News Center 2018.

4 *Documents on British Foreign Policy, 1919–1939*, 3rd series, 1938–1939. London, H.M.S.O. 1949–57 [hereinafter *DBFP*], Vol. II, Document No. 991, pp. 437–438, Halifax’s telegram to Newton, 21 September, despatched at 1:20 am, No. 992, p. 438, Newton’s telegram to Halifax, 21 September 1938, despatched at 4:45 am.

there would be a “European” war. The first to issue the warning was the British Foreign Office in a statement dated 26 September, followed by Chamberlain’s advisor Horace Wilson and the French Ambassador in Berlin, André François-Poncet, during talks with Hitler taking place the next two days.⁵ In my opinion, the term “hard pressure” on an ally would be more fitting than “betrayal.”

2. The British and French unwillingness to go to war because of Czechoslovakia’s border regions, in Czech debates usually linked to words such as “shortsightedness” or even “stupidity,” is, in the light of previous historical developments, understandable and, in a way, even rational. The horrors of the Great War with more than two million dead only on the side of France and Britain were still too vivid. On the other hand, horrors of the holocaust and Nazi occupation of most of Europe were, for the time being, hardly imaginable. France’s domestic policy weakness only strengthened its dependence on Britain. Moreover, the French government saw in Mussolini’s ambitions in the Mediterranean, targeting not only Spain, but also Tunisia, or even Corsica and Nice, a danger almost comparable to that posed by German expansion.⁶ British Chiefs of Staff, too, were ruling out a possibility to wage war against Germany, Italy and Japan simultaneously – even in cooperation with France and the Soviet Union (in the case of which the horrors of forcible Sovietization, collectivization, and the just culminating wave of state-organized terror were known well enough to quench any interest of Western politicians in cooperation with the Soviet Union, at least for the time being).⁷ Britain was not militarily prepared for a war, one of the reasons being insufficient defence appropriations (and it must be noted that also members of the opposition Labour Party had been criticizing literally every penny set aside for this purpose until 1937). Since the spring of 1938, British dominions had been flatly refusing to participate in a war in defence of Czechoslovakia.⁸ When Prime Minister Neville Chamberlain described trench digging and trying on gas masks as a nightmare “because of a quarrel in a faraway country between people of whom we know nothing” on the evening of 27 September, he pretty much expressed what most of the British public were thinking.⁹ Thus, when he announced he had been invited to Munich during his speech in parliament the next day, the House burst into ovations. Even Winston

5 DBFP, 3rd series, Vol. II, Note 1 to document No. 1111, pp. 550; NEVILLE, Peter: *The British Attempt to Prevent the Second World War: The Age of Anxiety*. Newcastle upon Tyne, Cambridge Scholars Publishing 2018, p. 119; FRANÇOIS-PONCET, André: *Berlin 1931–1938: Vzpomínky diplomata* [Berlin 1931–1938: Recollections of a diplomat]. Praha, Nakladatelství Universum 1947, p. 314.

6 ADAMTHWAITE, Anthony: *France and the Coming of the Second World War, 1936–1939*. London, Totowa 1977, pp. 255–260.

7 HAUNER, Milan: Czechoslovakia as a Military Factor in British Considerations of 1938. In: *The Journal of Strategic Studies*, Vol. 1, No. 2 (1978), pp. 194–222, here p. 196–198.

8 PARKER, R. A. C.: *Chamberlain and Appeasement: British Policy and the Coming of the Second World War*. London, Macmillan Press 1993, pp. 295–296.

9 *Documents on International Affairs*, Royal Institute of International Affairs. London, Oxford University Press 1943, p. 270.

Churchill, a well-known rebel in the ranks of the Conservative Party, wished the Prime Minister “God-speed” for his mission.¹⁰ Yes, the same Churchill, who on 5 October 1938 stated in the House of Commons that Britain had suffered “a total and unmitigated defeat” in Munich, and predicted an early destruction of post-Munich Czechoslovakia – however, in May 1938 even he had failed to see through the convincing act of the leader of the Sudeten German Party, Konrad Henlein, playing a reasonable and moderate politician during his visit in London.¹¹ Nevertheless, Britain did not withdraw into its “splendid isolation,” as often mistakenly stated. On the contrary, it tried to mediate a peaceful solution of the Sudeten crisis – first by sending Lord Runciman as a go-between, then by the Prime Minister’s personal effort during his three trips to Hitler.¹²

3. Most texts or movies capturing the destruction of Czechoslovakia in 1938 and 1939 ascribe the loss of its border regions to the decision of the four chiefs of their governments during the conference in Munich – in the Czech narrative presented as “about us without us.” Yet, everything that mattered had already been clinched during the two weeks before Munich, or decided later, in the first decade of October in Berlin (i.e. at negotiations of representatives of the four powers and Czechoslovak Envoy Vojtěch Mastný concerning the extent of the “fifth zone”), rather than during the chaotic summit in Munich. The most important event there was probably Chamberlain’s meeting with Hitler on the morning of 30 September, during which the German leader signed a commitment for the Prime Minister to the effect that any future European problem would be resolved by negotiations between the two great powers. It was this agreement that Chamberlain, full of emotions and hopes, was waving with after landing in London.¹³ For decades, a vivid debate was going on in Britain as to whether Chamberlain really believed he had ensured “peace for our time,” or whether he was only trying to gain more time for a stepped-up armament programme. His private correspondence suggests the former, but being a pragmatic politician, he also took steps to increase Britain’s defence capabilities.¹⁴ As a matter of fact, Britain was considerably better prepared

10 *Parliamentary Debates, House of Commons*, London, H.M.S.O., 5th series, 1938–1948 (herein after *H.C. Deb.*), Vol. 339, 28 September 1939, Cols. 26–28; GILBERT, Martin (ed.): *Winston Churchill, Companion Vol. V.: The Coming of War, 1936–1939*. London, Heinemann 1975, pp. 1184–1185.

11 *H.C. Deb.*, 5th series, Vol. 339, 5 October 1938, Cols. 360–374; GILBERT, M. (ed.): *Winston Churchill, Companion Vol. V., The Coming of War, 1936–1939*, pp. 1024–1025.

12 VYŠNÝ, Paul: *The Runciman Mission to Czechoslovakia, 1938: Prelude to Munich*. Houndmills – Basingstoke, Palgrave Macmillan 2003; ELLINGER, Jiří: *Neville Chamberlain: Od usmířování k válce. Britská zahraniční politika, 1937–1940* [Neville Chamberlain: From appeasement to war. British foreign policy, 1937–1940]. Praha, Nakladatelství Lidové noviny 2009, pp. 182–241.

13 PARKER, R. A. C.: *Chamberlain and Appeasement*, pp. 180–181.

14 *Birmingham University Library, Chamberlain Papers*, NC 18/1/1071, Neville Chamberlain’s letter to his sister Ida, 9 October 1938; NC 18/1/1072, Neville Chamberlain’s letter to his sister Hilda, 15 October 1938; NC 18/1/1075, Neville Chamberlain’s letter to his sister

to wage a defensive war against Germany in the summer of 1940, when it actually happened, than it had been in the autumn of 1938. Suffice to say that by 1940, there were Spitfire and Hurricane fighters, radars, air raid shelters, and, after all, also the broken Enigma code.

4. In spite of all real or just perceived perfidy of the Western powers, we should not forget that the main engine of the whole crisis was Hitler's targeted and planned expansionist policy – fueled partly ideologically by extreme nationalism and partly economically by growing needs to meet the enormous costs of armament, full employment, the social security system, etc. At the time when Germany was still preparing for a large-scale war, its expansionist policy was supposed to be approved by the West, whether tacitly or explicitly. Hitler was, at the same time, making use of his propaganda machine to create a concept of alleged oppression of Germans living abroad combined with emphasizing the German nation's right to self-determination.¹⁵ The essence of the matter thus became blurred enough to make the annexation of additional territories inhabited by Germans to the Reich an acceptable price for the preservation of peace in Europe for a substantial number of Western politicians.

5. Still, it must be noted that Czechoslovakia was not just a wholly innocent victim. Let us remind ourselves that Edvard Beneš, speaking to Entente statesmen during the peace conference in Paris, stated that his country would become another Switzerland – and that certainly did not happen.¹⁶ The Czech-German relationship was permanently burdened by the memory of 54 dead (and more than a hundred wounded) Czech Germans shot during anti-Czechoslovak riots on 4 March 1919.¹⁷ Even impartial and objective observers subsequently kept noticing that Czech public servants often treated German inhabitants tactlessly, to say the least. This, of course, only strengthened complexes of a substantial part of the Germans who never put up with the fact that their position had changed from that of a privileged nation to that of a subservient one almost overnight in 1918. The government of the multiethnic state could, and perhaps even should, have shown its effort to deal, if possible generously, with the situation of ethnic minorities in the calm 1920s, and

Hilda, 6 November 1938; *Bodleian Library*, Oxford, microfilm, CAB 23/96, Cab 60(38), 21 December 1938. See also my interview with R.A.C. Parker: Nejen o appeasementu [Not only about appeasement]. In: *Dějiny a současnost*, Vol. 21, No. 1 (1999), pp. 44–47.

15 WEINBERG, Gerhard L.: *The Foreign Policy of Hitler's Germany*, Vol. 2: *Starting World War II*. Chicago – London, The University of Chicago Press 1980, esp. Chapter 2 – “Hitler's Preparations 1937–38,” pp. 18–51.

16 See, for example: Memorandum No. III, *Le problème des Allemands de Bohême*, presented by the Czechoslovak delegation at the Paris Peace Conference in 1919, which, referring to the future position of Germans in Czechoslovakia, stated: “La régime serait semblable à celui de la Suisse.”

17 KÁRNÍK, Zdeněk: *České země v éře První republiky (1918–1938)* [The Czech Lands in the era of the First Republic (1918–1938)]. Vol. 1: *Vznik, budování a zlatá léta republiky (1918–1920)* [The birth, building, and golden years of the republic]. Praha, Libri 2003, p. 43.

not only under increasing pressure in 1937–1938.¹⁸ The economic crisis which hit Sudetenland with its dominant consumer industries (textile and glass factories) more than the rest of the country only exacerbated the feeling of alienation.¹⁹ The government was not dealing with its regional impacts consistently enough – and, unfortunately, even at the time when a regime which managed to completely eliminate unemployment in a few months and fascinated fellow Germans living across the border in many respects due to its emphasis on modernity and efficiency, established itself in neighbouring Germany.

6. Czechoslovakia's political leaders were playing a strange game with their people in September 1938, alternately stirring up and moderating their patriotic feelings – depending on where the behind-the-scenes negotiations on Czechoslovak border regions were heading at a given moment. As early as in mid-September, both Prime Minister Milan Hodža and President Edvard Beneš spoke, independently of each other, about a possibility of territorial concessions to Germany, albeit smaller than those ultimately implemented, before British Envoy Basil Newton.²⁰ Beneš addressed a similar message to the French diplomacy, probably through Ambassador Victor De Lacroix and, in particular, through his confidante and Minister of Social Welfare Jaromír Nečas, whom Beneš sent to Paris on 15 September with a secret plan for a cession of 4,000 to 6,000 square kilometers – in exchange for the transfer of 1.5–2 million Germans to Germany.²¹ However, with Czechoslovakia voluntarily resigning to defend its territorial integrity, or its historical borders hundreds of

18 The most detailed account on vain efforts of the Czechoslovak government can be found in: KUKLÍK, Jan – NĚMEČEK, Jan: *Od národního státu ke státu národnosti? Národnostní statut a snahy o řešení menšinové otázky v Československu v roce 1938* [From a national state to a state of nationalities? The national statutes and efforts to resolve the issue of minorities in Czechoslovakia in 1938]. Praha, Karolinum 2013.

19 KÁRNÍK, Z.: *České země v éře První republiky (1918–1938)*, Vol. 2: *Československo a české země v krizi a v ohrožení (1930–1935)* [Czechoslovakia and the Czech Lands in crisis and jeopardy (1930–1935)]. Praha, Libri 2002, pp. 45–48.

20 *DBFP*, 3rd series, Vol. II, Document No. 902, p. 358, Newton's report for the Foreign Office, 16 September 1938; DEJMEK, Jindřich: *Nenaplněné naděje: Politické a diplomatické vztahy Československa a Velké Británie (1918–1938)* [Unfulfilled hopes: Political and diplomatic relations of Czechoslovakia and Great Britain (1918–1938)]. Praha, Karolinum 2003, pp. 416–417, note 141.

21 *Documents Diplomatiques Français 1932–1939*, 2nd series (1936–1939). Paris, Imprimerie Nationale 1977–82 [hereinafter *DDF*], Vol. XI, Document No. 180, pp. 273–275, De Lacroix's telegram to Bonnet, 16 September 1938; DEJMEK, Jindřich et al. (eds.): *Dokumenty československé zahraniční politiky: Československá zahraniční politika v roce 1938* [Documents of Czechoslovak foreign policy: Czechoslovak foreign policy in 1938], Vol. II (1 July – 5 October 1938). Praha, ÚMV – UK – Karolinum – HÚ AV ČR 2002 [hereinafter *DČSZP*, 1938, II], Document No. 599, pp. 201–202, Instruction of President E. Beneš for Minister of Social Welfare of ČSR J. Nečas before his negotiations in France, 15 September 1938, Appendix III, pp. 521–526, Letter of former Minister of Social Welfare of ČSR J. Nečas for former President of ČSR E. Beneš, informing about his journey to France and Great Britain, undated (end of October 1938).

years old, Western “appeasers” started viewing the whole matter as a question of quantity – with a chance of finding a compromise acceptable to all parties.²² Negotiations held at 10 Downing Street on 18 September thus resulted in a British-French plan for the cession of the border regions.²³ It was of course born independently on Czechoslovakia’s will, primarily as a reaction to Hitler’s pressure on Chamberlain during their meeting in Berchtesgaden, but the initiatives of the two highest representatives of Czechoslovakia gave it a semblance of acceptability even in the eyes of skeptics. The government in Prague initially rejected the plan. However, when Prime Minister Hodža, in a conversation with the French ambassador, highly likely expressed Czechoslovakia’s preparedness to accept it if presented as an ultimatum, the Czechoslovak government, facing the threat formulated as indicated above (i.e. that Czechoslovakia would have to deal with Germany on its own if it did not accept the plan), ultimately accepted the British-French plan on 21 September.²⁴ In doing so, it violated the constitution, as only the parliament could endorse border changes. Under the pressure of the public in the form of extensive demonstrations on 21 and 22 September, it resigned and was succeeded by the caretaker government of General Jan Syrový. Reacting to the British-French recommendation, the latter declared a general mobilization on the evening of 23 September, but it also continued to assure the British and the French that the consent with the cession of territory was still held. And so, while reservists were enthusiastically enlisting to defend the republic and its borders, the government in Prague was discussing which specific territories Czechoslovakia would cede in the future.²⁵ The government’s truly step-motherly attitude to the wave of patriotic enthusiasm culminated on 30 September, when the police violently intervened against a demonstration of some 8,000 people protesting against the acceptance of the Munich Agreement on Prague’s Wenceslas Square. When speaking to representatives of the Committee for the Defence of the Republic, President Beneš justified the action by the necessity not to provoke Berlin in the new circumstances.²⁶

7. Still, the proposition of Czech historian Jan Tesař (made popular by Petr Zelenka’s movie *Lost in Munich*) is not convincing. He argues that Munich was in fact a major

22 DČSZP, 1938, II, Document No. 631, p. 328, Osuský’s letter to Beneš, citing Anatole de Monzie, 19 September 1938.

23 PARKER, R. A. C.: *Chamberlain and Appeasement*, pp. 164–165; ELLINGER, J.: *Neville Chamberlain*, pp. 200–201.

24 DDF, 2nd series, Vol. XI, Document No. 232, pp. 361–362, De Lacroix’s telegram to Paris, 20 September 1938. At the same time, Jean-Baptiste Duroselle also furnishes evidence attesting to the authenticity of De Lacroix’s message, which is stored not only in the papers of Georges Bonnet, but also in that of Édouard Daladier. DUROSELLE, Jean-Baptiste: *France and the Nazi Threat: The Collapse of French Diplomacy 1932–1939*. New York, Enigma Books 2004 (first published in French in 1985), p. 469, note 128.

25 DEJMEK, J.: *Nenaplněné naděje*, pp. 330–333; TESAŘ, Jan: *Mnichovský komplex* [The Munich complex]. Praha, Prostor 2000, pp. 18–23.

26 KÁRNÍK, Z.: *České země v éře První republiky (1918–1938)*, Vol. 3: *O přežití a o život (1936–1938)* [For survival and for life (1936–1938)]. Praha, Libri 2003, pp. 618–619.

Czechoslovak diplomatic victory and that it was more or less in line with what President Beneš allegedly wanted, knowing that the war would come anyway. With this in mind, Tesař goes on, Munich basically allowed the Czech nation to survive the war at relatively low losses and to resolve the minority problem in the future by resettling the Germans.²⁷ This is, in my opinion, an *ex post* rationalization of sorts. From all we know about the last decade of Beneš's life, it is obvious that Munich was the biggest trauma of his political career, which gave birth to "his" Munich syndrome. The cornerstone of his exile efforts was a programme of the "undoing of Munich," including not only the repeal of the Munich Agreement and the restoration of Czechoslovakia within its pre-Munich borders, but also punishing culprits for the Munich humiliation, getting rid of a substantial part of Sudeten Germans by a population transfer, and ensuring the state's security against a repeated German threat by an alliance with the Soviet Union and by establishing a common border with it (through an offer to cede Carpathian Ruthenia made as early as in the autumn of 1939²⁸). British politicians are thus reminded, literally *ad nauseam*, of their "Munich debt"; Beneš's attitude to the Polish exile representation is highly mistrustful; Yugoslavs are reproached for not helping Czechoslovakia, etc.²⁹ All of them become targets of Beneš's devastating criticism during his talks with Stalin and Molotov in Moscow in December 1943 – in addition, President Beneš also orders that the Soviets pursue postwar pressure on Czechoslovakia so that it punishes all guilty Slovaks.³⁰

8. It should be noted that even Beneš subsequently doubted (albeit only in private) Soviet preparedness to come to Czechoslovakia's assistance in September 1938,

27 TESAŘ, J.: *Mnichovský komplex*, esp. pp. 84–98; the movie *Ztraceni v Mnichově* [Lost in Munich], screenplay and direction Petr Zelenka, Czech Republic 2015.

28 *Dokumenty vneshnei politiki* [Documents on foreign policy], Vol. XXII/2, Moskva, Ministerstvo inostrannych del SSSR 1992, Documents No. 625, 802, pp. 121–122, 326–237, from Ivan Maisky's diplomatic diary, 22 September and 21 November 1939; NĚMEČEK, Jan – NOVÁČKOVÁ, Helena – ŠTOVÍČEK, Ivan – TEJCHMAN, Miroslav (eds.): *Československo-sovětské vztahy v diplomatických jednáních 1939–1945: Dokumenty* [Czechoslovak-Soviet relations in diplomatic negotiations 1939–1945: Documents], I–II. Praha, Státní ústřední archiv v Praze 1998–1999 [hereinafter *ČSSVDJ*], here Vol. 1, Document No. 26, pp. 86–87, Beneš's record of his talk with Maisky, 22 September 1939. The Czech record of the second talk has never been found.

29 SMETANA, Vít: *In the Shadow of Munich: British Policy towards Czechoslovakia from the Endorsement to the Renunciation of the Munich Agreement (1938–1942)*. Praha, Karolinum 2008, esp. chapter "Planning for the Future while Looking to the Past," pp. 244–310; SOVILJ, Milan: *Počátky československé a jugoslávské exilové vlády v Londýně za druhé světové války: Očekávání, možnosti a realita* [Beginnings of the Czechoslovak and Yugoslav exile governments in London during the Second World War: Expectations, possibilities, and reality]. In: *Soudobé dějiny*, Vol. 26 (2019), No. 4, in print.

30 For the Soviet and Czechoslovak record of Beneš's talks in Moscow, see: *Archiv vneshnei politiki Rossijskoi federacii* [Foreign Policy Archive of the Russian Federation], Moscow [AVP], fund Molotov's Secretariat, opis [compartment] 5, papka [stack] 33, delo [file] 401; *ČSSVDJ*, Vol. 2, Document Nos. 58–70, pp. 121–189.

when recalling very well the evasive answers of Soviet Envoy Sergei Alexandrovskii, who did not have anything to offer to the President in reaction to his increasingly urgent pleas in the pre-Munich days.³¹ According to available documents, Stalin was prepared to intervene only in a European war (and we do not know in which form and intensity), not to help lonesome Czechoslovakia. After all, the only warning issued by the USSR during the critical days was not addressed to Germany, but to Poland, which was the principal target of Soviet expansion – and even that warning remained unfulfilled after Munich and the Polish occupation of the Těšín/Cieszyn district in Silesia.³² On the other hand, Czechoslovak generals who flew to Moscow to negotiate with their Soviet partners in September 1938 were only greeted by toasts at best, and they had to undergo unpleasant inspections of their luggage and checks of their personal correspondence – as if they were not allies, but rather enemy spies.³³ However, the Munich solution, which completely ignored the Soviet Union, was a major blow to Litvinov’s policy of collective security and most probably also an important milestone on the road toward the signing of the Nazi-Soviet pact in August 1939.³⁴

9. Western politicians soon sobered from the Munich intoxication – most of them sometimes between the Crystal Night on 9 November and the occupation of Prague on 15 March 1939. And British journalists started looking for national culprits (“guilty men”) as early as in the summer of 1940.³⁵ The “lessons of Munich,” according to which it is not advisable to make concessions to any aggression or blackmailing, become a part of policies of Western statesmen confronting expansionist dictatorships, and are referred to in crises and wars, from Korea, through Suez and Vietnam to the Persian Gulf Wars. Anthony Eden pays for their application in 1956 with his Prime Minister’s seat, and the other life of Munich continues to complicate the use of “negotiations” as a method of dealing with international crises

31 AVP, fund Czechoslovakia’s office (0138), opis 19, papka 128, delo 6, Minister Alexandrovskii’s report *Zametki o sobytijach v Čechoslovakii v konce sentjabrja i načale oktjabrja 1938 g.* [Record of the events in Czechoslovakia in late September and early October 1938], 26 October 1938, pp. 11–13; FEIERABEND, Ladislav Karel: *Politické vzpomínky* [Political memoirs], Vols. I–III. Brno, Atlantis 1994–1996, here Vol. III, Appendix 3/1, pp. 417–419, Ivan Herben’s letter to Feierabend, 25 September 1965.

32 For further details, see: SMETANA, Vít: *Ani vojna, ani mír: Velmocí, Československo a střední Evropa v sedmi dramatech na prahu druhé světové a studené války* [Neither war, nor peace: Great Powers, Czechoslovakia, and Central Europe in seven dramas on the eve of the Second World War and the Cold War]. Praha, Nakladatelství Lidové noviny 2016, pp. 41–69; KUKLÍK, Jan – NĚMEČEK, Jan – ŠEBEK, Jan: *Dlouhé stíny Mnichova: Mnichovská dohoda očima signatářů a její dopady na Československo* [Long shadows of Munich: The Munich Agreement through the eyes of its signatories and its impacts on Czechoslovakia]. Praha, Auditorium 2011, pp. 62–67.

33 SMETANA, Vít: *Ani vojna, ani mír*, pp. 58–59.

34 HASLAM, Jonathan: Soviet-German Relations and the Origins of the Second World War: The Jury Is Still Out. In: *The Journal of Modern History*, Vol. 69, No. 4 (1997), pp. 785–797.

35 CATO: *Guilty Men*. London, Gollancz 1940.

by Western politicians at numerous other moments of the Cold War. And it is not just the content, but also the form: afraid of Chamberlain's analogies, American politicians and diplomats take the utmost care not to be caught with an umbrella in their hand, especially when meeting the Soviets.³⁶

10. Munich has had, and unfortunately continues to have, a fundamental influence on the Czech "mental map" of Europe and the Czech place on it. The story about the united nation determined to defend its borders and betrayed by unreliable Western "friends" at the crucial moment, colourfully depicted by Czechoslovak propaganda even in the years of exile, was soon joined by the myth of Yalta concerning the alleged writing off of Eastern Europe as a part of the Soviet sphere of influence by Western powers as early as in February 1945 – together with the fact that Americans did not help fighting Prague in May 1945 (when General Eisenhower complied with the request of the Red Army command that falsely informed him, on 5 May, that the Prague operation had already begun).³⁷ The lesson according to which the West should not be trusted and it would therefore be advisable to look for protection and alliance in the East, is something Edvard Beneš arrived at already in the post-Munich days. He steered the state's foreign policy accordingly almost until the very end of his days.³⁸ And this "lesson" obviously still lives on in minds of a number of Czech politicians and of a not negligible segment of the public.

This is an updated and expanded version of the article Deset tezí o Mnichovu 1938: Smutné výročí bez legend a národních stereotypů [Ten propositions about Munich 1938: The sad anniversary without legends and national stereotypes], published in Dějiny a současnost, Vol. 40, No. 10 (2018), pp. 10–14.

Translated by Jiří Mareš

36 RECORD, Jeffrey: *The Spectre of Munich: Reconsidering the Lessons of Appeasing Hitler*. Washington, Potomac Books 2008; MAREŠ, Petr: American Policy, Korean War, and the Lessons of Munich. In: *Czech Journal of Contemporary History*, Vol. V (2017), pp. 5–62; ADAMEC, Jan: Americký mnichovský syndrom [The American Munich syndrome]. In: *Lidové noviny – Orientace* (29 September 2018), p. V/23.

37 For details, see: HRBEK, Jaroslav – SMETANA, Vít et al.: *Draze zaplacená svoboda: Osvobození Československa 1944–45* [Dearly paid freedom: The Liberation of Czechoslovakia 1944–45], Vols. I–II. Praha, Paseka 2009, here Vol. I, pp. 65–69.

38 Compare: HAUNER, Milan: "We Must Push Eastwards!" The Challenges and Dilemmas of President Beneš after Munich. In: *Journal of Contemporary History*, Vol. 44, No. 4 (2009), pp. 619–656.

When We Walk Down Wenceslas Square...¹

*A Picture of the Return of Czech Legionnaires
to Their Homeland in Their Recollections
and Autobiographic Novels*

Dalibor Vácha

On 13 June 1920, we stepped on the native soil at the border railway station of Dvořiště, in the southern corner of Bohemia. It was a sacred and memorable moment for us, soldiers from Siberia. It was a nice summer Sunday, a holiday. The nature seemed to be in a festive mood and attire. Azure skies spanned fertile fields of southern Bohemia, without a single blemish or a trace of cloud. The sun was shining pleasantly, as if knowing that we were coming from cold and harsh Siberia, that we were longing for its comforting warmth
[...]
Metoděj Pleský

In my dreams, I heard cries of the wounded, including unfortunate teacher Pištěk whom I liked so much and whom I vainly tried to help again and again. The

1 “Až půjdem po Václaváku! šeptali si kluci v mokrých borispolských zemljankách...” [“When we walk down Wenceslas Square! whispered boys in sodden dugouts in Borispol...”] (VLASÁK, Rudolf: *Naši kluci doma*: [Our boys at home]. In: IDEM: *Houpačky na magistralé: Humoresky z Ruska i z vlasti* [Seesaws on the Trans-Siberian railway: Humorous stories from Russia and home]. Praha – Čáslav, Za svobodu 1927, p. 337).

worst dreams were those about bayonet attacks [...] when stabbed men were helplessly falling in death rattle on the ground one after another, their eyes bulging and mouths gaping [...]. And, as if deliberately, a terrifying image haunted me from time to time, that of a soldier who, unable to pull out his bayonet from his enemy's body, steps on the dying man and, using all his strength, wrenches his bayonet out of the body with shreds of still living human flesh dripping warm blood. Such dreams often woke me up, but it was good for nothing, as I fell asleep again after a while and the terrible dream continued! [...] In the early months after my return from the war, I "fought" with the enemy sometimes three times a week. [...] I have been home 11 years now and I am completely calmed down, but war horrors still appear in my dreams a few times a year.

Karel Svoboda²

Both quotations used as mottos of this article are examples of a long line of memories which are related to the topic of the return of Czech volunteers from Russia to their homeland. Their emotional messages of course represent opposite types of such recollections between which reflections of legionnaires are usually found.

Opening Notes

Most Czechoslovak soldiers were returning from Russia to their liberated homeland in 1919 and 1920. Paradoxically, they reached home later than released prisoners of war who had refused to join Czechoslovak units, be it in Siberia or elsewhere. And, understandably, surviving ex-soldiers of the former Austro-Hungarian army had already also been home for a long time. By irony of fate, predictions of some pessimists who had doubted the reasons to put on a Russian uniform during the recruitment campaign came true. The first trains with so-called invalids and over-aged legionnaires even encountered baffled surprise of local people who were wondering at the "prisoners of war" coming back from Russia.³

2 SVOBODA, Karel: *S vichřicí do dvou světadílů: Dokumentární historie ruského legionáře* [With a windstorm to two continents: A documentary story of a Russian legionnaire]. Praha, Professional Publishing 2006, p. 206 (1st edition F. Obzina 1931).

3 "Which prisoners are you talking about? Is a Czechoslovak soldier who fought at Zborov, Bachmač or in Siberia a prisoner? Do not mistake us for 'also-Czechs' who have returned to Austria or are still stuck in a POW camp although they could have been among us a hundred times. We are Czechoslovak soldiers, or Russian legionnaires, which is how we are called here, and no one will ingratiate himself with us by calling us prisoners." (ZEMEK, Oldřich:

By and large, the presented study does not deal with the fate of individuals (or small groups) who made their way back to Czechoslovakia in a way other than organized transports. Its aim is to present and analyze the image of the return to the home country created by men who boarded transoceanic liners in Vladivostok to step off, after a shorter or longer journey, trains on the territory of the state they fought to help create. This is definitely not a factual study aspiring to accurately determine the arrival time of each transport and analyze its composition from the viewpoint of units and weapons it carried, or establish garrisons where the units were stationed, etc.

The chosen source base consisting of memories of the volunteers or their fictionalized memoirs permits analyzing only subsequent recollections of soldiers about their first moments in Czechoslovakia, but it also offers a possibility to show stereotypes connected with a more or less literary description of such events. Self-reflections of the legionnaires provide a vicarious account of the collective experience of the first hours, days, weeks, and rarely months at home, but the time interval between the experience and its reflection makes the former influenced by the awareness of subsequent events. The picture of the return to the home country is therefore affected by many other factors which transposed the initial experience in various ways, beclouding its “authenticity” (whether the source texts admit such productive formation of memories or not). On the other hand, however, it helps reconstruct how the volunteers looked back at themselves and their war experiences, and also indirectly explain processes of their integration into the peace society.

It should be noted that it is often impossible to decide to what extent the writer’s recollections have preserved their original character and to what extent they have been affected by period stereotype pictures of recent history. In some cases, it might perhaps be possible by a comparison with archival documents and/or private sources, such as unpublished diaries and letters. As obvious from the following account, many descriptions contain repeated images, sometimes even identical phrases. The question thus is whether this indicates a (more or less intentional) use of a specific way of expression as a template permitting to present one’s own experience in a general framework, or a (more or less subconscious) use of such rhetoric to present one’s own similar thoughts and ideas.⁴

Světovým požárem: Paměti [Through the global fire: Memoirs]. Praha, Ústřední legionácké nakladatelství 1929, p. 477.)

4 A minor note concerning terminology: while soldiers of the Czechoslovak army in Russia called themselves “volunteers,” the Czechoslovak environment at home assigned them the name “legionnaires.” The origin of the latter is clear; it refers to the “Nazdar” platoon (*rota*) of the French foreign legion. Russian volunteers were initially irritated by being called “legionnaires” (their perception of the French foreign legion was rather negative), but they gradually became accustomed to the label. The presented study uses the terms “legionnaire,” “volunteer,” “member of the Czechoslovak army” as mutually interchangeable synonyms without any further connotation. Similarly, it must be noted that the term “nationalism” is used neutrally in the text, without any positive or negative air.

Sources and Literature

The source base on Czechoslovak legions is basically inexhaustible, which is the case of most modern history topics. Source-wise, the presented study is no exception from the author's research of the legions in the last few years.⁵ It has been created on the basis of a set of personal sources, a majority of them published (most frequently in the form of memoirs) and an extensive collection of novels falling into so-called "legionnaire literature" (i.e. novels and other belletristic texts written by and about the legionnaires). A specific source in the set is the *Sibiřská 5* magazine, which followed the tradition of frontline magazines published almost for the whole time which the soldiers spent on Russian territory and aboard ships on their way home.

Apart from the best known trio consisting of Josef Kopta, František Langer, and Rudolf Medek, there were many other legionnaire writers whose names have long been forgotten, such as Pavel Fink, Adolf Zeman, Metoděj Pleský, Václav Valenta-Alfa, or Rudolf Vlasák, a "hack" important for this study. It must be noted that the above list includes only those who have written more than one book. However, their texts are often more important for research than Medek's, Langer's, or Kopta's works, whose ambitions were more artistic. It is sometimes difficult to decide whether a particular work is a novel or rather a book of fictionalized memories. However, such a categorization is irrelevant from the viewpoint of research into the mentality or everydayness of the legionnaires.

The term "legionnaire literature" applies to any literary work dealing with the legionnaires and written by an author with a personal experience of service in Czechoslovak troops in Russia (or France, Italy, Serbia, or anywhere else). From the viewpoint of the objective of the presented study, working with autobiographic novels or short stories is not essentially different from using, for example, memoirs. In any case, it is necessary to conduct a thorough critical review of the source and bear in mind, throughout the work, that there may be potential limitations resulting from the author's self-stylization, auto-censorship, or use of established literary stereotypes. For example, the bitter novel *Veteráni republiky* [Veterans of the republic], written by Italian legionnaire Jan Václav Rosůlek and dealing with Russian volunteers returning home, is literally a catalogue of various stereotypes related to peacetime life in the new republic.⁶

5 See, in particular: VÁCHA, Dalibor: *Bratrstvo: Všední a dramatické dny československých legií v Rusku* [The Brotherhood: Ordinary and dramatic days of Czechoslovak legions in Russia]. Praha, Epoque 2015; IDEM: *Ostrovy v bouři: Každodenní život československých legií v ruské občanské válce (1918–1920)* [Islands in the storm: Everyday life of Czechoslovak legions in the Russian Civil War (1918–1920)]. Praha, Epoque 2016. Both books contain extensive bibliographies comprising most literary sources also used in the presented study. As to legionnaire novels, they contain an almost exhaustive list of titles published between the two world wars.

6 ROSŮLEK, Jan Václav: *Veteráni republiky* [Veterans of the republic]. Praha, Sfinx B. Janda 1930.

In most of the examined cases, the boundary between a text which can be called commemorative and which can be termed fictionalized memoirs is very narrow and often indistinguishable. Some external elements, such as labelling the work a “novel” or “war memories” on the copyright page, may be helpful, but especially the works falling into the latter category can also be included among novels almost immediately. Also, the use of direct speech in such works is by no means a privilege of belles-lettres. The narrator’s person may provide better guidance. It is true that the first-person narrative is used, apart from memoirs, by a number of novels, but it can still be perhaps the most reliable genre classification criterion. With a bit of caution, it can be employed to divide the source base into fictionalized memories and memoirs as such.

The list of literary titles dealing with the topic of Czechoslovak armed or political foreign resistance during the Great War is relatively extensive, but most of them are, unfortunately, factual. As to more modern works, it is certainly necessary to mention *Anabáze* [The anabasis] by Robert Sak, studies of Karel Pichlík and his co-workers, or Jan Galandauer and Jiří Fidler.⁷ Exile historian Victor Miroslav Fic brought a greater variety of sources (in particular foreign ones) into the Czech perspective, making probably the most thorough attempt to set the topic of Czechoslovak legions into an international context.⁸ In addition to books, there is a somewhat more extensive magazine production examining smaller segments of the legions’ history.⁹ It must be noted that the 1990s brought a short-lived interest in the Czechoslovak legions among both historians and laymen; however, 10 to 20 years later the topic was put on a back burner, although it had not been examined thoroughly enough. As a matter of fact, the attitude of historians in the last few years seems to suggest that, insofar the Czechoslovak legions are concerned, they believe there is nothing more to research. This may also be one of the reasons why works of Jaroslav Papoušek, Josef Kudela, and particularly František Šteidler (but also other authors),

7 SAK, Robert: *Anabáze: Drama československých legionářů v Rusku (1914–1920)* [The anabasis: The drama of Czechoslovak legionnaires in Russia (1914–1920)]. Jinočany, H & H 1996; PICHLÍK, Karel – KLÍPA, Bohumír – ZABLOUDILOVÁ, Jitka: *Českoslovenští legionáři (1914–1920)* [Czechoslovak legionnaires (1914–1920)]. Praha, Mladá fronta 1996; GALANDAUER, Jan: *Bitva u Zborova* [The Battle of Zborov]. Praha, Havran 2002; FIDLER, Jiří: *Generálové legionáři* [Generals among legionnaires]. Brno, Jota 1999; IDEM: *Zborov 1917*. Brno, Jota 2003.

8 FIC, Victor Miroslav: *Československé legie v Rusku a boj za vznik Československa 1914–1918* [Czechoslovak legions in Russia and the struggle for the creation of Czechoslovakia [1914–1918], Vol. 1–4. Praha – Brno, Academia – Stilus 2006–2014.

9 See, for example: KUTÍLKOVÁ, Dagmar: K problematice stejnokrojů československé jednotky v Rusku v letech 1914–1917 [On the issue of uniforms of the Czechoslovak unit in Russia in the years 1914–1917]. In: *Historie a vojenství*, Vol. 50, No. 4 (2001), pp. 796–815; LOCHMAN, Daniel: Chajlarský incident aneb Čechoslováci a Japonci na Sibiři [The Hailar incident, or the Czechoslovaks and Japanese in Siberia]. In: *Ibid.*, Vol. 58, No. 4 (2009), pp. 47–53; ZABLOUDILOVÁ, Jitka: Příspěvek k tematice propagandy v čs. vojsku v Rusku v letech 1914–1920 [A contribution to the topic of propaganda in the Czechoslovak army in Russia in the years 1914–1920]. In: *Ibid.*, Vol. 49, No. 1 (2000), pp. 56–66.

who tried to make an initial historiographic evaluation of the legions' role during the two decades of the existence of the first Czechoslovak Republic, have in many respects remained – for some perhaps surprisingly – unsurpassed.¹⁰

There is not probably any relevant historiographic text on the return of the legions home, which would analyze the border-crossing moments and first days or weeks of the legionnaires on the territory of the republic in a more thorough manner. The book *Československo a legionáři* [Czechoslovakia and legionnaires] by historian Jan Michl understandably covers the entire interwar period, as do some other scientific studies by Ivan Šedivý, Karel Straka, and Jan Galandauer.¹¹ The same applies to works dealing with some outstanding legionnaire personalities and their activities at the time of the First Republic.¹²

Modern research cannot dispense with methodological and other inspirations by specialized titles in foreign languages. Insofar as the presented study is concerned, such sources were sought mainly in Anglo-Saxon historiography, whose approach to military history in the last two decades seems to be the most inspiring. In this respect, names such as Jeremy Black, Richard Holmes, Stephen Fritz, and others should be mentioned.¹³ Modern Anglo-Saxon historiography often uses a source

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- 10 See, for example: PAPOUŠEK, Jaroslav: *Rusko a československé legie v letech 1914–1918* [Russia and Czechoslovak legions in the years 1914–1918]. Praha, Slovanský ústav 1932; KUDELA, Josef: *Přehled vývoje čl. revolučního hnutí na Rusi: Do odchodu čl. armádního sboru z Ukrajiny* [A review of the evolution of the Czechoslovak revolutionary movement in Russia: Until the departure of the Czechoslovak army corps from Ukraine]. Praha, Památník odboje 1923; ŠTEIDLER, František: *Československé hnutí na Rusi: Informační přehled* [The Czechoslovak movement in Russia: An information review]. Praha, Památník odboje 1921; IDEM: *Naše vystoupení v Rusku v r. 1918* [Our performance in Russia in 1918]. Praha, Památník odboje 1923.
- 11 MICHL, Jan: *Legionáři a Československo* [Legionnaires and Czechoslovakia]. Praha, Naše vojsko 2009; IDEM: *Legionářské organizace v Československu (1920–1938)* [Legionnaire organizations in Czechoslovakia (1920–1938)]. In: *Historie a vojenství*, Vol. 56, No. 4 (2007), pp. 4–23; ŠEDIVÝ, Ivan: *Legionářská republika: K systému legionářského zákonodárství a sociální péče v meziválečné ČSR* [The legionnaire republic: On the system of legionnaire legislation and social care in interwar Czechoslovakia]. In: *Ibid.*, Vol. 51, No. 1 (2002), pp. 158–184; STRAKA, Karel: *Památník osvobození (1929–1939) a jeho předchůdci* [The resistance memorial (1929–1939) and its predecessors]. In: *Ibid.*, Vol. 58, No. 3 (2009), pp. 32–64; GALANDAUER, Jan: *Nenaplněné poslání legionářského panteonu na Vítkově: Od Mnichova k “Vítěznému únoru”* [The unfulfilled mission of the legionnaire pantheon on Vítkov Hill: From Munich to “Victorious February”]. In: *Ibid.*, Vol. 61, No. 3 (2012), pp. 45–55.
- 12 ZABLOUDILOVÁ, Jitka – HOFMAN, Petr: *Rudolf Medek*. In: *Ibid.*, Vol. 43, No. 6 (1994), pp. 133–157.
- 13 FRITZ, Stephen: *Frontsoldaten: The German Soldier in World War II*. Lexington, University Press of Kentucky 1995; HOLMES, Richard: *Obrazy války: Chování člověka v bitvě* [Acts of war: Behaviour of men in battle]. Praha, Nakladatelství Lidové noviny 2011; BLACK, Jeremy: *Rethinking Military History*. London, Routledge 2004; TOWNSHEND, Charles (ed.): *Historie moderní války* [History of modern war]. Praha, Mladá fronta 2007; BEN-ZE'EV, Efrat – GINIO, Ruth – WINTER, Jay: *Shadows of War: A Social History of Silence in the Twentieth Century*. New York, Cambridge University Press 2010. As to extensive historical

base similar to that analyzed in this study, including fiction and poetry, as indicated by the unending popularity of Paul Fussell's pioneering work *The Great War and Modern Memory*; he outlined a revealing image of the First World War (as seen by English eyes on the Western Front) in belles-lettres and particularly in poetry.¹⁴ In this respect, Neil M. Heyman's history of everydayness of the Great War should not be omitted as well.¹⁵

Generally speaking, the topic of the immediate return home (which concerned most soldiers and most wars of the 20th century) is not very common in Czech or international historiography. There are studies examining effects of war conflicts on human psyche in the long run, but the moment of crossing the border into one's home country and first hours and days on the home ground are somewhat overlooked. This is also one of the reasons why the following text was written.

In terms of its topic, chronology, and methodological concept, the study follows on from the author's texts "Cesta do vlasti" [The road home], which analyzes the legionnaires' journey across seas of the world from the viewpoint of everydayness history, and "Itálie očima legionářů" [Italy through the eyes of legionnaires], which describes experiences of legionnaires returning home from Russia via Italian seaports (Naples and particularly Trieste).¹⁶ It is another step on the road toward knowledge of the phenomenon of legionnaireship which had an essential influence (through its representatives, ideology, and "mythology") on the history of Czechoslovakia not only in the first half of the 20th century.

Home at Last... Joy or Disappointment?

The opening motto from the book of memories of Metoděj Pleský has two parts. The first two sentences were written for the author's memoirs titled *Velezrádci* [Traitors], while the rest of the excerpt quotes the author's older text from *Dějiny 4. střeleckého pluku* [History of the 4th rifle regiment].¹⁷ It is a typical account of the return home,

syntheses, it is possible to mention the following works: FERGUSON, Niall: *Válka světa: Dějiny věku nenávisti* [War of the world: History's age of hatred]. Praha, Academia 2008; STEVENSON, David: *1914–1918: The History of the First World War*. London, Penguin UK 2005.

14 FUSSELL, Paul: *The Great War and Modern Memory*. New York, Oxford University Press 1975.

15 HEYMAN, Neil M.: *Daily Life during World War I*. Westport (Connecticut), Greenwood 2002; the topic of this study is related mainly to the chapter entitled "The Armistice and Demobilisation," pp. 253–264.

16 VÁCHA, Dalibor: Cesta do vlasti: Českoslovenští legionáři na světových oceánech 1919–1920 [The road home: Czechoslovak legionnaires on oceans of the world 1919–1920]. In: *Historie a vojenství*, Vol. 62, No. 3 (2013), pp. 4–23; IDEM: Itálie očima legionářů: Italská zkušenost ruských legionářů [Italy through the eyes of legionnaires]. In: RAUCHOVÁ, Jitka – JIROUŠEK, Bohumil (ed.): *Věda, kultura a politika v československo-italských vztazích 1918–1951* [Science, culture, and politics in Italian-Czech relations 1918–1951]. České Budějovice, Jihočeské muzeum v Českých Budějovicích 2012, pp. 59–76.

17 PLESKÝ, Metoděj: *Dějiny 4. střeleckého pluku Prokopa Velikého 1917–1920* [History of the 4th rifle regiment of Prokop the Great 1917–1920]. Praha, Metoděj Pleský 1927.

which contains a considerable ideological drive and is totally idealized. Such a style of expression is used in “great” narratives – regimental histories, prestigious publications, official history. However, the author’s reflections on the return do not end there. The idealism of the moment of the return is immediately replaced by a sobering up from everyday reality, a feature typical for “small” narratives addressing ordinary readers and, in particular, former fellow soldiers: “To be honest, the situation in the republic did not impress us much. We did not find our nation united and concordant, as we had naively imagined. We found our people divided into political parties struggling with one another, just like before the war, at the time of detrimental Austrian rule. And the situation was equally dismal in the ranks of legionnaires. As early as then! The same discord, the same struggle of one group against the other. As soon as we arrived in Hradec and Josefow, we were ‘gratified’ with a pile of leaflets in which the ‘Svaz’ invited us to join their organization and the ‘Družina’ into theirs. One organization was rumoured to lean to the left, the other to the right.”¹⁸ The next part of the article is dedicated to the somewhat idealized view of the first moments of Russian volunteers in Czechoslovakia, but it also includes the opposite perspective.

Crossing the Border and Welcome

A stereotypic image of crossing the border of the homeland consists of rough faces of men who have tears of emotions running down their cheeks. As a matter of fact, tears appear fairly frequently in personal accounts or autobiographic novels of volunteers, creating a tension between the brutality of war and emotional involvement of an individual. In one of his many books, Rudolf Vlasák addresses his readers directly: “Well, tell us, readers-legionnaires: were you not feeling great when you reached the border? And was there not a tear running down your cheek when the band was playing or when you were signing the anthem? Do not be ashamed of that. It is true that tears are unbecoming of a soldier. But were those old, seasoned Cossacks not crying when they saw the havoc wreaked upon their country?”¹⁹

Vlasák makes use of a parallel with rough, “seasoned” Cossacks who were a paragon of manliness for many volunteers (and other readers) to show that tears may be shed even by hardened soldiers in extreme situations. It is a strange parallel – it is hard to say whether the author gave it a second thought, as he draws a comparison between Czechoslovaks returning home and Cossacks crying over the disintegrating Russia. Regardless of his initial intention, he presents two intentions in which men are “allowed” to shed tears: return to one’s homeland (absolute happiness, a dream come true) and loss of one’s homeland (absolute

18 IDEM: *Velezrádci*, Vol. 5, p. 243. The Union of Czechoslovak Legionnaires (*Svaz československých legionářů*) and Association of Czechoslovak Legionnaires (*Družina československých legionářů*) were the two largest organizations of legionnaires in interwar Czechoslovakia.

19 VLASÁK, Rudolf: Šimon svatý [Simon the Saint]. In: IDEM: *Veselá anabase brášky číslo X* [The merry anabasis of brother X]. Praha, Za svobodu 1927, p. 259.

depression, a dream shattered). On the contrary, if Matěj Němec does not accentuate tears at all in his memories, he only proves tears were nothing unusual: “As soon as the engineer brought the train to a stop in the fields, everyone is disembarking, the regimental band is playing the anthem, and all of us, full of emotions and joy, are standing on our native ground. Some of us embrace each other, others are crying, kneeling and kissing the ground. We are home!”²⁰

Karel Svoboda probably did not cry when crossing the border, but he did so later, when writing a letter to his family during his journey through Czechoslovakia. His tears were not due to patriotism: “I shed a few tears while writing this letter; no one who has not been through so many years of separation can understand the thoughts which came one after another, vibrating in my head and denied me sleep. Why, I did not even know whether my loved ones were alive and well!”²¹ It is not necessary to add that Svoboda had indeed tears in his eyes a few weeks later, when meeting his parents.²² František Prudil also arrived home after five years of separation: “[...] I could not go on, there were suddenly tears in my eyes and I had to step to the windows so that they do not see them [...]”²³ Matěj Němec was moved by the welcome in Kroměříž, where his regiment was to be stationed as a peacetime garrison. They were greeted there by District Military Commander General Alois Podhajský, the garrison band, and locals, including children. “Who would not be moved? I was moved as well.”²⁴ The transport carrying Karel Fibich mixed joy and tears when crossing the border: after emotions upon the initial contact with the native ground, “we are boarding the train, joyful on the verge of being frolicsome.”²⁵ Emotion was also often the result of the tunes of the national anthem which was played (if there was a band travelling on the train) or sung upon the first encounter with the homeland.²⁶ As to tear-shedding legionnaires, we can add that officer Vitalij Vais was so overwhelmed with emotions when he met his mother that he could not even cry.²⁷

20 NĚMEC, Matěj: *Návraty ke svobodě* [Returns to freedom]. Praha, Naše vojsko 1994, p. 136.

21 SVOBODA, K.: *S vichřicí do dvou světadílů*, p. 203.

22 *Ibid.*, p. 204.

23 BRŮNA, Otakar – JURMAN, Oldřich (ed.): *Deník Františka Prudila z ruské fronty s prologem Oldřicha Jurmana a závěrečnou esejí Otakara Brůny o sváru mozku a srdce* [The diary of František Prudil from the Russian front with a prologue by Oldřich Jurman and a final essay on the dispute between the brain and the heart by Otakar Brůna]. Praha, Lucie 1990, p. 70.

24 NĚMEC, M.: *Návraty ke svobodě*, p. 138.

25 FIBICH, Karel: *Povstalci* [The insurgents], Vol. 5: *Vladivostok–ČSR* [Vladivostok – the Czechoslovak Republic]. Praha, Osvětový odbor Družiny dobrovolců čsl. zahraničního vojska 1938, p. 172.

26 See: CECHMAJSTR, Arnošt: *Z cesty 1. pluku Jana Husi do vlasti: Z mého deníku* [From the trip of the 1st regiment of Jan Hus to the homeland: From my diary]. In: ZEMAN, Adolf (ed.): *Cestami odboje* [Along the roads of resistance], Vol. 5: *Jak žily a kudy táhly československé legie* [How Czechoslovak legions lived and where they travelled]. Praha, Pokrok 1928, p. 175.

27 VAIS, Vitalij: *BOS: Bojovníci – Oběti – Spekulantí* [FVS: Fighters – victims – speculators], Vol. 4. Praha, J. Elstner 1938, p. 241. Other soldiers returning from Russia describe similar emotional situations: “My reunion with Mařenka after those long years of war was so

The stereotypic image of emotion-riven legionnaires is rejected, rather contemptuously, by the volunteer and lover of all things Japanese, Anťa (Antonín) Hartman: “Well, do not think we used the first stop to kiss in tears the revisited native soil. No way. Siberian legionnaires are not that romantic. All of us piled out of the carriages, but there was only one thing we could think about, whether the station restaurant served something that would warm us up. We had to do with lukewarm tea, some of us even satisfied themselves with a glass of beer, although today’s beer is hardly stuff to warm anyone up [...]”²⁸ It shows that looking for the truth is hard. Perhaps somewhere between the uncritical emotive idealism and the beer-criticizing skepticism?

The train in which the volunteer who later used the abbreviated pen name Jožka M. was travelling crossed the Czechoslovak border in an equally placid manner: “One morning in August 1920, we reached the republic’s border. When the train arrived at the first station, I quickly left the carriage and went looking for my brothers. Nothing [...] The boys were calmly lighting up cigarettes and only their comments such as ‘Guys, so we are here!’ reminded me that we were on the longed-for soil rather than at a railway station somewhere in Siberia.”²⁹ By the way, soldiers of the transport which also included soldier Josef Chuchel did not forget about beer as well. The transport landed in Cuxhaven, Germany, and thus its further journey led to Magdeburg, Domažlice (the soldiers were shedding tears when seeing maidens in typical Chod folk costumes) and Pilsen, at the railway station of which the soldiers were handed out free beer directly from the Pilsen brewery.³⁰

Another emotion experienced by legionnaires was fear, and they also suffered from depression. Especially invalids were facing an uncertain future. Their wish – to return to a free country – had come true, but an unfathomed life chapter was opening in front of them, which many had feared already during endless talks in Siberia and onboard ships en route to Europe. “We were experiencing a strange

cordial and pleasing that neither of us could speak. Mařenka was crying.” (KLIMENT, Josef: *Zápisky legionářovy: Ze života a bojů na Rusi ve světové válce v letech 1914–1919* [Notes of a legionnaire: From the life and fights in Russia during the world war 1914–1919]. Středokluky, Zdeněk Susa 2005, p. 156.) “At about 2 pm we knocked on the door of a small cottage where my mom was a life tenant. The moment of the joyful reunion came. All of us had tears of joy in our eyes.” (OPLETAL, Bedřich: *Zápisky z velké války: Anabáze hanáckého medika 1914–1920* [Notes from the Great War: The anabasis of a medical student from Haná 1914–1920]. Ed. Viktor Šlajchrt. Praha – Litomyšl, Paseka 1998, p. 132.)

28 HARTMAN, Anťa: *Cestou ze Sibíře: Dojmy československého legionáře* [On the way from Siberia: Impressions of a Czechoslovak legionnaire]. Praha, Zora 1920, p. 140.

29 M., Jožka: *První moje dojmy ve vlasti* [My first impressions at home]. In: *Sibiřská 5*, Vol. 1, No. 3 (1925), p. 2.

30 Výňatek z válečných vzpomínek Josefa Chuchla z Vrcova [Excerpt from war memories of Josef Chuchel from Vrcov]. In: CTIBOROVÁ, Miroslava et al. (ed.): *Za naši samostatnost: Českoslovenští legionáři – rodáci a občané okresu České Budějovice* [For our independence: Czechoslovak legionnaires – natives and citizens of the České Budějovice district]. České Budějovice, Jelmo 2000, p. 84.

kind of fear. How will it look like at home? Will we reunion with all our loved ones? Why, we have been God's rovers for so many years. And what about those of us, us with broken limbs and frayed nerves?"³¹

Fear of the future and disillusionment by the present are common for Czechoslovak veterans of the Great War and the Russian Civil War and many other veterans of modern war conflicts. Historian Stephen G. Fritz thoroughly examined the war experience of German soldiers during the Second World War (mainly those fighting on the Eastern front) and, just like them, named a typical view of the war "the lost years." The notion of a war as the "lost years" is not very frequent among Czechoslovak legionnaires, as their protagonists saw themselves as heroes and their deeds as praiseworthy. Still, the dismal view of the future held by the men who returned home is almost identical.³²

A potential comparison of the winners (Czechoslovaks in the Great War) and the losers (German soldiers in the Second World War) shows differences, but understandably also some common features – e.g. awareness of the extent to which their lives have been affected by the war, and not just in the form of mutilation or other physical disability or impairment.³³ The trauma of the "lost years" was not in the defeat of Nazism, but in the severance of civilian lives/careers of soldiers (whether personal or professional). At the same time, Fritz correctly reminds that many men went to war so young (and the same applies to the legionnaires) that they in fact never had a chance to start a proper "civilian" life.

Another military historian, Richard Holmes, emphasized that uncertainty was affecting not only civilians, but also those who had remained in the army as professional soldiers.³⁴ This applies twice as much to the legionnaires; captains, majors, colonels or generals who commanded vast areas in Russia (suffice to remember Radola Gajda and his engagement as one of the chief commanders of Kolchak's troops in Siberia) now felt bound by much smaller Czechoslovakia, low salaries, having to live in garrisons, and a much lower social status than they believed they were entitled to. It is hardly surprising that the above aspects (fear of return, difficulties in finding one's place in society and starting a professional career, etc.) are also described by American historian Jennifer D. Keene, who focused on US soldiers returning from the First World War (mainly from France) and also successfully analyzed some public activities of American veterans, such as establishing their own organizations or mass campaigns to promote reliefs for their members.³⁵ Similar feelings and problems of US soldiers are also described

31 HUŠÁK, Jindřich: Jedni z prvních vracející se domů [Among the first to return home]. In: ZEMAN, A. (ed.): *Cestami odboje*, Vol. 5, p. 165.

32 FRITZ, S.: *Frontsoldaten*, p. 219–232; compare: HOLMES, R.: *Obrazy války*, p. 350.

33 FRITZ, S.: *Frontsoldaten*, pp. 219–232; compare: BIESS, Frank: *Homecomings: Returning POWs and the Legacies of Defeat in Postwar Germany*. Princeton (New Jersey), Princeton University Press 2009.

34 HOLMES, R.: *Obrazy války*, p. 350.

35 KEENE, Jennifer D.: *Doughboys, the Great War and the Remaking of America*. Baltimore – London, Johns Hopkins University Press 2001, see especially the subchapter entitled

by historian Thomas Childers in his book *Soldier from the War Returning*.³⁶ It may be added that it is particularly difficult, in the given thematic context, to analyze, for example, pictures of US Vietnam war veterans, in which ideology and politics were reflected much more than in other war conflicts, including recent military campaigns against terrorism.³⁷

Only future thorough research based on solid methodological prerequisites will be able to reveal the extent to which lives of veteran legionnaires were affected by their war experiences (divorce rate, getting and retaining a job, continuation of their pre-war career, achieving a higher level of education, etc.). Richard Holmes wrote the following text about other (but basically the same) veterans: “The return to civilian life is unpleasant at best and impossible at worst. A few men get so much accustomed to the rough wartime life that there does not exist anything else for them [...]”.³⁸ This probe examining the self-reflection of the return among legionnaires only confirms the statement quoted above.³⁹

Welcome ceremonies at larger railway stations invariably included a speech delivered by a more or less important official. As a rule, the speeches did not captivate the legionnaires too much; sometimes they even did not pay much attention to them. They almost always became a target of their jibes, such as in České Budějovice, where one of the speakers referred to them as “national saints.”⁴⁰

“Veterans and the Army” (pp. 154–160) and the chapters entitled “War Memories: Reexamining the Social Contract” (pp. 161–178) and “Yanks Are Starving Everywhere: The Bonus March” (pp. 179–204).

36 CHILDERS, Thomas: *Soldier from the War Returning: The Greatest Generation's Troubled Homecoming from World War II*. New York, Mariner Books 2010.

37 On returns from the Vietnam War, see, for example: GREENE, Bob: *Homecoming: When the Soldiers Returned from Vietnam*. New York, G. P. Putnam's Sons 1989; LEMBCKE, Jerry: *The Spitting Image: Myth, Memory, and the Legacy of Vietnam*. New York, New York University Press 2000. The former is a collection of journalists' comments, the latter an academic study.

38 HOLMES, R.: *Obrazy války*, p. 348.

39 It would definitely be worthwhile to pay closer attention to, for example, psychologic and psychiatric problems of veteran legionnaires in the first Czechoslovak Republic. There are several studies in Anglo-Saxon literature, which could be used as a source of methodological inspiration. The best-arranged publication on this issue is Ben Shephard's *A War of Nerves: Soldiers and Psychiatrists in the Twentieth Century* (Cambridge (Massachusetts), Harvard University Press 2001). Compare: WINTER, Jay: *Remembering War: The Great War between Historical Memory and History in the Twentieth Century*. New Haven – London, Yale University Press 2006, in particular pp. 52–78; IDEM: *Shell-Shock and the Cultural History of the Great War*. In: SHEFFIELD, Gary (ed.): *War Studies Reader: From the Seventeenth Century to the Present Day and Beyond*. New York, Bloomsbury Academic 2010, pp. 201–207; HUNT, Nigel C.: *Memory, War and Trauma*. New York, Cambridge University Press 2010.

40 But there was no gratitude on the part of the legionnaires: “Boys! I can get a handle on pretty much everything, but not on the saints! Either the gentleman is mistaken or has heard that we like our legs being pulled and wanted to have his share. He probably does not want us to go out of practice, so they are going to pull our legs just like they did in Russia! [...] He said we were national saints, did he not? Guys, I cannot imagine that, and I do not think it will possible to make saints out of us. [...] My Good Lord! I cannot imagine the calendar!” (VLASÁK, R.: *Šimon svatý*, p. 262.)

Speakers in Hradec Králové also did not receive any ovations from the soldiers: “Hradec’s main square again saw a number of celebratory orations which we have never really got accustomed to.”⁴¹ Yet the local welcome ceremonies were always cordial to the soldiers who harboured pleasant memories of them.⁴² Matěj Němec and his transport were greeted by a very terse speaker in České Budějovice. “Here a soldier with our national flag is disembarking from the train standing at the next platform, followed by about 20 musicians. They immediately start playing the anthem. I command ‘present arms’; when the musicians have left, a high-ranking Czechoslovak general appears, salutes to Shokorov, and reports: ‘The Minister of National Defence ordered me to welcome you. Welcome home!’ He saluted and left [...]”⁴³ Němec’s train transport was soon to be compensated for the unpleasant impression due to the too terse welcome in České Budějovice. President of the Republic Tomáš Garrigue Masaryk greeted the soldiers in Planá nad Lužnicí. In spite of bad rainy weather, he saw an *impromptu* parade, delivered a short speech, and had a talk with a few legionnaires. The meeting with the President Liberator was an unforgettable experience not only for Matěj Němec, later to be promoted to the general’s rank. “Mr. President and his wife were standing at the platform, bare-headed. When the end of the train was passing by, I reported we were leaving and jumped into the last wagon. I can still see the President standing there, until everything disappeared in darkness [...]”⁴⁴ Historian Jan Michl states that this transport was one of only two trains honoured by being personally welcomed by the head of state.⁴⁵

Weather apparently played an important role in the legionnaires’ memories. The crossing of the border was either accompanied by beautiful sunny weather, or the soldiers were rejoicing in spite of bad weather conditions. In some cases, bad weather was used to illustrate the dismal mood of returning transports of soldiers. An ideal picture of beautiful weather and a serene atmosphere during the border crossing can be found in Adolf Zeman’s autobiographic travelogue *Československá odyssea* [The Czechoslovak odyssey]. There is a “lush green meadow lit by the golden sun,” with soldiers grouping like children around their general. Zeman emphasizes the unreal and unearthly nature of the experience. “All of this seems like a mysterious and incredible dream to us.” The almost pastoral atmosphere

41 SVOBODA, K.: *S vichřicí do dvou světadílů*, p. 203.

42 See: VANĚK, Antonín: Domů se 4. plukem Prokopa Velikého. In: ZEMAN, A. (ed.): *Cestami odboje*, Vol. 5, p. 196.

43 Němec’s memories continued: “We are looking at each other in embarrassment. Two thousand soldiers had been expecting something else. ‘We will have our own welcoming ceremony!’ decided Shokorov. I commanded ‘present arms’ and delivered a report according to regulations. The general passed by the units, exchanged greetings with each battalion and then, as the Inspector General of the Army, welcomed all of us home. A parade march followed, and the unpleasant feeling about the official welcome was a bit mitigated.” (NĚMEC, M.: *Návraty ke svobodě*, p. 136.)

44 *Ibid.*, p. 138.

45 MICHL, J.: *Legionáři a Československo*, p. 24.

is complemented by the “reverend melody of our national anthem which has a childhood prayer effect on me.” (The band allegedly did not forget to play even the Slovak anthem. The question is what tune and lyrics they played and sang. It was probably the song *Nad Tatrou sa blýská* [Lightning over the Tatras], although there is not much information about its “official” mission in Siberia.) “There is a strange feeling in our souls,” writes Němec about his and his “brothers” emotions. However, it is obvious that his narration is considerably stylized to be as close as possible to the ideal picture of the return of the nation-loving heroes to their country which they had helped liberate.⁴⁶

Legionnaires were not coming home with blinkers on their eyes; as a matter of fact, it was the other way round. Their observation talent, which had become honed in Russia and later in seaports all over the world, was not blunted upon the crossing of the Czechoslovak border. Rudolf Vlasák described that soldiers at the railway station in Budějovice had noticed not only local girls dressed in folk costumes in the welcoming committee, but also an advertisement of the local factory Hardmuth. Their reaction was predictable: “Look, Hardmuth is still ruling here!” said one of the brothers. “The Weimans and Petscheks probably too!” said another.⁴⁷ It may be added that the men on the train transport described by Vlasák were shouting “Budějovice! Sausageville!” when entering the city, obviously hinting to the so-called “sausage affair” of 1905, which – by the way – Hardmuth had been connected with.⁴⁸ The legionnaires did not forget about the attention-arousing affair even much later. It may be interesting to note that the “Prague Children of the 28th Infantry Regiment” association with a branch in České Budějovice organized a trip to the South Bohemian capital in July 1925 for the purpose of a reunion of former soldiers of the 28th infantry regiment and a commemoration of the affair.

To Mother Prague

Actually, what was the fate of the so much called-for victory march to Prague and down Wenceslas Square?⁴⁹ Not very good. Not all regiments could enjoy ovations

46 ZEMAN, Adolf: *Československá odyssea: Dojmy čsl. novináře-dobrovolce z cesty na lodi President Grant z Vladivostoku do vlasti* [The Czechoslovak odyssey: Impressions of a Czechoslovak journalist-volunteer from the journey from Vladivostok to the homeland aboard President Grant]. Praha, Nakladatelství Otto 1920, p. 316.

47 VLASÁK, R.: Šimon svatý, p. 261.

48 See the column “Miscellaneous” in: *Sibiřská 5*, Vol. 1, No. 2 (1925), p. 16. In 1905, there were riots in České Budějovice over the introduction of universal suffrage. Mayor Josef Taschek and industrialist Franz Hardmuth initiated a relocation of units of the 28th infantry regiment from the city because of their unreliability. The mayor sent the soldiers sausages as a present, which the men rejected, and the affair was remembered by a mocking greeting “Hi sausage!” for many years.

49 “We were great idealists. So many plans and hopes, particularly in 1916, how we would gloriously step on the soil of the beloved homeland, how tears of joy would be shed in Bohemian and Moravian villages through which we would march to golden Mother Prague!” (M., Jožka: *První moje dojmy ve vlasti*, p. 2.)

of the capital. Many units were diverted away from Prague, others were banned to enter Prague altogether as they were regarded too “Bolshevik.”⁵⁰ Trains carrying the 4th rifle regiment were redirected from the border directly to Hradec Králové and Josefov, the alleged reason being traffic and transportation problems before the Sokol Slet and its main programme.⁵¹ Trains of the 5th rifle regiment were to be unloaded in České Budějovice, but the men were protesting and it took the summoned Inspector General of the Army, Svatopluk Machar, to calm them down and make them leave the trains.⁵² The catharsis of national heroes in front of the nation’s eyes simply did not apply to all. “[...] the fact that we are not going to go to Prague baffles us,” was how Karel Fibich described the discomfited mood of his fellow soldiers in České Budějovice (where a so-called dispersing station was initially located) when they learned they would not proceed to the capital.⁵³ It is true that the first trains with invalids often reached Prague where they received a ceremonial welcome (in the presence of, for example, Minister of Defence Václav Klobáček), but they could only dream about a parade on Wenceslas Square. And if some transports indeed marched down Wenceslas Square, the reality was a long way from the soldiers’ dreams, as emphasized, for example, by Rudolf Vlasák.⁵⁴ Memories of Oldřich Zemek, who arrived in Prague with one such transport, ooze with disappointment and melancholy of the drab streets of Prague (Vršovice and Karlín).⁵⁵ His dismal mood was improved by a separate visit of Prague’s historical centre, where he was reflecting on the past, both distant and recent.⁵⁶

50 “We did not go to Prague [...] Well, we were something else, we were – as Bohdan Pavlů called us after the military congress in Irkutsk – Bolsheviks. Prague would have been infected by us; why, we were interned and finished serving the splendid and promising idea of Father Masaryk, that of liberating our Czech people from hardships of the Habsburgs and Germans unarmed [...] we were traitors [...] they even did not permit us to go to Prague.” (BRŮNA, O. – JURMAN, O. (ed.): *Deník Františka Prudila z ruské fronty*, p. 70.)

51 See: VANĚK, A.: *Domů se 4. plukem Prokopa Velikého*, p. 196.

52 See: ROSŮLEK, J. V.: *Veteráni republiky*, p. 6.

53 FIBICH, K.: *Povstalci*, Vol. 5, p. 173.

54 VLASÁK, R.: *Naši kluci doma*, p. 337.

55 “We were transported to a reserve hospital in Karlín. It was my first time in Prague and the box-like, desolate apartment blocks of the dismal quarter of Karlín did not make a good impression on me.” (ZEMEK, O.: *Světovým požářem*, p. 478.) The feelings of Sergej Řehounek travelling in a different transport and along a different route were similar: “[...] in the evening, we are in Prague, our golden Prague which have talked so much about, which we have been looking forward so much, and which has so much disappointed us by the reception it gave us [...]” (ŘEHOUNEK, Sergej: *Na lodi Archer*. In: ZEMAN, A. (ed.): *Cestami odboje*, Vol. 5, p. 157.)

56 “And only when I arrived at the golden chapel overlooking the Vltava and, as if rooted to the spot, looked at the unique panoramic skyline of Hradčany Castle, a stone monument of the tragic magnitude of our history, I was able to fully understand why it had become the most cherished symbol of our brotherhood. Then I walked to Old Town Square, remembering the Habsburg vengeance in 1621 and the executions of brothers in recent years at the darkened walls of the city hall [...]” (ZEMEK, O.: *Světovým požářem*, p. 479.)

Did anyone take part the dreamed-of welcoming ceremony in Prague at all? The answer is a very cautious yes. In any case, it concerned the oldest and most famous legionnaire unit, the 1st rifle regiment of Master Jan Hus. Many VIPs participated in its arrival and welcoming ceremony. “There was an honour guard platoon (*četa*) of the 22nd infantry regiment lined up, with two garrison bands. As the President of the Republic was ill, he was represented by Brother Minister Dr Beneš. Also attending were Prime Minister Tusar, Minister of National Defence V. Klofáč, Chief of the General Staff General Pellé, Inspector General Machar, Government Ministers, Habrman, Houdek and Sonntag [sic], representatives of the City of Prague, DTJ, delegations of regiments and officer corps.”⁵⁷ Having been enthusiastically greeted at Prague’s Main Train Station, the soldiers marched to Old Town Square. “Shortly after 11 am, we found ourselves standing on historic Old Town Square in front of the monument of Master Jan Hus, whose name we had carried with glory throughout the world. Lined up in front of the monument were government ministers, members of the National Assembly, representatives of foreign countries, and journalists [...]”⁵⁸

The hero of the legionnaire novel *Smrtí k životu* [Through death toward life] perceived the arrival to the capital philosophically, asking himself just two personal questions – “what to do now?” and “what will I do?,” and three general questions, “religious, ethnic, and social.”⁵⁹ Contemplations of the author of the book (understandably a Russian legionnaire) Josef Novotný over the meaning of life, war, and human existence in general during such tense times wind through the whole story. Was something like that possible? Why not? Many legionnaires deny the enthusiastic cheerfulness of their fellow soldiers during the journey through Bohemian regions, and instead emphasize serious deliberations over various issues. And we know that practically everything, from women and food to philosophical and ethnic issues, was discussed in *teplushkas* during the long days and evenings in Siberia. Contemplations of the volunteers over the nation and its (and their own) future was by no means an exception. It might even be said that it was rather a rule. Nevertheless, another legionnaire, Ferdinand Pražský, described the contemplations over things to come in a much more credible manner in his novel *Vítězství* [Victory]: “Mašek saw the elation and joy of thousands – but he was not experiencing them himself, like other brothers. He could not. He was

57 CECHMAJSTR, Arnošt: Příklad 1. pluku do Prahy [The arrival of the 1st regiment to Prague]. In: ZEMAN, A. (ed.): *Cestami odboje*, Vol. 5, p. 351. The correct name of the Minister of Finance in Tusar’s government was Kuneš Sonntag.

58 *Ibid.*, p. 351. A pictorial documentation of the event can be found in the publication *K vítězné svobodě 1914–1918–1928* [Toward victorious freedom 1914–1918–1928]. Praha, Památník odboje 1928, p. 427.

59 NOVOTNÝ, Josef: *Smrtí k životu: Kronika přerodu sibiřského legionáře* [Through death toward life: A chronical of the transformation of a Siberian legionnaire]. Praha, Grosman a Svoboda 1921, p. 160.

too much absorbed with himself, afraid of the nearest hours.”⁶⁰ Upon his return home, Jan Čížkovský, a legionnaire from Ledenice, was immediately disgusted by what was, in his opinion, immoral political canvassing (probably in newspapers), more specifically by attacks of National Democrats against Socialists.⁶¹

The publication *Za domovinu* [For our homeland] written for Czechoslovak youths contains almost codified “correct” images of the return of the legions home (in the 1920s, its editor-in-chief was seemingly the ubiquitous Rudolf Medek). All the stereotypes described above appear there. In Jaroslav Mácha’s poem, children are welcoming their father returning with the legions; an orphaned bakery awaits him, yet his heart remains with his brethren fallen at Zborov:

Zbytečně se, děti, ptáte,
kde je jeho srdce zlaté.
Tělo zde – a srdce chová
mohyla tam u Zborova!*

Children, there is no use in asking,
Where his heart of gold now rests.
His body’s here – his heart is buried
In a cairn at the Zborov battlefield!

* MÁCHA, Jaroslav: Srdce legionářovo [The legionnaire’s heart]. In: MEDEK, Rudolf (ed.): *Za domovinu: Legionáři československé mládeži* [For the homeland: From legionnaires to Czechoslovak youth]. Praha, Vojtěch Šeba 1934, p. 258.

The next story introduces Jeník Vašica, a 12-year old boy looking for his father among soldiers of the 1st regiment in Old Town Square. The story depicts the legionnaires as heroes, perfect as to their psychological, moral, and physical qualities, interpreting their march through Prague as their well-deserved reward, while also exhibiting a certain degree of alienation. One of the onlookers is commenting the parade: “The French and Italian legionnaires were more joyful when we were welcoming them here two years ago.”⁶² And it fits with Rudolf Medek’s style (Medek is the author of the story) to reveal, both to the reader and Jeník, that Jeník’s father Jan Vašica died a heroic death at Zborov (where else?) and would never come back. However, the hero’s death is not expected to bring only sadness, but also resolution and patriotism – a few years later, Jeník (more mature now) is welcoming the arrival of remains of an unknown soldier from Zborov, imagining that the remains are his father’s.

A Farewell to Arms

Before returning to their families, the legionnaires had to say goodbye to their friends and comrades they had spent so much time with. It was perhaps as emotional as reuniting with their families. For some of them, the military life ended

60 PRAŽSKÝ-SLAVKOVSKÝ, F. I. [PRAŽSKÝ, Ferdinand]: *Vítězství: Román ze života ruského legionáře* [Victory: A novel from the life of a Russian legionnaire]. Praha, K. Smolík 1934, p. 256.

61 Úryvky z deníku ruského legionáře Jana Čížkovského z Ledenic [Excerpts from the diary of Russian legionnaire Jan Čížkovský]. In: CTIBOROVÁ, M. a kol. (ed.): *Za naši samostatnost*, p. 78.

62 MEDEK, Rudolf: Jeník Vašica. In: *Ibid.*, pp. 259–272, quoted p. 262.

soon – after a few days in the barracks, they were sent to a furlough (the duration of which was a month, six weeks, or three months) and demobilized soon thereafter. Karel Svoboda shed his uniform without any sentiment: “Everyone who could leave the barracks was happy to do so. In muftis, we had freedom and liberty which enchanted us. The free citizen’s status was something like a panacea which was supposed to give us peace of mind after so many years of killing and wandering around the world. We wanted to forget all hardships and disillusionments that we had been victims of and that had spoiled our time abroad so much.”⁶³ His description of nightmares presented at the beginning of this article, however, shows the profound mental effect of his war experience.

Rather than the enlistment in the legions, a victory in Siberia, and even the crossing of the Czechoslovak border, the most emotional moment of the diary of František Prudil is that of saying goodbye to his fellow soldiers he had spent the past years with, in good times and bad. He probably did not hide his emotions at all, the way he did later when meeting his family: “The parting was indescribable, it was great and moving. They boys were embracing each other, tears in their eyes. Well, it was hardly surprising, with so many years together like true brothers, one trusting another, with so many merry times and, on the other hand, so much suffering and disappointment we had had to go through together.”⁶⁴ The parting of Karel Fibich and his comrades with the uniform was much merrier: “Bunks await their occupants long into the night. We are parting company with the military service and our comrades. The restaurant ‘U Slovanů’ is crowded to the point of bursting and vibrating with cheerful uproar interspersed with sung intermezzos. One cannot even guess how much meat got into all those portions of ‘pork, dumplings, and sauerkraut,’ how many kegs of beer were draught through the bar-room’s taps. The parched innards were also demanding their ‘anointment’ which the war had been denying to them for so long.”⁶⁵ However, Rudolf Raše, for example, just said goodbye to his comrades, got in a car, and set off for home. His arrival was probably so devoid of any emotions and pathos that “my wife is reprimanding me for allegedly coming home like I have only returned from a jaunt to Krč even now.”⁶⁶ Another legionnaire, František Macoun, described this life episode in a very brief and matter-of-fact manner: “On 18 November 1920, with 4 Czechoslovak crowns and half a loaf of bread which I received when demobilized in Jičín, I set out for a new journey – for a new struggle for living.”⁶⁷

63 SVOBODA, K.: *S vichřicí do dvou světadílů*, p. 204.

64 BRŮNA, O. – JURMAN, O. (ed.): *Deník Františka Prudila z ruské fronty*, p. 70.

65 FIBICH, K.: *Povstalci*, Vol. 5, p. 174.

66 IKA [RAŠE, Rudolf]: *Shrabky: Vzpomínky a feuilletony* [The rakings: Recollections and feuilletons]. Praha, Pokrok 1929, p. 148.

67 MACOUN, František: *Úryvky mých pamětí* [Excerpts from my memoirs]. In: STAŠKA, František (ed.): *Legionáři Sobotcka* [Legionnaires of the Sobotka region]. Sobotka, Nadace rodného domu Fráni Šrámka 1998, p. 45. A study by military historian Richard Holmes shows that such feelings are shared by veterans of many war conflicts, for example British

Home and with the Family at Last...

Returns of war veterans have always been difficult. Czechoslovak legionnaires often took as long as two years to return from the front, by which time the war had long been over for those whom they were returning to. How did they feel when they arrived in their native village or town, were standing on the threshold of their home, only seconds from the embrace of their loved ones? What was going on in their heads? Were they remembering? Were they afraid? How did they feel when knocking on the door or turning the doorknob? Did they not want to turn round and return to the community of legionnaires that had been substituting their families, but was disintegrating with every passing second of being in the homeland?

The literary character of volunteer Mašek from the novel *Vítězství* could be used as an example of how some returns from Russia probably looked like: “He too was perplexed and unable to get a handle on the situation. Everything seemed so alien, distant, cold, and a long way from the visions he had once been imagining. And yet, it is the same kitchen where he had been parting with Věruška for the last time, it is her – his wife, and his Jiříček! Nothing around had changed, except for time, and something unknown had built a high wall separating them.”⁶⁸ The “high wall” referred to above was the wife’s suspected infidelity, one of the things that terrified soldiers coming from Russia. Adultery, failed marriages, deaths in the family. And it is perhaps not necessary to add that they too were not returning with a clean record. In the end, legionnaire Mašek wins over himself, over slander and jealousy – the word “victory” in the title of the novel of which he is the main character does not refer only to “great history” (foundation of free Czechoslovakia), but mainly to a victory in personal and family life.

Some of the returning soldiers even put their concerns into verse; in the following example, the source of worries is the fact that the returning soldier is bringing a “sugar,” i.e. a Russian wife, with him:

Rozkoš manželského ráje
pomalounku cestou taje,
zbylo-li cos ještě po ní.
Na myslí se mraky honí,
zda tam doma matka – táta
nezavřou před nimi vrata.**

Delights of marital life
Are slowly fading on the way,
If there is anything left of them.
Dark clouds passing through the head.
Will Mother and Dad
Slam the door in their faces?

** Š.: Bráška se zlatíčkem [Bro with a sugar]. In: ZEMAN, A. (ed.): *Cestami odboje*, Vol. 5, p. 244.

Karel Svoboda, already mentioned above, captured a moment which became a common instrument used to describe the return home – a reunion with a family

paratroopers who fought against Argentinians in the Falklands, or veterans of the First and Second World Wars. (HOLMES, R.: *Obrazy války*, p. 345.)

68 PRAŽSKÝ-SLAVKOVSKÝ, F. I.: *Vítězství*, p. 258.

whose members almost cannot recognize each other. He depicts how “Kalaš, an officer in my platoon (*četa*), met his brother. Having not seen each other for several years, the brothers did not recognize each other; the last time the officer had seen his brother, the latter was still a boy. Now a grown man stood in front of him.”⁶⁹ It was also the nature, not only people, which had changed. Karel Fibich recalls how he took a walk around his parents’ garden and was amazed how much the trees had grown in the five long years he had been away; he picked a few pears and apples and enjoyed their taste, the taste of home. Returning home from the war seemed like a dream to him, just like to many other veterans. The dream which they had been afraid they would not live to see.⁷⁰

So much emotion and also travelling experience of legionnaires hidden in a simple sentence uttered by a companion of Lieutenant Colonel Vitalij Vais aboard a train travelling via Tábor to Prague: “[...] he is leaning from the window and says that Kamchatka is not that beautiful.”⁷¹ Vais also uses trees as a symbol of change, this time in a reverse set-up compared to Fibich; an ancient spruce poplar has been felled.⁷² Veterans thus may unconsciously illustrate their own perception of the time away from home; they have been away for so long that even nature itself has changed. It may also be interpreted as a symbol of severed ties with home; while they have been away, trees have been growing or disappearing, the volunteers’ fates and lives notwithstanding. The nostalgia in both memories is almost tangible.

Souvenirs from Russia

Memories often kept returning to what legionnaires had brought home from Russia, and an ironic note was frequently present. Rumours that they were bringing Russia’s gold treasure with them did their job. Many locals were allegedly surprised when the volunteers were not taking nuggets of gold from their rucksacks, and the volunteers were curious how the locals got the idea. The situation was exacerbated by pseudology or sense of humour of some of the legionnaires. Rudolf Vlasák wrote about a legionnaire who had brought a wife from Russia and, according to his neighbours, a sack full of gold as well.⁷³ Vlasák kept reminding of one and the same story – that of ingratitude and envy: “A part of Czech people soon forgot the sacrifices which legionnaires had brought to the cause of the homeland. They started envying the legionnaires even the attire in which they

69 SVOBODA, K.: *S vichřicí do dvou světadílů*, p. 202.

70 “Everything looked like a beautiful dream to me, a dream I could not embrace with my emotions, a dream I did not want to wake up from [...] And yet it was bound to dissolve like vapour. It was necessary to pull oneself together and to find a bridge across the time abyss caused by the war, to connect the beginning of 1915 and the end of 1919. So many threads severed!” (FIBICH, K.: *Povstalci*, Vol. 5, p. 181.)

71 VAIS, V.: *BOS*, Vol. 4, p. 238.

72 *Ibid.*, p. 241.

73 VLASÁK, R.: *Poklad z Ruska [A treasure from Russia]*. In: IDEM: *Veselá anabase brášků číslo X*, pp. 292–306.

had returned, some doing so intentionally, others because of ignorance, but all of them because of malevolence [...] Some people fabricated genuine fairytales about their riches. There were rumours about piles of money, millionaires, lumps of gold [...].”⁷⁴

However, the men sometimes indeed carried heavy pieces of luggage containing memorabilia of the Russian campaign, souvenirs from their journey around the world, or simply items which they believed were in short supply in Bohemia (tobacco, fabrics, etc.). With a parodic smile, Václav Valenta-Alfa described the arrival of Francek Tichý, a fictitious volunteer character, to his native region, where “Francek got angry as soon as he made the first step on his native soil. Instead of embracing his father, he had to tell him off for not having taken a hay wagon rather than a handcart. Where is he supposed to stack all his trinkets?”⁷⁵ Actually, what did Francek bring from the war? “And our dear neighbour was carrying a lot of pretty things: a pair of felt *pimas* with nice pink patterns, a bandedon, a sheepskin jacket, a teapot, a *samovar*, a mess kit, two blankets tied with a belt, a memorable straw mattress on which he spent the whole famous anabasis across Siberia, a curved Cossack sabre, a Cherkes khanjar, a sack of bombs to be used for whitewashing, several bags with sunflower seeds for cracking, a box of *makhorka*, and many other nice things! Believe me, my two eyes are unable to capture everything in the pile without a detailed list, and even if they were, the whole book could hardly list them all!”⁷⁶ For the record, it should be mentioned that Francek Tichý brought home not only an infinite number of various articles, but also unbelievable stories, for example about cruel colds in Siberia.⁷⁷

Balancing Ideals and Reality

Shortly after the stationing of the 4th rifle regiment of Prokop Holý in the Hradec Králové and Josefov garrisons, Metoděj Pleský (who has been quoted at the beginning of this article) participated in the creation of an appeal which illustrates well the mood prevailing among veterans who found themselves in what initially

74 *Ibid.*, p. 299.

75 VALENTA-ALFA, Václav: Francek Tichý vypráví svým rodákům o Sibiři [Francek Tichý narrating to his countrymen about Siberia]. In: IDEM: *Sibiřské jedovatosti* [Siberian sarcasms]. Brno, Moravský legionář 1935, p. 129.

76 *Ibid.*, p. 130.

77 “Man, the cold is so harsh there that they use ‘graduses’ to measure it, and when the real Siberian cold starts, the temperature is as low as 86 graduses below zero. In colds like this, everything becomes frozen – milk in cows’ udders, birds freeze in the clouds, boiling water on the stove is like an icicle, a flame does not burn you because it is frozen solid, your eyes freeze over so you end up with spectacle-like ice panes over them. If you pour a bucket of water out of the window, the water freezes on the way to the ground, and you have an icicle reaching up to third floor which you can use to climb down. If you touch your nose, it just crumbles off like a piece of curds. Freezing to a bedpost is nothing uncommon.” (*Ibid.*, p. 136.)

looked like a familiar environment. At second sight, however, it felt utterly incomprehensible and in stark contrast to the ideals dreamed of in Russia. The statement of the 4th rifle regiment for the government of the Czechoslovak Republic and the Czechoslovak nation contains all elements of the criticism of legionnaires, and it is therefore appropriate to quote a larger part of it here: “Having arrived home, we found the situation in the Czechoslovak Republic in stark contrast with the desire for and idea of collective work and fair efforts of all parties for general welfare of the Czechoslovak people which we had dreamed of during long years spent abroad and which thousands of legionnaires had shed their blood for. We can see that our nation has been living in a climate of party turmoil and intransigent political fights, i.e. in what the brotherly Russian nation has been thrashing about for several years now and what we have eyewitnessed. The outcome of our discord is visible particularly in Slovakia and we can see, with every passing day, that the Slovak people become increasingly alienated from us. Legionnaires encounter ingratitude and lack of understanding and become targets of attacks of individuals and parties that, having brought no sacrifices whatsoever for the homeland, have been pelting fighters for the nation’s freedom and better future with defamations and slanderous dirt and even want to arrogate to themselves the right to decide about the legionnaires who had just a single idea, regardless of their political affiliation: ‘Freedom and welfare of the nation.’”⁷⁸

An interesting feature of the appeal is the comparison of the situation in the republic to that in Russia, which is not very frequent in legionnaires’ texts. Moreover (as stated further in the declaration – see the footnote), the authors include in the group of “legionnaires” only themselves – legionnaires from Russia. At first, it was a general problem of legionnaire organizations which were divided not only by political affiliation, but also by “nationality” (i.e. by the country in which they operated). It is important to add that the soldiers brought home a very sensitive perception of the length of their service in the foreign army. Those who joined the Czechoslovak units later (for whatever reason) were always ridiculed by veterans of the Czech Companions (*Česká družina*) or veterans from Zborov to some extent.

78 Continuation: “As a result of the above, we therefore make the following statement: We fully agree with the declaration of brothers of the 1st, 2nd, and 3rd regiments of the I rif(le) division and commit ourselves to concordant and consolidated cooperation. In the interest of a united front of all legionnaires, we demand the earliest possible convening of a congress of Russian legions the objective of which will be to paralyze opposing efforts of the ‘Svaz’ [Union] and the ‘Družina’ [Association] and to unite all legionnaires for collective work for the nation’s welfare. We strongly protest against any political party arrogating the right to legionnaires, as the latter have fought for the whole nation and they also belong to the whole nation. Faithful to the ideas of the man who led us to freedom and victory, we promise to stand unswervingly behind our beloved President Masaryk and help him create the republic we were striving for together with him.” (Cited according to: PLESKÝ, M.: *Velezrádci*, Vol. 5, p. 244.)

The resolution of men of the 4th regiment followed on from a broader initiative of veterans who intended to abide by the principle of political non-affiliation in their organizations at home, which was, however, something they understandably had not done even in previous years at the other end of the world. Some delegates of the first three regiments of the first division (and subsequently also of the fourth regiment) wanted to show their dissatisfaction with the existing situation (mainly with political squabbles), but their initiative neither had the scope nor produced the response which they had expected. The desire for the non-political character of legionnaire organizations is also reflected in the Articles of Association and public statements of the Czechoslovak Association of Legionnaires in the years that followed, but it was more wishful thinking than reality.

Rudolf Vlasák, at other times expressing himself quite soberly, put a rather pathetic utterance into the mouth of one of his novel characters, which reflected some emotional statements of legionnaires: “Yes, brother, it is getting dark over our homeland, it is! It seems to me that there are stains on the beautiful sun of freedom. We cannot look at them through a sooty piece of glass, but we feel them on ourselves, in the economic life of our people, our state. Brothers, we are still experiencing great times of national evolution and consolidation. We are supposed to demonstrate our creative capabilities. To be able to do so, we need energy. We have enough of it, it is true, but it seems to me that we are wasting it on trivialities. Corruption, selfishness, moral decline! These are, brothers, the shadows of today’s great times. Let us drive them away, just like we did in Russia!”⁷⁹ It is rather doubtful whether any legionnaire would comment on current problems during a simple conversation with friends, for example in a pub, as emotionally as outlined above; still, the contrast between ideals and reality, corruption, and selfishness were topics of most complaints of legionnaires.

On the other hand, legionnaires returning home often showed despair rather than determination (although it was, in many cases, a reverse projection of the writers). Volunteer Jarolím Fiala undoubtedly captured the mood of many of his comrades in the following entry in his diary: “I do not know how it is possible – we were looking forward so much to our beloved homeland, and we have been as much disappointed and disillusioned. And I think if we were asked which of us wants back to Russia, most of us would go without any hesitation. This was not our idea of a liberated homeland. Lamentations and complaints of people indicate that roguishness and black marketeering have established themselves here like nowhere else [...] I am home! And I am standing here without any means of subsistence and jobless. This is the reward for most of us who have sacrificed themselves for the welfare of others.”⁸⁰ Fiala’s diary entry contains an element

79 VLASÁK, Rudolf: *Stíny velké doby: Román z legií* [Shadows of the great times: A novel from legions]. Praha, Za svobodu 1930, p. 344.

80 Z deníku legionáře Jarolíma Fialy [From the diary of legionnaire Jarolím Fiala]. In: PSÍKOVÁ, Jiřina et al. (ed.): *Českoslovenští legionáři: Rodáci a občané okresu Jindřichův Hradec* [Czechoslovak legionnaires: Natives and citizens of the Jindřichův Hradec district].

of Russophilia, so important for the understanding of the very phenomenon of the legionnaires' community. The reversal was completed: while men were longing for Bohemia while in Russia, they were calling for Russia while in Bohemia.

In this respect, a recollection of legionnaire Jožka M., which compares the welcome at home with that in Ekaterinburg after the volunteers had liberated it from the hands of Bolsheviks, is typical: "We immediately headed for our destination; it was not Prague, but Kroměříž. The welcome was rather weak there, mostly representatives of corporations. People – I mean common people – did not turn up. I again remembered Russia, with whole villages welcoming us in Ekaterinburg with icons and treating us to bread and salt."⁸¹

Having arrived in Prague with a train full of invalids, Sergej Řehounek sighed sarcastically: "If boys in Siberia saw all the love we are swamped with here, they would be calmer and would not hurry with their departure so much." And he added: "Well, it occurs to me how we could find understanding in Tsarist Russia – we found it in the common Russian man – when we find none in our own people for whom, after all, we were putting up with all those delights and hardships of military life abroad."⁸² Writer Václav Kaplický recalled a fellow soldier sitting at his luggage in Trieste, drinking red wine, and speaking bitter words to him: "Venca, if there were two tracks, one to Prague, the other to Russia, I swear I would send the suitcase with all those spices to Prague and I would then go straight to Russia."⁸³

The contradictory feelings toward both "homelands" result in an extensive and highly complicated space in which a substantial part of the collective mentality of this social group was evolving. Russophilia was unquestionably a mere part of the Czech nationalism of legionnaires. Perhaps a not very exaggerated hypothesis offers itself, namely that their love to Russia or Bohemia (Czechoslovakia) was indirectly proportional to the geographic proximity of this or that country at a given moment, reflecting the idealized home or the "fraternal Slavic power." Identical feelings are expressed, albeit in a bit escalated manner, in a poem fittingly titled "Vám" [To you], published in the legionnaire magazine *Sibiřská 5*. At least its first stanza is worth quoting:

Jindřichův Hradec, Okresní úřad Jindřichův Hradec – Státní okresní archiv Jindřichův Hradec 2001, p. 28.

81 M., Jožka: První moje dojmy ve vlasti, p. 2.

82 ŘEHOUNEK, S.: Na lodi Archer, p. 158.

83 KAPLICKÝ, Václav: Návrat [The return]. In: ZEMAN, A. (ed.): *Cestami odboje*, Vol. 5, p. 187.

Čekali jste na nás?	Were you waiting for us?
Věřili jste v nás?	Did you believe in us?
My víme, co nás bolí.	We know what hurts us.
Nebáli jsme se nikoho	We were not afraid of anyone
a vlastního národa se bojíme.	and now we are afraid of our own nation.
Byli jsme ozbrojeni	We were armed
a doma nám svázali ruce.	and they tied our hands at home.
Rozstrkali nás po jednom, po dvou,	They dispersed us by ones or twos
zacpali ústa	gagged our mouths
a nadávají: nenažranci!	and keep telling us: greedy pigs!
Ale! I filmová epocha má svůj konec	But! Even a movie has an end
a pes, když ho dlouho kopou,	and a dog, if kicked long enough,
chňapne po noze.	snaps at a leg.
Od nás čest dosud nikdo nekoupil	No one has bought honour from us yet
a vděčit za to, co jsme udělali,	and we do not have to grateful for what
nemusíme nikomu.	we have done to anyone.

Also interesting is the very end of the poem written in late July 1925, where the author returns to legionnaire messianism, depicting legionnaires as those expected to lead fundamental changes in Czech (Czechoslovak) society:

Čekali jste na nás?	Were you waiting for us?
Věřili jste v nás?	Did you believe in us?
Právě jsme vyrazili, připojte se!***	We have just set off, join us!

*** J.: Vám [To you]. In: *Sibiřská 5*, Vol. 1, No. 4 (1925), p. 2.

A part of the public (and journalists) perceived the volunteers not only as “saints,” but mainly as “saviours.” Their arrival was expected to rectify a number of problems of the young republic, although they were bringing new problems with them and there were many squabbles and difficulties related to them. Karel Svoboda commented on the situation very soberly, taking into account the viewpoints of both parties. “When the legionnaires had returned home, many were expecting that they would put the republic on the right track in many respects. Well, we disappointed them and they disappointed us. Why, we came from Russia exhausted, our nerves were longing for peace and rest, and this was why we stepped back and had no wish whatsoever to become involved in public activities.”⁸⁴ The story

84 SVOBODA, K.: *S vichřicí do dvou světadílů*, p. 205. Compare the impression of disillusionment as described in another recollection: “In stations along the way, and particularly in České Budějovice, we have an opportunity to listen to the opinions of the locals, and we are surprised by the coldness with which they talk about the republic and its government. Their words indicate that they are still expecting something from us, namely law and order in the state in a form based on the position and political affiliation of each of them. It is our first disillusionment after our return home, to be followed later by many more, and even times

“Z těplušky do těplušky” [From *teplushka* to *teplushka*], which provided the title for a whole collection of Rudolf Vlasák’s texts about legionnaires after their return home, is characterized by several stereotypes. The first of them is naturally their disappointment with Czechoslovakia, followed by their underappreciation by local people and, last but not least, their difficult social situation which prompts several characters appearing in the story to a decision to settle in empty railway carriages in a railway station (this is why the story’s title is “From *teplushka* to *teplushka*”). The *teplushka* is a symbol of something better and healthier, of the brotherhood of legionnaires and, looking back, of the uncomplicated life in wartime Russia, with a *samovar* occupying a place of honour in a railway carriage parked on a siding being the ultimate symbol of “Russism.”⁸⁵

Another often repeated stereotype characterizing the volunteer’s life at home and reflecting his allegedly problematic reception by the local environment is his vain effort to get any job. These attempts were often in the focus of satirists and humourists among legionnaires, but there is an undertone of bitterness and rejection in them. A much more comprehensive research project would be needed to prove or disprove that, but random probes seem to indicate that the situation of legionnaires as a social group was not, from the viewpoint of the exercise of their professions, as tragic as they themselves seemed to believe. It is true that a relatively high number of state administration jobs were “reserved” for legionnaires, yet it was not easy to get them. One of the reasons might be lack of qualification of candidates-veterans, a fact which was ridiculed by Rudolf Vlasák in the following overstatement: “I was asked somewhere whether I am a Catholic, in another place whether I play football and what post I hold in the game, still elsewhere whether I can repair telephones and water gardens, and here again whether I can feed pigs and breed racing homers. In short, there was always something I did not know. Now I have a box full of manuals on pig feeding, fishing, dog-companion breeding, etc. I also go and watch the feeding. I have even made drumsticks and play on my wife’s pots. But even all this is not enough, there is always something I cannot do. And this is why I am without a job.”⁸⁶

The alleged postwar want of legionnaires for jobs is used as a stereotype particularly by Rudolf Vlasák. He similarly emphasized a contradiction between state administration jobs promised to legionnaires and reality in a short story titled “Jak přijímali k policii...” [How they auditioned for the police...].⁸⁷ A question to

when these first soldiers of the yet non-existent state were called names because they were not willing to sell their ideals, their belief, to political dirt.” (KOHÁK, Josef: *Lodí “Silesia”* [Aboard ship “Silesia”]. In: ZEMAN, A. (ed.): *Cestami odboje*, Vol. 5, p. 179.)

85 VLASÁK, Rudolf: *Z těplušky do těplušky* [From *teplushka* to *teplushka*]. In: IDEM: *Z těplušky do těplušky a jiné houpačky* [From *teplushka* to *teplushka* and other stories]. Praha, Pokrok 1929, pp. 45–56.

86 VLASÁK, R.: *O místo* [Looking for a job]. In: IDEM: *Veselá anabase brásky číslo X*, p. 290; compare: IDEM: *Naši kluci doma*, pp. 396–420.

87 IDEM: *Jak přijímali k policii...* [How they auditioned for the police...]. In: IDEM: *Z těplušky do těplušky a jiné houpačky*, pp. 7–28.

be answered by further detailed research is whether and to what extent the above stereotype is based on true numbers of unemployed legionnaires, or whether it is based only on their complaints (which may be unjustified). There is a group of novels (such as Kopta's *Třetí rota doma* [Third platoon at home] or *Smějte se s bláznem* [Laugh with the fool], Rosůlek's *Veteráni republiky* [Veterans of the republic]), which describe the gloomy interwar life of legionnaires in a more detailed manner.⁸⁸

Rudolf Vlasák also attempted to summarize some negative opinions of “civilians” on the veterans: “All that glitters is not gold! There must be a lot of rascals among those legionnaires. One can never be too cautious! Good for us! We will not contribute to anything! One knows those braggarts! Their mouths are full of homeland and nation to make one fall ill in a jiffy!”⁸⁹ He thus characterizes – perhaps unknowingly – what legionnaires often perceived as a considerable problem of their existence. In Vlasák's story describing a visit of several returned volunteers at the “U Fleků” pub in Prague, distorted ideas of local people about the legionnaires' clash with the reality of tired soldiers. All ends in a quarrel and almost in a brawl when a negatively depicted “local fat patriot” accuses the volunteers of not being ardent enough Slavophiles and, at the same time, makes fun of their speech full of Russisms.⁹⁰ Jaroslav Fingl similarly discloses the “popular opinion” concerning legionnaires in a conversation of several “old women” in a Prague railway station: “Some decent people, they did not even bring any Russian woman with them.”⁹¹ The alleged moral depravity of Czechoslovak legionnaires (in the eyes of the local population) symbolized by venereal diseases and Russian wives or common-law spouses would merit a deeper probe. This hold true, after all, for the general image of Russian legionnaires in the Czechoslovak mindset in the early 1920s.

Frequent complaints of legionnaires about the emptiness of grand ideals (homeland, nation) compared to what they were expecting prompt a question whether these ideals were indeed the only, or at least the most powerful, prime mover of their acts in Russia. We can also point out the legionnaires' desire to create their own image of ideal warriors, which again collided with reality. The feeling of “disillusionment with the nation” is also dealt with in a poem whose leading title is “Vděkem národ dluhy splácí...” [The nation pays its debts with gratitude...] and in the end of which its author (again anonymous) placates the domestic reader that the legionnaires are not going to “occupy” public space for long:

88 KOPTA, Josef: *Třetí rota doma* [Third platoon at home], Vol. 1–2. Praha, Čin 1935; IDEM: *Smějte se s bláznem* [Laugh with the fool]. Praha, Melantrich 1939; ROSŮLEK, J. V.: *Veteráni republiky*.

89 VLASÁK, Rudolf: *Zrádce?? Román ze života legionářského* [A traitor?? A novel from the life of a legionnaire]. Praha, Za svobodu 1929, p. 349.

90 IDEM: *Naši kluci doma*, p. 375.

91 FINGL, Jaroslav: *V karanténě na Filipínách* [Quarantined in the Philippines]. In: ZEMAN, A. (ed.): *Cestami odboje*, Vol. 5, p. 185.

Každý z nás drží pevně svou masku
 národu posílá dojemnou zkazku:
 Mějte strpení, zanechte vření,
 mřem rychle, a přec jsme jen do...
 vymření.****

Each of us holding firmly his mask
 sends a touching story to the nation:
 Just bear with us, stop quarreling,
 we die quickly, and live only until...
 the extinction.

**** -ova: Vděkem národ dluhy splácí... [The nation pays its debts with gratitude...].
 In: *Sibiřská 5*, Vol. 1, No. 4 (1925), p. 5.

It may be compared with a song titled “Republiko, nebuď na mě zlá!” [“Republic, do not be angry with me!”] (it was supposed to be sung to the tune of the song “Ženo, ženo, nebuď na mě zlá!” [“Woman, woman, do not be angry with me!”]), the two last stanzas of which are presented below:

Dneska po té velké štrapáci
 máme z toho jenom legraci
 a tak dále doba míjí,
 praví bratři v Rusku hnijí –
 nám tu zbyli páni bratránci.

Today, after that long footslogging
 we only make fun of it
 and the time is passing by,
 true brothers are rotting in Russia –
 and only cousins have remained here.

Proto nebuď, Republiko, zlá,
 že zůstanu Sibirjakem já,
 že si dneska rvu jen vlasy
 a vzpomínám na ty časy,
 kdy si každý mohl říci: “Já.”****

So, Republic, do not be angry with me
 that I will remain a Siberian,
 that I am tearing my hair today
 and recall the times
 when everyone could say: “Me.”

**** ČERNOHORSKÝ, V.: Republiko, nebuď na mě zlá [Republic, do not be angry with me].
 In: *Ibid.* (July 1925), p. 15.

Conclusion

The presented study has attempted to outline basic tendencies and moments in the depiction of the arrival of Czechoslovak volunteers from the war to their homeland on the basis of their own memories, autobiographic novels, and other literary works. In doing so, it is not always easy to abandon or disregard the negative view of the young Czechoslovak Republic and its postwar society, which appears in a majority of the legionnaires' texts. However, the hypercriticism of the legionnaires was already well-known and understandable during the time they spent in Russia. On the one hand, they loved Russia; on the other hand, they were condemning it. As shown on previous pages, the stereotype of Russia as an example to follow for Czechoslovakia did not disappear upon their return home. In Russia, it was the other way round. Bohemia was always a measure of all things Russian.

The presented study intends to be just a short prelude of necessary further research which should include extensive probes into the legislation, social reality, or

art of the First Czechoslovak Republic (in particular from the viewpoint of “non-legionnaires”). This is the only way to create a plastic picture of the position of the legionnaires (and its reflection and self-reflection) in the interwar period. There is still a methodological question to what extent the legionnaires in peacetime Czechoslovakia constituted a tight-knit social group, or whether the legions-related experience was not the only thing they had in common. And this question might be at the birth of an entire monograph that could complement and perhaps deepen the knowledge presented in Jan Michl’s book *Legionáři a Československo* [Legionnaires and Czechoslovakia] referred to above.⁹²

The Czech version of this article, entitled Až půjdem po Václaváku... Obraz návratu československých legionářů do vlasti v jejich vzpomínkách a autobiografických románech, was originally published in Soudobé dějiny, Vol. 25, No. 1–2 (2018), pp. 55–84.

Translated by Jiří Mareš

92 In addition to legionnaires, however, it is necessary to focus on the “other side” of the war conflict in which the independence of Czechoslovakia was at stake, i.e. on numerically superior men serving in the Austro-Hungarian army. In this respect, one of the most important recent publications is a monograph written by Jiří Hutečka entitled *Muži proti ohni: Motivace, morálka a mužnost českých vojáků Velké války 1914–1918* [Men against fire: Motivation, morale, and manhood of Czech soldiers in the Great War 1914–1918] (Praha, Nakladatelství Lidové noviny 2016).

Jozef Tiso: My Enemy – Your Hero?

Jan Rychlík

A brief biography of Jozef Tiso with a focus on his political activity reads as follows.¹ He was born on 13 October 1887 in Bytča in north-western Slovakia. He studied theology at the university in Vienna, receiving a doctorate in 1911. After that, he worked as a chaplain in different places in Slovakia. After the outbreak of the First World War, he served as a military chaplain on the Eastern Front between 1914 and 1915. In 1915, he started teaching religion at Piarist grammar school in Nitra. At the same time, he worked as a spiritual director in the local bishop's seminary and later as secretary to the bishop. Before the foundation of Czechoslovakia, Tiso was not active in the Slovak national movement nor opposed it. As soon as the Czechoslovak Republic was proclaimed, he entered the Slovak People's Party (*Slovenská ľudová strana*), which was led by priest Andrej Hlinka and renamed Hlinka's Slovak Popular Party (HSLS, *Hlinkova slovenská ľudová strana*) in 1925. Tiso became a deputy and also a leading ideologist of the party, mainly because, unlike the party's chairman, Andrej Hlinka, he had received a good education and spoke several languages. Elected as a deputy of the National Assembly for the first time in 1925, he also maintained his mandate in the elections of 1929 and 1935. Between 1927 and 1929, he was Minister of Public Health on behalf of HSLS in the right-wing government, which was known as a "gentlemen's coalition." A convinced autonomist, or more precisely, a federalist, he was the first to formulate clearly the right of Slovaks to an autonomous state within Czechoslovakia, which

1 See entry "Tiso, Jozef" in *Slovenský biografický slovník* [Slovak biographical dictionary], Vol. 6. Martin, Matica slovenská 1994, p. 74. For more details, see: DÚRICA, Milan Stanislav: *Jozef Tiso 1887–1947: Životopisný profil* [Jozef Tiso 1887–1947: A biographical profile]. Bratislava, Lúč 2006.

he also set out in theoretical terms.² As a representative of a moderate wing of the party, Tiso was perceived by Czech politicians as somebody with whom it would be possible to come to an agreement.

Following Andrej Hlinka's death on 16 August 1938, Tiso became the leading figure not only of HSLŠ, but also in Slovak politics. In his quest for the autonomy of Slovakia, he took advantage of the Munich diktat of 30 September 1938, which resulted in Czechoslovakia losing its bordering territories to Germany, and the weakened position of its central government. In negotiations with the main Slovak political parties held in the town of Žilina in north-western Slovakia on 6 October 1938, he was able to convince their leaders and subsequently pressed the central government in Prague to agree with the declaration of autonomy of Slovakia. He was then appointed head of the Slovak autonomous government. On 13 March 1939, he was invited by Hitler to Berlin. Hitler informed him of his decision to put an end to the existence of Czechoslovakia and annex the Czech Lands directly to Germany. He strongly recommended to Tiso to secede Slovakia from the Czech Lands, or else Germany would lose all interest in it. The next day, the Slovak autonomous parliament declared the independence of Slovakia, which became a satellite state of Nazi Germany. On 1 October 1939, Tiso was elected chairman of HSLŠ and, on 26 October of the same year, President of the Slovak Republic. The dependence of Slovakia on Germany was defined by the German-Slovak treaty on protection of 23 March 1939. Among other things, it entailed the participation of Slovakia in the war on the side of Germany. Under Tiso's leadership, Slovakia participated in the attack against Poland and in 1941 in the invasion of the Soviet Union. On 13 December 1941, Slovakia also formally declared war on the other states of the anti-Hitler coalition.

The political system that Tiso created is not easy to define. It was to draw on the social teachings of the Catholic Church in combination with thoughts on a corporate state as defined by Austrian sociologist and political scientist Othmar Spann (1878–1950), whose theories strongly influenced Tiso. However, Spann's idea of a corporate state was not viewed favourably in Germany and therefore it was not put into practice in Slovakia. Tiso rejected both Marxism and political liberalism, hence also free competition between political parties and parliamentary democracy.³ During the existence of autonomous Slovakia, he had already built

2 TISO, Jozef: *Ideológia Slovenskej ľudovej strany* [The ideology of the Slovak People's Party]. Praha, Tiskový odbor Ústředí Svazu československého studentstva 1930.

3 For more details, see: WARD, James Mace: *Priest, Politician, Collaborator: Jozef Tiso and the Making of Fascist Slovakia*. Ithaca (New York) – London, Cornell University Press 2013, pp. 141–149, pp. 196–201. Also compare: RYCHLÍK, Jan: *Ideové základy myšlení Jozefa Tisa a jejich politický dopad* [Ideological foundations of Jozef Tiso's thought and their political consequences]. In: BYSTRICKÝ, Valerián – FANO, Štefan (ed.): *Pokus o politický a osobný profil Jozefa Tiso: Zborník materiálov z vedeckého sympózia Častá-Papiernička, 5.–7. mája 1992* [Attempts at a political and personal profile of Jozef Tiso: Proceedings of the international symposium held in Častá-Papiernička, 5–7 May 1992]. Bratislava, Slovak Academic Press 1992, pp. 263–274.

an authoritarian regime of one political party – *Hlinka's Slovak People's Party*. Yet, he was not a Nazi and represented a moderate and conservative wing of HSLŠ. By means of skilful manoeuvring, he was even able to eliminate the influence of the radical national-socialist wing led by Vojtech Tuka and Alexander Mach. As regards the persecution of political opponents, the regime in Slovakia was quite moderate (with the exception of the persecution of Jews), and until the outbreak of the Slovak National Uprising, no politically motivated death sentence was imposed in Slovakia.⁴

Tiso was a convinced anti-Semite, although in his case it was religious rather than racial anti-Semitism. As he himself claimed, during his studies in Vienna he was strongly influenced by the Christian socialist movement of Karl Lueger (1844–1910), Vienna's mayor at that time, who had made anti-Semitism a focal point of his political programme.⁵ Anti-Semitism thus formed an integral part of Tiso's Slovak nationalism, which was an ideological base of the Slovak state. In Tiso's view, Slovak nationalism represented the interests of the Slovak nation.⁶ Tiso's understanding of the nation solely in language-ethnic and religious terms⁷ thus pre-excluded all minorities, the Jews in particular, from the Slovak national community. Tiso himself did not organize the deportations of Jews, but he did not oppose them either. As the Prime Minister and later as the President of the Slovak Republic, he authorized several governmental decrees and laws, which in different ways limited the rights of Jews.⁸ He also signed constitutional law No. 68/1942 Sl. z. of 15 May 1942, which – with some exceptions – authorized the deportations of Jews from Slovakia to German-occupied Poland.⁹ Moreover, in a public speech in Holíč on 15 August 1942,

4 For the legal analysis of this situation, see: RAŠLA, Anton: *Legendy o Tisovi* [Legends about Tiso]. In: *Ibid.*, pp. 140–143.

5 See: ŠIMONČIČ, Albert – POLČÍN, Jozef: *Jozef Tiso, prvý prezident Slovenskej republiky* [Jozef Tiso, the first president of the Slovak Republic]. Bratislava, Zväz slovenských knihkupcov 1941, p. 17.

6 See: POLAKOVIČ, Štefan: *Tisova nauka* [Tiso's thought]. Bratislava, Hlinkova slovenská ľudová strana 1941, p. 17.

7 Compare: TISO, J.: *Ideológia Slovenskej ľudovej strany*, p. 2. For more details on Tiso's interpretation of the nation, see: BAKOŠ, Vladimír: *K Tisovej koncepcii národa a nacionalizmu* [On Tiso's conception of the nation and nationalism]. In: BYSTRICKÝ, V. – FANO, Š. (ed.): *Pokus o politický a osobný profil Jozefa Tisu*, pp. 275–280.

8 It was primarily Constitutional Act No. 210/1940 Sl. z. [Collection of laws of the Slovak Republic] of 3 September 1940, whereby government was conferred full power for the period of one year to completely exclude Jews from economic and social life in Slovakia. Under this law, Jews were gradually deprived, through various decrees, of all their possessions, as well as of their political and human rights. The infamous Jewish Code (No. 198/1941 Sl. z.), adopted on the basis of this law on 9 September 1941, introduced Nuremberg Racial Laws in Slovakia. (For more details, see: KAMENEC, Ivan: *Po stopách tragédie* [In the footsteps of a tragedy]. Bratislava, Archa 1991, pp. 125–132.)

9 Even though Constitutional Act No. 68/1942 Sl. z. sanctioned the deportation of Jews from Slovakia, it also removed certain categories of Jews from the deportations, paradoxically protecting them. However, after the occupation of Slovakia by the German army the deportations of Jews came under direct control of the Germans, who largely ignored the

Tiso expressed his approval of the deportations and rejected any claims that they were in conflict with Christian moral values.¹⁰ In 1944, Tiso openly opposed the Slovak National Uprising, agreeing to and authorizing retrospectively the presence of the German army in Slovakia.¹¹

As President of the Slovak Republic, Tiso remained an ally of Hitler's Germany to the very end of the war. In April 1945, he fled to Austria, later taking refuge in a monastery in Altötting in Bavaria. Here he was tracked down by American intelligence, detained and subsequently handed over to Czechoslovak authorities. On the basis of retribution decrees adopted by the Slovak National Council, Tiso was accused of active participation in destroying Czechoslovakia, implementing an authoritative undemocratic regime, supporting the war efforts of Nazi Germany, deporting Jews and betraying the Slovak National Uprising.¹² Following a three-month trial, he was sentenced to death by the National Tribunal in Bratislava. His request for clemency was not recommended by the government and was consequently also turned down by President Beneš. Tiso was hanged early in the morning of 18 April 1947 in the courtyard of Bratislava's regional tribunal.

Indictment, Apologetics and the Death Sentence

In order to understand the debate around Jozef Tiso, in the first place we have to focus on the main charges raised against him and later also on how Tiso and his apologists confronted these charges. To make it simple, we will start with the charges brought against him before the National Tribunal, although the criticism of Tiso is not only of a criminal nature. However, even today this criticism relates to the charges which had already been set out in the indictment of 1946. In the first place, he was charged with engaging in the break-up of Czechoslovakia in March 1939.

exempted categories. (For a more detailed analysis of Act No. 68/1942 Sl. z., see: *Ibid.*, pp. 187–190.)

- 10 TISO, Jozef: *Prejavy a články, sv. 2: 1938–1944* [Speeches and articles, Vol. 2: 1938–1944]. Eds. Miroslav Fabricius – Katarína Hradská. Bratislava, Academic Electronic Press 2007, p. 492, Document No. 287 – Prejav J. Tisu na cirkevno-národných slávnostiach (15. augusta 1942, Holíč) [J. Tiso's speech at the religious-national festivities (15 August 1942, Holíč)].
- 11 IDEM: *Prejavy a články, Vol. 3: 1944–1947*. Eds. Miroslav Fabricius – Katarína Hradská. Bratislava, Historický ústav SAV 2010, pp. 7–9, Document No. 1 – Prejav J. Tisu v Slovenskom rozhlase pri príležitosti vstupu nemeckých vojsk na slovenské územie (Bratislava, 30. augusta 1944) [J. Tiso's speech on the Slovak Radio on the occasion of the German army's entry onto Slovak territory (Bratislava, 30 August 1944)].
- 12 Slovak National Council decree No. 33/1945 Zb. n. SNR [Collection of decrees of the Slovak National Council] of 15 May 1945 on the punishment of fascists, criminals, occupants, traitors and collaborators, and on establishing people's (retribution) judiciary. In: Nové ASPI [online]. [quoted 2018-06-25.] Accessed at: <https://www.noveaspi.sk/products/law-Text/1/11701/1/2>. The website also features the subsequent amendments of this decree (see: Nariadenie SNR No. 57/1946 Zb. n. SNR).

He was also charged with implementing and maintaining an undemocratic regime of the Slovak state, participating in the war against the Soviet Union and the Allies, participating in the deportations and extermination of Jews and finally with failing to provide at least passive support of the Slovak National Uprising and being loyal to Nazi Germany to the very end of the war.

Apologetics of Tiso is essentially based on his own defence speech given before the National Tribunal, which his sympathizers later expanded with more arguments and sought to support with some facts. Therefore, it should suffice if we only look at Tiso's defence of 1947.¹³ The charge of participation in destroying Czechoslovakia was refuted by Tiso by arguing that Slovakia was in danger of being absorbed by Horthy's Hungary. Tiso's apologists later also emphasized the right of each nation to self-determination, an argument which gradually gained ground. As regards the other charges of the indictment, Tiso principally pleaded the pressure of Germany, which he allegedly could not defy, or the theory of "a lesser evil," that is, his efforts to prevent an even greater dependence of Slovakia on Germany, avert the seizure of power by Slovak nationalists around Vojtech Tuka and Alexander Mach, or simply the need to defend the interests of the Slovak nation under all circumstances. As for his participation in the genocide of Slovak Jews, Tiso defended himself by claiming that he had no knowledge of their tragic fate. Tiso's defenders later emphasized his role in the foundation of the Slovak state. The undemocratic nature of the Slovak regime was justified by the circumstances of war, the participation in war was described only as symbolic, and his involvement in the deportations of Jews was downplayed by stating that he had only approved their deportations to labour camps, knowing nothing about their real fate. According to the apologists, Tiso rejected the uprising because it was aimed against the existence of the Slovak state.

Naturally, what was considered Tiso's gravest crime in Czech postwar society was his participation in destroying Czechoslovakia in March 1939, something that, on the contrary, was not considered a crime by a greater part of Slovak society. In the aftermath of the war, quite a few people were aware of how differently Tiso's role in declaring the independence of Slovakia was perceived in the Czech and Slovak part of the country. It is certainly no coincidence that Anton Rašla, the military prosecutor in Tiso's trial, proposed to base the action on the charges of participating in crimes against humanity, and not on the charges of destroying the republic. Rašla was probably aware that the prosecution's arguments on the latter charge were rather tenuous and that this could contribute to making Tiso a martyr for Slovak independence. However, his proposal was not accepted.¹⁴

13 Jozef Tiso's final defence speech was published in the publication: SMOLEC, Ján (ed.): *Proces s dr. J. Tisom: Spomienky obžalobcu Antona Rašlu a obhajcu Ernesta Žabkayho* [The trial of Dr J. Tiso: Recollections of prosecutor Anton Rašla and defence lawyer Ernest Žabkay]. Bratislava, Tatrapress 1990, pp. 122–222. See also: PAUČO, Jozef (ed.): *Dr. Jozef Tiso o sebe* [Dr Jozef Tiso about himself]. Passaic, N.J., Slovenský katolícky sokol 1952, pp. 9–338; TISO, J.: *Prejavy a články*, Vol. 3, pp. 99–217. See also note 32.

14 *Ibid.*, p. 33. Rašla mentions that Ludovít Rigan, one of the civil prosecutors, shared his opinion.

The previous text clearly shows that in the postwar period the Czechs saw little difference between Tiso and, for example, Sudetenland leaders Konrad Heinlein and Karl Hermann Frank, who were also held responsible for the destruction of Czechoslovakia. It is likely that the Czechs would have more easily accepted Tiso had they not lost their own state at the time.¹⁵ The events of 14 March 1939 in Slovakia cannot be seen separately from the events of the following day of 15 March 1939, when the Nazis occupied Bohemia and Moravia and annexed the Czech Lands to Germany as the so-called Protectorate. Unlike many Slovaks believed, the Protectorate was only an autonomous territory of the Third Reich, and not a Czech state. Tiso was thus perceived by the Czechs much more negatively than the Protectorate's President Emil Hácha, who had agreed, in Berlin on the night of 15 March, to the occupation of the Czech Lands. The difference was that Hácha himself did not assist in the destruction of the Second Republic and considered the Protectorate only a temporary solution before Czechoslovak, or at least Czech, independence could be restored. By contrast, Tiso refused the renewal of Czechoslovakia in any form, despite being informed by the Slovak diplomat in Switzerland that the Allies did not support the existence of an independent Slovakia after the war.¹⁶ In 1938 and 1939, many Czechs in Slovakia also experienced the anti-Czech policy of Tiso's regime, primarily the expulsion of Czechs from Slovakia. As a result of these anti-Czech measures by the Slovak government, Tiso's regime was quite rightly perceived as anti-Czech¹⁷ in Czech society and Tiso himself as an enemy of the Czech people.

In the postwar period, Czech political parties differed little in their attitude towards Tiso. Both the left-wing parties, the Communists and Social Democrats, and the National Socialists, the most right-wing political party of the Czech political spectrum, demanded his death. Only the Czechoslovak People's Party called for a milder sentence. As a clerical party, it regarded the execution of a Catholic priest as unacceptable. This view was shared by Czech agrarians, who, since their own party was banned, mostly joined the People's Party or the National Socialist Party. Ladislav Feierabend, a pre-war agrarian politician who joined the National Socialist Party, wrote on this: "Dr Joseph Tiso, the President of the Slovak state, was rightfully sentenced to death, but the execution of the sentence seemed to me

15 For more details, see: RYCHLÍK, Jan: Vznik Slovenského štátu a česká spoločnosť [The birth of the Slovak state and Czech society]. In: BYSTRICKÝ, Valerián – MICHELA, Miroslav – SCHVARC, Michal et al.: *Rozbitie alebo rozpad? Historické reflexie zániku Česko-Slovenska* [A destruction or disintegration? Historical reflections on the disintegration of Czechoslovakia]. Bratislava, Veda 2010, pp. 392–405; IDEM: Situace v Protektorátu Čechy a Morava v roce 1939 a na počátku roku 1940 ve zprávách Generálního konzulátu Slovenské republiky v Praze [The situation in the Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia in 1939 and early 1940 in the reports of the Consulate General of the Slovak Republic]. In: *Český časopis historický*, Vol. 109, No. 4 (2011), pp. 716–738.

16 KIRSCHBAUM, Joseph Marian: *My Last Diplomatic Report to the President of Slovakia*. Furdek, Jednota 1972, p. 85.

17 See: RYCHLÍK, Jan: K otázke postavenia českého obyvateľstva na Slovensku v rokoch 1938–1945 [On the issue of the situation of Czechs in Slovakia in 1938–1945]. In: *Historický časopis*, Vol. 37, No. 3 (1989), pp. 405–410.

purposeless in his case.”¹⁸ Neither the National Socialists nor the Communists as a whole had any doubts about Tiso’s sentence. When the government was about to vote on Tiso’s request for clemency, the National Socialist Minister of Justice, Prokop Drtina, proposed first returning the request to the Presidium of the Slovak National Council, which was to issue a firm recommendation. However, when his proposal met with vehement opposition by the Communists, he did not support the request.¹⁹

The way Tiso was viewed in Slovakia was closely linked to the view of the Slovak state and its regime. The state could have been more or less acceptable for most Slovaks, but the same did not apply to the regime. The *Ludak* [Hlinka’s Slovak Popular Party] regime was rejected both by the Communists and by the democrats of all political orientations. The Communists viewed the regime as a form of fascist dictatorship acting in the interests of Slovak bourgeoisie and Tiso as its representative. Therefore, what the Communists disliked about the Slovak state was not only that it was a bourgeois state, but also a fascist one.²⁰ For democrats of all shades, the *Ludak* regime was a denial of all the principles of democracy, parliamentary forms of government and civic rights. Moreover, both the Communists and democrats perceived Tiso’s alliance with Nazi Germany negatively, the same as the fact that he remained an ally of the Nazis until the very end of the war. On the other hand, for Slovak nationalists seeking an independent Slovak state, Tiso was clearly

18 FEIERABEND, Ladislav Karel: *Politické vzpomínky* [Political recollections], Vol. 3. Praha, Atlantis 1996, p. 348.

19 In his memoirs, he wrote: “The four of us, national socialist ministers, we thus opposed or voted against clemency. Since I did not receive any recommendation of clemency, which, as I had told [the chairman of Slovak National Council] Lettrich and [British Ambassador] Nichols, was my condition if to support the request, I was not bound by anything. By contrast, the betrayal of a deputy and several times also a minister of the Czechoslovak state at the time of extreme vulnerability of the state was indisputable, this crime being committed continuously during many years since Hitler’s coming to power (!) and since the foundation of the Henlein’s and Karmasin’s Nazi parties of the Czechoslovak Germans. He provided them with political support, consorting with Henlein even before Munich. After that, he also betrayed Hácha’s regime by proclaiming Slovak independence, even against the will of Hlinka’s heir and successor Karol Sidor. He maintained his Nazi (!) autocratic regime in Slovakia until the very end of the war, declaring war on the United States and sending Slovak soldiers alongside the German army against Soviet Russia. After the outbreak of the Slovak National Uprising, he undermined it and contributed to its defeat with his speeches and radio broadcasts, arriving to the defeated town of Banská Bystrica by the side of an SS general! Has anyone committed worse crimes and betrayal of the Czechoslovak Republic than this Catholic priest? Definitely not. Capital punishment as well the rejection of clemency was in his case appropriate. For us, the ministers of the conscious Czech National Socialist Party, it was not possible to go any further on the issue of Jozef Tiso than we had gone. And we could not be expected to do more than we had done.” (DRTINA, Prokop: *Československo můj osud: Kniha života českého demokrata 20. století, sv. II/2. Rok 1947 – únor 1948* [Czechoslovakia – my fate: A book on the life of a Czechoslovak democrat of the 20th century, Vol. II/2. Year 1947 – February 1948]. Praha, Melantrich 1992, p. 303.)

20 See: SIRÁCKY, Andrej: *Klerofašistická ideológia ľudáctva* [Clerical fascist ideology of the *Ludaks*]. Bratislava, Slovenská akadémia ved 1955.

a hero, because in their view the proclamation of Slovak independence was a morally justifiable and politically correct act. The fact that for the first time in history, the Slovak nation had had an independent state, albeit completely dependent on Germany and with a highly problematic regime, was for the Slovak nationalists of such paramount and historic significance that the imperfections of the state seemed of little consequence.²¹

Between 1946 and 1947, the attitude of the Communist Party of Slovakia (KSS) towards Tiso was identical to that of the Czech Communists, and as for the demands for the death sentence for Tiso, also identical to the views held by the Social Democrats and National Socialists. By the views of the Slovak Communists, I am referring mainly to the party leadership, because the rank-and-file members of the party had demonstrably different opinions on this issue.²² The implacable position of the Communist Party of Slovakia rested on a finely-balanced political calculation. In the spring of 1946, the leadership of the Democratic Party (DS) entered into an agreement with representatives of political Catholics for their support in the upcoming elections, subsequently winning the elections, thanks to the votes of the Catholics (who previously mainly voted for HSLS). The Communists believed that this agreement, later known as the “April agreement,” contained a secret commitment by the Democratic Party not to allow Tiso’s sentence, or rather, the execution of the sentence. Thus they concluded that should Tiso be executed, the Catholic voters would turn away from the Democratic Party. They had little concern about Tiso in person. The existence of this secret clause has never been proved and it is questionable whether it actually existed.²³ But it is also true that, despite its active participation in the struggle for the renewal of Czechoslovakia and despite harbouring no sympathies for Tiso, the Democratic Party opposed the execution of the death sentence, appealing for clemency until the last moment. They feared, quite rightly, that the execution would damage relations between the Slovaks and Czechs, as well as between the Catholics and Protestants, and that those profiting politically from it would be the Communists.²⁴

21 See: VNUK, František: *Ludová strana v slovenskej politike* [Slovak People’s Party in Slovak politics]. In: *Literárni almanach Slovák v Amerike*. Chicago, Logos – Cromwell 1968, p. 44.

22 See: URSÍNÝ, Ján: *Z môjho života: Príspevok v vývoju slovenskej národnej myšlienky* [From my life: On the development of the Slovak national idea]. Martin, Matica slovenská 2000, p. 122.

23 It is unlikely that the Democratic Party would have committed itself to preventing Tiso’s sentence, because it would have been unable to meet this commitment. In his memoirs, Jan Ursíny, one of the prime movers of the April agreement on behalf of Democrats, made no comment whatsoever on such a commitment. (*Ibid.*) Pavol Čarnogurský, who represented the Catholics in the negotiations, claims that the Democrats had indeed promised to further a more moderate sentence for Tiso, or clemency, but that they had not committed to anything in writing. (ČARNOGURSKÝ, Pavol: *Svedok čias* [The witness of time]. Bratislava, USPO Peter Smolík 1997, p. 198.)

24 The Chairman of the Democratic Party and the leader of the insurgent Slovak National Council, Jozef Lettrich, who had been himself persecuted by Tiso’s regime, wrote on this issue: “Even before the trial, the Communists had already declared several times that Tiso must be executed. The Democrats opposed his execution for state-political reasons (Czechoslovak)

The response of the Slovak public (and not only the Catholics) to the execution of the sentence was disapproval, but no major incidents occurred.²⁵ The image of Tiso naturally remained positive in the Slovak Catholic environment and, just as the Slovak Protestants feared, for many Slovak Catholics Tiso did become a martyr. Some Slovaks also blamed the Czechs for Tiso's execution, principally President Edvard Beneš, who had never been accepted in Slovakia. According to popular belief, Tiso's execution was an act of vengeance by Beneš. Along with rumours that General Miroslav Rastislav Štefánik's plane had been shot down and that Beneš had sold the territories of Spiš and Orava in exchange for the Těšín (Silesia) region and Ostrava's coal, Tiso's execution therefore became an integral part of the Slovak anti-Czech stereotypes and myths. It made little difference that Tiso had been sentenced by a Slovak court in compliance with Slovak retribution decrees approved by the Slovak National Council, nor that the Slovak decrees – much stricter, incidentally, than the Czech retribution decrees – only allowed for condemning Tiso to death or to a sentence of 30 years of imprisonment.²⁶

In the Catholic environment, the image of Tiso as a good-natured country priest who had saved the Slovak nation from Hungarian and German occupation and ensured its prosperity during the Second World War was passed down from generation to generation. Though fading over time, this image partially survived the entire communist period to the present. The way this “true information” was passed

as well as for purely Slovak reasons. Quite rightly, they were concerned about the deterioration of Slovak-Czech relations, should a representative of Slovak radical nationalism be executed, and of deterioration of confessional relations among Slovaks, should a Roman Catholic priest be executed. Psychological reasons and a sense of justice also spoke against the execution. Providing an opportunity to the extreme political circles to make a political offender a martyr was not prudent. Despite all the acts Tiso had committed as a leader of the Slovak totalitarian state, he represented a moderate course. Not taking this important circumstance into consideration would be unjust.” (LETTRICH, Jozef: *Dejiny novodobého Slovenska* [History of modern Slovakia]. Bratislava, Archa 1993, p. 191. The book was originally published in English in New York in 1955 and a year later in London under the title *A History of Modern Slovakia*. The book was published again in 1985 in Toronto.)

- 25 For reactions to Tiso's execution, see: VNUK, František (ed.): *Dokumenty o postavení katolíckej cirkvi na Slovensku v rokoch 1945–1948* [Documents on the position of the Catholic Church in Slovakia in 1945–1948]. Martin, Matica slovenská 1998, Document No. VI/7, p. 118; Document No. VI/8, p. 119; Document No. VI/15, p. 128; Document No. VI/16, p. 128; RYCHLÍK, Jan: *Češi a Slováci ve 20. století: Česko-slovenské vztahy 1945–1992* [The Czechs and Slovaks in the 20th century: Czech-Slovak Relations 1945–1992]. Bratislava, Academic Electronic Press 1998, p. 95.
- 26 As regards the request for clemency, Slovak Catholics ignored the fact that the weight of responsibility for its rejection laid with the presidium of the Slovak National Council which had refused to adopt any position on it, submitting the proposal without any comment to the government in Prague. President Beneš undeniably made a political mistake by not granting clemency. However, we should also bear in mind that presidential clemency is in fact a power of the president to grant pardon to a convicted person, and not a right of the convicted person to enforce it.

down is well known to folklorists.²⁷ In the popular version, Tiso has only positive characteristics and, contrary to historical reality, is given credit for things he did not do (such as being the saviour of Slovak Jews). By contrast, all negative characteristics are attributed solely to his opponents. In other words, a folk hero is always what the people want him to be and acts in a way a good ruler is expected to act.²⁸

It is interesting that a majority of Slovaks (including the Slovak Catholics) also fervently supported the legacy of the Slovak National Uprising, as if they have forgotten that Tiso had openly opposed it. In contrast, the Protestant community had always maintained a certain distance from Tiso, and their attitude towards his regime, under which the Protestants had been second-class citizens, was rather reserved. Nevertheless, even the Protestants perceived the death sentence as an unsuitable punishment and the execution of the sentence as a political error.

Tiso's cult obviously could not be developed under the communist regime, and his historical role was clearly interpreted as negative by official historiography. This did not change even during the Slovak struggle for creating a Czecho-Slovak Federation in 1968, when different historical issues were being raised in the press. Tiso, however, did not fit this framework, because the struggle for a federation drew on the legacy of the Slovak National Uprising, which Tiso had clearly opposed. The only possible exception was Ladislav Hoffmann's article "Katolícka cirkev a tragédia slovenských židov" [The Catholic Church and the tragedy of Slovak Jews], published in the liberal *Kultúrny život* weekly [Cultural life].²⁹ With the onset of the so-called "normalization" (i.e. the period of Gustav Husák's government between 1969 and 1989) any efforts to rehabilitate Tiso naturally ceased.

For the so-called "normalization" regime, Tiso was "a clerical fascist" and a collaborator. In this relation, an interesting anecdote occurred in 1986. In *Ročenka Slovenského zväzu protifašistických bojovníkov* [The yearbook of the Slovak union of anti-fascist fighters] an unsigned article entitled "Rozsudky nad fašistickými pohlavármi" [Verdicts against fascist leaders] was published, in which the anonymous author claimed that a monument had been unveiled to Tiso in Israel (!) and expressed his righteous indignation: "It is incomprehensible that Israel is the only

27 See: RYCHLÍKOVÁ, Magdaléna – RYCHLÍK, Jan: Problémy výzkumu transmise lidové kultury [Problems of research into the transmission of popular culture]. In: *Národopisný věstník československý/Bulletin d'ethnographie tchécoslovaque*, Vol. II (No. 44). Praha, Národopisná společnost československá při ČSAV 1985, pp. 85–93.

28 See: RYCHLÍK, Jan: National Consciousness and Social Justice in Historical Folklore. In: HOERDER, Dick – BLANK, Inge (eds.): *The Roots of the Transplanted*, Vol. 2. Boulder (Colorado) – New York, East European Monographs – Columbia University Press 1994, pp. 43–53.

29 HOFFMANN, Ladislav: Katolícka cirkev a tragédia slovenských židov [The Catholic Church and the tragedy of Slovak Jews]. In: *Kultúrny život*, Vol. 23, No. 23 (7 June 1968), p. 6. Ladislav Hoffmann and his brother Gabriel Hoffmann were Jews, who had converted to Christianity long before the Slovak state was established. As converts, they obtained an exemption from the Jewish Code from President Tiso. Out of gratitude, they later defended not only Jozef Tiso but also his anti-Jewish policy. (See: HOFFMANN, Gabriel – HOFFMANN, Ladislav: *Katolícka cirkev a tragédia slovenských židov v dokumentech* [The Catholic Church and the tragedy of Slovak Jews in documents]. Partizánske, G-print 1994.)

state that approved the building of a monument to J. Tiso, in Jerusalem in 1981. Have the representatives of Israel forgotten the immense suffering of millions of Jews during the Second World War? They also suffered in Slovakia.”³⁰

Of course, no memorial to Tiso has ever or will ever be unveiled in Jerusalem, or anywhere else in Israel. It is not clear whether the claim in the article was a mistake or a deliberate provocation by the Communist Party with the aim of discrediting Israel as just at that time, at the behest of Moscow, a massive propaganda campaign was being pursued by the Communists in Eastern Europe against Israel. However, the rumour of a memorial to Tiso in Israel spread among both Slovak émigrés and his supporters in Slovakia. And, to the present day, many older people in Slovakia continue to believe it.

Tiso's Cult in Slovak Exile Circles

In the aftermath of the war, a Josef Tiso cult started to develop in the Slovak exile community, particularly in the United States and Canada. It spread mainly through local compatriot organizations such as the Slovak League of America (SLA, *Slovenská liga v Americe*) and the Canadian Slovak League (CSL, *Kanadská slovenská liga*) and their press. This was partly due to personal connections. A number of public figures of the *Ludak* regime left for North America, some of them occupying important posts in the compatriot organizations. For example, the editor-in-chief of the *Slovák* newspaper (HSLs's main organ), Jozef Paučo, became editor-in-chief of the expatriate *Slovák v Amerike* newspaper [Slovaks in America], historical journalist Konštantín Čulen and historian František Hrušovský were active members of compatriot organizations. As early as 1947, Čulen published a laudatory biography of Tiso entitled *Po Svätoplukovi druhá naša hlava* [Our second head of state after Svatopluk] in the United States, dedicating it to “the unfading memory of the victims of the so-called National Tribunal and People's Courts, which were sown across Slovakia as seeds of religious intolerance of our brothers [Protestants] and at the will of the greatest enemies of the Slovak nation, Dr Beneš and the Czechs.”³¹ Paučo was the first to publish Tiso's defence speech before the National Tribunal.³² In

30 *Ročenka Slovenského zväzu protifašistických bojovníkov* [The yearbook of the Union of Anti-Fascist Fighters], Bratislava 1986, p. 134.

31 ČULEN, Konštantín: *Po Svätoplukovi druhá naša hlava: Život Dr. Jozefa Tisu* [Our second head of state after Svatopluk: The life of Dr Jozef Tiso]. Middletown (Pennsylvania), Prvá katolícka slovenská jednota 1947, p. 1.

32 PAUČO, Jozef (ed.): *Dr. Jozef Tiso o sebe* [Tiso's defence speech]. Passaic (New Jersey), Slovenský katolícky Sokol 1952, pp. 353–355. This version of Tiso's defence speech was based on a transcript made by one of the onlookers in the courtroom. Therefore, it was neither complete nor accurate. The full version of the defence speech based on the court's stenographic record was published only in 2010 (see: TISO, J.: *Prejavy a články*, Vol. 3, pp. 99–217, Obranná reč Dr. Jozefa Tisa pred Národným súdom v dňoch 17. a 18. marca 1947 [Defence speech of Dr Jozef Tiso before the National Tribunal on 17–18 March 1947]).

a book published in 1953, he portrayed Tiso as a martyr revered by the entire Slovak nation.³³ In his memoirs published in 1967, Paučo also devoted a whole chapter to Tiso.³⁴ In 1972, on the 25th anniversary of Tiso's execution, several laudatory studies and commemorative articles were published in the *Slovakia* yearbook, edited by Paučo. The main article was written by the HSLŠ's former Secretary General and later the Slovak *chargé d'affaires* in Bern, Jozef Miloslav Kirschbaum.³⁵ Tiso's cult also spread among Slovak émigrés in Argentina, a destination mainly of those Slovaks who had not obtained entry visas to the United States and Canada. For example, one of the main ideologists and philosophers of the *Ludak* regime, Štefan Polakovič, who had already published a collection of Tiso's articles and speeches in Slovakia during the war, was active in Argentina for the rest of his life.³⁶

At the height of the Cold War, the émigrés of the *Ludak* regime logically emphasized the anti-communist character of the Slovak state, even using it as an argument to justify the participation of the Slovak army in the war against the Soviet Union during the Second World War.³⁷ In the 1960s and 1970s, it was mainly František Vnuk and Milan Stanislav Ďurica, the then exile historians of the younger generation, who contributed to popularizing Tiso. In an attempt to address the extremely sensitive issue of Tiso's responsibility for the deportation of Jews in 1942, Milan S. Ďurica described Tiso in 1957, in contradiction with historical reality, as nearly a saviour of Slovak Jews who had been granting them presidential exemptions on a massive scale.³⁸ The declaration of war against the United States and

33 “Dr Jozef Tiso touched the heart of the entire Slovak nation long before the execution, and before becoming the head of the independent Slovak state. Long before anyone could have imagined that some villains would murder our just and noble ruler (!).” (PAUČO, Jozef: *Tisov odkaz* [Tiso's legacy]. Middletown (Pennsylvania), Jednota Press 1953, p. 71.)

34 IDEM: *Tak sme sa poznali: Predstavitelia Slovenskej republiky v spomienkach* [This is how we met: The representatives of the Slovak Republic in recollections]. Middletown (Pennsylvania), Jednota Press 1967, pp. 221–278.

35 KIRSCHBAUM, Joseph Marian: Dr Joseph Tiso: The Prelate-Politician who Died on the Gallows for His People. In: *Slovakia*, Vol. 22, No. 45 (1972), pp. 5–20.

36 POLAKOVIČ, Štefan: *Z Tisovho boja* [On Tiso's struggle]. Bratislava, Vydavateľstvo HSEŠ 1941.

37 PAUČO, Jozef: *Slováci a komunizmus* [Slovaks and communism]. Middletown (Pennsylvania), Jednota Press 1957, pp. 107–111.

38 ĎURICA, Milan Stanislav: Dr Joseph Tiso and the Jewish Problem in Slovakia. In: *Slovakia*, Vol. 7, Nos. 3–4 (1957), pp. 1–22; 2nd edition, published in a format of a book (Padova, Università Padova 1964). It was also published in Slovak: *Dr. Jozef Tiso a problém Židov na Slovensku*. Middletown, Jednota Press 1957. Ďurica also published his theses about Tiso being a saviour in other languages. See, for example: IDEM: *La Republica Eslovaca y la tragedia de los judios europeos*. Buenos Aires 1957. The claim that Tiso had saved thousands of Jews by granting them presidential exemptions is a typical argument used by Tiso's apologists. These arguments are generally adopted from Ďurica's work. However, this claim is not true. In accordance with article No. 255 of the Jewish Code, the President of the Slovak Republic had the right to grant exemptions from all or some provisions of the code, that is, from the anti-Jewish decrees. A holder of the so-called full exemption was not *de iure* considered a Jew, and therefore the deportation did not apply to the holder nor to his or her family. Based on the preserved documentation stored at the Slovak National Archive it is apparent

Great Britain on 13 December 1941, an issue highly disagreeable for the *Ludak* exile community, was downplayed by pointing to the fact that it had not been approved by the Slovak parliament and that no fighting ever took place. It was often argued that the Americans and British never acknowledged the declaration of war.³⁹ Tiso's opposition to the Slovak National Uprising was justified by alleging that it would have meant the establishment of a communist regime. For the members of the exile community – in contrast to the majority of Slovaks at home – the Slovak National Uprising was only “an astounding and incomprehensible plot” against the Slovak Republic.⁴⁰ However, for the post-1968 Slovak exiles, Tiso was no longer an authority nor did they support his legacy. These exiles were aware that if the Slovak state was ever renewed, it would have to be built on a completely new footing.

The efforts of the *Ludak* exile community to rehabilitate Tiso morally in the eyes of American political circles were unsuccessful. During the Cold War, the United States supported the exile organization the Council of Free Czechoslovakia (*Rada svobodného Československa*), which consisted of Czech and Slovak pre-February politicians who were pro-Czechoslovakia oriented. Although clearly anti-communists, these politicians rejected – even in the interests of a joint struggle against communism – any cooperation with *Ludak* émigrés around the Slovak National Council Abroad (*Slovenská národná rada v zahraničí*) and the Slovak Liberation Committee (*Slovenský oslobodzovací výbor*). For the Council of Free Czechoslovakia, Tiso was and remained *persona non grata*; in this respect, the exile politicians agreed with the communist elite in Prague. For the Czech post-August exiles, who had witnessed the foundation of the Czechoslovak federation, the idea of an independent Slovakia was more acceptable than for the post-February exiles. However, any possibility of rehabilitating Tiso was strictly rejected by them.⁴¹

Tiso and Dissent

For Czech dissent circles, both the Tiso and *Ludak* regime remained unacceptable. In Slovakia, where the leading force of the Slovak opposition was the Catholic dissent, the situation was different. Slovak Catholics did not easily accept the fact

that President Tiso granted in total approximately 900 exemptions, mostly to those who had converted to Christianity some time ago or to those who lived in mixed marriages with a non-Jewish partner. But the deportations did not apply to christened Jews or to Jews living in mixed marriages anyway. In fact, the so-called resort exemptions, granted by individual ministers, played a much more important role in saving an important number of Slovak Jews.

39 The problems was that the existence of the Slovak Republic was not officially recognized by the United States and Great Britain in 1941. They could not thus respond to the declaration of war.

40 VNUK, František: *Neuveriteľné sprisahanie* [An incredible conspiracy]. Middletown (Pennsylvania), Jednota Press 1964.

41 *Ibid.*, p. 121.

that a Catholic priest, and the head of the only hitherto existing Slovak state in history, could have committed any unjust and despicable acts. If we look at it from a human and psychological perspective, this attitude is quite understandable. However, since the majority of the Catholic activists, such as František Mikloško or Jan Čarnogurský, realized that sympathizing with Tiso would discredit the opposition politically, they adopted a cautious and wait-and-see attitude. This can be clearly illustrated by the attitude of the leader of the Slovak Catholic opposition, Ján Čarnogurský. Čarnogurský studied law at Charles University in Prague and later defended his doctoral thesis in Bratislava on the issue of anti-Jewish legislation in Slovakia. In October 1988, he signed a declaration of opposition intellectuals expressing regret over the deportations of Jews in Slovakia in 1942.⁴² Yet, in an interview for a Czech samizdat journal, *Alternativa*, when asked what he thought about Tiso, Čarnogurský responded as follows: “I am not a historian and I do not have sufficient knowledge of the history of the Slovak state. At one point, I looked into a part of its legislation, but that was a while ago. I do not have a clear opinion on Tiso. But I pay attention to the memories and opinions of him in Slovakia. And these are rather positive.”⁴³ Nevertheless, for the Slovak civic opposition, Tiso was a taboo the same as for the Czechs. In view of the overall political situation and efforts to create a united opposition front, Tiso was not a suitable model for the Catholic dissent. Besides, in the 1970s and 1980s, his vision of a conservative Slovakia did not have the same appeal for Slovaks.

Despite the negative attitude towards Tiso and the war-time Slovak state, Czech opposition circles maintained that even Tiso’s supporters in Slovakia had the right to voice their opinions and that they should not be sanctioned by the state for it. This attitude was clearly evidenced by the case of the Slovak printer, Ivan Polanský, who published a samizdat, *Historický zápisník*, in Slovakia. Its first issue was published in 1986 and in fact focused on Jozef Tiso. The arguments Polanský used to rehabilitate Tiso were not his own, but were adopted entirely from the *Ludak* exile literature. Polanský showed the publication to the secret bishop, Ján Chryzostom Korec, who, although he probably agreed with the content, also realized that it was not politically convenient, and recommended to Polanský to cease his activities. Though he promised to take Korec’s advice, Polanský prepared the second issue of the journal, this time on Andrej Hlinka. On 5 November 1987, all copies were confiscated by the police, and Polanský was detained and charged with propagating fascism. Polanský’s articles defending and celebrating Tiso naturally could not have any positive reaction in the Czech Lands. Still, Czech opposition stood up for Ivan Polanský, and Charter 77 acknowledged his right to the freedom of speech. In November 1987, the *Committee for the Defence of the Unjustly Persecuted (Výbor na obranu nespravedlivě stíhaných)* called Polanský’s arrest an attack against

42 See: ČARNOGURSKÝ, Ján: *Videné od Dunaja: Výber z prejavov, článkov a rozhovorov* [As seen from the Danube: Selection of speeches, articles and interviews]. Bratislava, Kalligram 1997, pp. 122–124.

43 *Ibid.*, p. 112.

religious and civic activities. Committee of Solidarity with Ivan Polanský (*Výbor solidarity s Ivanem Polanským*), founded on 12 October 1988, was joined by dozens of Czech writers and samizdat publishers. A four-member information group was established within the committee, consisting of one Slovak (Ján Čarnogurský) and three Czechs (Václav Benda, Jiří Gruntorád and Heřman Chromý). Even *Cardinal František Tomášek*, the Archbishop of Prague, expressed his support in a letter to Polanský's wife, Ida, and praised Ivan Polanský's contribution to the publishing of Catholic literature. *Democratic Initiative (Demokratická iniciativa)*, an association of Czech right-wing liberals who naturally had no reason to feel personal or political sympathy towards Tiso, also stood up in defence of Polanský, sending a protest against his arrest to the Prime Minister of the federal government, Lubomír Štrougal, on 9 September 1988.

Open support bore some fruit. Polanský was eventually put on trial for subversion of the republic and not for the propagation of fascism. In the autumn of 1988, on the 70th anniversary of the foundation of Czechoslovakia, he was paroled under an amnesty granted by President Gustav Husák.⁴⁴ Later, Ján Čarnogurský expressed his appreciation of the support provided by Czech opposition: "State Security was harassing Ivan Polanský in 1987. He was detained and charged with supporting and propagating fascism. Mobilizing international support for Polanský was therefore difficult, because who would want to defend a fascist? It greatly helped that Charter 77 in Prague came to his defence, making it clear to foreign circles that he was no fascist, but simply an opponent of communism."⁴⁵

Disputes over Tiso after 1989

With the fall of communist regimes in Europe, the role of politicians and other public figures who had been criticized or directly condemned by communist historiography was re-evaluated. However, in many cases, it did not lead to a quest for a balanced and objective perspective, but merely to a mechanical about-turn in their evaluation. The new perspective was therefore no less distorted than the old one. This was, for example, the case for the uncritically praised Józef Piłsudski and his "*Sanacja*" [healing] regime in Poland, the rehabilitation of Miklós Horthy in Hungary, the efforts to rehabilitate Marshal Ion Victor Antonescu in Romania, the rehabilitation of Tsar Boris III in Bulgaria, etc. Despite their highly problematic character, various nationalist politicians and movements were also partially rehabilitated in the multi-ethnic states of Eastern Europe. For example, in Croatia efforts were made to rehabilitate the *Ustaša* movement, including its leader, *Ante Pavelić*.

44 See: RYCHLÍK, Jan: *Rozpad Československa: Česko-slovenské vztahy 1989–1992* [The split of Czechoslovakia: Czecho-Slovak relations 1989–1992]. Bratislava, Academic Electronic Press 2002, p. 47.

45 ČARNOGURSKÝ, J.: *Videné od Dunaja*, p. 319.

This process also affected Czechoslovakia. In the Czech Lands, it resulted in an uncritical idealization of the First Czechoslovak Republic. There were also some people who came to the defence of Protectorate President Emil Hácha, but this was rather marginal. In Slovakia, some political circles began to uncritically eulogize the war-time Slovak state, and with it also the figure of Jozef Tiso. Claiming that people should be finally told “the truth,” some Slovak nationalist journalists, following the example of the *Ludak* regime exiles, labelled the Slovak National Uprising an “anti-national” and “anti-state” coup. Moreover, after some of the *Ludak* exiles returned to Slovakia, they openly started reviving the Tiso cult. Some of their works, previously published in exile, were reprinted in Slovakia. Since 1990, a number of movements were founded in Slovakia, more or less openly demanding complete independence for Slovakia. In the first place, it was the Slovak National Party (SNS, *Slovenská národná strana*), but strong separatist tendencies could also be observed in the Christian Democratic Movement (KDH, *Kresťanskodemokratické hnutie*) of Ján Čarnogurský and later in the Movement for a Democratic Slovakia (HZDS, *Hnutie za demokratické Slovensko*) of Vladimír Mečiar. Even though, as a whole, these political forces did not sympathize with Tiso and the wartime Slovak state, emphasizing on the contrary that any future independent Slovak state had to be democratic, there were a number of supporters of the former Slovak state and Jozef Tiso sympathizers among their members. Yet precisely at this time, Tiso again became the subject of conflict between Czechs and Slovaks, and primarily among the Slovaks themselves.

On 8 July 1990, a memorial plaque to Tiso was ceremoniously unveiled on the wall of the former Catholic teachers’ seminary in Bánovce nad Bebravou⁴⁶ and consecrated by Bishop Ján Chryzostom Korec. Officially, the placing of the plaque was justified by an argument that Tiso, as a former parish priest in Bánovce,⁴⁷ contributed to the foundation of the local teachers’ seminary in the interwar period. However, from the very beginning, it was crystal clear that this was a first attempt to turn Tiso’s process of 1947 into an issue of “all Slovaks” and to achieve, if not legal,⁴⁸ then at least political rehabilitation of Tiso. Nobody could doubt that Tiso’s plaque was just a first step taken in this direction.

46 See: JABLONICKÝ, Jozef: *Glosy o historiografii SNP: Zneužívanie a falšovanie dejín SNP* [Comments on the historiography of the Slovak National Uprising: Misuse and falsification of the history of the Slovak National Uprising]. Bratislava, NVK International 1994, p. 143.

47 Tiso commuted to Bánovce nad Bebravou to celebrate a mass every Sunday, his posts of deputy or minister notwithstanding. He continued with this tradition even after the Slovak Republic was established, first as Prime Minister and later as President.

48 Legal rehabilitation of Jozef Tiso was not possible for two reasons. Firstly, there was no appeal against the decisions of the National Tribunal, and secondly – even if the possibility of appeal had existed – in the retrial, Tiso would have to be tried for the same acts as in 1946–1947. Most likely he would have been found guilty again. The rehabilitation means that a tribunal comes to the conclusion that the accused person in fact did not commit the acts he was charged for, or that the law was erroneously applied. None of this was the case in the trial of 1946–1947. Neo-*ludaks*, calling for Tiso’s rehabilitation, in fact demanded

This immediately set off a fierce debate. In the Czech press, some voices openly declared that Czechs could not live in a state where part of it celebrated as a hero someone who had contributed to the disintegration of the First Republic and that if Tiso became a symbol of the Slovak struggle for self-determination, the Czechs would have no alternative than quickly cut all ties with Slovakia. However, Tiso once again polarized the public in Slovakia. As early as 1990, a text entitled *Proces s Dr. Jozefom Tisom* [The process of Dr Jozef Tiso] was published. It was written jointly by the former military prosecutor in Tiso's process, Anton Rašla, and Tiso's defence lawyer, Ernest Žabkay.⁴⁹ Rašla – himself imprisoned in the 1950s – confirmed, both in the book and in his public appearances that followed, that his charges of 1947 were absolutely correct and justified, and rejected any efforts to call the trial into question.⁵⁰ Obviously, the dispute also had an internal political dimension. For the liberals from Public against Violence (VPN, *Verejnost proti násiliu*), as well as for left-wing politicians and the Hungarian parties in Slovakia, Tiso was no less acceptable than he was for the Czechs. The unveiling of the plaque was condemned by the Presidium of the Slovak National Council.⁵¹ As the ruling party, the Christian Democratic Movement was in a difficult position. In a declaration made on 14 July 1990, it eventually approved the unveiling of the plaque, at the same time expressing certain reservations about Tiso.⁵² However, only three days later, the Protestant section of the KDH condemned the unveiling of the plaque and proclaimed that any similar acts leading to Tiso's rehabilitation were unacceptable for Slovak Protestants.⁵³ The federal Prosecutor General, Tibor Böhm, who had close relations with KDH and who was to determine whether the unveiling of the plaque met the legal definition of the propagation of fascism, finally decided in favour of Tiso. His decision sparked another wave of disapproval, resulting finally in his resignation. At his request, Böhm was dismissed by President Václav Havel on 24 July and replaced by Ivan Gasparovič.⁵⁴ The Slovak World Congress Deputy Chairman and former Deputy Director of the Czechoslovak section of Radio Free Europe, Jozef Šrámek, came out in Tiso's defence in *Slovenský denník* [Slovak diary, the daily newspaper of KDH].⁵⁵ By providing space to Šrámek in its diary, KDH indirectly expressed agreement with his opinion.

that the trial and the decision be considered legally inexistent, in other words, that it be declared null and void.

49 SMOLEC, J. (ed.): *Proces s dr. Jozefom Tisom*.

50 Rašla reconfirmed this position in his memoirs *Zastupoval som československý štát: Vyznanie* [I was representing the Czechoslovak state: Confession] (Prešov, Privatpress 1999).

51 See: *Slovenský denník* (18 July 1990), p. 1.

52 *Ibid.* (16 July 1990), p. 1.

53 *Ibid.* (27 July 1990), p. 4.

54 *Ibid.* (25 July 1990), p. 1.

55 *Ibid.* (27 July 1990), p. 5.

In the end, Tiso's plaque was removed from the wall of the former teachers' seminary and put into storage.⁵⁶ For a time, the interest of the public fell away. On 13 October 1990, at a small act commemorating the 103rd anniversary of Tiso's birth, speakers demanded that the memorial plaque be restored; but this met with little response.⁵⁷ Public attention turned to the old issue of Tiso's responsibility for the deportations of Jews and the character of the Slovak state. These old and long refuted claims that Tiso not only was not responsible for the deportation of Jews, but also saved tens of thousands of Jews by granting them presidential exemptions were again being raised by exile historians Milan Stanislav Ďurica and František Vnuk. The same claims had already been voiced by the former *Ludaks* in Slovakia shortly after November 1989. Together with the exile historians, they won the support of several young Catholic intellectuals (Róbert Letz, Peter Mulík and Anna Magdolénová) and extremely nationalist historians, often pre-November communists (Jan Bobák). However, they rallied little support from the community of intellectuals and historians as a whole. Objections were even raised by some intellectuals around the Slovak National Party. For example, the efforts to justify Tiso's policy towards Jews was publicly rejected by historian Anton Hrnko in a discussion with Pavel Čarnogurský.⁵⁸ Slovak exiles again stepped in and started distributing leaflets in Slovakia, which explained their "truth" about Tiso.⁵⁹ Exile historians and journalists also urged the public "to view history from the perspective of the Slovak nation." According to them, anyone criticizing Tiso and the wartime Slovak state was harming Slovak interests.⁶⁰

56 A protest against the removal of the memorial plaque came from an organization called Slovakia, largely unknown to the public. Its chairman wrote an open letter to Prime Minister Mečiar demanding Tiso's rehabilitation. The opening of this letter is characteristic: "Mr Prime Minister Vladimír Mečiar, on 8 July of this year a memorial plaque was unveiled to Dr Jozef Tiso on the wall of the former teacher's seminary in Bánovce nad Bebravou. A fierce campaign was launched against it in Slovakia by Czechs, Jews, anti-fascists and other similar anti-Slovak elements [...]." The letter is signed by someone called Milan Kres, the chairman of the board of Slovakia, and the editor-in-chief of *Zvesti* magazine, Jozef Bernahauer. (For the text of the letter, see: Stanovisko ku kampani proti odhaleniu pamätnej dosky msgn. Dr. Jozefa Tisu [Position on the campaign against the unveiling of the memorial plaque to Msgr Dr Jozef Tiso]. In: *Slovenské ozveny*, Vol. 1, No. 9 (1990), p. 6.

57 See: *Čas* magazine (15 October 1990), p. 2.

58 In his recollections, Hrnko wrote about this: "I asked him not to defend indefensible, telling him that the so-called solution of the Jewish question in Slovakia may be explained but never defended, that a crime will remain a crime, even if unintentional." (HRNKO, Anton: *Nežný prevrat, alebo revolúcia? [A velvet coup or a revolution?]*. In: *Slovenské pohľady*, Vol. 115, No. 11 (1999), p. 66.)

59 One such leaflet entitled "guidance" was reproduced in a magazine of Slovak university students entitled *Echo*, Vol. 2, No. 12 (1991), p. 3.

60 See: RYCHLÍK, Jan: František Vnuk a tzv. slovenský pohľad na dejiny [František Vnuk and the so-called Slovak view of history]. In: *Kultúrny život*, Vol. 25, No. 36 (1991), p. 4; BALÁŽ, A. – ROSENBERG, M.: Pohľad z druhej strany: Hovoríme s literárnym historikom Františkom Vnuikom [From the other point of view: An interview with historian František

In the autumn of 1991, a new memorial plaque to Tiso was unveiled at his birthplace in Bytča. Also this time it caught the attention of foreign press. For the government, led by the Christian Democratic Movement, the whole issue was extremely embarrassing. However, at a press conference held in Bratislava on 16 October 1991, the Chairman of the Slovak National Council (and later one of the leaders of the Christian Democratic Movement), František Mikloško, made no direct comment. He merely “recommended” that Czech historians should focus on deportations of Jews from the Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia, instead of on deportations from Slovakia.⁶¹ Ján Čarnogurský was also vague on the issue when he said that the anti-Jewish laws were the responsibility of the then Prime Minister, Vojtech Tuka, but that nobody spoke of Tuka, while Tiso was always being spoken of. The matter was also displeasing for Czechoslovak President Václav Havel, who officially condemned the installation of the plaque.⁶² Still, the event in Bytča stirred up less emotion and drew less attention than the unveiling of the memorial plaque in Bánovce.

The case of “Tiso and the Jews” had a strange sequel in the spring of 1992. During his visit to the United States on 28 March, Bishop Ján Korec, who had by then been appointed cardinal, again claimed that in 1942 Tiso had been visited by Jewish rabbis and asked to remain in office. This famous (albeit completely fabricated) legend⁶³ was also repeated by the Chairman of the Slovak National Council, František Mikloško in an interview with the *Rudé právo* daily.⁶⁴ At the same time, between 25 and 27 March 1992, an international conference was held in Banská Bystrica on the issue of the deportation of Jews from Slovakia. At this conference, an Israeli historian of Slovak origin, Yeshayahu Andrej Jelinek, openly dismissed

Vnuk]. In: *Literárny týždenník*, Vol. 3, No. 16 (1990), pp. 1 and 11; VNUK, František – ŠRÁMEK, Jozef: Historická kauza dr. Jozef Tiso [The historic case of Dr Jozef Tiso]. In: *Ibid.*, No. 21, p. 8.

61 See: *Český deník* (18 October 1991), p. 3.

62 See: *International Herald Tribune* (4 December 1991), p. 5.

63 As was correctly pointed out by Yeshayahu Jelínek, it is unconceivable that Orthodox rabbis would negotiate with Tiso without informing the chief rabbi of Slovakia, Armin Frieder. However, Frieder does not mention this appeal in his diary. Moreover, no such visit ever took place. On the contrary, on 8 March 1942, Frieder delivered a memorandum from Jewish rabbis to Tiso with a petition to prevent, in the name of humanity, deportations of Jews from Slovakia. Tiso ignored this letter, as well as a memorandum of 5 March 1942 from Jewish religious communities, identical in content. (See: HUBENÁK, Ladislav: *Riešenie židovskej otázky na Slovensku 1939–1945: Dokumenty* [The solution of the Jewish question in Slovakia 1939–1945: Documents], Vol. 2. Bratislava, Slovenské národné múzeum 1994, pp. 31–33, Document No. 156 – Memorandum církevných zväzov Židov na Slovensku prezidentovi dr. Jozefovi Tisovi proti vystahovaní Židov zo Slovenska (5. marca 1942, Bratislava) [Memorandum of Jewish religious communities to President Dr Jozef Tiso against the deportations of Jews from Slovakia (5 March 1942)]; FRIEDER, Emanuel: *Z denníku mladého rabína* [From the diary of a young rabbi]. Bratislava, Slovenské národné múzeum 1993, p. 50.)

64 František Mikloško pripouští: Byl jsem špatný topič [František Mikloško admits: I was a bad boilerman]. In: *Rudé právo*, *Čtení na sobotu* supplement (28 March 1992), p. 9.

any similar claims as fabricated and proposed setting up an international commission of historians to assess the whole issue.⁶⁵ Nevertheless, no such commission has ever been set up. Principally because Tiso's apologists had no interest in it.⁶⁶

For the Christian Democratic Movement, Tiso's personality was like a ball and chain. Its leading politicians were trying to adopt a neutral stance. On the one hand, they were aware that justifying Tiso was impossible, on the other, they could not publicly reject him.⁶⁷ The movement was also under pressure from the exile community, which demanded that the "truth" be told about Tiso; in other words, they demanded Tiso's political rehabilitation. The KDH-led government decided to assign the task to historians. Between 5 and 7 May 1992, a major international conference entitled "An Attempt at a Political and Personal *Profile of Jozef Tiso*" was held in the training and conference centre of the Slovak National Council situated in the village of Častá-Papiernička. It was attended by both local and exile historians, exile journalists (among others the former General Secretary of the Hlinka's Slovak People's Party, Jozef M. Kirschbaum), but also by Czech and foreign historians. The speakers included an amateur historian and physician, Gabriel Hoffman, a pre-war Jewish convert, who repeated not only the fabrication that Tiso had saved 25,000 Jews, but also that a memorial to Tiso had been unveiled in Israel.⁶⁸ In general, many different opinions about Tiso were voiced at the conference. However, the conference as such must have been disappointing for the *Ludak*

65 For the conference contributions, see: TÓTH, Dezider (ed.): *Tragédia slovenských Židov: Materiály z medzinárodného sympózia Banská Bystrica 25.–27. marca 1992* [The tragedy of Slovak Jews: Proceedings of the international symposium, Banská Bystrica, 25–27 March 1992]. Banská Bystrica, Datei 1992.

66 This proposal met with a negative reaction of František Vnuk in particular. Vnuk rejected it as a challenge of Korec's veracity. However, he did not provide any evidence.

67 Pavol Čarnogurský came out in defence of Tiso and the Slovak *Ludak* regime in an interview for the *Rudé právo* daily published in late January 1992 (Národu, čo mu patrí: S Pavlom Čarnogurským o jeho synoch a nejen o politice [To each nation what is its: With Pavol Čarnogurský about his sons and not only about politics]. In: *Rudé právo, Čtení na sobotu* supplement (25 January 1992), p. 12). His opinions prompted negative reactions (Na čo Pavol Čarnogurský "zapomněl" [What has Pavol Čarnogurský "forgotten"]. In: *Ibid., Čtení na sobotu* supplement (1 February 1992), p. 16).

68 Dr Gabriel Hoffmann came from a family of Jewish doctors. However, already his father had converted to Catholicism. His family thus obtained an exemption from the anti-Jewish decrees. Out of gratitude to Tiso, he became a zealous apologist of Tiso. When Israeli historian Yeshayahu Jelínek repeatedly denied in the press the existence of Tiso's memorial in Israel, publishing a statement issued by Jerusalem mayor Teddy Kollek, Gabriel Hoffmann changed his claims and in 1994 wrote that as a token of gratitude for saving Slovak Jews, the state of Israel decided to unveil a memorial plaque to Tiso in Tel Aviv. See: HOFFMANN, Gabriel – HOFFMANN, Ladislav: *Katolícka cirkev a tragédia slovenských židov v dokumentoch* [The Catholic Church and the tragedy of Slovak Jews in documents]. Partizánske, G-print, 1994, p. 6. Needless to say that the alleged memorial plaque in Tel Aviv was the same fabrication as an alleged memorial in Jerusalem.

exiles, since it did not result in Tiso's rehabilitation. The *Ludak* interpretation of Tiso was rejected by the majority of local Slovak historians.⁶⁹

The debate on Tiso continued even after the demise of Czechoslovakia. In the summer of 1993, the bishop of Košice, Alojz Tkáč, stated that the Czechs should apologize for Tiso's death. There were mixed reactions to this statement in Slovakia, but none in the Czech Lands. The Czech ambassador in Bratislava, Filip Šedivý, refused to comment on Tkáč's appeal, claiming that it was a comment made by a private person, to which the government of the Czech Republic did not intend to respond. The longer the independent Czech Republic existed, the more the figure of Tiso sank into oblivion in the Czech Lands.

From the perspective of the second decade of the 21st century, Catholic priest and politician Jozef Tiso is definitely not a figure who would divide Czechs and Slovaks. Young Czechs are usually unfamiliar with his name, and older Czechs care very little about him. None of the Czechs would call Tiso a hero, but in contrast to the past, the majority of them do not see him as an enemy or a traitor either. Nevertheless, Tiso has always caused, and to this day still causes, rifts within Slovak society – for a small proportion of the society (and it should be emphasized that today it really is a minor part of Slovak society) he is a hero and martyr⁷⁰ who laid down his life for the independence of Slovakia, whereas for the majority of society he is an unsuccessful politician who led Slovakia under the heel of Nazi Germany, with all the related consequences. The present Slovak elite no longer sympathizes with Tiso and his regime. The present Slovak Republic, as a modern and democratic state, does not perceive itself as a successor of Tiso's wartime Slovak Republic, but – like the Czech Republic – as a successor of democratic Czechoslovakia. If Tiso still causes any division today, it is only in Slovak society.⁷¹

The Czech version of this article, entitled Jozef Tiso: Můj nepřítel, tvůj hrdina?, was originally published in Soudobé dějiny, Vol. 25, No. 3–4 (2018), pp. 348–365.

Translated by Blanka Medková

69 The conference contributions were published in the collection BYSTRICKÝ, Valerián – FANO, Štefan (eds.): *Pokus o politický a osobný profil Jozefa Tisu* [An Attempt at a Political and Personal Profile of Jozef Tiso]. Bratislava, Historický ústav SAV 1992.

70 Some Slovak *Ludak* émigrés also pressed for Tiso's canonization. After 1989, these attempts found an echo with Tiso's apologists and part of Slovak Catholic clergymen in Slovakia. Protests against these attempts were raised by the Slovak Jewish community, as well as by a number of Slovak intellectuals, including some clerics. However, as it turned out, Tiso remained a very controversial figure for Vatican and therefore also a non-viable candidate for canonization. See: ĎURICA, Milan Stanislav: *Jozef Tiso 1887–1947: Životopisný profil* [Jozef Tiso 1887–1947: A biographical profile]. Bratislava, Lúč 2006, pp. 543–558.

71 For more details on the controversy over Tiso in Slovakia, see: WARD, J. M.: *Priest, Politician, Collaborator*, pp. 269–280.

Cleansing of Industrial Plants from Collaborationists and “Anti-Social” Elements in 1945

A Political Machination, Retribution Excess or an Incubator of Revolutionary Morals?

Jakub Šlouf

After the Second World War, Czechoslovakia, just like other countries previously occupied by Nazi Germany, underwent a process of cleansing of public life from followers of the defeated regime.¹ It should be noted that the process was not taking place only in the sphere of criminal law, in the field of legal justice institutions, but also in all offices and factories. In the latter case, national cleansing was much more spontaneous, without explicitly defined legal or institutional tools and it was directly related not only to the ethnic situation, but also to the social and political one.

Czech historiography generally reflects the topic of the cleansing of industrial plants from collaborationists and so-called anti-social elements in postwar Czechoslovakia from two viewpoints. The first perspective is the formation of the power

1 Compare: KUKLÍK, Jan: *Mýty a realita tzv. “Benešových dekretů”: Dekrety prezidenta republiky 1940–1945* [Myths and reality of the so-called “Beneš Decrees”: Decrees of the President of the Republic 1940–1945]. Praha, Linde 2002; DEÁK, István: *Europe on Trial: The Story of Collaboration, Resistance, and Retribution during World War II*. New York, Westview Press 2015.

dominance of the Communist Party. In this context, the cleansing in industry after May 1945, which had its parallels in other fields of public life, appears on the edge of a more general reflection focused on the history of the trade union movement. As a rule, it is interpreted as a tool of employees' self-governments (factory councils) used to eliminate persons with a hostile attitude to the coming "people's democratic" system.² Some authors even regard it as a genetically related pre-stage of the cleansing which followed after the establishment of the Communist Party dictatorship in February 1948.³ Another view is offered by literature focusing on legal history, which generally perceives the postwar cleansing as a form of retribution not regulated by law ("wild") undermining the stability of the legal order.⁴ There are, however, just marginal comments, unsupported by any systematic studies.⁵

The cause of the absence of detailed research consists mainly in the fact that there exists only a minimum amount of coherent documentary sources and that source fragments must often be trawled for in regional archives, namely in archival documents of specific enterprises. As shown later, the phenomenon is related to the

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- 2 Compare: ČAPKA, František: *Odbory v českých zemích v letech 1918–1948* [Trade Unions in the Czech Lands in the years 1918–1948]. Brno, Masaryk University 2008, p. 161; KALINOVÁ, Lenka: *Společenské proměny v čase socialistického experimentu: K sociálním dějinám v letech 1945–1969* [Social changes at the time of the socialist experiment: On social history in the years 1945–1969]. Praha, Academia 2007, pp. 62 and 95; RŮŽIČKA, Karel: *ROH v boji o rozšíření moci dělnické třídy (1945–1948)* [Revolutionary Trade Union Movement in the struggle for an expansion of the power of the working class (1945–1948)]. Praha, Práce 1963, pp. 28–32; TĚHLE, Jaroslav: *Přehled dějin Československého odborového hnutí* [An overview of the history of the Czechoslovak trade union movement]. Praha, Práce 1984, p. 332; DUBSKÝ, Vladimír et al.: *Nástin dějin československého odborového hnutí* [An outline of the history of the Czechoslovak trade union movement]. Praha, Práce 1963, p. 334.
- 3 See: STÁTNÍK, Dalibor: *Závodní rady – iluze a skutečnost* [Factory councils – illusions and reality]. In: KOKOŠKOVÁ, Zdeňka – KOCIAN, Jiří – KOKOŠKA, Stanislav (ed.): *Československo na rozhraní dvou epoch nesvobody* [Czechoslovakia on the boundary between two epochs of oppression]. Praha, Národní Archiv – ÚSD AV ČR 2005, p. 383.
- 4 Compare: FROMMER, Benjamin: *Národní očista: Retribuce v poválečném Československu* [National cleansing: Retribution in postwar Czechoslovakia]. Praha, Academia 2010, pp. 60–97 and 250–257; BORÁK, Mečislav: *Spravedlnost podle dekretu: Retribuční soudnictví v ČSR a Mimořádný lidový soud v Ostravě (1945–1948)* [Justice by decree: Retributive justice in Czechoslovakia during the years 1945–1948. Extraordinary people's court in Ostrava and its activities.]. Šenov u Ostravy, Tilia 1998, pp. 42–46; KMOCH, Pavel: *Provinění proti národní cti: "Malá retribuce" v českých zemích a Trestní nalézací komise v Benešově u Prahy* [Offences against national honour: "Small retribution" in the Czech Lands and the Penal Adjudicative Commission in Benešov u Prahy]. Praha, Academia 2015, pp. 60–70; JARCHOVSKÁ, Lucie: *Odplata, či spravedlnost? Mimořádné lidové soudy 1945–1948 na Královéhradecku* [Retribution, or justice? Extraordinary people's courts in the region of Hradec Králové 1945–1948]. Praha, Prostor 2008, p. 368.
- 5 As to the industrial sector, it is regional literature that has approached the topic in the most comprehensive way. Compare: BAUEROVÁ, Marie: *Vznik revolučních orgánů dělnické třídy ve Škodových závodech v roce 1945* [The formation of revolutionary bodies of the working class in Škoda Works in 1945]. In: *Zpravodaj komise pro dějiny závodů v ČSSR*, No. 5. Praha, Ústřední škola ROH 1978, pp. 13–36.

spontaneity and lack of coordination of the cleansing process itself. The purpose of the presented study is to reconstruct different development phases of the cleansing mechanism and to identify social conflicts which the cleansing stemmed from. Apart from documents from central archives, this analysis draws from corporate archival funds of the enterprises *Akciová společnost*, formerly Škoda Works, in Pilsen and Prague,⁶ and *Českomoravské strojírny* in Prague.⁷ From a methodological viewpoint, the work has been inspired by social theories examining the social conditionality of value systems and legal orders derived therefrom.⁸ It therefore perceives the cleansing in industrial plants as a specific norm-setting process which was producing period concepts of guilt and innocence in a factory environment.

The Spontaneous Phase of the Cleansing in May 1945

The process of removing collaborationists and so-called anti-social elements from industrial plants started quite spontaneously during the anti-Nazi uprising in May 1945. Revolutionary groups were emerging from the underground in various factories, disarming and often also arresting German personnel.⁹ They were subsequently taking control of the enterprises, forcing their existing managers, discredited by their behaviour during the Nazi occupation, to resign. It must be noted that the enterprises' management was not taken over directly by Workers' Revolutionary Factory Councils – as a matter of fact, they had not yet existed in many companies and, furthermore, they lacked the necessary professional skills and qualification – but rather by Factory National Committees (and later by National Administrations) a substantial part of the members of which were capable clerks

6 See: IDEM: *Škodovy závody v letech 1945–1949* [Škoda Works in the years 1945–1949]. Candidate of Sciences dissertation defended at the Faculty of Arts of Charles University in Prague in 1974.

7 See: DLOUHÝ, Pavel: *Organizační vývoj podniků ČKD a související archivní soubory ve Státním oblastním archivu v Praze* [Organizational development of ČKD enterprises and related archival files in the State Regional Archives in Prague]. In: *Archivní časopis*, Vol. 65, No. 2 (2015), pp. 137–163.

8 Compare: DURKHEIM, Émile: *Společenská dělba práce* [Social division of labour]. Brno, Centrum pro studium demokracie a kultury 2004, pp 33–38, 61–65 and 76.

9 All German employees subsequently had their employment contracts cancelled across the board. See: *Státní oblastní archiv v Plzni (SOA v Plzni)* [State Regional Archive in Pilsen (SRA in Pilsen)], fund (f.) Škoda Works – Headquarters, Cardboard Box (c.) 1118, Inventory Number (Inv. No.) 6038, *Zpráva NVŠZ [Národního výboru Škodových závodů] o převzetí vedení Škodových závodů – ústředí a rozhodnutí[ch] dosud učiněných, 24 May 1945* [Report of the National Committee of Škoda Works (NVŠZ) on the takeover of Škoda Works – Headquarters and decisions made so far]; *Ibid.*, *Bojující Škodovák* [The Fighting Škoda Worker], No. 3 (9 May 1945); *Státní oblastní archiv v Praze (SOA v Praze)* [State Regional Archive in Prague (SRA in Prague)], f. Škoda Works – Headquarters, c. 1126, Inv. No. 6091, Letter “National receivership of Škoda Works,” 14 December 1945.

able to manage the operation of the plants.¹⁰ One set of top managers dating back to the former Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia was thus often replaced by another, willing to proclaim its sympathies to the new “people’s democratic” regime.¹¹

However, personal changes were also taking place at all lower levels since the very beginning. In many places, subordinates were refusing to cooperate with their superiors.¹² Such persons were banished from factory premises by revolutionary bodies and forced to take a provisional holiday.¹³ In some cases, there were even brutal physical assaults against individuals forcibly expelled from factories.¹⁴ (As a matter of fact, many such people had been promised a beating by their fellow-workers as early as during the occupation.¹⁵) The cleansing of industrial factories was therefore enjoying broad support among the workforce from the very beginning. It was motivated by both ethnic and social conflicts during the occupation.

10 As to the Headquarters of Škoda Works in Prague, for example, the management of the industrial conglomerate was taken over on 5 May 1945 by the National Committee of Škoda Works in Prague, which started initial cleansing steps. The National Committee of Škoda Works in Pilsen assumed the management of Škoda Works in Pilsen in a similar manner during the May revolution. The management of Českomoravské strojírny (ČMS) in Prague was taken over in the same manner on 5 May 1945 by Karel Juliš, former CEO of the company between 1940 and 1942, who subsequently played a significant role in the cleansing process in the enterprise until early June 1945. (*SRA in Prague*, f. ČKD národní podnik, c. 2, Inv. No. 31, Report for the Ministry of Industry, dated 4 June 1945; *SRA in Pilsen*, f. Škoda Works – Headquarters, c. 1118, Inv. No. 6038, Report of the National Committee of Škoda Works (NVŠZ) on the takeover of Škoda Works – Headquarters and decisions made so far, 24 May 1945; *Ibid.*, *Bojující Škodovák*, No. 3 (9 May 1945); *SRA in Pilsen*, f. Škoda Works – Headquarters, c. 1120, Inv. No. 6050, Protocol of a meeting of delegates of factory councils for the purpose of electing members of the National Administration, dated 29 May 1945; *Ibid.*, f. Škoda Works – Pilsen, c. 503, signature (sign.) 162A, Report of NVŠZ in Pilsen for the Headquarters in Prague, dated 6 May 1945.)

11 Vítězstvím na barikádách není boj skončen [The victory on the barricades does not mean the fight is over]. In: *Práce* (12 May 1945), p. 1; *Všeodborový archive* [All-Union Archives], Prague (hereinafter VOA), f. Ústřední rada odborů [Central Council of Trade Unions] (ÚRO) – Čestný soud [Court of Honour], c. 1, Inv. No. 4, Letter of František Bucek, a mechanic employed at Lada Soběslav, to ÚRO’s Court of Honour, dated 22 August 1945.

12 *SRA in Pilsen*, f. Škoda Works – Pilsen, c. 154, sign. 3, Minutes of a meeting of the Plant Revolutionary Council (RZR) of Škoda Works in Pilsen, dated 15 May 1945; *SOA in Prague*, f. ČKD národní podnik, c. 134, Inv. No. 867, Minutes of a meeting of the ČMS Karlín Factory Council, dated 5 June 1945.

13 *SRA in Prague*, f. ČKD národní podnik, c. 2, Inv. No. 31, Report for the Ministry of Industry, dated 4 June 1945; *SRA in Pilsen*, f. Škoda Works – Headquarters, c. 1118, Inv. No. 6034, Report of the National Committee of Škoda Works (NVŠZ) sent to the Central Council of Trade Unions (ÚRO), dated 15 May 1945; *SRA in Pilsen*, f. Škoda Works – Pilsen, c. 167, sign. 326, List of 186 people banished from the factory premises, dated 24 May 1945.

14 Norm-setter Jaroslav Trubač from Prague, for example, was kicked into unconsciousness (VOA, f. Antonín Zápotocký, c. 3, Inv. No. 39, Letter of norm-setter Jaroslav Trubač sent to Antonín Zápotocký, dated 2 July 1945.

15 *SRA in Pilsen*, f. Škoda Works – Pilsen, c. 166, sign. ZR 648, File of Karel Brabec.

At the same time, however, it was a valve releasing accumulated frustrations which many people were venting on easy targets.¹⁶

Although most of the victims were white collars, blue- and white-collar employees were represented by comparable percentages among the initiators of the cleansing process. Actually, the cleansing process was frequently a platform for settling interpersonal relations damaged by the occupation. So, high-ranking managers were, as a rule, accused by their office subordinates, and foremen by blue-collar personnel of their workshops.¹⁷ It was only logical, as conflicts at workplaces occurred mostly between people who were in everyday contact as superiors and subordinates. The cleansing process therefore hit mainly CEOs, top managers, human resources officers, norm setters, foremen, and security personnel.¹⁸

The cleansing process' priority targeting at managers was fully consistent with some stereotypical thinking traditionally present in the workers' movement. As a matter of fact, industrial workers had long been, under any regime, mistrustful toward factory management and were afraid that, without their forceful intervention, influential individuals could avoid, unlike rank-and-file employees, responsibility for their acts during the occupation in the liberated republic.¹⁹ In a number of cleansing cases, such worries were far from unfounded.

However, there was yet another reason why the clerical personnel were hit harder. Many industrial plants were not working at full capacity in May 1945, the reasons for this being the absence of workforce during revolutionary events, damage sustained by factory buildings by combat operations, and a difficult transition from wartime to peacetime production, combined with uncertainty about their future. Many enterprises were therefore unable to "feed" their existing white-collared workforce, and consequently were looking for an opportunity for a substantial reduction.²⁰ The cleansing process thus harmonized with current problems of some industrial conglomerates and was mitigating the structural imbalance of their workforces.

It should be noted that the whole wave of the abovementioned changes among personnel was proceeding in the absence of any legal grounds, as neither the exile

16 VOA, f. Antonín Zápotocký, c. 3, Inv. No. 39, Letter of norm-setter Jaroslav Trubač sent to Antonín Zápotocký, dated 2 July 1945.

17 *National Archives*, Prague (hereinafter NA), f. Central Committee of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia – General Secretariat 1945–1951 (1261/0/32 – original designation 02/4), Volume (Vol) 112, archival unit (AU) 728, Report on the situation at Škoda Works, dated 17 December 1948.

18 *SRA in Prague*, f. ČKD národní podnik, c. 2, Inv. No. 31, Report for the Ministry of Industry, dated 4 June 1945; *SRA in Pilsen*, f. Škoda Works – Headquarters, c. 1118, Inv. No. 6039, Reports on the situation in different plants of the industrial conglomerate in late April 1945; *Ibid.*, f. Škoda Works – Pilsen, c. 167, sign. 326, List of 186 people banished from the factory premises, dated 24 May 1945.

19 See, for example: HEUMOS, Peter: "Vyhrňme si rukávy, než se kola zastaví!": *Dělníci a státní socialismus v Československu* [Let us roll up the sleeves, before the wheels stand still: Workers and state socialism in Czechoslovakia, 1945–1968]. Praha, ÚSD AV ČR 2006.

20 *SRA in Pilsen*, f. Škoda Works – Headquarters, c. 1118, Inv. No. 6039, Report on the general situation of the enterprise, dated 24 May 1945.

retribution legislation nor the Košice Government Programme of April 1945 anticipated the cleansing process would take place at the enterprise level.²¹ Consequently, criteria of guilt and innocence had not been defined *a priori*, but were formulated “on the go,” on the basis of interests and interactions of specific players. They were not a product of the pre-war legal code and ethics related thereto. On the contrary, they were a pure and undiluted reflection of the new, revolutionary system of values. The latter was based on Protectorate traumas and included, in particular, escalated nationalism (targeting, first and foremost, ethnic Germans) and social equalitarianism (targeting existing elites). The step-by-step evolution of the cleansing process is therefore a good example of the overall dynamism of the May revolution. The cleansing was, in fact, a pre-stage of the retribution, a specific form of a norm-setting mechanism testing intuitively formulated accusations in practice. It was on the basis of experience acquired during the cleansing process in factories that the final form of the retribution system, finalized in the autumn of 1945 in the so-called Small Retribution Decree, was later codified.²²

Because of its very nature, the cleansing process incorporated a variety of conflicts. This was why a broad portfolio of transgressions was prosecuted, ranging from collaborationism (punishable under the later so-called Great Retribution Decree) and various acts then collectively labelled as lack of national consciousness to bullying at the workplace and minor labour disputes. Moreover, many denouncements were motivated by selfish and lowly reasons, or were completely false.²³ In some cases, the complainants were not even hiding their motives and naively demanded, for example, that the company flat used by the accused be allocated to them.²⁴ The charges were often brought preventively, for the purpose of camouflaging the complainant’s own transgressions.²⁵ Some complainants also wanted to “prove their allegiance to the Czech nation” through their radicalism.²⁶ At the same time, the accused had little chance to defend themselves. As a matter of fact, no written documents were made and not all relevant witnesses heard during this stage of the cleansing process. The accused were frequently given no chance of regular defence and, in some instances, they were not even present when their case was

21 *Ibid.*, KOVAŘOVIC, Josef: O naší závodní radě [About our factory council]. In: *Zprávy závodní rady Škodovka – ústředí* [News of the Factory Council Škodovka – Headquarters] (7 November 1945), p. 1.

22 See: FROMMER, B.: *Národní očista*, pp. 250–257.

23 VOA, f. Antonín Zápotocký, c. 3, Inv. No. 40, Letter of Ladislav Liška, Department Head in Československá zbrojovka, to Antonín Zápotocký, dated 15 July 1945; *SRA in Pilsen*, f. Škoda Works – Headquarters, c. 1126, Inv. No. 6092, File of the Deputy Head of the Garage Department, Josef Žáček.

24 *SRA in Pilsen*, f. Škoda Works – Headquarters, c. 1127, Inv. No. 6092, File of Bedřich Dolejší, technical clerk of Konstruktiva.

25 *Ibid.*, File of Chief Inspector Ladislav Cipra.

26 VOA, f. Antonín Zápotocký, c. 3, Inv. No. 39, Letter of norm-setter Jaroslav Trubač, dated 2 July 1945.

being dealt with.²⁷ In the revolutionary turmoil, many lies and false information thus remained unrecognized.

In spite of its obvious lawlessness, the cleansing process was initially generally accepted as an indispensable symbolic step toward the restoration of a “healthy” functioning of society. As a matter of fact, the whole Czech society was to some degree responsible for the previous rule of the Nazi regime. If we use the typology of German philosopher Karl Jaspers, almost everyone was guilty – at the political level (as a citizen of the state cooperating – albeit involuntarily – in perpetration of crimes), morally (as a participant in everyday life in the Protectorate), and metaphysically (as a spectator silently watching crimes committed by others).²⁸ Anyone could therefore be accused of having done less than he or she could have done, or of having yielded to the German rule more than had been necessary. For the purpose of the cleansing process, it was therefore necessary to simplify the ambiguous and multi-layered reality of the past and to define an artificial boundary between guilt and innocence. The condemnation of some thus also meant the acquittal of others.²⁹ The cleansing thus symbolically vacated room for the rest of the society to step toward a new, seemingly clear future. It should be noted that the boundaries of guilt defined during the cleansing process were not guaranteed by any timeless morality, but rather established in practice, reflecting interests and influence of specific players.

The unspoken basis of the cleansing process was most visible in the structure of the accused persons among whom leaders and managers accounted for an unquestionable majority, although rank-and-file clerical personnel and workers were also co-responsible for the functioning of factories in the Protectorate and their armament production. Some of them were even profiting from war efforts of the occupying forces, receiving benefits and rewards for overtime work and outstanding performance.³⁰ The cleansing process thus entirely missed some forms of guilt while emphasizing others. The result was a distorted interpretation of the past reality, legitimizing the class (targeting existing elites) aspect of the revolution.³¹

27 *Ibid.*, Letter of Chief Clerk of Západočeské konzumní družstvo Josef Škabrada, dated 18 June 1945.

28 Compare: JASPERS, Karl: *Otázka viny: Příspěvek k německé otázce* [The question of German guilt]. Praha, Academia 2006.

29 Compare: BAUMAN, Zygmunt: *Modernita a holocaust* [Modernity and the Holocaust]. Praha, Sociologické nakladatelství 2010, p. 301.

30 *Ustaňte, dokud je čas! K dnešním poměrům ve Škodovce* [Stop while there is still time! On today's situation in Škoda Works]. In: *Svobodný směr* (14 June 1945), p. 1.

31 VOA, f. Antonín Zápotocký, c. 3, Inv. No. 40, Letter of workshop foreman Josef Pánek to Antonín Zápotocký, dated 18 July 1945.

Typology of Prosecuted Acts

The most frequent transgressions dealt with at the company level were, in particular, symbolic manifestations of loyalty to the Nazi regime, a typical example of which was the Nazi salute. The denouncement often mentioned just an isolated case of a similar failure, but the atmosphere in factories in May 1945 was not inclined toward forgiving.³² The membership in Nazi organizations, no matter how formal it might be, was viewed just as sternly,³³ although some people had used the outward manifestations of loyalty to disguise their illegal activities during the occupation. Yet they were often affected by the postwar cleansing without being given a chance to defend themselves, and it was only when the first wave of radicalism had ebbed that they were able to achieve rehabilitation.³⁴ In some cases, even active participation in the May uprising or resistance activities during the occupation could not protect the investigated person.³⁵

Another vast group of prosecuted transgressions was represented by non-business contacts with Germans. As a rule, attending private parties or hunts organized by German superiors was considered immoral, although the person concerned often could not avoid them for social reasons.³⁶ Particularly sensitive – and often personally motivated – were accusations of amorous affairs with Germans. Even such purely private relationships could easily constitute grounds for labour law sanctions.³⁷ Members of all mixed Czech-German families were naturally threatened as well. A similar category consisted of people who had volunteered for work in the Reich or had claimed allegiance to German nationality on their own will.³⁸

Postwar industrial workers also regarded very sternly any manifestations of active consent with the occupation regime. A typical example was an enthusiastic monitoring of the advance of German troops on the map.³⁹ However, isolated

32 *SRA in Pilsen*, f. Škoda Works – Headquarters, c. 1128, Inv. No. 6098, File of Dipl. Ing. Konstantin Uvarov, member of the Export Department; *Ibid.*, c. 1127, Inv. No. 6092, File of Dipl. Ing. Karel Nový; *SRA in Prague*, f. ČKD národní podnik, c. 135, Inv. No. 875, File of Dipl. Ing. Karel Padr.

33 *SRA in Pilsen*, f. Škoda Works – Headquarters, c. 1119, Inv. No. 6048, Directive No. 1 of the National Committee of Škoda Works (NVŠZ), On the establishment of the Investigation Commission. In: *Pracující Škodovák*, No. 7 (15 May 1945), p. 1.

34 *Ibid.*, c. 1127, Inv. No. 6092, File of Director Dr. Josef Škola; *Ibid.*, c. 1128, Inv. No. 6095, File of Chief Inspector Jaromír Kubias.

35 *SRA in Prague*, f. ČKD národní podnik, c. 28, Inv. No. 122, File of workshop foreman Václav Moulík; *VOA*, f. Antonín Zápotocký, c. 3, Inv. No. 40, Letter of Chief Counsel of Státní výzkumné ústavy zemědělské [State agricultural research institutes] in Dejvice Josef Karabec to Antonín Zápotocký, dated 15 July 1945.

36 *SRA in Pilsen*, f. Škoda Works – Headquarters, c. 1126, Inv. No. 6091, File of Jan Reichman, Head of Photographic Studios.

37 *Ibid.*, File of clerk Milada Táborská.

38 *Ibid.*, c. 1128, Inv. No. 6095, File of clerk Bedřich Volejník.

39 *Ibid.*, f. Škoda Works – Pilsen, c. 166, sign. ZR 648, File of worker Ladislav Čížek.

and fragmentary statements such as “what the Führer does, he does well,”⁴⁰ I am loyal”⁴¹ or “I am ashamed I was born a Czech”⁴² were often enough to start the process. Moreover, it was often difficult to tell whether they were meant seriously, or sarcastically. In general, employees not maintaining friendly relations with their fellow workers, and were thus less readable for and more vulnerable to people around them, were put at a significant disadvantage during the postwar cleansing. This problem was felt by, for example, foreigners, such as Ukrainians, members of the interwar Russian emigration wave, or Silesians, as the language barrier often prompted mistrust on the part of their Czech colleagues during the occupation.⁴³ After the war, a shade of suspicion often clung to anyone in the presence of whom people had been afraid to speak openly about the political situation during the occupation. The individual concerned often had to prove that the mistrust toward him or her had been unfounded. In a similar context of loyalty to the enemy, publicly voiced concerns about the arrival of the Soviet army at the end of the Second World War were also considered immoral.⁴⁴

An accusation of practical support of war efforts of Nazi Germany could bring even harsher consequences. A typical white-collar offence in the environment of industrial plants was, in particular, a new patent application submitted during the occupation. Such acts were automatically interpreted as a symptom of pro-Nazi opinions. However, there existed viable means of defence. The persons concerned could claim, for example, that their inventions had made the workers’ job easier (e.g. transport and handling equipment),⁴⁵ or prove that their inventions had had no military use and instead contributed to the development of postwar peacetime production (e.g. light electric motorcycles).⁴⁶

An absolutely dominant phenomenon of the postwar cleansing process was represented by accusations of various forms of bullying of subordinates during the occupation. Such offences were often termed “anti-social behaviour.” No such crime had been defined in any pre-war Czechoslovak legal act, and it did not become a part of the later retribution decrees either. It was thus a specific component of the postwar cleansing process in industrial plants. Its essential characteristic feature consisted in exercising excessive pressure on subordinates, often accompanied by insults, threatening with the Gestapo, privileging one’s favourites, cutting salaries

40 *Ibid.*, f. Škoda Works – Headquarters, c. 1126, Inv. No. 6091, File of telephone operator Marie Nováková.

41 *Ibid.*

42 *Ibid.*, c. 1126, Inv. No. 6092, File of garage foreman František Němec.

43 *Ibid.*, c. 1128, Inv. No. 6098, File of Dipl. Ing. Konstantin Uvarov, member of the Export Department; *Ibid.*, c. 1126, Inv. No. 6092, File of Dipl. Ing. Boris Novgorodtsev, member of the Export Department.

44 In this respect, some people were influenced by a visit of the “Soviet Paradise” exhibition opened in Prague in 1942 (*Ibid.*, c. 1126, Inv. No. 6091, File of clerk Jaroslava Krátková).

45 *Ibid.*, c. 1127, Inv. No. 6092, File of Dipl. Ing. Vratislav Malík, Head of the Production and Technical Department.

46 *Ibid.*, f. Škoda Works – Pilsen, c. 163, sign. ZR 253, File of Department Head Dipl. Ing. Jindřich Kučera.

of one's subordinates, or moves of personnel to inferior manual jobs.⁴⁷ It should be noted that such an offence could be perceived as particularly contemptible for two reasons. First, it could be interpreted as threatening the existence of subordinates in hard times and, second, it could be viewed as support of the Nazi war efforts through increasing labour productivity.⁴⁸ However, the second, collaborationist, aspect of the offence was not always present. Even individuals whom the prosecution itself characterized as "harbouring an uncompromisingly anti-German opinion" were accused of their allegedly anti-social behaviour.⁴⁹

One of the problematic characteristics of the so-called anti-social behaviour was a frequent absence of personal initiative on the part of the persons concerned. As a matter of fact, most investigated "anti-social" characters pressed on the performance of their subordinates not on their own initiative, but in an effort to satisfy requirements of their German superiors.⁵⁰ After the war, they were therefore punished for general properties of the occupation system they were not quite responsible for.⁵¹ Some people were not even prosecuted for tangible acts, but rather for being too passive, as they allegedly had not been able to resist the occupiers strongly enough.⁵² In many cases, the acts that people were accused of were based on universal characteristics of the then existing capitalist system, with its commonly applied principles of incentives, penalties, and rewards.⁵³ A particularly threatened group in this respect were all norm-setters who participated in the determination of the workers' wage tariffs. They were therefore hated among workers, although they had to proceed in accordance with clearly defined rules.⁵⁴

Judging a suspicion of the so-called anti-social behaviour was also complicated by the fact that, after the revolution, many people were making use of an opportunity to interpret their laziness or incompetence during the Protectorate as a sabotage and wanted to take revenge on their bosses for justly imposed sanctions.⁵⁵ As a matter

47 *Ibid.*, f. Škoda Works – Headquarters, c. 1119, Inv. No. 6048, *Pracující Škodovák*, No. 53 (20.7.1945); *Ibid.*, c. 1126, Inv. No. 6091, File of Jan Reichman, Head of Photographic Studios; *Ibid.*, f. Škoda Works – Pilsen, c. 506, sign. TS 358, File of workshop supervisor Růžena Pechová.

48 *Ibid.*, f. Škoda Works – Headquarters, c. 1127, Inv. No. 6092, File of managing clerk Jaroslav; *Ibid.*, File of Associate Professor Dr Miroslav Hampl, Head of the Mathematical Department; *Ibid.*, c. 1128, Inv. No. 6092, File of managing clerk Ferdinand Vavřík.

49 *Ibid.*, c. 1127, Inv. No. 6092, File of Oldřich Frech, Head of Accounting Department; *Ibid.*, c. 1126, Inv. No. 6091, File of Emanuel Novák, Head of the Export Department.

50 *Ibid.*, c. 1119, Inv. No. 6048, *Pracující Škodovák*, No. 53 (20 July 1945).

51 *Ibid.*, *Pracující Škodovák*, nonpaged (11 September 1945).

52 *Ibid.*, c. 1126, Inv. No. 6092, File of the Deputy Head of the Garage Department Josef Žáček.

53 *Ibid.*, KOVAŘOVIC, Josef: O naší závodní radě [About our factory council]. In: *Zprávy závodní rady Škodovka – ústředí* [News of the Škoda Works Factory Council – Headquarters], nonpaged (7 November 1945), p. 1.

54 VOA, f. Antonín Zápotocký, c. 3, Inv. No. 39, Letter of norm-setter Jaroslav Trubač, dated 2 July 1945.

55 *SRA in Prague*, f. ČKD národní podnik, c. 28, Inv. No. 122, File of workshop assistant Josef Jarmář; VOA, f. Antonín Zápotocký, c. 3, Inv. No. 40, Letter of Department Head of Československá zbrojovka Ladislav Liška to Antonín Zápotocký, dated 15 July 1945.

of fact, the forced labour system implemented during the war had brought many people with dubious or no qualification to factories, people, who were not accustomed to meeting product quality standards. Their bosses, responsible for standard-compliant performance of production facilities entrusted to them, thus found themselves in a difficult situation. Consequently, the accused were often managers and foremen who had not placed any increased demands on their subordinates. In many cases, they intervened against the lack of discipline and order at work only at a time when the transgressions (such as regular games of chess during working hours) had become so obvious⁵⁶ that an unexpected inspection would have brought serious sanctions against all concerned. The bosses thus correctly perceived their reprimands and sanctions aimed at their irresponsible subordinates as a protection of the whole workshop or plant against an allegation of sabotage by German authorities.⁵⁷

For these reasons, setting any objective criteria of adequate work performance on the one hand and of bullying on the other for the purpose of cleansing-related investigation after the war was not easy. In some cases, revolutionary organs were attempting to compare situations in several neighbouring plants or workshops.⁵⁸ However, such information could be provided, as a rule, only by other leaders and managers, in many cases also affected by the cleansing process, which was why such voices were not initially lent a proper ear.

A frequent phenomenon accompanying these cases were also accusations of preferential treatment of German employees and other protégés with respect to salaries and working conditions.⁵⁹ For example, Karel Červenka, Head of the Personnel Department of Škoda Works, was accused of allowing clerks transferred from offices to production lines under the *totaleinsatz* programme to be replaced in their former positions by favoured relatives of top managers of the factory. The charge also noted that the clerks had been assigned manual jobs in spite of medical reports stating that they were unfit for hard work. As a result, there were even several deaths. However, Červenka was able to prove that the personnel transfers had not been his idea and that he had only been carrying out his superiors' instructions. This was why he was ultimately acquitted by the Regional Council of Trade Unions.⁶⁰

A special segment of the so-called anti-social behaviour were denouncements of subordinates for inadequate work performance or indiscipline. Both were among the most serious crimes that could occur in a factory environment. In such cases, the accused were facing criminal proceedings and a sentence to many years in prison by an extraordinary people's court. As a matter of fact, reporting even such

56 *SRA in Pilsen*, f. Škoda Works – Headquarters, c. 1127, Inv. No. 6092, File of Dipl. Ing. Vratislav Malík, Head of the Production and Technical Department.

57 *Ibid.*, c. 1126, Inv. No. 6091, File of Jan Reichman, Head of Photographic Studios.

58 *Ibid.*, c. 1127, Inv. No. 6092, File of Dipl. Ing. Vratislav Malík, Head of the Production and Technical Department.

59 *Ibid.*, c. 1127, Inv. No. 6092, File of Anna Bílková Head of Correspondence Section of the Armament Department.

60 *Ibid.*, File of Karel Červenka, Head of the Personnel Department.

a seemingly negligible offence to the factory management during the occupation often resulted in the employee concerned being investigated by the Gestapo for sabotage,⁶¹ the investigation frequently bringing a concentration camp sentence or even the inmate's death while serving his or her term.⁶²

However, even the cases ending with a prison sentence or death were not often easy to judge. Most of them were based on a classical "chain denunciation,"⁶³ where the intention to harm the affected person was not always provable. It should be noted that managers and foremen were obligated to report some offences to their superiors. If they failed to do so, they, too, were facing a threat of prosecution. Moreover, the Gestapo were not, as a rule, invited to the factory directly by the "denouncer" himself, who reported the offence up the chain of management, but from his German superiors.⁶⁴ Some cases of indiscipline at work could not be hushed up and remained unreported at all. A good example is the case of workshop foreman Karel Brabec from Škoda Works in Pilsen, who was physically assaulted by his subordinate while reprimanding him for indiscipline. The conflict had to be dealt with by the factory's security personnel. Other workers subsequently threatened him. The case was then investigated by the Gestapo and one of the arrested workers later died in a concentration camp.⁶⁵ Similarly, workshop foreman of Českomoravské strojírný Václav Moulík was trying to vainly persuade some of his subordinates to at least pretend work during a mandatory overtime shift in 1943 rather than demonstratively leaving for home. He had to report the culprits and the leader of the "strike" later died in a concentration camp.⁶⁶

However, the most frequent type of denouncement concerned an unfinished threat. After the war, many employees claimed that, during the occupation, their superiors had forced them to increase work performance by threatening them that otherwise they would have to report them as saboteurs. The accused generally interpreted their statements in a different way, claiming that they had only warned their subordinates against potential sanctions of the occupation regime.⁶⁷ They were also pointing out that the investigation by German authorities would have endangered not only the undisciplined employee, but all personnel of the workshop or plant. The above facts show that the boundary between threats and warnings was very fuzzy and, in some cases, utterly dependent on subjective perception of

61 *SRA in Prague*, f. ČKD národní podnik, c. 28, Inv. No. 122, File of Miroslav Dvořák, Secretary of the Factory Manager; *SRA in Pilsen*, f. Škoda Works – Headquarters, c. 1127, Inv. No. 6092, File of Karel Tröster, Deputy Factory Manager.

62 *SRA in Pilsen*, f. Škoda Works – Plzeň, c. 164, sign. ZR 645, File of electrical mechanic Miloš Hanzlovský.

63 Compare: FROMMER, B.: *Národní očista*, p. 203.

64 *SRA in Prague*, f. ČKD národní podnik, c. 28, Inv. No. 122, File of workshop foreman Václav Moulík.

65 *SRA in Pilsen*, f. Škoda Works – Plzeň, c. 166, sign. ZR 648, File of workshop foreman Karel Brabec.

66 *SRA in Prague*, f. ČKD národní podnik, c. 28, Inv. No. 122, File of workshop foreman Václav Moulík.

67 *Ibid.*, File of workshop assistant Josef Jarmář.

the players concerned. At the same time, these cases made determining the ratio of guilt between the denouncer and the victim very difficult, as the victim of the threats might have been much more dangerous for people around him or her than the person making the threat of denouncement.⁶⁸ It was exactly for these reasons that the postwar cleansing was trying to base its ruling on the atmosphere in specific workshops and plants, ignoring traditional legal institutions.

An entirely specific group of people affected by the postwar cleansing process consisted of members of factory guards/security personnel (*Werkschutz*). During the occupation, they were supervising the performance of workers, recording their absences from work, and making sure that no one was sleeping or resting while at work. They were generally very unpopular among factory personnel, and they were summarily prosecuted after the war, usually for denunciations in the matters listed above.⁶⁹

Another group substantially affected by the postwar cleansing were interwar (anti-Bolshevik) Russian émigrés. People around them often regarded them as Nazi sympathizers, particularly before the German attack on the Soviet Union in the summer of 1941.⁷⁰ As said above, the language and cultural barrier sometimes obviously contributed to mutual mistrust as well. After the war, Russian émigrés were summarily expelled from some factories (e.g. from Škoda Works in Pilsen).⁷¹ Elsewhere the “Russians” constituted a numerically significant category of punished persons, specifically mentioned in cleansing records (e.g. in Škoda Works – Headquarters in Prague).⁷²

Exceptionally, the cleansing at industrial companies also targeted post-revolution offences, punishing “shirkers” and “saboteurs” of postwar building efforts.⁷³ The new rising revolutionary morals were clearly reflected in these cases as well.

The review presented above shows that the cleansing of industrial plants included a much wider assortment of offences than the later Decree of the President of the Republic No. 16 of the Collection of Legal Acts, dated 19 June 1945, on the punishment of Nazi criminals, traitors and their helpers, and on the extraordinary people’s courts (Great Retribution Decree). As a matter of fact, the first outline of the decree had been drafted in the London exile, which was why it did not reflect newly established

68 *SRA in Pilsen*, f. Škoda Works – Headquarters, c. 1126, Inv. No. 6091, File of Jan Reichman, Head of Photographic Studios.

69 *Ibid.*, f. Škoda Works – Plzeň, c. 163, sign. ZR 645, Files of *Werkschutz* member Alois Jäger, clerk Dipl. Ing. Vilém Ernest and *Werkschutz* member Rudolf Šilháček.

70 *Ibid.*, f. Škoda Works – Headquarters, c. 1128, Inv. No. 6098, File of Dipl. Ing. Konstantin Uvarov, member of the Export Department; *Ibid.*, c. 1126, Inv. No. 6092, File of Dipl. Ing. Boris Novgorodtsev, member of the Export Department.

71 *Ibid.*, f. Škoda Works – Plzeň, c. 154, Minutes of a meeting of the Plant Revolutionary Council (RZR) of Škoda Works in Pilsen, dated 12 May 1945.

72 *Ibid.*, f. Škoda Works – Headquarters, c. 1119, Inv. No. 6048, Report of the Investigation Commission of the Headquarters Factory Council. In: *Pracující Škodovák*, nonpaged (11 September 1945), p. 1.

73 *SRA in Prague*, f. ČKD národní podnik, c. 134, Inv. No. 867, Minutes of a meeting of the Plant Council of ČMS Karlín, dated 8 June 1945.

criteria of guilt. For this reason, another Decree of the President, No. 138, dated 27 October 1945, on the punishment of some offences against national honour (Small Retribution Decree) was adopted later, which significantly expanded the range of punishable offences. It was based on lessons learned during the company cleansing process.⁷⁴ Decree No. 138/1945 Coll. was interpreted by Directive of the Ministry of Interior No. B-2220-23/11-45-I/2, dated 26 November 1945, which contained an explicit list of offences such as professional cooperation with Germans above and beyond limits of average mandatory performance (submission of patent applications), provision of favours to the occupiers (preferential treatment at work), or social contacts above the necessary limit (attendance of private parties of German superiors). However, it also dealt with some cases of “anti-social behaviour,” although it did not directly use this term. It concerned, in particular, Letter g) of the document in concern, i.e. the “abuse of a leading position achieved with the help of the occupiers for the purpose of gaining or securing personal benefits by helping the occupiers at the expense of subordinates,” and Letter ch), i.e. “abusing, insulting or terrorizing Czechs and Slovaks, perpetrated in the service or interest of the occupiers, or in an effort to win their favour.”⁷⁵

Investigation Commissions and Directives Governing Their Activities

However, let us now go back to the company cleansing mechanism itself. The first directive which influenced the spontaneous course of the cleansing process in industrial plants was the instruction of the Central Council of Trade Unions (CCTU) on elections to factory councils, dated 12 May 1945. It stipulated that all individuals suspected of collaboration with Germans were to be disenfranchised. Names were struck off election lists on the basis of decisions adopted by employees of the plant or workshop by a simple majority of votes. Consequently, every office or workshop where the cleansing process had not yet taken place had to assume an attitude to it.⁷⁶ Lists of disenfranchised persons were to be submitted to Investigation Commissions (about to be established) at a later date. The instruction of the Central Council of Trade Unions was still very general. This was why the determination of guilt continued to remain in the realm of work collectives and was not subject to any legislation.⁷⁷ Allegations voiced during plenary meetings of workshops and offices were thus often vague, consisting, for example, in accusing

74 See: FROMMER, B.: *Národní očista*, pp. 250–257.

75 Directive of the Ministry of Interior No. B-2220-23/11-45-I/2, dated 26 November 1945, on the implementation of Decree of the President of the Republic No. 138/1945 Coll., on the punishment of some offences against national honour (No. 607 of the *Official Journal 1945*). Compare: KMOCH, P.: *Provinění proti národní cti*, pp. 422–427 and 444–447.

76 *SRA in Pilsen*, f. Škoda Works – Headquarters, c. 1126, Inv. No. 6091, File of Emanuel Novák, Head of the Export Department.

77 *Ibid.*, c. 1118, Inv. No. 6028, the May 1945 decree on the election to the Factory Council of Škoda Works – Headquarters.

managers and foremen of “inhuman” treatment of their subordinates, but failing to give concrete examples of such acts. It was only much later that the Investigation Commissions were collecting appropriate evidence to support these – *de facto* accomplished – cleansing acts.⁷⁸

As a matter of fact, the cleansing process was culminating in the second half of May, in connection with preparations for elections to factory councils, affecting thousands of people all over the country.⁷⁹ The last barriers of traditional hierarchies in factories and respect to superiors had fallen. The cleansing process was no longer aimed at collaborationists and Nazi sympathizers, concentrating primarily on social conflicts between superiors and subordinates.

An article published in the West Bohemian National Socialist daily *Svobodný směr* in early June 1945 saw the situation as a “true chase of office personnel,” noticing its detrimental effects: “The national purpose of the cleansing of the factory was put aside, as settlement of personal accounts started. All it took was a fine imposed, by a clerk upon a worker, a pass not issued, a reprimand for a transgression – all of the above were national enough reasons for the individual to be banished from the workshop, to be denigrated, etc. Cases like this were counted in their hundreds, producing a disharmony among the workforce, which directly affects the foundations of the factory’s prosperity. We have to realize that many engineers and skilled clerks are disgusted by the situation at work, and they have already left the plant or are going to do so, and what will happen then?”⁸⁰

It was only then, in the second half of May 1945, that specialized cleansing institutions, the investigation commissions mentioned above, were gradually being established in plants and factories.⁸¹ These were established in individual factories, generally along their factory councils (or company national committees). As a rule, larger companies usually had an investigation commission in each of its plants/subsidiaries.⁸² The commissions were receiving proposed motions, collecting evidence for already opened cases, and judging individual disputes. However, most of their workload consisted of cases in respect whereof the execution of sentences had already begun. As a matter of fact, they frequently involved people who had *de facto* already been banished from their workplace or assigned to menial labour. The investigation commissions thus did not function as the initiator of the cleansing process, but rather as its auditor. Their aim was to formalize, standardize, and legalize the cleansing process which had already begun. In doing so, they were collecting

78 *Ibid.*, c. 1126, Inv. No. 6091, File of Václav Jelínek, Deputy Head of the Purchasing Department.

79 VOA, f. ÚRO – Presidium, c. 1, Inv. No. 2, Minutes of a meeting of the Presidium of ÚRO, dated 7 September 1945.

80 Ustaňte, dokud je čas!

81 *SRA in Pilsen*, f. Škoda Works – Plzeň, c. 154, sign. 3, Minutes of a meeting of the Plant Revolutionary Council (RZR) of Škoda Works in Pilsen, dated 15 May 1945; *Provádíme očistu* [We are carrying out the cleansing]. In: *Práce* (25 May 1945), p. 3.

82 *SRA in Prague*, f. ČKD národní podnik, c. 2, Inv. No. 40, Minutes of a meeting of the Factory Council’s Presidium, 24 August 1945.

documents and later, approximately from the beginning of June 1945, submitting their proposals to factory councils for a final decision.⁸³ The latter then published their verdicts in newspapers or on bulletin boards on factory or plant premises.⁸⁴

The commissions were not receiving only proposals from those making accusations. The latter were also coming from individuals affected by the spontaneous cleansing in early May, who wanted to have their cases re-examined in an effort to prevent slander and protect their honour.⁸⁵ In addition to the above agenda, the commissions were also conducting investigations for various institutions and agencies of the state, in particular courts and security authorities.⁸⁶ They were also participating in the processing of applications of both current and former employees for certificates of national and political reliability.

However, actual practices of the investigation commissions did not follow common rules of criminal proceedings. In many cases, the commissions were not providing enough time to defence during their short hearings and were not acquainting the accused with the exact wording of the charge. Moreover, the sessions were often very emotional, with those present interrupting the accused or not allowing them to speak at all.⁸⁷ Some of the accused even learned about their sentences and reasons thereof from newspapers, without being properly summoned and given a chance to defend themselves.⁸⁸ With the passing time, however, the work of the commissions became more accurate and the excesses such as those described above were eliminated. As a rule, no defence counsels of the accused were allowed during hearings before the investigation commissions.

Initially, the work of the investigation commissions was not subject to any official directives. However, the commissions were unable to stop the ongoing cleansing process and wait for more detailed instructions. Consequently, their members felt a need to standardize and conceptually regulate the cleansing process. Individual companies, or even whole groups of companies in a region, thus spontaneously started creating their own rules.⁸⁹

One of the first drafts of such directives was prepared by Josef Kovařovic, Chairman of the Investigation Commission of Škoda Works Prague – Headquarters.

83 *SRA in Pilsen*, f. Škoda Works – Headquarters, c. 1119, Inv. No. 6048, *Pracující Škodovák*, No. 20 (8 June 1945).

84 *Ibid.*, f. Škoda Works – Plzeň, c. 155, sign. 523, Minutes of a meeting of the Plant Council of Škoda Works in Pilsen, dated 15 May 1945; *Provádíme očistu*.

85 *SRA in Pilsen*, f. Škoda Works – Headquarters, c. 1126, Inv. No. 6091, File of JUDr. PhDr. Josef Svátek, Head of the Advertising and Promotion Department; *Ibid.*, c. 1127, Inv. No. 6092, File of Deputy Director Karel Brunner.

86 *Ibid.*, c. 1120, Inv. No. 6051, Protocol of a meeting of the Factory Council of Škoda Works, 17 December 1945.

87 *Ibid.*, f. Škoda Works – personal files of employees, No. 4497, Personal file of workshop foreman Karel Šmrha.

88 *Ibid.*, f. Škoda Works – Headquarters, c. 1127, Inv. No. 6092, File of Managing Clerk Jaroslav Čochnář.

89 *Závodním radám podniků, ústavů a úřadů* [To councils of companies, institutes, and offices], Vol. 1, No. 17 (1 June 1945), p. 2.

On 15 May 1945, his draft was published in the mimeographed in-house magazine of the Škoda Works group named *Pracující Škodovák* [The working Škoda worker].⁹⁰ Using the directives, the National Committee of Škoda Works established a five-strong investigation commission tasked to collect documents on crimes and offences perpetrated by both Germans and Czech collaborationists during the occupation.⁹¹ As to the latter group, the directives contained an exhaustive list of offences worth investigation:

“a) Opting for German nationality, using the Nazi salute, denunciation of Czech people to Germans or German authorities, or a threat thereof;

b) political cooperation with occupiers, e.g. membership in organizations such as: *Společnost pro spolupráci Čechů s Němci* [Association for cooperation of Czechs with Germans], *Vlajka* [The flag], *Liga proti bolševismu* [League against Bolshevism], voluntary membership in *Kuratorium pro výchovu mládeže v Čechách a na Moravě* [Board of trustees for the education of youth], etc., promotion, advocacy or praising of principles of Nazism, Fascism, anti-Semitism and acts arising therefrom, praising, support or advocacy of speeches and policies of the Nazis, Fascists and Czech traitors, manifestation of joy over military retreats of allied armies,

c) joint work with occupiers in the economic sphere, benefitting the occupiers in a manner exceeding limits of average mandatory performance, including, but not limited to: initiative fulfilment of work duties, including outside standard working hours, submitted proposals of measures increasing or improving production or work performance, initiative acts or deeds benefitting the occupiers and going beyond duty limits, bribing of and provision of favours to the occupiers, whether monetary or in kind, acceptance or seeking of extraordinary rewards, ranks or decorations from the occupiers and traitors during the occupation,

d) social, out-of-duty contacts with occupiers (hunts, parties, etc.).”⁹²

According to the directives, all employees were obliged to provide assistance to the investigating commission. Anonymous denunciations were not to be taken into account. The commission was supposed to maintain written records signed by witnesses on every case, and members of the commission were to treat all information they came across in connection with the cases as confidential.⁹³

It is interesting to note that Kovařovic’s directives did not contain the offences which had already been commonly labelled as so-called “anti-social behaviour” in

90 The mimeographed magazine was published from 7 May 1945 by Škoda Works Headquarters in Prague under the title *Bojující Škodovák* [The fighting Škoda worker]; from 10 May 1945, its name was changed to *Pracující Škodovák* [The working Škoda worker]. In September 1945, it was replaced by a printed magazine titled *Škodovák* [The Škoda worker] (*SRA in Pilsen*, f. Škoda Works – Headquarters, c. 1119, Inv. No. 6047 and 6048).

91 In addition to Josef Kovařovic, the commission included Antonín Urban, Josef Konopásek, Karel Weber and Nikolaj Kostlár.

92 *SRA in Pilsen*, f. Škoda Works – Headquarters, c. 1119, Inv. No. 6048, Directive No. 1 of the National Committee of Škoda Works (NVŠZ) on the establishment of the Investigation Commission. In: *Pracující Škodovák*, No. 7 (15 May 1945), p. 1.

93 *Ibid.*

the ongoing cleansing process. It is thus reasonable to assume that the commission initially attempted to investigate only the cases stemming from the national conflict. It was only under the pressure of employees that it was subsequently forced to examine social conflicts, which later even accounted for the biggest part of its workload.

Immediately after their appearance in the factory magazine, Kovařovic's directives were reprinted by the *Rudé Právo* daily,⁹⁴ whereby they acquired the status of an unofficial model to be followed by all other investigation commissions. The Central Council of Trade Unions subsequently adopted them as official model directives for the entire trade union movement.⁹⁵ Some formulations used in Kovařovic's document were even incorporated into directives of the Ministry of Interior implementing Decree No. 138/1945 Coll.

In addition to the abovementioned directives drafted in Prague, there were also other documents produced in different factories and regions. In West Bohemia, for example, the first set of instructions was drafted by the Revolutionary Regional Trade Union Council (KOR) in Pilsen as early as on 12 May 1945. The Pilsen directives did not contain as accurate definitions of prosecuted offences as those in Kovařovic's document. However, they distinguished two levels of seriousness. As to serious offences, their perpetrators were to be handed over to for custody to the National Committee in Pilsen, while less serious ones were to be dealt with by merely firing the culprit. However, culprits falling into both categories were supposed to undergo a subsequent court trial. In Pilsen, too, the investigation commission was required to maintain written records signed by witnesses. However, the Pilsen directives, unlike those of Prague, explicitly required that so-called anti-social elements be prosecuted as well. In Article 5, they defined the latter as follows: "In addition, special lists of enemies of workers, of those who have been robbing workers of their salaries and those who have been robbing the company, of those who have fired workers, friends of the Soviet Union and combatants for democratic Spain, will be drafted. These people must be expelled from factories, in particular from decision-making positions." However, the instructions also warned against firing indispensable specialists which would harm the operation of factories, giving the following recommendations: "If there is no readily available replacement, leave the culprit, for the time being, in his position, reprimand him sternly, and closely watch what he is doing. Act tactically, fairly, and efficiently." The lists of culprits were to be passed to the Revolutionary Regional Trade Union Council in Pilsen, which was supposed to arrange their subsequent court trials. In May 1945, Pilsen

94 Škodovka čistí závod od zrady [Škoda Works cleansing their plants of treason]. In: *Rudé právo* (17 May 1945), p. 6.

95 *SRA in Pilsen*, f. Škoda Works – Headquarters, c. 1119, Inv. No. 6048, *Pracující Škodovák*, No. 14 (28 May 1945); *VOA*, f. ÚRO – Organizační oddělení, c. 3, Inv. No. 21, Directives of the Revolutionary Regional Trade Union Council (KOR) in Pilsen, dated 8 June 1945.

saw the birth of a cleansing mechanism in which the Regional Trade Union Council was to play a much more significant role than in Prague.⁹⁶

The Centre of Investigation Commissions

The investigation commissions soon found out that their activities had to be coordinated on a regional and sectoral basis. As a matter of fact, employees dismissed from one company could seek a job in another, where their behaviour during the Protectorate was not known. For this reason, representatives of the 12 largest mechanical engineering enterprises in Prague met in the building of Škoda Works – Headquarters in Prague on 5 June 1945 to agree on standard rules how to proceed. They later attempted to legalize these rules at a nationwide level through the Central Council of Trade Unions. First and foremost, all factories were ordered to ask every new employee to provide a National and Political Reliability Certificate (release sheet) issued by the factory council of his/her previous employer. Furthermore, a principle authorizing factory councils to assign an employee to a different position even if his/her accusation was not proven was adopted. Its purpose was to maintain peace and order in factories, as disputes accompanying the cleansing process were rendering any cooperation between feuding parties impossible.⁹⁷ If guilt was proven, the rules set three basic levels of punishment commensurate to the magnitude of guilt. Perpetrators of the least serious offences were to be assigned to a lower-paying job within the enterprise; medium-serious offences were to be punished by a dismissal, with the dismissed individual being given a release sheet stating the reasons why he/she was dismissed. The most serious cases were to be handed over to security authorities for further criminal proceedings.⁹⁸

The Central Council of Trade Unions later indeed adopted the skeleton of these rules as its own.⁹⁹ Functionaries of factory councils not abiding by these principles were themselves risking prosecution by investigation commissions.¹⁰⁰ To synchronize the cleansing process, enterprises in Prague even drafted standardized specimen forms of the National and Political Reliability Certificate for different types of offences.¹⁰¹ The lack of official instructions applying to the *de facto* ongoing cleansing

96 *SRA in Pilsen*, f. Škoda Works – Plzeň, c. 506, sign. 32A, Instructions of the Revolutionary Regional Trade Union Council in Pilsen, dated 12 May 1945.

97 *Ibid.*, f. Škoda Works – Headquarters, c. 1126, Inv. No. 6091, File of Václav Jelínek, Deputy Head of the Purchasing Department; *Ibid.*, Inv. No. 6092, File of the Deputy Head of the Garage Department Josef Žáček.

98 *Ibid.*, c. 1125, Inv. No. 6069, Resolution of representatives of factory councils of 12 mechanical engineering enterprises in Prague, dated 5 June 1945.

99 VOA, f. ÚRO – Secretariat, c. 1, Inv. No. 4, Minutes the meeting of the Presidium of ÚRO held on 5 June 1945.

100 *SRA in Prague*, f. ČKD národní podnik, c. 135, Inv. No. 875, File of Jaroslav Pálka, Chairman of the Factory Council of ČMS Karlín.

101 *SRA in Pilsen*, f. Škoda Works – Headquarters, c. 1125, Inv. No. 6069, Resolution of the meeting of the Central Investigation Commission held on 17 July 1945.

process thus made the investigation commissions to deal with problems “on the go,” through their own legislative and organizational initiatives based on their practical experience.

The dominant personality around whom the coordination of cleansing activities of Prague’s mechanical engineering factories was revolving was Josef Kovařovic, Chairman of the Factory Council of Škoda Works – Headquarters in Prague, who was the author of most of the directives and form specimens mentioned above. In the absence of detailed official instructions, other investigation commissions operating in Prague were therefore joining him to protect themselves against potential errors and lawsuits. On 19 June 1945, the spontaneously created structure was formalized. On that date, representatives of factory councils concerned established the Centre of Investigation Commissions of Factory Councils (ÚVK). The central body had an ambition to fill the gap in the hitherto established organizational structure of the cleansing process and to become both an advisory organ and an authority of appeal. It wished to have the decision power in disputable cases when the ruling of an investigation commission was questioned by someone, and its decision was to be binding upon all investigation commissions. The Centre of Investigation Commissions was to have a nationwide authority and all investigation commissions concerned were invited to join it in the media.¹⁰²

The Centre had its seat in the building of Škoda Works, Jungmannova 29, in the second district of Prague, and its meetings took place every Tuesday at 2 pm in the local movie theatre.¹⁰³ On 11 July 1945, it adopted its articles of association drafted by Josef Kovařovic. At the same time, it notified the Central Council of Trade Unions of its establishment and asked the Council to approve the Centre’s articles of association.¹⁰⁴ The Centre planned to organize legal courses for members of investigation commissions and to publish its own magazine. The membership was open to any investigation commission which submitted a written application signed by its factory council.¹⁰⁵ The chairmanship rotated from one member to another in an alphabetic order after every meeting.¹⁰⁶ The founding members of the Centre of Investigation Commissions were the factory councils of the following mechanical/metalworking enterprises: Akciová společnost, formerly Škoda Works (branch plants Prague, Smíchov and Fyzikální ústav/Institute of Physics); Avia, joint-stock company, Letňany; Českoslovie – international transport; Českomoravské strojírný (branch plants Karlín and Libeň), Československá zbrojovka Prague; Československé

102 *Ibid.*, Resolution establishing the Central Investigation Commission, dated 19 June 1945; *Ibid.*, Press release of the Central Investigation Commission, dated 28 June 1945.

103 *Ibid.*, c. 1122, Inv. No. 6053, Draft of Josef Kovařovic’s article “Naše revoluce a morálka závodních rad” [Our revolution and the ethics of factory councils], published in the *Škodovák* magazine, Vol. 2, No. 5 (1946), p. 1.

104 *Ibid.*, c. 1125, Inv. No. 6069, *Articles of the Centre of Investigation Commissions of Factory Councils* adopted on 11 July 1945.

105 *Ibid.*, c. 1119, Inv. No. 6048, *Pracující Škodovák*, No. 40 (2 July 1945).

106 *Ibid.*, c. 1125, Inv. No. 6069, *Articles of the Centre of Investigation Commissions of Factory Councils* adopted on 11 July 1945.

státní dráhy Praha; Elka Praha; Götzl & Schmidt; Jawa Praha; Konstruktiva; Křižík; Letecko-technická výrobní společnost Letňany; Mikroфона Strašnice; Podniky Juliš; Poldina huť; Phillips; Phillips-Elektra; Rudý Letov I., II. a III.; Sellier & Bellot Vlašim; Státní aerolinie; Továrny Waldes a spol.; Vojenské telegrafní dílny Kbely; Walter Jinonice; and Západočeské kaolinky Praha.¹⁰⁷ Later, the Centre of Investigation Commissions was joined by enterprises from other regions and industry sectors, such as Akciová společnost, formerly Škoda Works (branch plants Adamov, Hradec Králové and Brno); Baťa (offices in Prague); Slavie, vzájemně pojišťovací banka, J. Kameníček a spol.; Grafické umělecké závody V. Neubert a synové; or Srb a Štys.¹⁰⁸

However, the Central Council of Trade Unions disagreed with the cleansing process being handled by an organization of an association nature, which the Centre of Investigation Commissions was.¹⁰⁹ It thus decided to assume the initiative and in mid-July 1945 started building up a unified structure of cleansing bodies along the trade union line.¹¹⁰ Appeal senates were established under the umbrella of Regional Trade Union Councils, the role of which was to examine rulings of investigation commissions. The decision of the Central Council of Trade Unions made the Centre reconsider its ambitions. It stopped aspiring to become a body of appeal and remained a mere advisory board.¹¹¹ It continued to do so until August 1945, when the company-level phase of the cleansing process was basically completed. Since the beginning of August, investigation commissions were not opening any new cases, handing over relevant proposals to start investigations directly to security authorities, national committees, or courts.¹¹²

Appeal Senates of Regional Trade Union Councils

Courts of honour were established under the umbrella of Regional Trade Union Councils (KOR) in various regions since May 1945, initially as tools of the cleansing

107 *Ibid.*, Report of the Centre of Investigation Commissions for ÚRO, dated 11 July 1945.

108 *Ibid.*, Applications to the Centre of Investigation Commissions submitted in 1945; *Ibid.*, c. 1122, Inv. No. 6053, Draft of Josef Kovařovic's article "Naše revoluce a morálka závodních rad" [Our revolution and the ethics of factory councils], published in the *Škodovák* magazine, Vol. 2, No. 5 (1946), p. 1.

109 VOA, f. ÚRO – Secretariat, c. 1, Inv. No. 23, Minutes of a meeting of the Presidium of ÚRO, dated 2 August 1945.

110 Obnovit výrobu: Otázka očisty v závodech. Doplňkem k projevu Zápotockého [To restore production: The issue of the cleansing process in factories. A supplement to Zápotocký's speech]. In: *Práce* (14 July 1945), p. 3.

111 *SRA in Pilsen*, f. Škoda Works – Headquarters, c. 1125, Inv. No. 6069, Resolution of a meeting of the Centre of Investigation Commissions, dated 17 July 1945.

112 *Ibid.*, f. Škoda Works – Plzeň, c. 154, sign. 3, Minutes of a meeting of the Plant Revolutionary Council (RZR) of Škoda Works in Pilsen, dated 8 August 1945; *Ibid.*, f. Škoda Works – Headquarters, c. 1119, Inv. No. 6048, *Pracující Škodovák*, No. 65 (3 August 1945).

process in the ranks of the trade union movement itself.¹¹³ They were in fact branches of the Court of Honour of the Central Council of Trade Unions, which issued rulings in cleansing cases involving employees of central trade union bodies.¹¹⁴ However, as time was passing by, it was increasingly obvious that many errors had been made in the course of the cleansing process, and not just during its spontaneous phase in the first half of May 1945, but also after the establishment of investigation commissions. Many affected people were contacting the Central Council of Trade Unions with requests for legal advice.¹¹⁵ It was therefore necessary to establish a universal system of appeal bodies which both the affected people and factory councils, often attempting to review their own rulings, could turn to. To this end, the existing structure of the Courts of Honour of Regional Trade Union Councils was made use of. Pursuant to directives of the Central Council of Trade Unions dated 14 July 1945, the courts of honour became bodies of appeal for cleansing cases dealt with by factory councils.¹¹⁶ At the same time, the step was accompanied by other measures imposing much more demanding requirements upon necessary particulars of cleansing proceedings and the work investigation commissions. It is thus obvious that the establishment of the appeal senates was motivated not only by efforts to centralize activities of trade unions, but particularly by efforts to eliminate the most blatant excesses from the cleansing process.¹¹⁷

There was yet another reason why the establishment of the appeal senates of investigation commissions was necessary. Documents collected by the latter were supposed to be used as evidence in court trials. Most of them, however, did not meet relevant criteria. This fact was openly referred to by, for example, instructions of the Regional Trade Union Council in Pilsen from that period: "It was found out that protocols of many factories were incomplete, that the culprits had not been interrogated, that the data were not complete. A resolute and fast approach is correct, but a fair investigation of the case by investigation commissions will save people's and national courts a lot of work. People's courts are supposed to punish, not to do office work."¹¹⁸ It was exactly for these reasons that trade union authorities started emphasizing hitherto ignored principles: the accused's right to proper

113 VOA, f. ÚRO – Sekretariat, c. 1, Inv. No. 23, Minutes of a meeting of the Presidium of ÚRO, dated 2 August 1945.

114 The Chairman of the Court of Honour of the Central Council of Trade Unions was Václav Havelka. The first session of the court took place on 11 June 1945. During its existence, the court of honour handled 998 cases, finding guilty only 19 of them. (*Ibid.*, f. ÚRO – Court of Honour, c. 1, Inv. No. 1, Order of Procedure of the Court of Honour, 17 May 1945; *Ibid.*, Inv. No. 2, Review of activities of the Court of Honour of the Central Council of Trade Unions from 15 May 1945 to 28 February 1946.)

115 *Ibid.*, c. 1, Inv. No. 2, Václav Havelka's report for the Presidium of ÚRO, dated 13 June 1945.

116 *Ibid.*, Inv. No. 1, July 1945 directives of ÚRO addressed to Regional Trade Union Councils; Obnovit výrobu: Otázka čistoty v závodech.

117 VOA, f. ÚRO – Organizational Department, c. 3, Inv. No. 21, Directives of the Regional Trade Union Council in Pilsen concerning procedures to be used by penal commissions of factory councils, undated.

118 *Ibid.*

defence, the duty to punish workers as sternly as office personnel, and sanctions for those submitting false denouncements.¹¹⁹ However, even the Court of Honour of Regional Trade Union Councils did not permit the accused to be represented by an attorney-at-law.¹²⁰

The practical implementation of the cleansing process differed from region to region even after the intervention of the Central Council of Trade Unions. In Prague, for example, trade unions had been, until then, playing a negligible role in the cleansing process. As a matter of fact, the local court of honour was established only in July 1945, and earlier coordination and advisory activities had been performed by the Centre of Investigation Commissions mentioned above.¹²¹ Since July, second instance appeals were handled by the Court of Arbitration of the Regional Trade Union Council in Prague.¹²² However, the court was only dealing with a smaller part of rulings of factory councils, namely those where an appeal was submitted. The appeal had to be submitted within eight days since the publication of the challenged ruling of the investigation commission in the factory magazine.¹²³

On the other hand, the role of trade union bodies in the region of West Bohemia was much more significant. The Court of Honour of the Regional Trade Union Council in Pilsen was established as early as in late May 1945. Its ranks included five former inmates of the Buchenwald concentration camp and an attorney-at-law in an advisory capacity.¹²⁴ Since the very beginning, the Regional Trade Union Council in Pilsen was attempting to regulate the spontaneous cleansing process by its directives, in this regard closely cooperating with the Legal Department of the District National Committee (ONV) in Pilsen.¹²⁵ The latter's members were even directly participating in activities of the Court of Honour of the Regional Trade Union Council in Pilsen and cleansing commissions of some important enterprises in the region. So, for example, sessions of the investigation commission of Škoda Works in Pilsen were regularly attended by Josef Fried, a member of the Legal Department

119 *Ibid.*

120 *Ibid.*, c. 11, Inv. No. 78, Report from a conference of the Regional Trade Union Council in Pilsen held in 1946.

121 The Court of Honour of the Regional Trade Union Council in Prague had its offices at Praha II, Na Zbořenci 18 (*Ibid.*, f. ÚRO – Sekretariat, c. 1, Inv. No. 17, Minutes of a meeting of the Presidium of ÚRO, dated 7 July 1945).

122 The Chairman of the Court of Arbitration of the Regional Trade Union Council in Prague was Antonín Horský (*SRA in Pilsen*, f. Škoda Works – Headquarters, *Zprávy závodní rady Škodovka – ústředí* [News of the Factory Council of Škoda Works – Headquarters], non-paged (7 November 1945).

123 *Ibid.*, c. 1119, Inv. No. 6048, *Pracující Škodovák*, No. 28 (16 June 1945).

124 The Chairman of the Court of Honour of the Regional Trade Union Council in Pilsen was Rudolf Dubský (*Ibid.*, f. Škoda Works – Plzeň, c. 154, sign. 3, Minutes of a meeting of the Revolutionary Regional Trade Union Council (KOR) in Pilsen, dated 8 June 1945; Court of Honour of the Regional Trade Union Council. In: *Pravda* (21 May 1945), p. 4).

125 VOA, f. ÚRO – Organizational Department, c. 3, Inv. No. 21, Directives of the Regional Trade Union Council in Pilsen concerning procedures to be used by penal commissions of factory councils, undated.

of the District National Committee.¹²⁶ The appeal term in Pilsen was set at seven days since the ruling was announced to the accused.¹²⁷ However, even the previous stage of the cleansing process had planned to hand over cases to the Regional Trade Union Council.¹²⁸ This was why factory councils in Pilsen were submitting most of their rulings in cleansing matters for a review, no matter whether an appeal had been lodged or not.¹²⁹ As Škoda Works produced a substantial part of the cleansing agenda of the Regional Trade Union Council in Pilsen, the latter even established a special Appeal Senate of the Court of Honour to which only Škoda Works cases were assigned. The Appeal Senate's sessions took place together with those of the plant's Investigation Commission directly in workshops of the company.¹³⁰ When dealing with their cleansing agenda, Škoda Works were in Pilsen were thus able to rely on the authority of the Legal Department of the District National Committee in Pilsen and of the Appeal Senate of the Regional Trade Union Council in Pilsen.

Sentences Awarded

The regional and local variability of the mechanism of cleansing in industrial plants and factories was also reflected in a wide variety of awarded sentences. However, there did exist some general principles. Perpetrators of the most serious offences were, as a rule, detained and handed over to security authorities for criminal proceedings, while less serious ones were sanctioned within the company. The harshest sanction was the termination of employment.¹³¹ Some companies were distinguishing between the "hard" variant, which was immediate termination, and the "soft" variant which applied the notice period. Even less serious offences resulted in a relocation of the person to another job. Rehabilitated persons whom their former work collectives refused to accept back were generally assigned to a different position requiring the same qualification.¹³² In many cases, such shifts were motivated by an intention to assign the person concerned to a job where he or she would not

126 *SRA in Pilsen*, f. Škoda Works – Headquarters, c. 1118, Inv. No. 6030, Appeal "Škoda workers!" from Pilsen, 11 September 1945.

127 *Ibid.*, f. Škoda Works – Plzeň, c. 154, sign. 3, Minutes of a meeting of the Plant Revolutionary Council (RZR) of Škoda Works in Pilsen, dated 8 June 1945.

128 *Závodním radám podniků, ústavů a úřadů* [To councils of factories, institutes, and offices], Vol. 1, No. 17 (1 June 1945), p. 2.

129 *SRA in Pilsen*, f. Škoda Works – Plzeň, c. 154, sign. 3, Minutes of a meeting of the Plant Revolutionary Council (RZR) of Škoda Works in Pilsen, dated 8 June 1945.

130 The first Chairman of the Senate was Václav Nezbeda, who was succeeded by National Socialist Josef Michálek (*Ibid.*, Minutes of a meeting of the Plant Revolutionary Council (RZR) of Škoda Works in Pilsen, dated 20 July 1945).

131 *Provádíme očistu.*

132 *SRA in Prague*, f. ČKD národní podnik, c. 2, Inv. No. 40, Minutes of a meeting of the Factory Council Presidium, dated 24 August 1945; *SRA in Pilsen*, f. Škoda Works – Headquarters, c. 1126, Inv. No. 6091, File of Václav Jelínek, Deputy Head of the Purchasing Department; *Ibid.*, Inv. No. 6092, File of the Deputy Head of the Garage Department Josef Žáček.

be in contacts with his or her denouncers, and thus would not give cause to any dissension, rather than by an intention to administer a punishment.¹³³ Sentenced employees were usually transferred to worse and less paid jobs or explicitly menial work positions. In large companies, the person concerned could also be transferred to one of their branch plants.¹³⁴ The assignment to a worse job could be permanent or temporary, the latter sometimes as short as a few weeks.¹³⁵ The lightest form of punishment was a public reprimand.¹³⁶ In many cases, however, the factory council dropped the charges and pensioned the person concerned off.¹³⁷

Factory councils were also influencing the future of the dismissed employees, as they were issuing national and political reliability certificates to them. The document was needed for a number of various official acts, including the assignment of national administratorship in border regions. The punishment could therefore consist in a mere rejection to issue it, which made finding a new job or way to sustain oneself very difficult for affected persons. In some cases, rulings of factory councils in cleansing cases explicitly stipulated that the sentenced person should be issued a certificate containing a reservation of some sort. The most typical note in this respect was “not desirable in border regions.”¹³⁸

However, specific conditions prevailing in various factories and industries also resulted in some exceptional forms of punishment. So, for example, Škoda Works in Pilsen often punished their employees by a temporary assignment to special rubble-clearing work gangs.¹³⁹ As a matter of fact, the factory was heavily damaged by allied bomb raids in April 1945 and its management was thus trying to make up for lack of manual labourers.¹⁴⁰ The Court of Honour of the Regional Trade Union Council in Kladno reacted to a specific situation in the mining industry,

133 *SRA in Pilsen*, f. Škoda Works – Headquarters, c. 1127, Inv. No. 6092, File of Managing Clerk Jaroslav Čochnář; *Ibid.*, f. Škoda Works – Plzeň, c. 506, sign. TS 358, File of workshop foreman Rudolf Ulno.

134 *Ibid.*, f. Škoda Works – Plzeň, c. 154, sign. No. 3, Minutes of a meeting of the Plant Revolutionary Council (RZR) of Škoda Works in Pilsen, dated 17 May 1945.

135 *SRA in Prague*, f. ČKD národní podnik, c. 135, Inv. No. 868, A 1945 list of 41 employees of Českomoravské strojírný Vysočany, transferred on the grounds of their “anti-social behaviour.”

136 *SRA in Pilsen*, f. Škoda Works – Headquarters, c. 1119, Inv. No. 6048, *Pracující Škodovák*, No. 53 (20 July 1945); *Ibid.*, c. 1127, Inv. No. 6092, File of Associate Professor Dr Miroslav Hampl, Head of the Mathematical Department.

137 *Ibid.*, f. Škoda Works – Plzeň, c. 167, sign. 327, A 1946 list of employees of Škoda Works in Pilsen who were investigated during the postwar cleansing.

138 *Ibid.*, sign. 334, Memo of the Security Department of Škoda Works to the Human Resources Department of the company, dated 24 October 1945.

139 *Ibid.*, c. 163, sign. 591, Memo of the Security Department, dated 14 September 1945.

140 See: EISENHAMMER, Miroslav: Škody způsobené městu Plzni nálety v době druhé světové války [Damage caused to Pilsen by bomb raids during the Second World War]. In: *Západočeský historický sborník*, No. 5, No. 1 (1999), pp. 267–307; *SRA in Pilsen*, f. Škoda Works – Plzeň, c. 171, sign. 598, Minutes of a meeting of representatives of the National Committee of Škoda Works, top managers of the company, and representatives of white-collar and blue-collar personnel committees held on 7 May 1945.

using an industry-specific two-tier punishment system; banishment from the mining industry on the whole territory of the republic, and banishment from the mining industry in the Kladno Mining District.¹⁴¹ In a few cases, a punishment in the form of a “voluntary” financial donation can also be found. Such rulings were routinely served by the Court of Honour of the Regional Trade Union Council in Pilsen, which used the donations to sponsor the Fund for Recreation of Workers, an organization existing within and subordinated to the Regional Council. The penalties, or “donations,” ranged from CZK 500 to 100,000 (the latter imposed upon Ladislav Hladík, the CEO of a locomotive factory in Pilsen).¹⁴² However, the amount of the donation was derived from the financial situation of the person in question rather than from the magnitude of his or her guilt. The sentenced persons were in fact given a chance to use the donation to buy themselves out of other, less acceptable forms of punishment.

However, a sentence did not necessarily mean the person in question would have to serve it. Some people succeeded in evading it. For example, skilled workers punished by an assignment to a menial or worse job often left the factory and immediately signed an employment contract with another company for a job or position similar to that they had just left. A skilful white-collar clerk or workshop foreman with a good reputation could therefore sometimes ignore the cleansing ruling.¹⁴³

Negotiable Rulings

The sequence of instances in the cleansing process was not always strictly adhered to. Rulings of higher instances were often not final and binding. There was room for frequent corrections and re-assessments of previous positions. In some cases, Regional Trade Union Councils were re-assessing their own rulings upon requests of factory councils concerned. In other cases, appeal verdicts were produced at joint meetings of first- and second-instance bodies (which was the case, for example, of the Regional Trade Union Council in Pilsen). In practice, this meant that the outcome of proceedings was often a result of multi-party negotiations which work collectives (either in the plaintiff's role, or supporters of the accused person), the investigation commission, factory councils, factory managers, and appeal bodies of Regional Trade Union Councils were participating in. In some cases, bodies at the

141 VOA, f. ÚRO – Court of Honour, c. 11, Inv. No. 19, Report of the Regional Trade Union Council in Kladno to the Investigation Commission of the Central Council of Trade Unions, dated 4 April 1946.

142 SRA in Pilsen, f. Škoda Works – Plzeň, c. 167, sign. 334, Memo of the Security Department to the Human Resources Department of Škoda Works in Pilsen, dated 5 November 1946; VOA, f. ÚRO – Organizational Department, c. 25, Inv. No. 106, Report of the Regional Trade Union Council in Pilsen sent to ÚRO, dated 7 November 1946.

143 SRA in Pilsen, f. Škoda Works – personal files of employees, No. 4497, Personal file of workshop foreman Antonín Štochl.

level of the entire enterprise, such as the enterprise council or enterprise administration, were also intervening in the process. The result was a flexible mechanism that permitted rectifying some previous mistakes and entering into generally beneficial compromises taking into account interests of a broad spectrum of players.

A good example of the negotiation procedure outlined above is the case of Dipl. Ing. Vladimír Bárta, CEO of Škoda Works' subsidiary Elektrotrakce Doudlevice. An experienced manager, Bárta found himself in dispute with another ambitious clerk, Dipl. Ing. František Brabec, later to become the General Manager of Škoda Works (1948–1954). The factory personnel split into two hostile factions of supporters of these two outstanding personalities. In connection with the conflict, Bárta was accused of dishonourable deeds during the occupation and sentenced both by the investigation commission of the factory council and by the appeal senate of the Regional Trade Union Council in Pilsen.¹⁴⁴ However, the factory's management considered Bárta an irreplaceable expert, and their opinion was also supported by the council of Škoda Works. Contrary to the previous rulings, Bárta was allowed to retain his position. However, the Regional Trade Union Council protested against the case being handled in such an inconsistent manner,¹⁴⁵ and the whole case therefore had to be dealt with in a more formalistic way. The factory council in Doudlevice convened a meeting of all employees and forced Brabec's and Bárta's supporters to make a truce. As a consequence, the objections against Bárta were withdrawn and Bárta's staying in his position retroactively legalized. The factory council reported the changed situation to the Regional Trade Union Council and the latter did not offer any further resistance. In situations like that, appeal senates of Regional Trade Union Councils were generally accepting views of companies and respected the social reality within them.¹⁴⁶

There were also cases when organizations of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia were defending people affected by the cleansing process.¹⁴⁷ In other instances, the ruling was reviewed by the petitioner himself. As a matter of fact, having restored production, the personnel of some workshops learned the hard way that the influence of their ousted ex-boss on the smooth operation of the facility had been greater than they had expected in their revolutionary enthusiasm, and they thus started calling for the return of the man they themselves had expelled.¹⁴⁸

144 *Ibid.*, f. Škoda Works – Pilsen, c. 167, sign. 334, Ruling of the Regional Trade Union Council in Pilsen, dated 3 August 1945.

145 *Ibid.*, f. Škoda Works – Headquarters, c. 1120, Inv. No. 6051, Protocol on a meeting of the Company Council of Škoda Works, dated 15 October 1945.

146 *Ibid.*, c. 1127, Inv. No. 6092, Memo of the Company Council of Škoda Works to the Regional Trade Union Council in Pilsen, dated 17 October 1945.

147 VOA, f. Antonín Zápotocký, c. 5, Inv. No. 54, Letter of the cell of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia at Banka Slavia to Antonín Zápotocký, dated 13 September 1945.

148 *SRA in Pilsen*, f. Škoda Works – personal files of employees, No. 4497, Personal file of workshop foreman Antonín Štochl.

Stopping the Cleansing Process for the Sake of Restored Production

With the introduction of appeal senates of Regional Trade Union Councils in July 1945, the cleansing process advanced to a new phase. As a matter of fact, factory councils started reassessing their priorities. Cleansing ceased to be their primary mission; their attention was increasingly focusing on restoring production. The latter, however, depended on the restoration of essential principles of work discipline among employees.

Thus, for example, the National Administration of Škoda Works openly demanded, as early as in late June 1945, the factory council to regulate the cleansing process for the sake of improved work performance. "To use all its powers to remedy the situation among personnel to prevent employees or department heads to be pushed from their positions before being sentenced by the investigation commission or factory council meeting. Any other actions, such as mass signing of petitions, should not be allowed, as they invite personal vengeance. If something like this has already happened, the affected individuals should immediately resume their former positions. If the relationship between a department head and its subordinates cannot be improved, let the factory council notify the National Administration thereof in a proper and substantiated form, and the latter will either relocate the person, or take remedial measures." Apart from trying to prevent excesses, the National Administration also urged to conclude open cases as fast as possible, so as to avoid harmful effects of the cleansing process in workplaces.¹⁴⁹ In July 1945, factory councils themselves were backing up the plea for "peace and order in workshops and for letting the accused know what they are facing."¹⁵⁰

The feeling of absolute freedom spreading during the revolutionary days, combined with the erosion of existing hierarchies and authorities, had to give way to day-to-day practical operation of factories. The revolt against superiors was one of the prime movers of the cleansing process in May 1945 and also a constitutive part of the new value system of the revolution. However, now it had to be suppressed for the sake of restored production. And the only the bodies established by the revolution could suppress it, as they were the only entities that work collectives held in some respect. The entire cleansing process thus started to be re-assessed. The new priorities were reasonable management of human resources and efforts to integrate affected persons in new positions in the production process. Emphasis was refocused to professional expertise. Company and factory councils therefore started accepting comments and requests of plant administrations, increasingly permitting allegedly indispensable experts to be exempted from the cleansing

149 *Ibid.*, f. Škoda Works – Plzeň, c. 155, sign. 524, Proposal of the National Administration of Škoda Works sent to the Factory Council of Škoda Works Prague – Headquarters, dated 28 June 1945.

150 *Ibid.*, c. 154, sign. 3, Minutes of a meeting of the Plant Revolutionary Council (RZR) of Škoda Works in Pilsen, dated 20 July 1945.

process.¹⁵¹ Paradoxically, the person's skills and expertise were thus taken into account not only with respect to the punishment, but also when deciding about the guilt. In some cases, the initial ruling of the commission, referring to the person concerned as "a collaborator," changed to "a nationally and state-wise responsible person" in the appeal proceedings. It should thus be noted that the new "mitigating circumstance" influencing the final ruling often consisted only in the indispensable expertise of the person concerned.¹⁵² Regional Trade Union Council accepted the process of "saving" skilled labour force and, upon requests of companies, frequently repealed previous verdicts. With a bit of exaggeration, one might say that "making the wheels of production turn" also marked the end of the cleansing process in industrial plants. At the same time, first post-revolution standards stipulating punishments for violations of work discipline by employees were drafted as well.¹⁵³

The reassessment of priorities was visible not only at the level of individual companies and plants, but also at that of central trade union bodies. On 4 July 1945, the Presidium of the Central Trade Union Council resolved to launch a campaign for an effective inclusion of individuals affected by the cleansing process back into appropriate production positions: "Insofar as the cleansing process is concerned, company councils, workers, regional, district and local trade union councils will be instructed to permit affected employees to be rehabilitated and reassigned to the production process. (This, of course, applies to minor transgressions only, such as anti-social behaviour, not to clear-cut traitors and the like.) There will be a campaign (in the radio and press) appealing to company councils and the general public not to make the entry to a new life harder for these people, so that they can make up for their deeds. We do not want to destroy, we only want to punish."¹⁵⁴ The new course was personally promoted by Antonín Zápotocký, Chairman of the Central Council of Trade Unions, who subsequently repeatedly talked and wrote about the necessity to proceed from destroying toward building. He was also calling for courage to rectify errors of the cleansing process.¹⁵⁵ After his public appearances,

151 In this respect, Dipl. Ing. Vilém Hromádko, National Administrator of Škoda Works, was particularly successful. He succeeded, for example, in having Pilsen's top managers Dipl. Ing. Ladislav Hladík and Dipl. Ing. Jan Tušl exempted from the cleansing process. (VOA, f. ÚRO – Organizational Department, c. 25, Inv. No. 106, Report of the Regional Trade Union Council in Pilsen sent to the Central Council of Trade Unions, dated 1 November 1945; *SRA in Pilsen*, f. Škoda Works – Headquarters, c. 1120, Inv. No. 6052, Protocol of a meeting of the Company Council of Škoda Works, dated 25 February 1946; *Ibid.*, f. Škoda Works – Plzeň, c. 156, Minutes of a meeting of the Plant Revolutionary Council (RZR) of Škoda Works in Pilsen, dated 25 June 1946; NA, f. 1261/0/32, Vol. 112, Archival Unit 728, Report on the situation at Škoda Works, dated 17 December 1948.)

152 *SRA in Prague*, f. ČKD národní podnik, c. 135, Inv. No. 875, File of CEO, Dipl. Ing. J. V. Růžička.

153 *SRA in Pilsen*, f. Škoda Works – Headquarters, c. 1122, Inv. No. 6054, Decree of the Company Council, "Škodováci!" [Škoda Workers], July 1945.

154 VOA, f. ÚRO – Secretariat, c. 1, Inv. No. 16, Minutes of a meeting of the Presidium of the Central Council of Trade Unions, dated 4 July 1945.

155 ZÁPOTOCKÝ, Antonín: Odboj nehledá odůvodnění v paragrafech [Resistance is not looking for justification in legal acts]. In: *Práce* (14 July 1945), p. 1.

many people all over the country, who had been affected by the cleansing process, started contacting him personally, both with words of thanks and appeals for help.¹⁵⁶ On the other hand, a smaller number of people protested against the rehabilitation of persons previously sentenced by company councils.¹⁵⁷

The symbolical turning point of the transformation of the cleansing policy were directives of the Central Council of Trade Unions, based on previous speeches of Antonín Zápotocký and issued on 14 July 1945.¹⁵⁸ The document described the continuation of the cleansing process as a factor disrupting the restoration of production and urgently called for its termination: "Today's task of the Central Council of Trade Unions and all its bodies is to properly regulate and steer the campaign. [...] Regional Trade Union Councils, their functionaries and functionaries of District Trade Union Councils must not be blind to conflicts in factories, which stem from the cleansing campaign; on the contrary, they must interfere, steer them and take care that they are dealt with in a swift and for good. The issue of cleansing must not be an open ulcer on the body of this or that factory, a persistent cause of disputes and unrest; it must be done away with and decided, in one way or the other. [...] Insofar as cleansing actions are concerned, heed the following instructions:

a) Those persons whose guilt is unquestionable, who were straightforward traitors and collaborationists, who caused imprisonment or even death of Czech people, helped rape, persecute, etc., must be detained and delivered to courts.

b) If the nature of the case is not that serious, but the employee has discredited himself or herself so much that he/she must be removed not only from his/her position, but from the whole factory, it is necessary to consider his/her use elsewhere and to arrange appropriate options. The company council must not deny documents and certificates needed for this purpose, and trade union bodies must take care to arrange the reassignment, particularly if the person in question is a qualified and professionally skilled specialist.

c) In particularly minor cases, care must be taken to retain the persons in question, particularly if they are professionally skilled and important for the performance of the plant, although they may be reassigned to a different place of work or position.

d) In cases where company councils have obviously made a mistake – and cases like this, although rare, do exist – we must not be afraid to correct their wrong decisions. Prestige considerations must not play a decisive role in such situations. He who has enough courage to rectify and remedy a mistake that he has made is not going to lose his authority; on the contrary, he who continues to defend an obvious and visible mistake and denies its remedy in order to retain prestige will lose it. This is why our trade union bodies and their functionaries must negotiate ways and options. They must attend meetings of factory councils and strictly oppose so-called radicals who only wish to implement, whatever their reasons

156 VOA, f. Antonín Zápotocký, c. 3, Inv. No. 40, Letters sent to Antonín Zápotocký, July 1945.

157 *Ibid.*, c. 5, Inv. No. 51, Letter of employees of J. Otto Publishing House, 24 August 1945.

158 *Ibid.*, f. ÚRO – Secretariat, c. 1, Inv. No. 19, Minutes of a meeting of the Presidium of the Central Council of Trade Unions, dated 12 July 1945.

may be, a policy of personal revenge and selfish interests rather than that which benefits all. [...]

Questionable cases which could not be finished even after an intervention of the Regional or District Trade Union Council must be transferred the Court of Honour of the Regional or District Trade Union Council. The court of honour will deal with the case using an abbreviated procedure and documents submitted by the company council, hear a representative of the factory council and the accused person, and then issue a final ruling. The ruling must be submitted to, and both Regional Trade Union Councils and trade union bodies in factories will be obliged to follow it and make sure that it is enforced. If there is no court of honour at a District or Regional Trade Union Council, it must be established immediately, and all questionable cases dealt with and concluded as soon as possible. [...]

The principal task which trade union bodies must always keep in mind is to ensure undisturbed production, prevent anarchy, eliminate chaos, protect interests of workers and company councils, but not to allow the rights to be abused in favour of ulterior interests of individuals or irresponsible factions. [...] We must realize that the greatest enemy and the greatest risk of curtailment of the rights are not those who oppose them; it is those who abuse them for their own selfish and particular interests, thus discrediting them."¹⁵⁹

These instructions made appeal senates of Regional Trade Union Councils rehabilitate a substantial part of people affected by the cleansing process.¹⁶⁰ It should be mentioned that they were not only so-called indispensable experts. Some people assigned to menial jobs were successful with their appeals, arguing that their health condition does not allow them to work manually and submitting a medical report to that effect.¹⁶¹ Regional Trade Union Councils also often revealed new facts and circumstances speaking in favour of the accused, which the commissions forgot to record (resistance activities, important defence witnesses).¹⁶² In such cases, company councils were tasked to explain the changed rulings to work collectives which had submitted the accusation and to suppress their potential protests.¹⁶³ They only seldom attempted to revert rehabilitation rulings.¹⁶⁴

159 *Ibid.*, f. ÚRO – Court of Honour, c. 1, Inv. No. 1, Directive of the Central Council of Trade Unions of July 1945, addressed to Regional Trade Union Councils; To restore production. For the issue of the cleansing process in factories.

160 See: GREGOR, Richard: Nedorozumění okolo resoluce [A misunderstanding around the resolution]. In: *Svobodný zítřek*, Vol. 2, No. 11 (14. March 1946), p. 2.

161 *SRA in Pilsen*, f. Škoda Works – Plzeň, c. 167, sign. 334, File of clerk Josef Zábranský.

162 *Ibid.*, f. Škoda Works – Headquarters, c. 1119, Inv. No. 6048, Report of the Investigation Commission of the Trade Union Council of Škoda Works – Headquarters. In: *Pracující Škodovák*, nonpaged (11 September 1945), p. 1; *Ibid.*, c. 1127, Inv. No. 6092, File of Associate Professor Dr Miroslav Hampl, Head of the Mathematical Department.

163 *Ibid.*, f. Škoda Works – Headquarters, c. 1126, Inv. No. 6091, File of Jan Reichman, Head of Photographic Studios.

164 VOA, f. Antonín Zápotocký, c. 5, Inv. No. 51, Letter of employees of J. Otto Publishing House, dated 24 August 1945.

From the turn of 1945 and 1946, courts of honour of Regional Trade Union Councils were gradually being phased out. After the passing of Presidential Decree No. 138/1945 Coll., they themselves saw their continuing existence as unnecessary.¹⁶⁵

Company Cleansing as a Cause of Political Differentiation

The cleansing process taking place in industrial plants was not a political order, but it had its autonomous, ethnically and socially motivated dynamism.¹⁶⁶ After all, most of Communist Party cells at the factory level and factory councils did not yet exist in early May 1945. All structures like the ones mentioned above were only being born at that time, and thus did not constitute any homogeneous, vertically controlled pressure group. Even political alliances of most players involved were only shaping up in the following weeks and months, the shaping factors including, *inter alia*, also the experience with the cleansing process and operation of company councils.¹⁶⁷ Last but not least, there were not yet any open disputes of political parties of the National Front in the spring of 1945. So, political differentiation was not an essential factor determining the course of the cleansing process. It was actually the other way round – the cleansing process gradually became one of the principal factors differentiating political attitudes and opinions.¹⁶⁸

The cleansing process was political only in that it generally affected opponents of the new “people’s democratic” regime – not specifically competitors of the

165 *Ibid.*, f. ÚRO – Court of Honour, c. 1, Inv. No. 2, Request of the Chairman of the Court of Honour of the Central Council of Trade Unions Václav Havelka sent to the Presidium of the Central Council of Trade Unions, dated 27 December 1945; *Ibid.*, f. ÚRO – Secretariat, c. 2, Inv. No. 64, Minutes of a meeting of the Presidium of the Central Council of Trade Unions, dated 19 July 1946.

166 Compare: McDERMOTT, Kevin: *Communist Czechoslovakia, 1945–1989: A Political and Social History*. London, Palgrave 2015, p. 51.

167 A good example is Dipl. Ing. Vilém Hromádko, National Administrator of Škoda Works. In May 1945, communists were enthusiastically supporting him as their candidate for top position in the plant’s management, although he had been a member of the management during the occupation. The reason was his excellent contacts with the Soviet Union. However, they later regretted their support, also because of his attitudes during the cleansing process, when he stood up for a number of experienced experts. (SRA in Pilsen, f. Škoda Works – Headquarters, c. 1128, Inv. No. 6098, Copy of the testimony of Josef Modrý in the case of Albert Göring before the Extraordinary people’s court in Prague, dated 6 February 1947; SRA in Prague, f. Extraordinary People’s Court in Prague, File No. 242/1947; NA, f. 1261/0/32, Vol. 112, AU 728, Complaint of the factory cell of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia in Škoda Works Prague – Headquarters, sent to the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia, dated 24 September 1945.)

168 Many people affected by the cleansing process started engaging in political parties and publicly criticizing events taking place in the industry (SRA in Pilsen, f. Škoda Works – Headquarters, c. 1120, Inv. No. 6052, Protocol of a meeting of the Factory Council of Škoda Works, 20 May 1946).

Communist Party. Moreover, all political parties were making use of a chance to fill in positions vacated as a result of the cleansing process. The Communist Party was just the most successful, but not the only one.¹⁶⁹

Still, the deluge of cleansing cases also contained a number of those in which the cleansing process was abused for the purpose of eliminating political opponents. In Škoda Works in Pilsen in May 1945, for example, the former Social Democratic member of the company committee Josef Vacek was removed by a fabricated denunciation. The whole scheme was co-devised by František Panýrek, the communist commander of the plant's security guards.¹⁷⁰ However, it was not a part of an across-the-board campaign controlled from above, but rather an initiative of a few individuals.

Investigation commissions sometimes became a tool of political struggle between rival factions of Communist Party functionaries. For example, a strange case occurred in Českomoravské strojířny in Karlín. František Synek, the Chairman of the Investigation Commission, dared accuse the Chairman of the Company Council, Jaroslav Pálka, of dishonest conduct. Both were functionaries of the Communist Party. Pálka, however, fought back efficiently. At a meeting of the company council, he pushed through a proposal to abolish the whole investigation commission and had other members of the council to authorize him to take over the commission's files.¹⁷¹ Synek refused to hand over some of the documents, and they had to be confiscated from him only during a police-assisted house search.¹⁷² This controversy clearly shows the influence of investigation commissions, which was mainly due to compromising documents in their possession.

169 NA, f. 1261/0/32, Vol. 112, AU 728, Report on the situation in Škoda Works, dated 17 December 1948; BEINHAEUEROVÁ, Anna – SOMMER, Karel: *Mocenské pozice ve znárodněném průmyslu (1945–1948)* [Power positions in the nationalized industry (1945–1948)]. In: JECH, Karel (ed.): *Stránkami soudobých dějin: Sborník statí k pětádesátinám historika Karla Kaplana* [Leafing through contemporary history: Collection of essays on the 65th of the historian Karel Kaplan]. Praha, ÚSD AV ČR 1993, pp. 61–75.

170 See: ŠLOUF, Jakub: *Tisk KSČ na Plzeňsku v letech 1945–1948* [The press of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia in the Pilsen region 1945–1948]. In: SKÁLA, Adam (ed.): *Musa pedestris: Sborník ke stému čtyřicátému výročí Městského archivu v Plzni a šedesátým narozeninám Jaroslava Douši* [Musa pedestris: Collection on the occasion of the 140th anniversary of the Municipal Archive in Pilsen and 60th birthday of Jaroslav Douša]. Ústí nad Labem, Albis international 2010, pp. 307–309.

171 SRA in Prague, f. ČKD národní podnik, c. 135, Inv. No. 874, File of the Chairman of the Company Council of ČMS Karlín, Jaroslav Pálka; *Ibid.*, c. 134, Inv. No. 867, Minutes of a meeting of the Company Council of ČMS Karlín, dated 23 October 1945; *Ibid.*, c. 2, Inv. No. 39, Minutes of meetings of the Company Council of ČMS Karlín, dated 30 October 1945 and 7 November 1945.

172 *Ibid.*, c. 134, Inv. No. 867, Minutes of a meeting of the Company Council of ČMS Karlín, dated 15 March 1946.

Results of the Cleansing Process

Unfortunately, overall results of the cleansing of industrial plants in postwar Czechoslovakia are not known. When the process was finished in 1946, its regional and central players (Regional Trade Union Councils, Central Council of Trade Unions) were not interested in collecting the data and produce a statistical review of the campaign.¹⁷³ Thus, unfortunately, only fragmentary data on activities of investigation commissions of some larger enterprises have been preserved. The information provided by surviving documents of Regional Trade Union Councils is incomplete as well. Many of them, particularly in the border regions, did not have any court of honour established. Others did not provide any quantification of their activities. Still, preserved fragments of source documents allow us to get at least an approximate idea of the overall scope and consequences of the cleansing campaign. Our considerations will again be based on information on the industrial plants constituting the subject matter of the research project – Škoda Works and Českomoravské strojírný.

In early 1946, Škoda Works – Headquarters in Prague employed some 1,300 clerks a substantial part of whom belonged to top management of the company.¹⁷⁴ By September 1945, the local investigation commission had examined 76 persons of Czech or Russian ethnic descent. Eight of them were handed over to security authorities for criminal prosecution, 25 were fired, 16 re-assigned to another job, four received a reprimand or admonition, 22 were acquitted (“rehabilitated”), and one handed over to the investigation commission of another company of the Škoda industrial group.¹⁷⁵ However, the list did not include information about reviews of cases undertaken in cooperation with the Regional Trade Union Council in Prague. During the months that followed, a number of the punished employees (at least

173 It is true that the Central Council of Trade Unions sent a request for information on activities of courts of honour to all Regional Trade Union Councils in March 1946. However, the replies generally contained only statistical data on the cleansing in the ranks of the Revolutionary Trade Union Movement (ROH), not on appeals challenging decisions of company councils. (VOA, f. ÚRO – Court of Honour, c. 1, Inv. No. 8, Circular of ÚRO, dated 29 March 1946.)

174 *SRA in Pilsen*, f. Škoda Works – Headquarters, c. 1120, Inv. No. 6052, Protocol of a meeting of the Factory Council of Škoda Works, 15 April 1946.

175 The source provides an even more detailed division of punishments; eight people were handed over to security authorities for criminal prosecution, 18 fired immediately, seven fired with a notice, five reassigned to inferior jobs with a corresponding salary cut, three reassigned to an identical position and reprimanded, two reassigned to an identical position, but not at the Headquarters, six reassigned to another department within the Headquarters, four received only a reprimand or admonition, 22 were rehabilitated, and one handed over to the investigation commission of another company of the Škoda industrial group. (*Ibid.*, c. 1119, Inv. No. 6048, Report of the Investigation Commission of the Company Council of Škoda Works – Headquarters. In: *Pracující Škodovák*, nonpaged (11 September 1945), p. 1; *Očista v našem ústředí* [The cleansing at our headquarters]. In: *Škodovák*, Vol. 1, No. 5 (21 September 1945), p. 5.)

eight) were rehabilitated.¹⁷⁶ German employees had already been handed over to detention and internment facilities in May 1945: 23 to the prison of the Regional Criminal Court in Praha – Pankrác,¹⁷⁷ 17 to the prison of the Divisional Court in Praha – Pohořelec, and 14 to the Hagibor Internment Camp in Prague.¹⁷⁸

Lists of persons affected by the cleansing process in the Vysočany plant of Českomoravské strojírný have been preserved in the company's archive. At that time, the plant was employing some 1,200 office personnel and 4,200 workers.¹⁷⁹ The investigation commission of ČMS received some 151 denunciations.¹⁸⁰ The commission dealt with 107 cases, of which 28 were handed over to other institutions (courts and national committees),¹⁸¹ 14 people were fired,¹⁸² 41 reassigned to other jobs (on the grounds of anti-social behaviour),¹⁸³ and 24 acquitted.¹⁸⁴ Sixty-one Germans and 38 Czech were detained at ČMS.¹⁸⁵

Unfortunately, comprehensive information on activities of the Regional Trade Union Council in Prague, the appeal body of both companies mentioned above, has not been preserved at all. According to information from Škoda Works – Headquarters in Prague, however, the Prague council was examining only a fraction of the caseload handled by investigation commissions. It should be noted that a substantial segment of appeals led to rehabilitation or at least some mitigation of the initial ruling.¹⁸⁶

In May 1945, Škoda Works in Pilsen were officially employing 32,000 workers and 6,000 clerks. However, a substantial part of them were on the verge of leaving

176 At that time, rulings of the Court of Arbitration of the Regional Trade Union Council (KOR) in Prague were published in the *Zprávy závodní rady Škodovka – ústředí* [News of the Factory Council Škodovka – Headquarters] newsletter (*SRA in Pilsen*, f. Škoda Works – Headquarters, *Zprávy závodní rady Škodovka – ústředí*).

177 *Ibid.*, c. 1128, Inv. No. 6094, List of 23 male internees handed over by Škoda Works to the prison of the Regional Criminal Court in Praha – Pankrác, 13 May 1945.

178 *Ibid.*, Inv. No. 6097, List of 14 female internees handed over to the Hagibor Internment Camp in Prague, 13 May 1945.

179 *SRA in Prague*, f. ČKD národní podnik, c. 2, Inv. No. 44, Minutes of a meeting of the Company Council and company management of ČMS Vysočany, dated 2 July 1947.

180 *Ibid.*, c. 135, Inv. No. 868, List of 151 denounced employees of ČMS Vysočany dating to 1945.

181 *Ibid.*, List of 28 ČMS Vysočany employees handed over to extraordinary people's courts and national committees in 1945.

182 *Ibid.*, List of 14 ČMS Vysočany employees dismissed from work in 1945.

183 *Ibid.*, List of 41 ČMS Vysočany employees reassigned to other work positions on the grounds of their anti-social behaviour in 1945.

184 *Ibid.*, List of 24 ČMS Vysočany employees acquitted during the cleansing in 1945.

185 *Ibid.*, Inv. No. 872, Lists of detainees and prisoners of war dating to 1945.

186 Only fragmentary information has been preserved, which describes first instance cleansing activities of the Court of Honour of the Regional Trade Union Council in Prague among employees of the Central Council of Trade Unions. Throughout its existence, the court of honour handled only 14 cases and delivered an acquitting ruling in six of them. (VOA, f. ÚRO – Court of Honour, c. 11, Inv. No. 19, Report of the Regional Trade Union Council in Prague to ÚRO's investigation commission, 2 April 1946.)

for a new job, as the the bombed-out factory could not sustain more than 9,000 employees at that time.¹⁸⁷ The local investigation commission dealt with 651 cases there, involving 429 clerks and 222 workers.¹⁸⁸ In addition, 135 German employees were detained and handed over to the legal department of the District National Committee in Pilsen.¹⁸⁹ More detailed data on investigation results at the company level has not been preserved.

Luckily, there is a detailed report on activities of the Court of Honour of the Regional Trade Union Council in Pilsen from 1946. The special appeal senate of the Regional Trade Union Council in Pilsen retried almost all cases that had been previously handled by the investigation commission of Škoda Works, namely 630 out of 651. The outcome was the following structure of rulings: 109 people dismissed from the plant, 95 reassigned to other departments, 93 reassigned to menial jobs, 96 reprimanded, 14 pensioned off, 12 fined, 35 detained and handed over to the legal department of the District National Committee in Pilsen, and 175 acquitted.¹⁹⁰

The remaining three senates of the Regional Trade Union Council in Pilsen (for other companies and enterprises in the region) had much less work, altogether dealing with 318 cases. Of the persons concerned, 84 retained their existing positions, 25 were relocated, 21 reassigned to menial jobs, 132 dismissed from work, and 47 handed over to other institutions (security authorities, national committees, courts). In three cases, the senates were cooperating in the establishment of national administration, and they recommended one case to be dealt with under civil law.¹⁹¹ The Court of Honour of the Regional Trade Union Council in Pilsen

187 *SRA in Pilsen*, f. Škoda Works – Headquarters, c. 1118, Inv. No. 6039, Reports on the situation in different plants as of the end of April 1945.

188 *Ibid.*, f. Škoda Works – Pilsen, c. 167, sign. 327, List of employees of Škoda Works – Pilsen investigated during the postwar cleansing, dated 1946.

189 *Ibid.*, sign. 477, Memo for Company CEO Dipl. Ing. Jaroslav Říha, dated 16 February 1946; *Ibid.*, sign. 325, List of 135 Germans handed over to the legal department of the District National Committee in Pilsen, undated.

190 VOA, f. ÚRO – Organizational Department, c. 11, Inv. No. 78, Report from a conference of the Regional Trade Union Council in Pilsen held in 1946; *Ibid.*, f. ÚRO – Court of Honour, c. 11, Inv. No. 19, Report of the Regional Trade Union Council in Pilsen to ÚRO's investigation commission, dated 6 April 1946; *SRA in Pilsen*, f. Škoda Works – Plzeň, c. 167, sign. 327, List of employees of Škoda Works – Pilsen investigated during the postwar cleansing, dated 1946.

191 The detailed breakdown of the sanctions was as follows: nine persons were transferred to sister companies/subsidiaries, 16 demoted, 16 assigned to menial jobs (from three weeks to two years), five were assigned to menial jobs permanently, 120 dismissed from work with a certificate of national reliability, four dismissed from work with a certificate of national reliability which, however, contained a clause “not recommended for border regions,” one national reliability certificate was issued conditionally, and seven people were dismissed on the ground of their national unreliability. In addition, six cases were returned to national committees for retrying, one case was passed to the District Administration Commission, two were handed over to military authorities (military counterintelligence), three to the Land National Committee in Prague, 13 to the police, 17 to the extraordinary people's courts. In five cases, detainment was proposed, and the senates helped install a national

collected a sum of CZK 287,800 in voluntary donations. Most of the money went to the Fund for the Recreation of Workers of the Regional Trade Union Council in Pilsen.¹⁹²

Compared to other regions, activities of the Regional Trade Union Council in Pilsen, which re-examined almost all cases previously dealt with by company councils operating on its territory, were probably exceptional. Other Regional Trade Union Councils usually were not so active. First, the situation of Regional Trade Union Councils in border regions was utterly different, as local company councils generally did not have any cleansing agenda, which was why courts of honours usually were not established there. This was the case, for example, of Regional Trade Union Councils in Šumperk, Ústí nad Labem, Znojmo, or Karlovy Vary.¹⁹³ Other Regional Trade Union Councils established courts of honour, but were not performing across-the-board reviews of company councils, and thus handled only a few appeals. This was the case, for example, of the Court of Honour of the Regional Trade Union Council in Tábor, which handled only 21 cases during its existence, confirming the company council's ruling only in six of them.¹⁹⁴ The Court of Honour of the Regional Trade Union Council in Kladno also handled only 26 cases, banning 15 people from the mining profession.¹⁹⁵ The Court of Honour of the Regional Trade Union Council in Liberec handled mere eight cases.¹⁹⁶

All in all, it is possible to estimate that, nationwide, the cleansing in industrial plants affected thousands to tens of thousands of people. One of the largest groups

administrator in companies belonging to the accused in three cases; one case was recommended to be dealt with under the civil law. (VOA, f. ÚRO – Organizational Department, c. 11, Inv. No. 78, Report from a conference of the Regional Trade Union Council in Pilsen held in 1946; *Ibid.*, f. ÚRO – Court of Honour, c. 11, Inv. No. 19, Report of the Regional Trade Union Council in Pilsen to ÚRO's investigation commission, dated 6 April 1946.)

192 *Ibid.*, f. ÚRO – Organizational Department, c. 11, Inv. No. 78, Report from a conference of the Regional Trade Union Council in Pilsen held in 1946; *Ibid.*, f. ÚRO – Court of Honour, c. 11, Inv. No. 19, Report of the Regional Trade Union Council in Pilsen to ÚRO's investigation commission, dated 6 April 1946.

193 *Ibid.*, f. ÚRO – Court of Honour, c. 11, Inv. No. 19, Report of the Regional Trade Union Council in Šumperk to ÚRO's investigation commission, dated 10 April 1946; *Ibid.*, Report of the Regional Trade Union Council in Ústí nad Labem to ÚRO's investigation commission, dated 5 April 1946; *Ibid.*, Report of the Regional Trade Union Council in Znojmo to ÚRO's investigation commission, dated 1 April 1946; *Ibid.*, Report of the Regional Trade Union Council in Karlovy Vary to ÚRO's investigation commission, dated 6 April 1946; *Ibid.*, Report of the Regional Trade Union Council in Pilsen to ÚRO's investigation commission, dated 10 April 1946.

194 *Ibid.*, Report of the Regional Trade Union Council in Tábor to ÚRO's investigation commission, dated 4 April 1946.

195 In this case, a more detailed structure of the sanctions is available: the total caseload was 26, six people were banished from the mining industry on the whole territory of the republic, nine from the mining industry in the Kladno Mining District, 11 people were acquitted, and three cases handed over to the extraordinary people's courts.

196 *Ibid.*, Report of the Regional Trade Union Council in Liberec to ÚRO's investigation commission, dated 16 April 1946.

were so-called anti-social elements. At the same time, it generally held true that a substantial segment of the affected people were rehabilitated by company councils or Regional Trade Union Councils. Only a smaller part were dismissed from work. A more frequent alternative was a permanent or temporary reassignment to another position, or a reprimand. The cleansing was particularly dramatic and spontaneous in companies taking part in wartime armament production. It was probably less intensive in other industries, such as mining (as illustrated by the case of the Regional Trade Union Council in Kladno). The hypothesis, however, would need verifying by detailed research in archives of companies of relevant industries. The affected persons suffered a great deal of moral damage even if ultimately rehabilitated. Many of the accused suffered a nervous breakdown,¹⁹⁷ or even committed suicide¹⁹⁸ during the witch-hunt. In general, the cleansing process contributed to an erosion of existing hierarchies in industrial plants and also weakened the level of skills and qualification of their personnel.

Lawsuits Filed against Revolutionary Bodies

In the first phase of the cleansing process, suspected people were often banished from factories merely upon a decision of work collectives, within hours, and without any proper legal steps needed to terminate the employment contract. Step by step, the establishment of investigation commissions led to efforts to legalize results of the revolutionary process. The investigation commissions were issuing recommendations, or guidelines, which factory councils used to make their decisions in each individual case. In the revolutionary atmosphere, such decisions were deemed legal, although the authority of company councils was not based on any legislation. However, as soon as the first revolutionary wave had ebbed and the rule of law had been restored, the affected persons gained enough confidence to start pointing at the illegal nature of the termination of their employment contracts. In a number of cases, they sued company councils for substantial sums of money derived from their lost wages or denied severance payments.

In many cases, the legitimacy of their claims stemmed from a mere fact that the company council had decided to dismiss them from work but forgotten to ask the company management as the only party authorized to terminate employment contracts to make appropriate steps. As a matter of fact, company councils were not employers and, as such, could act only indirectly.¹⁹⁹ Consequently, there was

197 *Ibid.*, f. Antonín Zápotocký, c. 3, Inv. No. 39, Letter of Chief Clerk of Západočeské konzumní družstvo Josef Škabrada to Antonín Zápotocký, dated 18 June 1945.

198 *Ibid.*, Inv. No. 40, Letter of Chief Counsel of Státní výzkumné ústavy zemědělské in Dejvice Josef Karabec to Antonín Zápotocký, dated 15 July 1945; *SRA in Pilsen*, f. Škoda Works – Pilsen, c. 167, sign. 327, List of employees of Škoda Works – Pilsen investigated during the postwar cleansing, dated 1946.

199 VOA, f. ÚRO – Presidium, c. 1, Inv. No. 2, Minutes of a meeting of the Presidium of ÚRO, 7 September 1945.

a sizable group of people banished from factory premises without their employment contract having been properly and officially terminated.

However, problems arose even in connection with people whose employment contracts were terminated by the company management rather than the company council. The existing labour legislation did not contain notions such as “inadequate national discipline,” “anti-social behaviour,” or “insurmountable aversion of the factory’s workforce,” not to speak of recognizing them as potential reasons for an immediate termination of the employment contract. Termination notices were therefore mostly served under Sections 22 or 34 of the Private Employees Act (No. 154/1934 Coll.), which did not explicitly mention such reasons.²⁰⁰ In the case of the dismissal of workshop foreman Václav Moulík, for example, Českomoravské strojírný argued that he was “unable to discharge his duties because of spontaneous resistance of his co-workers against his previous cooperation [with the occupiers and] earlier behaviour, and therefore [for] a private obstacle on his part, so that, pursuant to Section 22 of Act [No.] 154/34 [Coll.] he is no longer entitled to his salary.” However, legal constructs like this were, to say the least, very problematic,²⁰¹ and it was thus highly likely that lawsuits arising therefrom would be lengthy affairs with an uncertain outcome.

In January 1946, for example, the Company Council of Českomoravské strojírný registered 26 lawsuits filed by former top managers of the enterprise.²⁰² Karel Juliš, ČMS’s former CEO, claimed CZK 197,346 as a compensation of his lost wages, arguing that the termination notice he had received in June 1945 did not contain a proper rationale, as it only stated that Juliš did not seem “trustworthy enough” to the company’s national administration.²⁰³ Some lawsuits were even directly targeting the Central Council of Trade Unions, alleging that the latter was responsible for issuing directives and guidelines concerning the cleansing process. The aggregate sum which these lawsuits claimed was CZK 750,000.²⁰⁴ That is not something to shrug off.²⁰⁵

Roughly since August 1945, an increasing number of functionaries of company councils started warning against casting doubts on the revolutionary cleansing process through civil lawsuits.²⁰⁶ The only viable solution was, in their opinion,

200 *SRA in Pilsen*, f. Škoda Works – Plzeň, c. 160, sign. 183, Employment contract termination forms issued to individual employees by the Personnel Department of Škoda Works in 1945.

201 *SRA in Prague*, f. ČKD národní podnik, c. 28, Inv. No. 122, File of workshop foreman Václav Moulík.

202 *Ibid.*, c. 2, Inv. No. 39, Minutes of a meeting of the Company Council of ČMS, dated 15 January 1946.

203 *Ibid.*, c. 28, Inv. No. 122, File of CEO of Českomoravské strojírný, Dipl. Ing. Karel Juliš.

204 *VOA*, f. ÚRO – Secretariat, c. 1, Inv. No. 46, Minutes of a meeting of the Presidium of ÚRO, 13 December 1945.

205 See: KLIMENT, Gustav: Zastavit soudy proti závodním radám [Stop lawsuits against company councils]. In: *Rudé právo* (24 January 1946), p. 2.

206 *SRA in Pilsen*, f. Škoda Works – Plzeň, c. 167, sign. 321, Complaint of the Company Council of Škoda Works in Pilsen addressed to the Regional Trade Union Council in Pilsen in 1945.

a new piece of legislation.²⁰⁷ Josef Kovařovic, the Chairman of the Company Council of Škoda Works – Headquarters, summarized the problem in the following way: “In this respect, however, our company council made another mistake. It believed that saying ‘get lost and never appear here again!’ emphatically enough to a German lackey would terminate his employment contract. Alas! Our dismissed little collaborationist has not been heard of for, say, five months – or is not still heard of – and, lo and behold, all of a sudden our company council receives a letter from a lawyer reading roughly as follows: ‘In May this year, my client XY was invited by you to leave the premises of your factory. However, he has not, as of today, received a proper termination notice and his employment contract has not been terminated for justifiable reasons pursuant to and in accordance with Section 34 of the Private Employees Act. I therefore demand that you remit to me, within 14 days, my illegally withheld salary for May to October, or else I will have to claim it by a lawsuit.’ The company council was wrong. The existing law has its mysterious provisions on the termination of the employment contract, and our company council failed to comply with them in the revolutionary turmoil. Being a lawyer, I must emphasize I am a long way from advocating lawlessness. The rule of law and order is too precious a thing, which we learned the hard way between 1939 and 1945. Still, I believe that the revolution, which both our government and our nation wanted, should have its specific, own law. However, we have been promised a lawful and fair legislation to deal with the extraordinary situation, so we will hopefully live to see it.”²⁰⁸

In September 1945, using inputs such as the one described above, the Socio-Political Commission of the Central Council of Trade Unions drafted an outline of a legal act the purpose of which was to prevent lawsuits against employment changes made during the revolution.²⁰⁹ The draft set a principle that the employment contract would be deemed terminated as of the moment the person in question was *de facto* banished from the factory’s premises, if the reason of the banishment was national unreliability, cowardice during the period of unfreedom, “anti-social” behaviour, or any other circumstance due to which that person’s co-workers could not be demanded to continue to cooperate with him or her.²¹⁰

207 *Ibid.*, f. Škoda Works – Headquarters, c. 1128, Inv. No. 6097, Memo for Josef Kovařovic, dated 30 August 1945.

208 *Ibid.*, KOVAŘOVIC, Josef: O naší závodní radě [About our factory council]. In: *Zprávy závodní rady Škodovka – ústředí* [News of the Škoda Works Factory Council – Headquarters], nonpaged (7 November 1945), p. 1.

209 VOA, f. ÚRO – Presidium, c. 1, Inv. No. 2, Minutes of a meeting of the Presidium of ÚRO, 7 September 1945.

210 *Ibid.*, Inv. No. 4, Minutes of a meeting of the Presidium of ÚRO, 5 October 1945.

The Polemic between Ferdinand Peroutka and Antonín Zápotocký

However, the requirement of the Central Council of Trade Unions for the adoption of such a legal standard initiated a fierce social and political discussion the significance of which ultimately exceeded the issue of the postwar cleansing of industrial plants itself. As a matter of fact, it was focused on a more general issue of the relationship between new revolutionary values and the traditional rule of law. The controversy started by the first all-national conference of the Revolutionary Trade Union Movement on 11 to 13 January 1946, whose resolution contained a requirement demanding that legal steps to prevent questioning the cleansing actions in factories before courts be taken: “We demand the government and the parliament to immediately take steps to prevent prosecution of anyone for his or her revolutionary deeds and national cleansing. In particular, it is necessary to sanction all measures taken by revolutionary company councils or bodies established by them since the liberation.”²¹¹

Ferdinand Peroutka reacted very sharply to the requirement for impunity of revolutionary blunders in *Svobodné noviny* on 27 January 1946: “Even during the revolution, people saw evil acts committed next to them, sometimes very heinous evil acts, and now they hear they must not be punished for some reason, that a punishment must not even be considered lest strikes break out. They saw wrongs done, sometimes ones that would make your heart stop. And now they hear even the wrongs must not be remedied lest strikes break out. They saw, and even heard from official sources, that the revolutionary crowd was sometimes joined by evil people, but they also hear from those admitting it that nothing of it must be punished, that everything must be excused lest strikes break out. They hear there may have been mistakes, but they also hear that the mistakes are special, protected mistakes which must not be rectified [...] This is what worries and confuses them, not the socialization, not the powers of national committees, they are not after wealth; it is the moral balance they wish to have. [...] Perhaps it will suffice if we have enough people with enough courage to say (and find a place to do so) that even the harshest revolutionary and national law must be fair and follow the old principle which I believe has not yet been repealed, namely that the innocent should not suffer and the guilty should not escape punishment, even if doing so causes administrative difficulties that are related to distinction.”²¹²

The polemic was also joined by National Socialist press, particularly by the *Svobodný zítřek* weekly, which demanded compliance with traditional principles of the rule of law. At the same time, it was not condemning the revolution *per se*,

211 Za programem vlády [For the programme of the government]. In: *Práce* (15 January 1946), p. 1.

212 PEROUTKA, Ferdinand: “Nesrozumitelný dnešek” [The incomprehensible present]. In: *Svobodné noviny* (27 January 1946), p. 1. Also printed in: IDEM: *O věcech obecných* [On general matters], Vol. 2: *Výbor z politické publicistiky* [Selection from political journalism]. Ed. Daniel Bohdan. Praha, Státní pedagogické nakladatelství 1991, pp. 537–540.

admitting that every revolution must be, by definition, a largely illegal event, but insisting on the termination of the existing lawlessness and restoration of the rule of law.²¹³ In doing so, it even referred to previous efforts of top representatives of the Central Council of Trade Unions, including its chairman Antonín Zápotocký, to remedy mistakes made during the cleansing process by reviews performed by Regional Trade Union Councils. According to the principal political journal of the National Socialist Party, the cleansing process got out of control, even within the Revolutionary Trade Union Movement.²¹⁴ In this respect, the weekly was pointing at the fact that cleansing actions had often violated directives and guidelines of the Central Council of Trade Unions itself, although Regional Trade Union Councils had rectified many such cases.²¹⁵ National Socialists demanded that standard tools of the judiciary continue to revise the cleansing, begun earlie by the trade union movement, but never completed in practice.

The whole controversy was, at the same time, a part of a broader discussion on the retribution and its criteria, which was prompted by the start of activities of the National Court on 15 January 1946.²¹⁶ The retribution was slowly becoming a key topic of the forthcoming election campaign. This was also why the trade unions' daily *Práce* reacted to the critical articles published in *Svobodné noviny* and *Svobodný zítřek* by a counterattack. Antonín Zápotocký presented key points of the trade unions' position in an article titled "Správná revoluce" [The right revolution] and published on 3 February 1946. In doing so, he abandoned his previous efforts in July 1945, when he had helped moderate the cleansing wave and incorporate some elementary principles of law into it. On the contrary – he spoke against requirements demanding that results of the cleansing process be reviewed by the judicial system: "Here we are facing the essential question: What is moral and what morals are we talking about? Every period has its morals. The war has its morals, so does peace, and even the revolution has its morals. [...] We are talking not only about social reforms, but also spiritual ones, about removing the rule of strong capitalist individuals and their spiritual morals which they have inoculated the society with." According to Zápotocký, Peroutka was now lecturing about morals, although he had just been looking on at communist workers being fired or imprisoned for political reasons at the time of the First Republic. He had considered it moral then. Zápotocký also expressed his mistrust in independent decisions of professional judges: "I will say it quite openly: we now believe much more in the justice of factory councils than in the justice of many judges."²¹⁷ The position of the Chairman of

213 STRÁNSKÝ, Jaroslav: O revoluci a právu [On the revolution and law]. In: *Svobodný zítřek*, Vol. 2, No. 5 (31 January 1946), p. 1.

214 GREGOR, Richard: O revoluční justici [On revolutionary justice] In: *Ibid.*, No. 6 (7 February 1946), p. 3.

215 IDEM: Nedorozumění okolo resoluce [Misunderstaing around the resolution]. In: *Ibid.*, No. 11 (14 March 1946), p. 2.

216 Národní soud zahájil [The national court takes off]. In: *Ibid.*, No. 3 (17 January 1946), p. 8.

217 ZÁPOTOCKÝ, Antonín: Správná revoluce [The right revolution]. In: *Práce* (3 February 1946), p. 1.

the Central Council of Trade Unions was only seemingly contradicting his speeches of July 1945.²¹⁸ As a matter of fact, Zápotocký was not opposing a review of the cleansing process as such. He was against the review being performed by judicial bodies and according to pre-revolution moral principles.

As a matter of fact, trade unions did not perceive the class angle of the cleansing process as something out of the ordinary but viewed it as the very foundation of the revolution. The Regional Trade Union Council in Pilsen summarized this attitude very fittingly in a report assessing its activities in a previous period: "We have law and order in companies again, and many of the accused indeed had to be told that a worker was also a human being with a right to life and that his work was as important as that in a position carrying more responsibility. This, too, is a positive contribution of these courts."²¹⁹

At the end of the day, the Ministry of Justice accepted the requirement of trade union members and civil courts started adjourning lawsuits against company councils, waiting for a final legal act that would have dealt with the whole matter for good.²²⁰

The House of Deputies ultimately passed the law, but as late as on 16 May 1946, together with legislation defining the position and status of the entire trade union movement and soon after general legalization of illegal revolutionary acts.²²¹ Act No. 143/1946 Coll., on labour relations affected by consequences of the national revolution, rendered most lawsuits against dismissals from work irrelevant. It was used to retroactively legalize particularly those changes of labour relations and employment contracts which had occurred during the revolution as a result of a justifiable suspicion of the perpetration of a criminal act according to Decree No. 16 Coll., dated 19 June 1945, on the punishment of Nazi criminals, traitors, and their helpers and on extraordinary people's courts. However, the act, in addition to suspected cases of collaboration, also applied to so-called anti-social behaviour. As a matter of fact, its first section read as follows: "If, prior to 31 December 1945, the employee was acting or behaving in a manner provoking serious and justified aversion so that other employees could not be reasonably asked to continue cooperating with him or her, the employment contract shall be deemed lawfully terminated as of the day of the actual termination, although it might have been terminated only under special terms and conditions or by a special procedure according to the employment contract."²²² Civil lawsuits prompted by

218 IDEM: Odboj nehledá odůvodnění v paragrafech.

219 VOA, f. ÚRO – Organizational Department, c. 11, Inv. No. 78, Report from a conference of the Regional Trade Union Council in Pilsen held in 1946.

220 Opatření revolučních závodních rad budou sankcionována [Measures taken by company councils will be sanctioned]. In: *Práce* (16 January 1946), p. 1.

221 Act No. 144 Coll., dated 16 May 1946, on the united trade union organization; Act No. 115 Coll., dated 8 May 1946, on the lawfulness of acts related to the fight of Czechs and Slovaks for regaining freedom.

222 *Zákony pro lidi.cz* [online]. Collection of legal acts of the Czech Republic. Act No. 143/1946 Coll. Act on labour relations affected by consequences of the national

cleansing actions of company councils were subsequently suspended by courts.²²³ The termination of employment contracts of public servants/employees and Germans was dealt with in separate legal acts.²²⁴

Conclusion

The cleansing of industrial plants from collaborationists and so-called anti-social elements in 1945 was a process during which a new revolutionary system of values and guilt criteria based on it were negotiated in practice. It contained elements of radical nationalism, social equalitarianism (sometimes turning into class antagonism), and later also building productivism. The cleansing process incorporated various conflicts of employees dating back to the period of occupation, in particular disputes between superiors and subordinates. For this reason, the people who were removed from factories mostly included CEOs and managers, human resource clerks, norm setters, workshop foremen, and security personnel. The principal outcome of the May revolution in the industry was a collapse of previous hierarchies and a weakening of professional capabilities. At a psychological and symbolical level, the articulation of guilt of some also worked as a cleansing, or acquittal, of others, in particular workers and rank-and-file clerks. They, too, had participated in the production for the Nazis, and had often benefitted from it, but their forms of guilt were utterly disregarded during the cleansing process.

Initially, the cleansing procedure was based on spontaneous acts of employees of various workshops and offices. In the second half of May, more stable structures of company councils and their specialized cleansing bodies – investigation commissions – started appearing in factories. The commissions were trying to regulate and formalize the ongoing cleansing process, but they were initially operating without any detailed instructions or guidelines from the government or trade union movement leaders. Every enterprise thus proceeded along its own way, although their spontaneous attempts for cooperation within industries or regions.

Early in July 1945, the Central Council of Trade Unions stepped into the process, establishing a network of appeal senates under Regional Trade Union Councils, whose task was to re-examine disputable cases. At the same time, top-level trade union functionaries led by Antonín Zápotocký launched a campaign for a review and accelerated conclusion of the cleansing process. They supported the return of “indispensable” experts to their former positions and the rectification of identified

revolution. © AION CS, s.r.o. 2010–2017 [cit. 2017-05-09]. Available at: <https://www.zakonyprolidi.cz/cs/1946-143>.

223 *SRA in Prague*, f. ČKD národní podnik, c. 28, Inv. No. 122, Files of CEO of Českomoravské strojířny, Dipl. Ing. Karel Juliš and workshop foreman Václav Moulík.

224 Decree of the President of the Republic No. 105 Coll., dated 4 October 1945, on cleansing commissions examining activities of public servants/employees; Act No. 83 Coll., dated 11 April 1946, on employment (apprenticeship) contracts of Germans, Hungarians, traitors, and their helpers.

errors. Their motivation was primarily economic. Restoring the production also required a restoration of the work discipline damaged during the revolution, and the shaken authority of managers had to be supported by revolutionary bodies. The process of prosecuting so-called anti-social elements was thus re-evaluated and suspended mainly to “make the wheels of production turn again.” A subsidiary reason of the review of the company-level cleansing process by the Central Council of Trade Unions was the fact that documents collected by investigation commissions was not good enough to withstand examining by courts. It was therefore necessary to finalize them and eliminate any obvious excesses and irregularities.

Generally speaking, the cleansing process in industrial plants was not a machination of the Communist Party, although there were occasional cases of abuse of investigation commissions for political purposes. It was political only in that it wilfully focused on people who did not sympathize with the new “people’s democratic” regime of the Third Republic. The cleansing thus was not a consequence of any political differentiation within the National Front government. As a matter of fact, it was the other way round – the cleansing produced the political differentiation, becoming a topic of political disputes. The cleansing also opened a way to crucial positions in the industry for all political entities of the National Front, but the fact is that the Communist Party made the best use of it.

Criteria of guilt applied in the cleansing process were based on principles of the newly constituted revolutionary morals. However, the new system of values did not match the pre-war concept of law on which retribution acts were initially based. Decree of the President of the Republic No. 16 Coll. adopted in June 1945, had already been drafted in the London exile during the war and did not cover an overwhelming majority of offences dealt with by the cleansing process at the factory level. Under the pressure of trade unions, the government expanded the scope of legally defined offences by the so-called Small Retribution Decree (No. 138/1945 Coll.) in October 1945. It should be noted that directives implementing the decree were largely based on experience of the previous cleansing campaign in the industry. Apart from criminal acts covered by the two retribution decrees, there was, however, a substantial segment of minor offences not dealt with in either retribution decree, which investigation commissions in companies had previously punished by the termination or a change of the employment contract. In May 1946, Act No. 143/1946 Coll. was therefore adopted, whose principles were drafted by leaders of trade unions and which retroactively legalized retribution punishments meted out along the company line.

The cleansing of industrial plants from so-called anti-social elements was neither a power conspiracy, nor a retribution excess. On the contrary – it was a spontaneous, standard-setting process during which a specific revolutionary system of values prevailing in the factory environment was created. The criteria of guilt produced by the system were in contradiction to the pre-revolutionary rule of law and included, in addition to national aspects, also class ones. Through efforts of the trade union movement and the Communist Party, some of them were later

incorporated into the retribution legislation. The outcome of the revolution and its legitimization concept were thus fixed.

The study was sponsored by the Grant Agency of the Czech Republic as part of Project GA13-10279S, "Industrial Workers in the Czech Lands 1938–1948."

The Czech version of this article, entitled Očista průmyslových závodů od kolaborantů a „asociálních živelů“ v roce 1945: Politická machinace, exces retribuice, či inkubátor revoluční morálky?, was originally published in Soudobé dějiny, Vol. 24, No. 4 (2017), pp. 538–581.

Translated by Jiří Mareš

“You Have to Fight the Struggle Yourself”

The Political Role of the Soviet Army and Its Local Allies in “Normalization” of Czechoslovakia (1968–1969)

Marie Černá

In October 1968, representatives of the Czechoslovak and Soviet governments signed a treaty on the conditions of the temporary presence of Soviet troops in Czechoslovakia. The stationing of the Soviet army, which, together with other Warsaw Pact armies, had invaded Czechoslovakia on 21 August 1968 in order to end the ongoing democratization efforts, was thus given a certain legal basis. With the signing of the treaty, the withdrawal of the Soviet troops was postponed indefinitely. For the majority of society, this symbolized a political defeat and an act of submission. On the other hand, the treaty also stipulated that only a portion of the Soviet intervention troops would remain in Czechoslovakia¹ and that the majority of the Warsaw Pact troops, which had set up camps at random all over the country, would withdraw. Obviously, the treaty was no victory. However, communist politicians also publicly stated that it was not all bad. They emphasized that it brought order to the chaotic post-August situation and that it would subject the presence of the Soviet army to legal rules. The Soviet army would withdraw to barracks and other military areas, Czechoslovak institutions would again function normally and the period of chaos would thus come to an end. It was along these lines that Prime Minister Oldřich Černík addressed the National Assembly about the treaty on the day of its approval. Among the positive aspects of the treaty, he also explicitly mentioned the fact that it “fully respected the sovereign execution

1 Under the secret provisions of the treaty, 75,000 Soviet soldiers were to stay in Czechoslovakia.

of state power and administration by our authorities.”² With this he was referring to the following paragraph: “The temporary presence of the Soviet forces in the Czechoslovak Socialist Republic does not violate its sovereignty. Soviet forces shall not interfere in internal affairs of the Czechoslovak Socialist Republic.”³ In view of the fact that the August 1968 military intervention turned Czechoslovak society upside down and that the presence of foreign armies determined all major political decisions, this formulation was a mockery of reality at that time, and at least for the entire early-“normalization” period.

Post-August Soviet political pressure took many different forms and involved a number of intermediaries.⁴ Its key aim was to make Czechoslovak politicians acknowledge that the country had been in danger of a counterrevolution and hence a military intervention was necessary. It was also to make them to deal with the “enemies of socialism” at central and local level, in other words, to carry out personnel purges, as well as renew loyalty towards the Soviet Union. Soviet troops in Czechoslovakia became an instrument of this policy. The Soviet army’s political officers in the localities where they were relocated and the selected *komandaturas* (Soviet military headquarters throughout the country significantly expanded the network of agents reporting to the centre. Reports and information or disinformation of different origins and levels circulating between the intelligence agency, political organs of the Soviet army and the Soviet leaders were to give an overall picture of the danger of counterrevolution and provide the Soviet leadership with arguments to exert pressure on Czechoslovak politicians. The Soviet officers also

2 Společná česko-slovenská digitální parlamentní knihovna [Joint Czech-Slovak digital parliamentary library] [online]. Národní shromáždění RČS, Stenoprotokoly, 27. schůze, 18. října 1968 [National Assembly of the Czechoslovak Republic, Stenographic protocols, 27th session, 18 October 1968] [quoted 2018-09-17]. Accessed at: <http://www.psp.cz/eknih/1964ns/stenprot/027schuz/s027001.htm>.

3 BENČÍK, Antonín – PAULÍK, Jan – PEČKA, Jindřich (ed.): *Prameny k dějinám československé krize v letech 1967–1970* [Sources on the history of the Czechoslovak crisis in 1967–1970], Vol. VI/2: *Vojenské otázky československé reformy 1967–1970: Srpen 1968 – květen 1971* [Military issues of the Czechoslovak reform 1967–1970: August 1968 – May 1971]. Brno, Doplněk 1999, pp. 74–79, here p. 75, Document No. 21 – Úředně zveřejněné znění Smlouvy mezi vládou ČSSR a vládou SSSR o podmínkách dočasného pobytu sovětských vojsk na území Československa, Praha 16. 10. 1968 [Officially published version of the treaty between the government of the USSR and the government of the Czechoslovak Socialist Republic on the terms of the temporary presence of Soviet troops in Czechoslovakia, Prague, 16 October 1968].

4 See, for example, the following collections of documents: VONDROVÁ, Jitka – NAVRÁTIL, Jaromír (ed.): *Prameny k dějinám československé krize v letech 1967–1970*, Vol. IV/3: *Mezinárodní souvislosti československé krize 1967–1970: Září 1968 – květen 1970* [International context of the Czechoslovak crisis in 1967–1970: September 1968 – May 1970]. Brno, Doplněk 1997; VONDROVÁ, Jitka (ed.): *Prameny k dějinám československé krize v letech 1967–1970*, Vol. IV/4: *Mezinárodní souvislosti československé krize 1967–1970: Dokumenty ÚV KSSS 1966–1969* [International context of the Czechoslovak crisis in 1967–1970: Documents of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union 1966–1969]. Brno, Doplněk 2011.

added to the ranks of political emissaries who actively propagated Soviet policy directly in Czechoslovakia. This intelligence as well as political activity in a broader sense was carried out by the Soviet army from the very beginning of the invasion in August 1968. Despite the often-repeated formula about non-interference in domestic affairs, this situation did not change after the withdrawal of the Warsaw Pact armies and the relocation of part of the Soviet troops in Czechoslovakia under the previously mentioned treaty.

The following text aims to capture the political activity of the Soviet army in Czechoslovakia in the early stage of the so-called “normalization,” particularly in the local context. I drew primarily on material from three district towns in which Soviet troops had been stationed from October 1968,⁵ particularly the town of Trutnov in north-eastern Bohemia and the towns of Šumperk and Olomouc in Moravia. I also took into account local and national press of the time. I was not concerned with the specifics and complexity of local relations though. By analyzing local events, my aim was to point to the broader constituting elements of the “normalization process” and to the role the Soviet army, together with its Czechoslovak sympathizers, played in it. The political tasks of the Soviet army were also mentioned in Soviet documents that I was able to access. These documents, though not numerous, speak volumes about it.

The first part of this text outlines the plans of Soviet strategists to use the Soviet army’s presence in Czechoslovakia for political and propaganda purposes. In order to comply with these assigned tasks, Soviet officers sought contacts with local officials and official institutions. The pressure that local officials faced is described in the second part of the text. However, my main focus was on the parallel activity of local sympathizers of the Soviet army who from the very beginning violated a social embargo and more or less openly cooperated with the Soviets. These were people who had for various reasons opposed the reform process of 1968 and who found, in active cooperation with the Soviet army, a united orientation and argumentation, as well as a platform for their radical expression. Their active involvement in local politics was of key importance as it allowed the Soviet army, among other things, to comply, at least ostensibly, with the premise that they would not interfere in the domestic affairs of the state. Taking the example of the platform of “old” and distinguished Communist Party members, I tried to show that the Soviet army together with its Czechoslovak sympathizers manipulated the proven institutional base in a systematic and coordinated manner. The fact that it was mobilized and subsequently used for the purposes of Soviet political agenda throughout the country proves that cooperation with the Soviet army did not involve only individuals at random. I further illustrate the pro-Soviet activities of the “old” Communist Party members and Soviet army’s allies by their active participation in the first stage of

5 The Soviet army was stationed in Czechoslovakia in a few dozens of towns and villages mostly in the north, east and north-east of the country, in a lesser extent also in Slovakia. Defining the deployment of the Soviet troops with precision is problematic, because, due to continuous spatial expansion, it changed over time.

the 1969 “post-invasion” purges carried out on district level, in other words, by their support of “normalization” from below. I try to show how these people contributed not only to the removal of the strongest opponents of the Soviet invasion from public offices, but also to the gradual transformation of the way the Soviet army was perceived. In the final part of the paper, I describe the crucial role they played in preparing the ground for local institutions to accept the Soviet army’s presence. It was only then that the Soviet army could fully develop its planned and publicly supported propaganda activities.

My analysis extends the work of authors who pointed to the political aspects of the Soviet army’s presence in Czechoslovakia as early as in the 1990s. They often drew on their personal, local experiences at the time, sometimes directly from the position of Communist Party officials who were later expelled, or on the testimonies of direct participants. The political activity of Soviet officers at the outset of the so-called “normalization” was mapped by Emil Gímeš in Olomouc and Karel Jiřík in Ostrava.⁶ Both authors pointed to the links between political sections of the Soviet army and the so-called “healthy forces” within the Communist Party, and to the active role of the latter in the process of “consolidation.” The activities of dogmatic radicals, members of the Communist Party’s “core” in 1968, are also described in a number of newer works, which refer more or less systematically to their cooperation with the Soviet army.⁷ The political activity of the Soviet headquarters in Czechoslovakia is also evidenced, albeit fragmentarily, by a collection of documents entitled *Československé události roku 1968 očima KGB a ministerstva*

6 GÍMEŠ, Emil: Počátky normalizačního režimu na Olomoucku [Beginnings of the “normalization” regime in the Olomouc region]. In: GÍMEŠ, Emil – KOUDELKA, František (ed.): *Počátky “normalizace” na severní a střední Moravě* [Beginnings of the “normalization” in northern and central Moravia]. Praha, ÚSD AV ČR 1996, pp. 31–56; JIŘÍK, Karel: *Demokratizační proces v Ostravě a jeho násilné potlačení* [The democratization process in Ostrava and its violent repression]. In: *Svědectví o roce 1968 v Ostravě: Studie, vzpomínky, dokumenty* [Testimony on the events of 1968 in Ostrava: Studies, recollections, documents]. Šenov u Ostravy, Tilia 1998, pp. 15–50; IDEM: *Rok 1968 a počátky normalizace v Ostravě* [The year 1968 and the beginnings of the “normalization” in Ostrava]. Praha, ÚSD AV ČR 1997; IDEM: *Frakční činnost předválečných členů KSČ v Ostravě v letech 1968–1969* [Factional activity of the pre-war members of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia in Ostrava in 1968–1969]. In: *Acta Universitatis Palackianae Olomucensis, Facultas Paedagogica*. Olomouc, Univerzita Palackého 1995, pp. 25–39.

7 For information on the characteristics and political influence of the ultra-leftist groups during the Prague Spring and in the aftermath of the invasion, see most recently: McDERMOTT, Kevin – SOMMER, Vítězslav: *The “Anti-Prague Spring”: Neo-Stalinist and Ultra-Leftist Extremist in Czechoslovakia, 1968–1970*. In: McDERMOTT, Kevin – STIBBE, Matthew: *Eastern Europe in 1968: Responses to the Prague Spring and Warsaw Pact Invasion*. Basingstoke, Palgrave Macmillan 2018, pp. 45–70. Meetings of pro-Soviet orientated radicals with the representatives of the Soviet army in the east Bohemian town of Hradec Králové in 1968 are described by FELCMAN, Ondřej: *“Ultras” v Hradci: Aktivita prosovětských sil na Královéhradecku na podzim 1968* [“Ultras” in Hradec Králové: Activities of pro-Soviet forces in the region of Hradec Králové in the autumn of 1968]. In: *Soudobé dějiny*, Vol. 15, Nos. 3–4 (2008), pp. 639–669.

vnitra [The Czechoslovak events of 1968 through the lens of the KGB and the Ministry of Interior], published in Russia in 2010. The collection contains several documents referring to Czechoslovak “contact persons,” who diligently provided detailed information to the Soviets on the political negotiations of local authorities as well as on individual officials, reporting on activities which qualified as “anti-socialist,” “anti-Soviet” or directly “counterrevolutionary.”⁸

In my contribution to illustrating the Soviet army’s political activities at the early stage of the “normalization,” I also put emphasis on the Soviet sympathizers, often branded as hard core, (neo-)Stalinists, dogmatists, factionalists, left-wing ultras, conservatives, etc., labels that undoubtedly correspond with their behaviour. But it should be noted that these terms also emerged from the political struggles of that period, in which opponents defined or, as the case may be, discredited each other. What was characteristic of the situation at the end of the 1960s was manipulation of the categories of “progressive” versus “conservative,” the setting of boundaries and crossing them in practice, as well as changes in political coalitions. Rather than stating ideological reasons, I am trying to point to the practical consequences of certain people’s cooperation with the Soviet army and to its forms. Their radicalization and “dogmatism” may be seen both as a consequence and a possible motive of this cooperation. I am not trying to describe a specific historically defined group – “vulgar dogmatists,” but rather “vulgarily dogmatic” behaviour and activities, which, with the advancing the “normalization” and also the contribution of the Soviet army, were gaining the upper hand in society.

To Stabilize the Political Situation

The Soviet plans of using the army’s presence in Czechoslovakia for political purposes were devised shortly after the invasion. Let me quote in detail the proposal of the Chief of the Main Political Administration of the Soviet army, Alexei Yepishev.

8 See: ZDANOVICH, A. A. (ed.): *Chekhoslovatskie sobytija 1968 goda glazami KGB I MVD* [The Czechoslovak events of 1968 through the eyes of the KGB and the Ministry of Interior of the USSR]. This quite extensive edition (510 pages) contains 63 Czechoslovak and Soviet documents from Russian archives from the period December 1966 – May 1969, and three addendums. A 100-page long introduction by the editors offers a chronology of events related to the “Czechoslovak crisis” of the late 1960s. According to information in the imprint, the edition was prepared by the joint editorial office of the Ministry of Interior of Russia and the Society for the Study of the History of the Russian Special Services (*Obshchestva izucheniya istorii otechestvennykh spetssluzhb*). A drawback of this edition is the undefined and potentially biased criteria of the documents selection, based on the evaluation and intentions of the editors as formulated in the introduction: “The Czechoslovak events of 1968 were an attempt of the internal opposition to complete a putsch in the Czechoslovak Socialist Republic with the political support of the Western countries and active participation of the Western secret services.” (*Ibid.*, p. 3.) Nevertheless, the individual documents represent a useful source of information, among other things, on the efforts of the Soviet army to intervene in the political affairs of the then Czechoslovakia.

Documents like this one provide an important key to understanding later propaganda activities of the Soviet army, which, without a broader political context, might be interpreted as random, or mere formalistic acts forming part of political ceremonies. The following excerpt clearly shows that it was in fact a plan conceived at the centre with a political logic behind it. Yepishev proposed using Soviet forces in Czechoslovakia to “stabilize the political situation,” “normalize the activities of the local Communist Party and state authorities” and unify “all healthy patriotic forces of Czechoslovakia.” The task of the Soviet soldiers in Czechoslovakia was to “actively create broad working and political contacts on all levels” with local authorities and social organizations, the Czechoslovak army, industrial and agricultural enterprises and schools, “renew and strengthen the friendship and cooperation with the Czechoslovak population and soldiers.” To that end they were to seek “active involvement in the work of local Communist Party and state bodies” and “help them with the means at our disposal.” Yepishev emphasized agitation-propaganda work among the inhabitants, such as disseminating printed materials, film screenings, organizing debates, lectures and evenings of “friendship” (*družba*) with the local population, and visiting schools and enterprises. As he recommended, the renewed friendly relations were to be built on the old proven bases, appropriately emphasized to this end. By this he meant continual commemorating of the Red Army’s merits in the liberation of Czechoslovakia and emphasizing the combat friendship of Soviet and Czech soldiers and their common struggle against fascism. What the Soviet general saw as particularly appropriate were joint guided tours to Second World War memorial sites, visits of the veterans of the Great Patriotic War and the liberation of Czechoslovakia, and mainly the use of important anniversaries for organizing joint mass political and cultural events. Leisure activities were not to be overlooked, and the Soviet army was encouraged to organize, for example, competitions in “different sports.”⁹

Presenting itself as an (eternal) friend of the Czechoslovak people, the Soviet army was to contribute to Brezhnev’s broader “friendship” policy of targeting all segments of society through an array of activities, ranging from cultural and artistic exchanges and academic cooperation to “friendship” on the level of regions, towns, enterprises and other institutions.¹⁰ An important role in this political-propaganda plan was to be played by personal contact of Soviet soldiers, primarily officers, with local people, taking the form of talks, lectures, “friendship” evenings and social and sport events. Turning Soviet soldiers into instruments of propaganda and

9 *Ibid.*, pp. 31–33, Document No. 5 – Proposal of the Chief of the Main Political Administration of the Soviet army, General Alexei Yepishev, to the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union on the measures to “normalize” the political situation in Czechoslovakia.

10 VONDROVÁ, J. – NAVRÁTIL, J. (ed.): *Prameny k dějinám československé krize v letech 1967–1970*, Vol. IV/3, pp. 116–135, Document No. 196.1 – Record of the meeting of the delegation of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia with the leadership of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union in Moscow held on 3–4 October 1968 on “issues, which are of interest for both parties,” 8 October 1968].

“friendship” was an ambitious plan if we take into account the fact that it had been precisely the military invasion which had damaged Czechoslovak-Soviet friendly relations. The problematic nature of this plan soon became apparent. A broader public that could be targeted by the Soviet officers’ propaganda activities in the spirit of the “friendship” policy had to be created first.

“I Would Be Lucky to Leave in One Piece”

There is plenty of evidence of the efforts of the Soviet army’s representatives to establish contacts with local institutions shortly after being deployed in Czechoslovakia. However, at that time they were still seen as “occupiers” by the majority of Czechoslovak society, and it was understood that nobody communicates with occupiers. In November 1968, when the Vysoké Mýto chronicler noted that the Soviet army’s representatives “visited local schools, proposing ‘twinning’” and that this initiative “met with no interest,”¹¹ it was taken as a matter of course. By contrast, according to Soviet period documents, rejecting contacts with Soviet soldiers only proved that Czechoslovak society was in a dismal situation and under the ideological influence of right-wing saboteurs. It was interpreted as an offence against the eternal Czechoslovak-Soviet friendship, a bond that the Soviet representatives continually reminded their Czechoslovak counterparts about and which they used as one of their coercive arguments. In the face of such pressure, Czechoslovak politicians also had to acknowledge that “bad relations” with Soviet soldiers was “a very serious issue” and that in fact improving relations was in the interest of all. Whether they liked it or not, the necessity of fostering different forms of friendly contacts between the Czechoslovak people and Soviet soldiers was accepted by them. However, for strategic reasons, they were reluctant to rush the process. In September 1968, when the Soviet political emissary and the Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs, Vasily Kuznetsov, complained that “people reject any contact,” the Chairman of the National Assembly, Josef Smrkovský, asked him for patience: “[...] as regards friendly relations of enterprises and cultural institutions, we should wait two or three months, not stirring the emotions of our people now.”¹² Not only incessantly reminded of this issue, but also urged to set an example, the Presidium of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia wrote a letter to the Communist Party regional committees in November 1968. Within the framework of normalizing the situation, it urged them to establish friendly social contacts

11 *Státní okresní archiv (SOkA) Ústí nad Orlicí* [State district archive (SOkA) in Ústí nad Orlicí], *Pamětní kniha Vysokého Mýta 1961–1973* [Chronicle of the town of Vysoké Mýto 1961–1973].

12 VONDROVÁ, J. – NAVRÁTIL, J.: *Prameny k dějinám československé krize v letech 1967–1970*, Vol. IV/3, pp. 47–54, here p. 51, Document No. 179 – Record of a conversation between the Chairman of the National Assembly, J. Smrkovský and V. Kuznetsov on 11 September on the concept of “normalization” and on the compliance with the Moscow agreements, Prague 12 September 1968.

with Soviet garrisons, which “will undoubtedly be different in form and content.” Attached to the letter was an instruction by the government providing practical information on the operation of the garrisons, as well as a note that the Soviet *komandaturas* “had no right to intervene in domestic affairs of the Czechoslovak Socialist Republic or to challenge the authority of Czechoslovak authorities.” The letter also contained a recommendation to the local authorities to invite representatives of Soviet garrisons to celebrations of the Great October Socialist Revolution, or to accept their offers of the *brigáda* (unpaid work assistance).¹³

These vaguely formulated instructions, in the environment of persistent opposition of society on the one hand, and the pressure of the Soviet troops on the other, put the local officials in a difficult situation. “It may be the official position of the Communist Party and the government, but it is a tragedy. From my point of view, it is premature to initiate any meetings with them. [...] I would be lucky to leave in one piece,” one of the members of the Presidium of the District Committee of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia in Trutnov said.¹⁴ The search for acceptable boundaries in relations with Soviet soldiers became a delicate issue, and there was no easy approach to dealing with it. The debates on what position to adopt towards cooperation with Soviet soldiers, which emerged, for instance, with each important anniversary, also revealed conflicts within the relevant bodies, such as the Communist Party or national committees. But at first, the position of the majority of local authorities to open cooperation with Soviet soldiers and their contact with the local population was, whether on principle or for pragmatic reasons, rather reserved. Masses gathered on the occasion of official ceremonies, public grandstands, invitations to factories and schools, flowers and presents was clearly something that the Soviet officers would only experience later. Yet, hesitation or direct opposition by Czechoslovak authorities did not discourage them from their efforts to establish contacts. In the first place, they sought to broaden the field of issues on which the local officials would not dare not to act. Through frequent official complaints brought on state and local levels, they placed themselves in the role of arbiters of ideologically correct public space – they protested against slogans in the streets, articles in newspapers, screenings of certain films, the destruction of memorials, etc. They held the relevant local officials responsible, urging them to act, take measures and to adopt the Soviet interpretation of the situation. No one

13 *Národní archiv*, Praha (hereinafter NA) [The National Archive of the Czech Republic], fond [fund – f.] Předsednictvo ÚV KSČ 1966–1971 [The Presidium of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia 1966–1971] (1261/0/5; initial fund designation 02/1), svazek [Volume – Vol.] 85, archivní jednotka [archival unit – AU] 132, Draft letter of the Presidium of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia to the regional committees of the Communist Party on mutual contacts with Soviet troops, 8 November 1968.

14 *SOkA Trutnov*, fund (f.) Okresní výbor (OV) KSČ Trutnov [District Committee (OV) of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia in Trutnov], karton [cardboard box – box] 80, Minutes of the meeting of the Presidium of the District Committee of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia in Trutnov, 10 December 1968.

dared to say a word against the argument that the destruction of Soviet memorials “defiled the sacred memory of fallen Soviet heroes” who had fought “for the happiness of the working class of Czechoslovakia.”¹⁵ On the contrary, leading and local Communist Party officials quickly adopted Soviet arguments on vandals and hostile elements hampering consolidation, and “vandals” and “hostile elements” gradually became the labels for all people who openly expressed their opposition to the Soviet army’s presence. At the top of a list of destroyed Soviet memorials, which the Soviets submitted with a protest against their destruction, was a tank-memorial which had been pulled down in Trutnov in August 1968. The rapid change in the local authorities’ interpretation of this case – from “spontaneous display of protest” against the occupation to a “regrettable incident” to a shameful “counterrevolutionary act” – reflects the gradual adoption of the Soviet viewpoint. The relocation of the tank around the town – first it was pulled down where it stood in the public space in front of the seat of the district national committee, then it was repaired and installed in a less prominent place, just to be reinstalled finally in the original place in May 1970 – and the related acts provide a fitting example of “normalization” changes.

In all the garrison towns, the Soviet army’s representatives systematically exploited the cases of so-called hostile acts by the local population. Protests against “hooligans” that they raised in a coordinated manner in late 1968 and early 1969 were linked to the pressure for a more resolute response by relevant authorities. Any alleged tolerance of hostilities, which could also have been provoked by Soviet soldiers, was deemed an unjustifiable political misconduct. As the Chairman of the National Committee in Trutnov said, this raised doubts “whether we are able to solve the situation alone. [...] [Soviet soldiers] are being attacked, which only proves the weakness of our authorities, since we are not able to maintain order. The irresponsible behaviour of our citizens further complicates the situation in the town.”¹⁶ Permanent danger of an “uncontrolled security situation” led to a relatively rapid realignment of coalitions, ultimately distancing local representatives from the revolting population. And, on the contrary, by taking action against the open “enemies of consolidation,” the local officials aligned themselves more and more with the Soviet army’s representatives. By protesting against the disturbance of “civil coexistence,” the Soviets wanted to put pressure on local representatives not only to act more resolutely against all “anti-Soviet manifestations,” but also to support friendly contacts with the representatives of the local Soviet garrisons. This important implicit message of the coordinated campaign of protests against the security situation – that is, that the conflicts need to be solved through contacts – was

15 *Ibid.*, f. Městský národní výbor (MěNV) Trutnov [Municipal National Committee (MěNV) in Trutnov], inventární číslo [Inventory Number – Inv. No.] 19, box 3, Minutes of the plenary session of the Municipal Committee in Trutnov, Protest of the Soviet military representatives against the destruction of graves and memorials of Soviet soldiers who had perished in the liberation of Czechoslovakia, 22 October 1968.

16 *Ibid.*, Minutes of the meeting of the Board of the Municipal National Committee in Trutnov, 12 November 1968.

embraced, for example, in Olomouc. As early as in January 1969, the Presidium of the District Committee of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia ordered that Communist Party organizations and national committees were to “condemn the negative acts by some of our citizens towards the Soviet army as well as recommend establishing contacts and developing relations with the Soviet army in all spheres of social life.”¹⁷ For the time being, all contacts were to be established strictly on a voluntary basis.

“They Disseminated ‘the White Book’ and ‘Zprávy’”

While continuing to exert pressure on local authorities, Soviet officers also developed contacts with people willing to support their interests, at the same time seeking certain legitimization. Like any social movement, the “reform process” had its, figuratively speaking, wounded. All the more so because democratization followed the path of personal, not structural, changes. The efforts to eliminate all discredited or incompetent people from public, political and professional life was often closely linked to labelling them conservatives or Stalinist dogmatists. For a certain segment of society, feelings of wrong or personal danger blended with concerns about the existence of the socialist regime. Fear of having their very basic principles of life disrupted uncovered feelings of deep-rooted animosity toward unpredictable “elements”. Historians Kevin McDermott and Vítězslav Sommer pointed to some common characteristics of “neo-Stalinist” opponents of the “reform process”: anti-intellectualism, which often went hand in hand with more or less explicit anti-Semitism, fear of disruption of the “holy” principle of unity and the leading position of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia and opposition to “elitist” reformers isolated from the masses.¹⁸ We can also add that in the case of so-called workers’ cadres, their distrust of intellectuals could have been motivated by fear of losing their positions, as many of them lacked sufficient professional qualifications. Another important motive was a “sacred” relation with the Soviet Union, which, in the eyes of many, had been disrupted by the “reform process” and subsequently trampled on by the all-nation protest against the occupation. The Soviets used all these doubts, animosities, fears and feelings of wrongdoing in society to mobilize their sympathizers, making the renewal of “eternal” Czechoslovak-Soviet friendship their common theme.

Soviet officers thus rapidly engaged in creating networks of “reform process” opponents, who helped to implement the “normalization” process from below. Those opponents who had any kind of institutional background were valuable. They could

17 *SOka Olomouc*, f. District Committee of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia in Olomouc, box 124, Minutes of the meeting of the Presidium of the District Committee of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia in Olomouc, Proposals for establishing and developing contacts with Soviet army units, 15 January 1968.

18 McDERMOTT, Kevin – SOMMER, Vítězslav: The “Anti-Prague Spring.”

be individual functionaries of Communist Party organizations and national committees at all levels, members of organizations of the National Front, the security forces, People’s Militias, employees of state-owned enterprises or schools,¹⁹ all who had a potential environment in which to exert their influence. The strategic goal of Soviet officers was to create a network of these individuals so that they could support each other and jointly take over the Soviet political agenda. From the beginning, an important unifying element was the distribution of newspaper *Zprávy* [News]²⁰ and other propaganda material provided by Soviet officers to Czechoslovak citizens. A booklet, published by the Communist Party’s District Committee of Prague 4 on the occasion of the 50th anniversary of the founding of the Communist Party, speaks of the merits of its members in 1968: “So, a group of those most loyal was established in Pankrác. [...] They distributed the White Book²¹ and *Zprávy*. [...] The group members met with other loyal comrades from other parts of Prague 4 at the Regional Committee of the Union of Czechoslovak-Soviet Friendship, receiving from its chairman, comrade Jaroslav Kozler, all sorts of printed and photocopied material useful for political awareness activities. [...] and participated in visits of Soviet army garrisons in the surroundings of Prague.”²² Activity by the group of “loyal internationalists” nearly amounting to conspiracy was described in a similar way by Jaroslav Kozler: “Comrade Hájek provided information from Soviet soldiers”

19 This issue was mentioned in the study of Emil Gímeš: “There was a number of Soviet units located in Olomouc and the nearby military area of Libavá, whose officers sought contacts with local functionaries. [...] The political department of the division under the leadership of Colonel Dubrava was in charge of regular contact with selected functionaries of the District Committee of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia, security forces, a number of Communist Party committees as well as individuals.” (GÍMEŠ, E.: *Počátky normalizačního režimu na Olomoucku*, p. 33.)

20 It was a pro-Soviet propaganda weekly published between August 1968 and May 1969 by the Soviet army headquarters in the German Democratic Republic and illegally distributed in Czechoslovakia through the Soviet *komandaturas*.

21 The so-called White Book, officially entitled *K událostem v Československu: Fakta, dokumenty, svědectví tisku a očitých svědků* [On the events in Czechoslovakia: Facts, documents, press reports and eye-witness accounts], was published in Moscow shortly after the August invasion as a collective work of an unspecified press group of Soviet journalists on the commission of the propaganda department of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union. Its aim was to provide arguments for justifying the necessity of the military invasion to Czechoslovakia. The thesis of a threat of a counterrevolutionary putsch with the assistance of imperialistic secret services is evidenced by a collage of quotes and excerpts from articles and speeches of the “reform process” leaders and from the Western press, but also by, more or less, distorted references to the opposition to the military invasion. It was published in many language versions – in Czech, Slovak, Russian, English, German, French and other languages – allegedly in a printing of one million copies.

22 NA, f. Kozler Jaroslav, signatura [ref. No.] 11, brožura *Čím komunisté vítězili* [booklet How did the communists win]. Praha 4, Obvodní výbor KSČ 1971.

and, conversely, “internationalists” provided the Soviet soldiers with information on the “anti-Soviet leadership of the district [Prague 4].”²³

Gathering information on the political situation represented an important part of the work of the Soviet *komandaturas*. Soviet documents show that thanks to their collaborators, Soviet officers had a detailed overview of the local authorities’ activities as well as of the individual functionaries.²⁴ Often, they had at their disposal full records of meetings or particular statements. What is important is that at first reports provided by their loyal informers served the Soviet officers as the basis for defining what was “anti-Soviet,” “antisocialist or “right-wing opportunist.” And it was with these people that the Soviets subsequently clarified these ideas and confirmed their opinions about specific people who had to be removed from public life. As early as 30 August 1968, a political instructor of the Soviet army in Olomouc provided information about the composition of the Presidium of the Regional Committee of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia and briefly commented on it, labelling two of its members influential revisionists. The remaining members were assessed as “good people,” who had only succumbed to the right-wing psychosis. “With some assistance, they will be able to stand up to the right-wingers,” he suggested.²⁵

People who visited the Soviet *komandaturas* also became the first participants in political talks and debates, because the task of these offices was “to provide Czech citizens with help in orientating themselves in this difficult situation.”²⁶ It was not always about convincing those already convinced. A good case in point with respect to this “orientating work” and assistance in the search of “correct views” is a report of the previously mentioned political instructor from Olomouc. In this report, he described a meeting with six members of the local committee of the Czechoslovak Union of Women, which resulted in a “heated” exchange of opinions. At the end of the meeting, on leaving the Soviet headquarters, one of the women, a founding member of the Communist Party and long-time active functionary of the Regional Committee of the of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia in Olomouc, Herma Barfusová, held out her hand to one of the patrolling soldiers – probably in a gesture of reconciliation. “They were very cross that the leaders of the Czechoslovak Socialist Republic and the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia had not informed

23 *Ibid.*, ref. No. 13, Evaluation of the political activity of the District Committee of the Union of Czechoslovak-Soviet Friendship in Prague 4 for the period of 1968–1969.

24 ZDANOVICH, A. A. (ed.): *Chekhoslovatskie sobytija 1968 goda glazami KGB I MVD*, pp. 30, 173–176, 203–212 and 302.

25 *Ibid.*, pp. 173–176, Document No. 16 – Dokladnaya zapiska instruktora politotdela 38. armii podpolkovnika Kosenkova chлену voyennogo soveta – nachalniku politotdela armii o politicheskom položenii v rayone Olomouc, 2. 9. 1968 [Report of the instructor of the political department of the 38th army, Lieutenant Colonel Kosenkov, to a member of the military council – chief of the political department of the army on the political situation in the region of Olomouc, 2 September 1968].

26 *Ibid.*, pp. 313–315, Document No. 48 – Spravka o rabote voyennykh komandatur g. Pragi za okt’yabr 1968 g., 2. 11. 1968 [Information on the work of the military *komandaturas* in Prague in October 1968, 2 November 1968].

them about the activities of the counterrevolution. [...] They organized a meeting with all the members of the committee. [...] All of them agreed that the measures adopted [probably the invasion] were correct, but they [added] that in the current situation the nation would not understand it,” the instructor wrote.²⁷ Barfusová, who had left the meeting so heartily, also maintained contact with the Soviet *komandatura* through meetings of a group of distinguished members of the Communist Party.²⁸ She was the co-author of a resolution adopted by this group at a joint meeting held in Olomouc in September 1968. In it, long-standing members of the Communist Party called on the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia to pursue consolidation in the country and “also in relation to the Warsaw Pact’s armies present in our country.”²⁹ When, several days later, at the session of the District Committee of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia, doubts arose concerning the meeting, she defended it claiming that it could by no means be considered subversion of the Communist Party nor a meeting of “collaborators and traitors.” She also said how impressed she was by the Soviet officer: “What a personality, comrades.” Apart from looking well (“I had no idea that men could look 10 years younger”), he understood “people,” but mainly “politics”: “In my view, he gave a reasonable explanation of why they were here.” Therefore, even though Barfusová was, in her own words, shocked by the invasion and did not consider it “the correct thing,” the debate with the Soviet officers eventually convinced her of something she had in fact deeply believed: “that the Soviet Union is not capable of foul tricks with the aim of restricting the liberty of the Czechoslovak people.” The anger that had originally prompted her, together with other women, to visit the Soviet *komandatura*, was redirected: “Then, why the heck does the Central Committee not tell us what they had been debating about?”³⁰

27 *Ibid.*, p. 174, Document No. 16 – Dokladnaya zapiska instruktora politotdela 38. armii podpolkovnika Kosenkova chlenu voyennogo soveta – nachalniku politotdela armii o politicheskom polozenii v rayone Olomouc, 2. 9. 1968 [Report of the instructor of the political department of the 38th army, Lieutenant Colonel Kosenkov, to a member of the military council – chief of the political department of the army on the political situation in the region of Olomouc, 2 September 1968].

28 I comment on this platform in detail below.

29 Dopis zaslužilých členů strany Ústřednímu výboru KSČ [Letter from the distinguished Communist Party members to the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia]. In: *Stráž lidu*, Vol. 24, No. 76 (20 September 1968). *Stráž lidu* [Guardian of the People] was a bulletin issued by the District Committee of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia in Olomouc.

30 *SOKA Olomouc*, f. District Committee of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia in Olomouc, box 26, Minutes of the plenary session of the District Committee of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia in Olomouc. A more detailed record of the Soviet officer’s speech, capturing his argumentation line, was made by one of the participants of the debate (see: GÍMEŠ, E.: Počátky normalizačního režimu na Olomoucku, p. 34). It is interesting to see how Soviet arguments were to be strengthened by the use of exact numbers. According to this officer, there were 18,450 members of former political parties in Olomouc. Olomouc had 100,000 inhabitants, but only 100 members of the Public Security (*Veřejná bezpečnost* – VB, police), whereas in the 1950s the ratio was of 46,000 of inhabitants to 250 members

“Dear Comrades, Collaborators!”

Apart from meetings with selected individuals, which could even be held in private places, Soviet garrisons, mostly on the occasion of different official anniversaries, also organized bigger meetings of their supporters directly in the barracks. Moreover, Soviet political officers participated in broader meetings of emerging or renewed pro-Soviet platforms. A number of such meetings was organized between 1968 and 1969. Some of them had a directly demonstrative character and reached far beyond the local level, usually also being attended by high-ranking Communist Party officials, committed artists or other public figures. For instance, the previously mentioned Chairman of the Regional Committee of the Union of Czechoslovak-Soviet Friendship in Prague 4 was also one of the principal organizers of a meeting, numbering several thousand, held in the Lucerna hall in Prague in 1968 on the occasion of the anniversary of the Great October Socialist Revolution. Apart from army officers and top leaders of the Union of Soviet-Czechoslovak Friendship, the Soviets were also represented by the Soviet army’s art ensemble, brought to the Lucerna hall from the German Democratic Republic.³¹ However, probably the very first meeting of this kind was organized in the town of Vítkovice as early as on 2 September 1968 by a group of long-standing communists from Ostrava, who met in support of Soviet policy and the arrival of the Warsaw Pact armies.

Probably the historically best-known meeting was held in the Čechie hall³² in the Prague quarter of Libeň in October 1968 and was organized by several members of the local Communist Party organization around Josef Jodas.³³ It became known for its radical critique of higher Communist Party organs, unscrupulous defamation of individual reform politicians, and the denunciation of people and acts opposing the August military invasion, all of which was embodied in a letter addressed to the public prosecutor – and also for the negative reactions to this meeting on the level of the Municipal Committee of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia in

of the Public Security. This allegedly evidenced the counterrevolutionary efforts to disrupt the security forces in a situation, when potential political enemies were lurking behind every corner.

- 31 *ÚSD AV ČR*, f. Governmental commission of the Czechoslovak Federal Republic for the analysis of the events of 1967–1970, A 308, Record of the ceremony in the Lucerna hall on the occasion of the 51st anniversary of the Great October Socialist Revolution; *Ibid.*, A 150, Information on the events of 7 November (Great October Socialist Revolution).
- 32 *NA*, f. 1261/0/5, Vol. 84, AU 130, Minutes of the meeting of the Presidium of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia, 21 October 1968, item 12, Information on the meeting of the so-called old communists in the Čechie hall in Libeň on 9 October 1968 and the approach of the municipal Communist Party organization in Prague.
- 33 On the activity of this group, which interpreted the so-called reform process as a threat to the achievements of the socialist revolution and a breach of the basic principles of Marxism-Leninism, see, for example: URBÁŠEK, Pavel: Jak “pancéřové divize” bránily socialismus: K úloze ultraradikální levice v letech 1968–1970 [How “armoured divisions” defended socialism: On the role of ultra-radical left in 1968–1970]. In: *Listy*, Vol. 37, No. 4 (2006), pp. 17–24; McDERMOTT, K – SOMMER, V.: The “Anti-Prague Spring.”

Prague, as well as the Central Committee. Complicity between the organizers, the participants and the representatives of the Soviet army was emphasized by one of the officers who opened his speech with the following words: “Let me tell you and address you ‘Dear comrades, collaborators.’” Then he gave the assurance: “We came to help real communists.”³⁴ Despite the protests of higher Communist Party bodies, the resolution from this meeting spread further. Parts of its text were later reproduced in resolutions from all over the republic. The following formulation became especially popular: “No one will ever convince us, long-standing communists, and all the honest members of the Communist Party that the allied armies came to deprive us of our liberty, of the socialist basis of our society.”³⁵ Other, more or less well-known meetings followed. One of the events that stirred up public opinion was a meeting in the town of Semily on 14 February 1969 on the occasion of the foundation of the Red Army.³⁶

These meetings were of great importance for pro-Soviet activists and played an important role in future political developments. Speeches given by high-ranking officials and contributions in the debates reinforced the participants’ belief that “the post-January developments” had gone adrift, in the threat of counterrevolution, reactionary activities of the media, and consequently in the legitimacy of the military invasion. In this context, the indissoluble bonds of friendship with the Soviet Union were recalled through references to the victims of the Soviet Union and

34 Several different records of this meeting have been preserved, differing both in evaluation and selection of details in accordance with the attitudes of the author. For example, from the majority of them we will not learn that Soviet officers “very diligently noted things down.” The information on the mentioned address was drawn from the report (probably of an employee of the Czechoslovak Press Agency) epically entitled “Report from the meeting of communists (old Communist Party members) of Prague 8, renamed during the course of negotiations to the meeting of the communists of Great Prague” (*ÚSD AV ČR*, f. Governmental commission of the Czechoslovak Federal Republic for the analysis of the events of 1967–1970, A 229).

35 NA, f. 1261/0/5, Vol. 84, AU 130, Minutes of the meeting of the Presidium of the Central Committee of the Communist Party, 21 October 1968, item 12, Information on the meeting of the so-called old communists in the Čechie hall in Libeň on 9 October 1968 and approach of the municipal Communist Party organization in Prague, Resolution.

36 Two circumstances made the meeting “famous.” First, it was the brutality with which some of the policemen attacked one of the main organizers of the protest meeting, Karel Hádek, after the event had finished. The police crackdown provoked a widespread outrage. However, with the advancing “normalization” investigation symptomatically turned against the victim. (See: CUHRA, Jaroslav: *Trestní represe odpůrců režimu v letech 1969–1972* [Criminal proceedings of the regime opponents in 1969–1972]. Praha, Ústav pro soudobé dějiny AV ČR 1997, pp. 85 and 95.) Secondly, the case was also popularized by writer and journalist Ludvík Vaculík, who, uninvited, attended the meeting. In a story published afterwards, he described not only the course of the ceremonial evening, but also the subsequent events. (VACULÍK, Ludvík: *Proces v Semilech* [Process in Semily]. In: *Listy*, Vol. 2, No. 10 (6 March 1969), p. 1.)

the Soviet army in liberating Czechoslovakia³⁷ from Nazism or through references to the alliance of classes.³⁸ Even though a sense of shared solidarity occasionally sparked a wave of euphoria, which critical observers did not hesitate to call “mass hysteria,” these meetings were not only about a sense of shared solidarity of an isolated group of jilted dogmatists. People who attended these meetings found a common denominator here. They accepted only the first part of the popular and widely expressed conviction that the Soviet Union was a friend who had betrayed. They were convinced (or readily let themselves be convinced) that whatever the Soviet Union did, it would always remain a friend. This collective identity was also strengthened by the hostility of society towards these meetings. “We have to appreciate the courage of our people to enter the building while being threatened,” one of the organizers said in reference to the previously mentioned meeting in Semily.³⁹ They did not object to being labelled collaborators by the majority of society because of its content, since they did not deny cooperating with the Soviet army, but for its moral connotations. What they did not accept was that the term collaboration, which had been used during the period of the Nazi Protectorate and the consequent retribution, should also be employed in the post-August situation, something that most people saw, on the contrary, as natural. They interpreted “aiding a foreign power” not as a pathological threat to national existence and political as well as moral order, but as an effort to preserve it. Quite to the contrary, for them collaborators and traitors were those who had abandoned the friendship with the Soviet Union. They perceived themselves only as “collaborators” in quotation marks.⁴⁰

Through the presence of Soviet officers or directly through representatives of the Soviet press, the Soviet Union used the demonstrative “friendship” meetings as evidence of broad support for its policy. Speeches or resolutions attacking particular

37 “Thanks to the heroism of the Soviet army, the liberator, its victory over fascism and general assistance of the Soviet Union after 1945 we could establish socialism in Czechoslovakia. Only in a close friendship and alliance with the Soviet Union can we maintain socialism in our homeland and further develop it.” (Quote from the resolution adopted at the all-district meeting of the Union of Czechoslovak-Soviet Friendship in Prague 6, held on 17 March 1969: *Bylo nás mnohem víc* [There were many more of us]. In: *Svět socialismu*, Vol. 2, No. 15 (9 April 1969), p. 6.)

38 District conference of the Union of Czechoslovak-Soviet Friendship in Kladno, held on 28 March 1969, provided an opportunity to place contemporary support of Soviet policy into a context of the class struggle of the local miners and workers, old comrades, for whom the Soviet Union had always served as a “beacon” on their way to socially just society. Marie Zápotocká, wife of the second workers president, reportedly said at this conference: “I love the Soviet Union.” (*Hlas rudého Kladna* [Voice of Red Kladno]. In: *Ibid.*, No. 16 (16 April 1969), p. 16.)

39 NA, f. Central Committee of the Union of Czechoslovak-Soviet Friendship (ÚV SČSP), box 11, Minutes of the national debate of chairmen and secretaries of district committees of the Union of Czechoslovak-Soviet Friendship in Olomouc, 25–26 March 1969.

40 Starting in the autumn of 1969, the *Svět socialismu* magazine published a series of articles entitled “How have I become a ‘collaborator’.” In these texts, the authors gave testimonies on their unwavering friendship with the Soviet Union, unshaken even by the events of 1968.

reform politicians and journalists also formed an important part of this strategy. The underlying tone of these meetings was menacing aggression (usually with a reference to revolutionary combativeness)⁴¹ towards the outside world, which was by no means to remain only at the level of stated intentions. On the one hand, the meetings were to commit participants to further activity, on the other they were to inspire like-minded people in other parts of the country. Moreover, the meetings defined arguments and terminology – directly inspired by the store of Soviet ideology – which were to be further replicated through the actions of pro-Soviet activists and supported by printed material.⁴²

A basic logic of this argumentation was the following. Post-January, and primarily post-August development turned into the intimidation of “honest comrades,” who “had faithfully and loyally defended the policy of the Communist Party.” Accusations of collaboration and treachery were yet another display of “white terror” against all those who had stood firm on the position of internationalism.⁴³ Attacks against these people were seen as attacks against the very foundations of Marxism-Leninism and the socialist order. Therefore, these people also enjoyed a privileged position in identifying anti-Soviet and anti-socialist elements and in their removal from public life. The primary objective of the incessant enumeration of wrongdoing and injustice as well as of their overestimation was not to strengthen some kind of fellowship of those affected, but to mobilize people into taking action. In other words, any criticism of not only the Soviet invasion, but also of pro-Soviet attitudes – any references to “factional activity,” left-wing extremism, and dogmatism – later had to be accounted for by those who had made the criticism. Participants of the “friendship”

41 Slogans like “The truth is on our side,” “We will keep fighting and we will attack,” “Let us not be afraid to get rid of these people” could be heard in the debate of the District Committee of the Union of Czechoslovak-Soviet Friendship in Olomouc in late March 1969 (NA, f. Central Committee of the Union of Czechoslovak-Soviet Friendship, box 11, Minutes of the national debate of chairmen and secretaries of district committees of the Union of Czechoslovak-Soviet Friendship in Olomouc, 25–26 March 1969).

42 Apart from the illegal *Zprávy* weekly, it was the weekly for ideology and politics *Tribuna*, somewhat later published by the Bureau of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia, but mainly the magazine of the Union of Czechoslovak-Soviet Friendship. After the invasion, its editorial board completely changed, it was renamed from *Svět sovětů* [The world of the Soviets] to *Svět socialismu* [The world of socialism] and published from November 1968. Immediately, it became the platform for open supporters of pro-Soviet policies, preceding by one year the majority of the media. Even though it maintained a format of visually attractive social magazine, from the beginning it served Soviet propaganda and was used to publicly re-label people who had been socially stigmatized as collaborators and traitors to people faithfully and bravely defending the ideals of international friendship and socialism.

43 Soviet politicians liked to use the word “terror” in discussions with their Czechoslovak partners. They talked about “terror” against people “with correct Marxist opinions,” about “moral terror” of people supporting the Soviet army and the pursuit of old communists. It was clearly under their influence that the “leftist danger” was gradually erased from the agenda of Czechoslovak political leaders and replaced by calls for support and rehabilitation of “people unjustly accused.”

meetings were also reinforced in their beliefs of being the only ones who properly applied the agreements and resolutions aiming at “normalization” adopted at the highest level. And the increasing number of resolutions they could invoke also increased their political influence.

“I Will Always Feel Deep Respect”

Closed “friendship” meetings were generally organized on the initiative of individuals or diverse groups. However, the organizers usually claimed to be members of some official structure – typically one of the organizations of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia or branches of the Union of Czechoslovak-Soviet Friendship. From outside, it was therefore not clear by and for whom the meetings were organized and whether they had been approved by any authority.⁴⁴ At first, these meetings provoked the indignation and dismay not only of the broader public, but also of high-ranking officials of the relevant organizations, who often dissociated themselves from these activities, or directly condemned them as unwanted factional activity. This organizational chaos also reveals the efforts of the pro-Soviet activists to expand the spectrum of platforms that could take patronage of these meetings and on whose behalf they could speak and exert their political influence. Groups of “old,” or alternatively pre-war, distinguished members of the Communist Party represented one of these platforms. Their semi-official status was strategically convenient. Formally these groups fell under the relevant Communist Party authorities – regional, district or municipal committees of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia. However, they were also considered loose associations of a more representative character, without any practical obligations and powers, only with an “advisory” role.

It were the “old” Communist Party members who potentially best suited the image of an eternal ally of the Soviet Union, forever committed by a joint struggle against fascism; an image which formed, to a great extent, the basis of Soviet propaganda. A confession made by Gusta Fučíková in a letter sent to the meeting in the Lucerna hall in November 1989 – “I will always feel deep respect and gratitude to the Soviet people and I shall never betray these feelings” – was personal

44 This was also why it was difficult to trace back the body responsible for the meeting and find out how the lists of the invited had been made. For example, the meeting in the Čechie hall was held “under the umbrella of the District Committee of the Union of Czechoslovak-Soviet Friendship in Prague 8, based on personal invitations,” at the same time as “a debate of some communists from different Prague districts, convened by several old Communist Party members.” From the perspective of the then relatively strict organization structure of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia or the National Front, it was a rather strange grouping. Similarly, the event in Semily was allegedly organized by the 1st street organization of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia under the umbrella of the District Committee of the Union of Czechoslovak-Soviet Friendship. Ludvík Vaculík observed that the participants were “mostly old and largely uniformed” (VACULÍK, L.: *Proces v Semilech*).

and at the same time aimed at expressing the general experience of the pre-war members of the Communist Party. For Soviet officers they represented a natural nucleus of the so-called “healthy forces,” which they were to support, as well as an allied environment. And thus with the arrival of the Soviet army, throughout the country groups were being activated which acted in defence of the threatened revolutionary and socialistic ideals, primarily internationalism, claiming the authority of experienced communist veterans and labelling themselves distinguished members of the Communist Party.

However, it took some political effort to transform a diverse group of pre-war Communist Party members into one of the main allies of the Soviet army and supporters of “consolidation.” First of all, it was necessary to clarify who might and who might not use the label of “old” and “distinguished” members of the Communist Party and act on their behalf. After all, a number of “reformers” were also pre-war members of the Communist Party. However, eventually those acting on behalf of the distinguished Communist Party members were only a small group of militant opponents of the post-January policy, who openly maintained contact with the representatives of the Soviet army and who had formed according to Soviet expectations. A platform of “old” members, from which they excluded their opponents, allowed them to exert their influence through institutional channels. They took upon themselves the authority of all those (alive or dead) who had fought their entire lives for the Communist Party, suffered for it, but “got nothing in return.”

One of the earliest and most flagrant examples of an alliance between the “old” members of the Communist Party and the Soviet army was that of Ostrava, which had been very well mapped. A resolution adopted at their joint meeting at the beginning of September 1968 approved, among other things, the August invasion by the Warsaw Pact armies. It was subsequently published in the Moscow-based *Pravda* daily. The Ostrava example is extreme, not only for its timing but also with regard to its consequences. Historian Karel Jiřík very convincingly places the attacks of “old” members against the editorial team of the *Nová svoboda* [New freedom] daily and their alliance with the Soviet army in direct relation with the abduction of the Head Secretary of the Municipal Committee of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia in Ostrava, Radomír Gaj, and the editor of the *Nová svoboda* daily, Ivan Kubíček, by Soviet soldiers on 13 September 1968.⁴⁵ The abductions, as well as threats that they would be shot, were evident “interference in domestic affairs” and were denounced as unacceptable. However, cooperation of the Soviet army and the “old” members of the Communist Party in general took root. The Ostrava incident was followed by the previously mentioned meetings of “old” members in Olomouc, in Prague’s Čechie hall, and also in Trutnov, Šumperk, Nymburk, Hradec Králové and other places, usually in the presence of the Soviet army’s representatives. Resolutions in the form of open letters to higher-ranking Communist Party

45 See: JIŘÍK, K.: *Demokratizační proces v Ostravě a jeho násilné potlačení*; IDEM: *Rok 1968 a počátky normalizace v Ostravě*; IDEM: *Frakční činnost předválečných členů v Ostravě v letech 1968–1969*.

authorities were adopted at these meetings. They were usually also published in the local press.⁴⁶ Invoking their authority as distinguished members of the Communist Party and acting as the Communist Party's self-appointed spokesmen, "old" Communist Party members declared their support of "consolidation," Soviet policy and friendship with the Soviet Union, and called for improved relations with the Soviet army's troops. Over time, they increasingly criticized the local political leadership and media, calling more or less explicitly for purges. However, these were not mere declarations. In all the localities, there were enthusiastic individuals among them who also took an active part in local affairs.

Allow me a brief parenthesis. Between approximately May and June 1969, vetting and purges of responsible officials took place on regional, district and local levels. This attack on the main representatives of the "reform process" is usually related to political changes taking place at top level, particularly to the replacement of Alexander Dubček in the post of the First Secretary of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia by Gustav Husák, supported by Brezhnev, in April 1969. Personal changes in the power centre clearly inspired personal changes at local level. But at that time there were no clear instructions yet from the centre on purges at local level. The purges had different dynamics in different districts and regions. However, in all the studied examples the "old" communists and other people with links to local Soviet garrisons accelerated the purges or participated directly in them. Many of them were gradually co-opted to posts which allowed them to bring about better influence on the development of affairs. Political vetting and purges came in several waves, or it could be said that they took the form of a whirl which caught up an increasing number of people – first, political functionaries, later *nomenklatura* cadres from the ranks of professionals – leading eventually in 1970 to blanket Communist Party and non-party vetting, this time centrally announced. At the same time, people who at the beginning of the purges had "merely" been removed from important political posts were brought down further and further. Over time, their cases were reopened, and with increasing radicalization they were punished even more severely.⁴⁷ These processes, which culminated at the end of 1970, started in the late spring and early summer of 1969, in many places almost imperceptibly.

46 See, for example: Dopis zasloužilých členů strany Ústřednímu výboru KSČ; Cestou vpřed, ke komunismu [Road forward, towards communism]. In: *Naše slovo*, Vol. 11, No. 1 (3 January 1969); Staří komunisté k polednové politice [Old communists on post-January policy]. In: *Nymbursko*, Vol. 10, No. 9 (27 February 1969); Dopis starých komunistů ÚV KSČ [Letter of the old communists to the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia]. In: *Krkonošská pravda*, Vol. 11, No. 19 (8 May 1969). The *Naše slovo*, *Nymbursko* and *Krkonošská pravda* weeklies were published by District National Committees and the District Committees of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia in the towns of Šumperk, Nymburk and Trutnov.

47 See also: MAŇÁK, Jiří: *Od ústupu k porážce, od omezování k likvidaci: Postup "normalizace" a jeho vyvrcholení v "očistě" liberecké okresní organizace Komunistické strany Československa* [From retreat to defeat, from restrictions to removal: The process of "normalization" and its culmination in the "purges" of the district organization of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia in Liberec]. Praha, ÚSD AV ČR 2011.

Stained by Anti-Sovietism

Whereas in the region of northern Moravia, political vetting of district functionaries began soon after the first proactive purges at the level of the Regional Committee of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia in Ostrava in May 1969, in the district of Trutnov the first wave of political vetting was triggered by double pressure. This came both from below and above, creating a not very clear situation. An anonymous letter “warning about some political issues in the district,” and which insulted selected district functionaries in the most vulgar manner, played a certain role in this story. The denouncement was addressed to the Central Control and Review Commission of the of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia (*Ústřední kontrolní a revizní komise KSČ*), which immediately issued an instruction to the Regional Committee of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia in Hradec Králové to investigate the matter. Based on this, a commission was established to evaluate the activities of several selected district functionaries, among them the then Chairman of the District Committee of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia and the District National Committee in Trutnov. Political vetting of functionaries was also demanded by the group of “old” communists, who provided the commission with their own supporting material. At the same time, an open letter was addressed to the Central Committee of the of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia, in which the “old” members criticized, without naming anyone in particular, leading district functionaries for not confronting a growing “right-wing threat – nationalism and opportunism,” stating that they lacked a “fighting spirit and commitment to the ideology of Marxism-Leninism.” They also expressed the hope that “measures will be adopted at the May Plenum [of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia], which will also be introduced at the level of district and basic organizations” and which will allow them to part from the “nationalist extremists and anti-Soviet hysterics.”⁴⁸

This marked the beginning of a period of concentrated and joint pressure on Trutnov’s district functionaries, identified as those who openly disagreed with the presence of the Soviet army. At the May meeting of the District Committee of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia in Trutnov, one of the main spokesmen of the “old” communists, Jaroslav Metelka,⁴⁹ directly attacked several members of its Presidium. In

48 *Dopis starých komunistů ÚV KSČ*. See footnote no. 47.

49 Jaroslav Metelka (1918–1975) was a long-standing local Communist Party and state functionary, teacher and regional historian from the town of Úpice, with a consistently built biography of an anti-fascist resistance fighter. In the postwar period he worked at a series of jobs and held a number of posts in political, educational and cultural-educational institutions in the Trutnov district. He had a reputation of a controversial and conflictive person. In the spring of 1968 he attacked the long-standing secretaries of the Communist Party district committees, after August he focused on selected representatives of the “reform process.” With the onset of the “normalization,” he became a member of the District Committee of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia in Trutnov, Head of the Educational and Cultural Department of the District National Committee in Trutnov and temporarily also a director of the Museum of the Podkrkonoší Region in Trutnov. (See VAŠATA, Ondřej: Jaroslav Metelka: Historik dělnického hnutí a KSČ [A historian of the workers’ movement and the

line with the previously mentioned logic, he spoke on behalf of that “section of communists who (...) had been attacked in the most rude, vulgar and systematic manner by right-wing opportunists of the district.” He closed his speech with the words of a Soviet officer, saying that “we have to fight this struggle ourselves” and urged the resignation of those who had allegedly failed: “Those who are not firm enough in this struggle [...] who are stained by their opposition to Soviets [...] you, comrades, have to leave.”⁵⁰ At the following meeting, the Presidium of the District Committee of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia had already taken on a different formation, that is, without the presence of “stained” comrades.

At the next plenum of the District Committee of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia in Trutnov in June 1969, another distinguished member of the Communist Party focused on the main representatives of the local District National Committee. She launched her offensive by recalling “white terror,” “terrible attacks” and “moral pressure brought on all honest and loyal members of the Communist Party.” Then, she proceeded to accusations: “I denounce responsible people in our district,” that is, in the first place the Board of the District National Committee, who in August 1968 called for the “isolation of traitors and collaborators.” She then called upon the accused functionaries to account for how they complied with the highest Communist Party resolutions and for their positions on internationalism. She was seconded by the district procurator, who invoked the November, April and May resolutions of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia, which as he said “emphasized that proletarian internationalism, the relation towards the Soviet Union in particular, was one of the basic principles of Marxism-Leninism.” He demanded that relations with the Soviet Union should be one of the main criteria in the vetting of public officials.⁵¹

At the same time, the institutional background from which the attacks against selected functionaries were led was being broadened. Part of the engaged “old” members and other pro-Soviet orientated activists joined the committee of the newly established *Tribuna* weekly [new Communist Party magazine] clubs. Although established to promote subscription to the new Communist Party magazine, these clubs were used for evaluating the political situation and discrediting specific people under the influence of pro-Soviet activists. This situation rather surprised the functionaries of Communist Party District Committee in Trutnov, as did the regularity and even the vulgarity of the attacks and the vehemence with which the club’s members demanded that their requirements be met (one of the requirement was to increase contact with Soviet soldiers). Nevertheless, by stating that “these people should help us and not

Communist Party of Czechoslovakia]. In: *Historiografie Trutnovska: Krkonoše-Podkrkonoší. Suplementum S* [Historiography of the Trutnov Region: Krkonoše-Podkrkonoší. Supplement S]. Trutnov, Muzeum Podkrkonoší 2008.)

50 *SOka Trutnov*, f. OV KSČ Trutnov, box 20, Inv. No. 82, Minutes of the extraordinary plenary session of the District Committee of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia in Trutnov, 31 May 1969. I have borrowed the words of the quoted speech for the title of this article.

51 *Ibid.*, Minutes of the plenary session of the District Committee of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia in Trutnov, 24 June 1969.

put obstacles in our way,” they confirmed their influence. In the first place, this affected the criteria of evaluations and arguments originally used by a small group, and they gained some measure of general validity. At the meeting of the Presidium of the District Committee of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia in Trutnov in July 1969, when the Chairman of the local District National Committee, František Čermák, defended himself against various accusations of an anti-Soviet attitude and right-wing opportunism, which had been gathered against him by the regional commission with the help of distinguished members of the Communist Party, he was reminded by the Head Secretary of the District Committee of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia, František Hašek, of the words of a Soviet officer: “Comrade Chairman, with opinions such as yours, it is worrying that you should be a chairman of the ONV [district national committee].”⁵² Soon, due to the concentrated efforts of others, this statement was to become a reality. First, a gentlemen’s agreement was still possible – Čermák had to leave his post in the District National Committee, but he could resume his post of enterprise director. However, after further criticism by the members of the *Tribuna* Club, who accused the Presidium of the District Committee of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia in Trutnov of “a tendency to compromise, decadence and opportunism,” and as part of “the deeper analysis of the past period,” the case of the former Chairman of the National Committee was reopened.⁵³ A disciplinary commission, which also included representatives of the “old” members of the Communist Party, proposed the most severe punishment, that is, the expulsion from the Communist Party. The main aggravating circumstance in his case was that “as late as in March and April [1969] he still called Soviet troops occupiers.” The Head Secretary closed the case by saying: “I clearly told him that he would not resume the post of enterprise director.”⁵⁴

Similarly, the former Chairman of the District Committee of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia in Trutnov,⁵⁵ Vlastimil Zelený, was reproached for intentionally jeopardising “consolidation.” This allegedly manifested itself “mainly in his relation towards the Soviet Union and Soviet troops in Trutnov.” The phrasing of the relevant evaluation report leaves no doubt that the author of the report was one the “old” members of the Communist Party: “He refused to join, even passively, numerous meetings with the ‘occupiers’ in the district; he did not intervene in the hostile campaign against the debate of the representatives of the Soviet army with the SČSP 3

52 *Ibid.*, box 81, Inv. No. 123, Minutes of the Presidium meeting of the District Committee of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia in Trutnov, 8 July 1969.

53 *Ibid.*, Minutes of the Presidium meeting of the District Committee of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia in Trutnov, 12 August 1969.

54 *Ibid.*, Minutes of a meeting of the Presidium of the District Committee of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia in Trutnov, 4 November 1969.

55 Apart from the post of head secretary, in the spring of 1968, the post of chairman of the district committee was reintroduced in Trutnov. However, in the spring of 1969, the chairman became a target of the above mentioned criticism and the post was again cancelled as “duplicate.” In the summer of the same year, the case of the former chairman was re-evaluated in accordance with the outlined scenario.

[a branch of the Union of Czechoslovak-Soviet Friendship] in December 1968 [...] the first contacts between the Soviet army and communists were established without the initiative of the District Committee of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia.”⁵⁶ This strongly-worded interpretation was somewhat side-lined in the final version of the evaluation report, but the criticism that Zelený had negatively influenced “the development of relations between the citizens and the Soviet troops stationed in the district town” still prevailed.⁵⁷ The vetting resulted in his expulsion from the Communist Party and his removal from the post of secondary school headmaster.

Under the influence of criticism by the “old” Communist Party members and other pro-Soviet activists, the situation in other districts developed in a similar way. In Šumperk, the “old” communists published a resolution in early January 1969, in which, using the wording of the resolution from the Čechie hall, they approved of the Soviet invasion and, among other things, demanded the punishment of people who in their view had defamed socialist allies and their symbols.⁵⁸ There was a somewhat ironic and critical reaction to the text written by the member of the District Committee of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia in Šumperk and the director of a local branch of a bank, Alexandr Pilař. However, this polemic with the “old” members of the Communist Party turned against him in the vetting of the district Communist Party functionaries in May 1969. Later, it was used as the main argument in charges raised against him in disciplinary proceedings brought against him on the initiative and with active participation of the local “old” communists. In the first phase of the vetting, Pilař – at that time still in the post of the bank director – left the Plenum of the District Committee of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia at his own request. Everybody agreed that he was a figure who was too closely associated with “the reform process” and one of those who had refused to “accept the invasion of the armies.” In the following phase, the disciplinary commission came to the conclusion that with his “defamatory article” in the local press, “[...] he not only violated the regulations of the Communist Party but also the internal discipline of the Communist Party.” Whereas, according to the commission, the resolution adopted by the “old” Communist Party members “fully complied with the resolution adopted by the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia,” Pilař felt entitled to “subjectively” challenge it in public. The verdict was his expulsion from the Communist Party and his removal from the post of bank director.⁵⁹

This was also a more general trend in Šumperk. “Old” Communist Party members vehemently adopted positions of evaluators of the political situation and gradually acquired more and more positions within important public organs and vetting commissions. Early in October 1969, they took the initiative and presented their

56 *Ibid.*

57 *Ibid.*, Minutes of the meeting of the Presidium of the District Committee of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia in Trutnov, 24 November 1969.

58 Cestou vpřed, ke komunismu. See footnote no. 47.

59 *SOKa Šumperk*, f. District Committee of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia in Šumperk, box 87, Inv. No. 75, Minutes of the meeting of the Presidium of the District Committee of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia in Šumperk, 16 October 1969.

evaluation of the local press. However, they also commented in it on the overall situation. Claiming that the June vetting of the Plenum of the District Committee of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia in Šumperk “went only halfway,” they proposed a number of “cadre” changes. They mainly agitated against the Chairman of the Municipal Committee of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia in Šumperk, Antonín Mareš. Despite the fact that Mareš had already left the post at his own request, “old” Communist Party members demanded his official removal from the post and disciplinary punishment, because he was “swept up by a wave of anti-Sovietism.” Furthermore, they demanded the punishment of the Secretary of the District Committee of the Czechoslovak Union of Women in Šumperk for her “anti-Soviet and right-wing opinions.” She was criticized for daring, together with other members of the union, to publish an enquiry sent to the Ministry of Interior into when the publishing of the pro-Soviet *Zprávy* weekly would be prohibited. “Old” Communist Party members also protested against “scribblers,” who had not condemned “acts of hooligans against the Communist Party and allied armies,” and put together a list of “grave” articles published in the local press.⁶⁰ Changes in the editorial board of the *Naše slovo* weekly followed shortly after, and disciplinary proceedings and “cadre” changes were gradually carried out by the end of the year.

The attitude towards the presence of Soviet soldiers also gradually became the main criterion of political vetting in Šumperk. It even ended the political careers of those functionaries who were otherwise evaluated positively in many aspects of the ongoing “normalization” policy.⁶¹ This was the case of the retired Chairman of the Municipal Committee of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia in Šumperk, Mareš, who did not escape a disciplinary proceeding. Its conclusion was that “his attitude towards establishing friendly contacts with the Soviet army officials did not contribute to the normalization of the political situation [...] he did not personally contribute to it and to this day there have not been any substantial results in establishing friendly relations at the initiative of the MěV KSČ [Municipal Committee of the of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia].”⁶² Similarly, what sealed the fate of the Chairman of the Municipal National Committee was his “constant and obstinate refusal of contact with the representatives of the Soviet army” and “justification of attacks and invectives against members of the local Soviet garrison and the Soviet Union on the grounds that the sole cause of this was their presence.”⁶³

60 *Ibid.*, Minutes of the meeting of the Presidium of the District Committee of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia in Šumperk, 8 October 1969.

61 Emil Gímeš described the evaluation of the District Committee of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia in Olomouc and its members in a similar way: “The evaluation focused on very questionable details [...] mainly on the fact whether the person always stood on the side of Soviet policy.” (GÍMEŠ, E.: *Počátky normalizačního režimu na Olomoucku*, p. 41.)

62 *SOka Šumperk*, f. District Committee of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia in Šumperk, box 87, Inv. No. 75, Minutes of the meeting of the Presidium of the District Committee of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia in Šumperk, 8 November 1969.

63 *Ibid.*, Minutes of the meeting of the Presidium of the District Committee of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia in Šumperk, 8 October 1969.

Though important actors in promoting Soviet interests, “old” Communist Party members were definitely not the only ones.⁶⁴ In practice, it was more a question of creating a network of actors, acting from different strategic positions and mutually supporting one another in their efforts. At the beginning of September 1969, distinguished and founding members of the Communist Party met in Olomouc. Apart from district Communist Party functionaries, the meeting was also attended by a commander of the political department of the Soviet army’s local garrison. Within the framework of evaluating the political situation, they also debated at the University in Olomouc. They approved the text of an open letter in which they criticized the attitudes of “the greater proportion of communists and academic functionaries of the university,” claiming that they hampered “consolidation” and acted contrary to the resolutions of the latest meetings of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia. The letter ended with an appeal that it was “high time” to evaluate these attitudes and draw conclusions.⁶⁵ Responses in support of this initiative were published shortly afterwards.⁶⁶ They represent a showcase of institutions whose employees expressed pro-Soviet attitudes and maintained contact with Soviet soldiers. Later, when the Presidium of the District Committee of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia in Olomouc decided to dissolve the Committee of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia at the University in Olomouc, it could record in the minutes of the meeting that the decision had been taken “on the grounds of criticism.”⁶⁷ Purges of the university leadership followed somewhat later. The new rector received a delegation of Soviet soldiers in March 1970.

“We Can Talk about Anything after All”

In the course of 1969, all those who had openly opposed the presence of the Soviet army, who had at a certain stage challenged the compromise Communist Party and government resolutions and who had in any way criticized the pro-Soviet groups were gradually removed from public life. Commissions that were established to evaluate the functionaries were provided with minutes from the meetings of the respective Communist Party bodies. Evaluators then examined the opinions that

64 It is not possible to describe here in any detail the activities of the Union of Czechoslovak-Soviet Friendship, which was parallelly renewed since the autumn of 1968 with considerable assistance of the Soviet Union, often with the assistance of the “old” Communist Party members and other sympathizers of the Soviet army. It played a key role in establishing contact between Czechoslovak society and the Soviet army, especially in facilitating these activists admission to different institutions.

65 Otevřený dopis komunistům Univerzity Palackého [Open letter to the communists at Palacký University]. In: *Stráž lidu*, Vol. 25, No. 106 (6 September 1969).

66 Z rezolucí na otevřený dopis komunistům na Univerzitě Palackého [From the resolutions adopted in reaction to the open letter to the communists at Palacký University]. In: *Ibid.*, No. 110 (16 September 1969).

67 *Ibid.*, k. 126, Minutes of the meeting of the Presidium of the District Committee of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia in Olomouc, 15 September 1969.

had been voiced, and by whom. Out of the often ambiguous material, references and credentials, the main evaluation criterion eventually became relations towards Soviet soldiers or their local allies. Some of the latter then, in the role of evaluators, marked passages with reference to themselves or to their Soviet allies. In this way, allusions, critical remarks and arguments which had been made during the period of relative open-mindedness were transformed into “attacks” and “wrongdoings.” By tracing them back in time, the main saboteurs and enemies of the renewed social order were identified. It is certainly no coincidence that from the very beginning the Soviets insisted on a comprehensive “evaluation” of the post-January development from the central to the local level. The situation in the localities where Soviet troops were stationed shows that from the summer of 1969, the attitude of functionaries towards contact with Soviet soldiers changed, among other things, under the influence of the evaluations. Open rejection of contact with the Soviet army had clear consequences. The risk of being accused of anti-Soviet attitudes forced the functionaries to demonstrate that they were not anti-Soviet and that they had no objections to contact with the Soviet army. Moreover, visits of certain individuals in Soviet garrisons, over which official political authorities had no control, unnerved the officials and compelled them to take the initiative.

Thus, at the meeting of the Presidium of the District Committee of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia in Trutnov in August 1969, its Head Secretary František Hašek recommended an “immediate meeting” with the representatives of the Soviet army in order to “clarify certain issues, because a small group of comrades visits the garrison, evaluates the district committee, as well as individual functionaries, and subjectively informs Soviet comrades, who then accordingly draw conclusions on our work.” The following debate centred merely on how to justify the visits in order to avoid the impression that “we do not make free and independent decisions in our work” but do what “was dictated to us by Soviet soldiers.” Once unlocked, it was easy to swing the doors wide open. The Presidium members agreed that it was wise to inform Soviet soldiers so that they could “form an unbiased opinion” and see that the leadership of the district committee sought “solutions in accordance with the Communist Party line.” After all, “we can talk about anything. [...] Such an open discussion between comrades might be helpful. We should also allow them to visit some enterprises and meet our people.”⁶⁸

Starting in autumn of 1969, Soviet soldiers were getting where they wanted to be since their arrival. In September 1969, when the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia officially declared the August 1968 invasion an act of “friendly assistance,” the situation in regions was already prepared for a broadly conceived “friendship.” First of all, the relevant bodies themselves began to take over the initiative and make plans for developing contact between Soviet soldiers and citizens, as well as for integrating Soviet representatives in the traditional

68 *SOka Trutnov*, f. District Committee of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia in Trutnov, box 81, Inv. No. 123, Minutes of the meeting of the Presidium of the District Committee of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia in Trutnov, 19 August 1969.

communist celebrations and ceremonies. “The entire period of the preparations for the 25th anniversary of the liberation of Czechoslovakia, [...] the anniversary of the Great October Socialist Revolution and the 100th anniversary of the birth of V. I. Lenin clearly calls for maximizing the use of the Soviet soldiers’ presence to develop and strengthen their friendship with our citizens and youth,” said the proposal approved by the Presidium of the District Committee of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia in Šumperk.⁶⁹ The political and social mobilization surrounding the celebrations of anniversaries provided a number of opportunities for connecting debates, lectures, cultural events, commitments and establishing new branches of the Union of Czechoslovak-Soviet Friendship with the participation of the Soviet army. And most importantly, the tradition of remembering the historical role of the Soviet Union during various anniversaries “directly called for” updating these anniversaries in accordance with contemporary political needs. In other words, the celebrations of the Great October Socialist Revolution, Lenin’s birth and the liberation of Czechoslovakia also provided a good opportunity to appreciate the “friendly assistance” provided by the Soviet Union in 1968. This is shown by the presence and speeches of Soviet officers. How quickly these updates became obligatory is reflected in the indignant reaction of the Presidium of the District Committee of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia in Trutnov to a speech given by one of the functionaries, who during the celebrations of the October Revolution anniversary in 1969 “only spoke about the time when the Great October Socialist Revolution was born, omitting altogether the events of last year and failing to express gratitude to the Soviet Union in his speech.”⁷⁰ Finally an appropriate time had come to make use of relations between Soviet soldiers and their supporters, so far maintained privately and unofficially. This is well illustrated by the case of two teachers from the north Moravian districts of Šumperk and Jeseník.

“You Would Not Believe All the Arrangements We Had to Make”

For their initiative in establishing contact with the Soviet garrison in Jeseník, these teachers were nominated in 1970 for the state Decoration for Merit in Building

69 *SOka Šumperk*, f. District Committee of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia in Šumperk, box 87, Inv. No. 75, Minutes of the meeting of the Presidium of the District Committee of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia in Šumperk, 16 October 1969, Proposal on increasing contacts between workers and youth with Soviet soldiers stationed in our district of Šumperk and in Jeseník.

70 *SOka Trutnov*, f. District Committee of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia in Trutnov, box 81, Inv. No. 123, Minutes of the meeting of the Presidium of the District Committee of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia, 18 November 1969.

the State⁷¹ and for the Medal for Strengthening of Friendship in Arms.⁷² From the supporting material, we learn that both these teachers maintained, on their own initiative, contact with the representatives of Soviet army from as early as autumn of 1968. They also helped to bring about further contact (for example with the local agricultural cooperative farm or with the branch of the Union of Czechoslovak-Soviet Friendship) and organized mutual visits and official celebrations. Klára Kožuchová, at the time a primary-school teacher in the small town of Javorník, “spoke in Russian to the Soviet soldiers and gathered citizens” during the liberation celebrations in the garrison town of the Soviet army in Jeseník in May 1969. Both teachers actively intervened in local politics. Kožuchová participated in the meeting of communist teachers held on 4 September 1969 in Prague, at which the newly appointed Minister of Education, Jaromír Hrbek, spoke about the need for thorough purges. A week later, she joined the district meeting of school headmasters of the Šumperk region, which adopted “the resolution for all teachers and educational workers in the district.” It spoke about the need to redress “everything that has been committed since January 1968,” address the “displays of anti-Sovietism,” educate in the spirit of proletarian internationalism, re-establish contact with schools in the Soviet Union and “build up a healthy core of teaching staff by all available means.”⁷³ Since the autumn of 1969, she actively published articles in the local and national press. In November, she was co-opted to the plenum of the District Committee of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia in Šumperk, filling a new vacancy after a wave of purges. The second decorated teacher, Emílie Blehová, who was the headmaster of a primary school in the village of Žulová, became a member of the District Committee Presidium. Both teachers were appointed to posts in which they later participated in evaluations of the *nomenklatura* cadres, such as school headmasters, and later also in Communist Party vetting. For both of them, this political development also meant an advance in their professional careers. In the summer of 1970, Blehová left the post of headmaster of the village primary school and became a district school inspector. In February 1970, Kožuchová replaced the headmaster of a primary school in the town of Javorník, after his evaluation had changed from conditionally reliable to politically unreliable.⁷⁴ After several years she became the headmaster of a grammar school in the town of Jeseník.

71 *SOKA Šumperk*, f. District Committee of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia in Šumperk, box 88, Inv. No. 75, Minutes of the meeting of the Presidium of the District Committee of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia in Šumperk, 27 February 1970.

72 *Ibid.*, Minutes of the meeting of the Presidium of the District Committee of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia in Šumperk, 2 April 1970.

73 Resolution of the participants of the meeting of primary school headmasters, chairmen of basic organizations of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia, works committees of the Revolutionary Trade Unions Movement (ZV ROH) and workers in education. In: *Naše slovo*, Vol. 11, No. 38 (17 September 1969).

74 *SOKA Šumperk*, f. District Committee of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia in Šumperk, box 88, Inv. No. 75, Minutes of the meeting of the Presidium of the District Committee of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia in Šumperk, 19 February 1970.

In September 1969, headmaster of the primary school in Žulová, Emília Blehová, used her personal contacts with Soviet soldiers and invited their representatives for a debate with teachers and with pupils of the 8th and 9th grade. This was the very first school in the Šumperk district that exposed its pupils to a debate with Soviet soldiers. During the visit, the soldiers talked about the Second World War's Carpathian-Dukla Operation and the liberation of Czechoslovakia from the fascists, distributed badges to the children and agreed on another visit.⁷⁵ This gave rise to a tradition of meetings between the children, teachers and Soviet soldiers. A year later, this founding moment was remembered in the national magazine *Svět socialismu* [The World of Socialism]: "It was 5 October 1969. [...] Teachers and children were looking forward to meeting the sons of those who had brought freedom to our country in 1945. Their children hearts were also poisoned in 1968. [...] But the sowing of hatred by the right-wingers did not fall on fertile ground in Žulová."⁷⁶ With time, the importance of this "historical event" increased – this was the very first school to establish contact with Soviet soldiers not only on district but also on national level.⁷⁷ What is important is that it became a model which was gradually followed by other schools.

Klára Kožuchová, in turn, in cooperation with other teachers, prepared a joint performance by pupils and Soviet soldiers on the occasion of the celebration of the Great October Socialist Revolution. At a gala evening held in Javorník's cultural centre on 9 November 1969, the pupils of local schools sang together with the cultural ensemble of the Soviet garrison in Jeseník.⁷⁸ The importance of this event, highlighted by the visit of Gusta Fučková in Jeseník's Soviet garrison, also went far beyond the boundaries of the district. In a story published in the *Svět socialismu* magazine, one of the participating teachers shared some information on the details of its preparation, for example, that the children had prepared for it for more than a month and that a rehearsal had taken place in the Soviet garrison. She also added: "You would not believe all the arrangements we had to make before we could put these children on the stage with the Soviet soldiers. First, we had to ask their parents for consent. [...] This was the very first and the most important step

75 Učitelé podporují politiku strany [Teachers support the policy of the Communist Party]. In: *Naše slovo*, Vol. 11, No. 40 (1 October 1969).

76 Je správná učitelka [She is a good teacher]. In: *Svět socialismu*, Vol. 3, No. 51 (16 December 1970), p. 22.

77 "Our school was the first one in the republic to organize a debate between teachers and Soviet soldiers in 1969. At the time when many functionaries did not have things clear and stayed on the sidelines, our teachers, communists and non-communists, met with Soviet soldiers at friendly debates, visited the Soviet garrison in Jeseník with the children, organized entertaining afternoons, demonstrations of combat vehicles, etc." (*SOKA Šumperk*, f. District Committee of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia in Šumperk, box 468, Inv. No. 1085, Minutes of the annual meeting of the basic organization of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia of the primary school in Žulová, 13 February 1973.)

78 Z oslav 52. výročí VŘSR [From the celebrations of the 52th anniversary of the Great October Socialist Revolution]. In: *Naše slovo*, Vol. 11, No. 46 (12 November 1969).

in the preparation of the event, and at the same time a first test of the attitudes of our citizens. [...] Only a few parents refused.”⁷⁹

Conclusion

Within a few years, contact between Czechoslovak society and Soviet officers gradually “normalized.” It was no longer the domain of radicalized internationalists who had united in the struggle against “the reform process.” It became just one of many broadly performed, acknowledged and publicly propagated expressions of political loyalty to the regime. Principally in the early 1970s, local media reported on the “friendly visits,” debates, voluntary work and cultural and social events with Soviet soldiers. Soviet soldiers could be seen in factories, agricultural cooperatives, at schools of all educational levels, even kindergartens, Pioneer (the communist youth organization) camps and balls. As living proof of eternal Czechoslovak-Soviet friendship “sealed with blood,” Soviet soldiers participated in official ceremonies, (again) shed their blood, this time only at the blood donation centre of Olomouc hospital, or assisted in the ceremonial handovers of the first identity cards to young people. “Friendship” events with the Soviet army fitted into a broader framework of vehemently renewed “friendship” with the Soviet Union and the adoration of anything Soviet. With the advent of the so-called “normalization,” this again struck Czechoslovakia, taking the culture of its public discourse back to the 1950s.

Although on the level of lived experience, different forms of “twinning” are often considered formal acts without any deeper meaning, one cannot disregard certain circumstances. First, from the perspective of Soviet policy it was a well thought-out and centrally planned propaganda activity with the aim of reminding Czechoslovakia of its commitments to a friend who had made and was still making enormous sacrifices. Secondly, it cannot be ignored that (as I have tried to show with this text) the phase of ostentatious twinning with the Soviet army – somewhat embarrassing, somewhat ridiculous, but in any case to a great extent formal and seemingly harmless – was preceded by another, less visible phase. During this phase, the interests of a certain, albeit minor, part of Czechoslovak society merged with the interests of Soviet policy, which was personalized in many places by Soviet officers. Together these people contributed to the “purges” of the local political and public life, pressed for the Soviet interpretation of the Prague Spring and the August invasion, and helped to discredit any public manifestation of opposition to the Soviet army’s presence and to the policy of the Soviet Union. Collaborators of Soviet soldiers significantly contributed to the “normalization” from below and also paved the way for mass “twinning” events.

However, their fate in the further political development was not that clear. As is well known, radicalism did not fit the concept of “normalization” endorsed by

79 Rozum a srdce [Reason and heart]. In: *Svět socialismu*, Vol. 2, No. 50 (10 December 1969), p. 10.

the Husák leadership. The same applied to the overemphasis these people put on their heroic merits in supporting the Soviet military invasion. Thus, some of these activists were later removed from their posts again, and this situation might have left them feeling aggrieved at the “turncoats.” Others, on account of their advanced age, soon passed away. However, there were also many of them who had found their place in “normalization” society and continued – whether from honorary positions of distinguished communists or from officially held positions – to wave the flag of Czechoslovak-Soviet friendship; with the difference that they waved it with considerably more enthusiasm than other people. No matter their subsequent fate, as collaborators of the Soviet army they clearly played a historical role in the early stage of the so-called “normalization.”

The study was prepared with the support of the Czech Science Foundation (GAČR) as part of grant No. 17-06744S entitled “Czech Society and the Soviet Army in 1968–1991.”

The Czech version of this article, entitled „Ten boj si musíte vybojovat sami!“ Politická role Sovětské armády a jejích místních spojenců v „normalizaci“ Československa (1968–1969), was originally published in Soudobé dějiny, Vol. 25, No. 3–4 (2018), pp. 400–432.

Translated by Blanka Medková

Debates on Czechoslovakism and Czechoslovaks at the End of the Federation, 1989–1992¹

Tomáš Zahradníček

The year 1989 reopened the question of the future of the Czechoslovak state. Czech society sought answers to what to do next especially in the past – the just-closed era of state socialism was a dead end in Czech debates from which it was necessary to back out. But how far? The idealized interwar First Republic was most often reminded as a model. That these feelings were not shared by Slovak society came to light relatively soon after the regime change, especially during the Federal Assembly internal debates on institutional reforms and later on the new name of the state. Both the unanimous opposition of Slovak political representation to political reform efforts reducing powers of Slovakia's representatives in the federal legislature, and the critical statements of some Slovak representatives surprised Czech society. The Slovak tradition of criticizing Czechoslovakism was virtually unknown to the Czechs. Moreover, the criticism came as a move in the opposite direction instead of the erroneously assumed appreciation of the First Republic: forward, towards the completion of the federalization and the achievement of true equality between the two national republics within the federation and its institutions.

1 The original text was part of a wider compendium called *Čechoslovakismus* [Czechoslovakism], which will be published in 2019 by the publishing house Nakladatelství Lidové noviny. That is why the text focuses only on the Czech role in the process of breaking up the federal state.

Debates about the developments to the date thus commenced. It was a matter of unexpected difficulty, in which several successive Czech and Slovak political languages intermingled with their conceptions and terminology, many of which were only partially comprehensible on the other side of the linguistic boundary. One of the terms that aroused the most turmoil throughout the debate was “Czechoslovakism.” It is its (un)presence and changing meanings in the Czech and Slovak debates in the federation’s final years that constitute the axis of this study. An essential characteristic of a historical concept is its ambiguity and permeability through various meanings and contexts.² To trace who, when and in what context used “Czechoslovakism” between 1990–1992, and what content this term acquired in it, will serve to analyze Czech-Slovak relations in the last phase of the Czechoslovak state.

Following this notion and the dynamics of the Czech-Slovak discussions will cause the Czech post-dissident liberal camp represented in particular by Czech Prime Minister Petr Pithart to be downplayed in the interpretation. This is due to their reflective use of historical terms, which makes Pithart’s entire interpretation merely flicker as an interpreter of Slovak attitudes, and also to the related waning of their influence on public opinion, culminating in defeat in the 1992 elections. Perhaps it is sufficient to say that the paths that lead to such an outcome are described in a rich body of commemorative and analytic book production, elaborating on Pithart’s concise summary in the autumn of 1992: “It sunk me in the end. [...] The Slovaks were right about a number of things.”³

The story begins before 1989 and requires looking at the baseline. In the 1980s, the term “Czechoslovakism” appeared with unequal intensity in the public space of the Czechoslovak Socialist Republic. In Slovakia, criticism of a centralized Czechoslovakia before the federalization of 1968 was a key part of the basic register of political and journalistic discourse and one of the most important legitimization motives of the then ruling class. Leading representatives emphasized the issue as those who pushed through the establishment of a Slovak state within Czechoslovakia. In their speeches, Czechoslovakism was described with outspoken criticism as a bourgeois ideology serving mainly to deny Slovak national autonomy, as an ideology of Czech domination. Often recalling the pre-history of the cultural rapprochement

2 VAŠÍČEK, Zdeněk: *Obrazy (minulosti): O bytí, poznání a podání minulého času* [Images (of the past): On the being, knowledge and submission of the past time]. Praha, Prostor 1996, p. 51. Compare: HORSKÝ, Jan: *Obraz, pojem, vyprávění: Příspěvek Zdeňka Vašíčka k teorii historických věd* [Image, concept, narrative: Zdeněk Vašíček’s contribution to the theory of historical sciences]. In: VAŠÍČEK, Pavel (ed.): “*Z přirozené potřeby kritického ducha*”: *Reflexe života a díla Zdeňka Vašíčka* [From the natural need of a critical spirit: Reflection of the life and work of Zdeněk Vašíček]. Praha, Triáda 2016, p. 155–162. See also: STORCHOVÁ, Lucie et al.: *Koncepty a dějiny: Proměny pojmů v současné historické vědě* [Concepts and history: Metamorphosis in contemporary historical science]. Praha, Scriptorium 2014, pp. 51–52.

3 PITHART, Petr – KLUSÁKOVÁ, Jana: *Nadoraz... o Havlovi, Mečiarovi a revoluci, která požírá své děti* [To the edge... about Havel, Mečiar and the revolution that devours its children]. Praha, Primus 1992, p. 70.

between the two nations and taking into account the positive aspects of the First Republic for Slovak society, exceptionally also without them. In a rather extreme formulation of writer Vladimír Mináč, chairman of *Matica Slovenská* (Slovakia's scientific and cultural institution dedicated to issues concerning the Slovak nation), in a debate to mark the 70th anniversary of Czechoslovakia in the autumn of 1988, Czechoslovakism was a "governmental idea" designed to hide the fact that, with the creation of a common state, Slovaks "groaned from one tutelage to another. From Hungary to Czechoslovakia [...]." Mináč therefore suggested not to celebrate the creation of Czechoslovakia, but only its federalization. "For Slovaks, the only or at least the central function of celebrating the creation of Czechoslovakia ought to be the affirmation of Slovak statehood within Czechoslovakia."⁴

The thematization of Czechoslovakism and its critical condemnation are also to be found in period representational publications or in school civic education. For example, in the first volume of the *Malá československá encyklopedie* [A short Czechoslovak encyclopaedia] from 1984, a Czech-published book produced in collaboration with Slovak authors, the term was set out in detail in a somewhat special entry corresponding to the form taken by Slovak historiography of the 1960s: as "an ideological and political concept of the Czech and associated parts of the Slovak bourgeoisie; it was based on the fiction of a single Czechoslovak nation, denying autonomy for the Slovak nation. [...] After the creation of the Czechoslovak Republic, it became the official state ideology. [...] In reality, however, Czechoslovakism shrouded the exploitative policy of Czech capital towards Slovakia and the *de facto* unequal position of Slovaks in the republic; it did not lead to the rapprochement between the two nations, but instead objectively created the ground for the growth Slovak bourgeois nationalism and separatism." In this extremely unfavourable situation, the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia entered into the dictionary interpretation and corrected it in three steps: firstly, by rejecting Czechoslovakism and the rule of Czech bourgeoisie in the First Republic; secondly, by joining the government and the Košice Government Programme in 1945; and thirdly, by federalization in 1968.⁵ The same scheme – without explicitly mentioning the term – was followed in the 1980s by the curriculum of political education at second level of Czech primary schools.⁶

In the 1980s, the concept of "Czechoslovakism" was not even found in the vocabulary of the Communist Party normalization leadership. Alois Indra, chairman of the Federal Assembly and a member of the Communist Party Central Committee, repeatedly expounded on the birth and purpose of this institution, noted in a representative publication of the 1980s that by federalizing the state, the

4 *Literárny týždenník*, Vol. 1, No. 2 (1988), p. XX.

5 *Malá československá encyklopedie* [A short Czechoslovak encyclopaedia], Vol. I, Praha 1984, p. 766.

6 JELÍNKOVÁ, Antonie – PRUŠÁKOVÁ, Viera: *Občanská nauka pro 6. ročník základní školy* [Civic education for the 6th year of primary school], Praha 1989 (5th revised edition), pp. 78–79.

“Communist Party of Czechoslovakia carried out one of the essential parts of its long-term programme, [it] achieved a fair arrangement of relations between Czechs and Slovaks as fraternal nations,” however, without elaborating it in the manner of Slovak texts.⁷

Until 1989, the language of official interpretations was therefore meaningfully identical in the Slovak and Czech versions, but they were unequal in status. The Slovak version was essentially an original, itself a result of mainly critical debates on interwar Czechoslovakia, promoted together with the topic of federalization into encyclopaedias and political education textbooks. In Slovakia, criticism of the First Republic and Czechoslovakism was a politically effective theme, often repeated in detail, widely accepted, appearing in other political, academic, journalistic and literary texts and speeches. It was an intricately won, satisfying and politically useful answer to one of the central questions of recent Slovak history.

This was not true in the Czech environment. On the contrary, from the 1960s, both historiography and public opinion tended toward the rehabilitation of the First Republic against postwar criticism regarded as excessive and unfair after the experiences of further development. The criticism of Czech policy toward Slovakia fell within this large family of communist severity toward the First Republic, which was, however, used less frequently than in the 1950s. Beyond the language of the humanities, the term “Czechoslovakism” was not used at all in the Czech environment of the 1970–80s, not even in political speeches of Czech members of the Communist Party’s normalization leadership or in journalistic discourse. Despite the existence of dictionary entries, it was unusual for the Czech public, unintelligible in content and its critical charge essentially unacceptable.⁸

At the very end of the 1980s, the rehabilitation of the First Republic, begun in the 1960s, was returning in another wave on the occasion of Czechoslovakia’s 70th anniversary. In texts written by Czech historians from 1988–89 published in vast copies for the general public, censorship permitted texts that completely missed the abovementioned official image and dealt with the problem of the Czech-Slovak relationship in the tradition of First Republic interpretations, in which Slovakia’s accession was simply established as a positive historical event, a joint political success.⁹ In this climate, Masaryk’s Society was created as one of the newly established

7 INDRA, Alois: *Československo osmdesátých let* [Czechoslovakia of the 1980s]. In: *Československo osmdesátých let* [Czechoslovakia of the 1980s]. Praha, Orbis 1985, nonpaged.

8 I think that the few Czech treatises on “Czechoslovakism” from this period should be read as a polemic with the official categorical rejection by Slovak authors, even if the texts frame themselves as a critique of bourgeois ideology and do not contain explicit polemical passages. Compare for example: KOLEJKA, Josef: *O teorii a cílech ideologie buržoazního čechoslovakismu* [On the theory and goals of the ideology of bourgeois Czechoslovakism]. In: *Sborník prací Filozofické fakulty brněnské univerzity. C. Řada historická* [Collection of works of the Faculty of Philosophy of Brno University. C. Historical series], Vol. 35, No. C33 (1986), pp. 33–41.

9 See: GALANDAUER, Jan: *T. G. Masaryk a vznik ČSR* [T. G. Masaryk and the creation of Czechoslovakia]. Praha, Melantrich 1988; KLIMEK, Antonín: *Jak se dělal mír roku 1919: Československo na konferenci ve Versailles* [How peace was made in 1919: Czechoslovakia at

opposition platforms, and its co-founder and dissident historian Jaroslav Mezník showed by research among workers at Brno's Transporta factory, where he worked as a warehouse keeper, a high degree of idealization of the First Republic among young workers and local Communist Party functionaries.¹⁰

The Slovak Critics and "New Czechoslovakism"

The aforementioned different relation to the First Republic in Czech and Slovak environments became fully apparent after the collapse of the last communist government and the associated censorship practices protecting public space from politically undesirable communications. During the so-called "hyphen war" in the Federal Assembly, the one-word Czechoslovakia interpreted on this occasion by some Slovak speakers as a vestige of Czechoslovakism disappeared from the name of the state. In the Czech environment, on the other hand, nostalgia for the First Republic developed, its political language returned to circulation, the basic political library of the interwar 20 years became available again in re-editions, and the First Republic's advocacy was published in the press, including explaining efforts to create a Czechoslovak political nation. They evidenced a vivid belief that the project of a great Czechoslovakia was essentially correct and that the attempt to form a political nation was at least partially successful, which was reinforced by the public with discussed examples from German, Slovak or Ukrainian environments.¹¹

The term of "Czechoslovakism," until then still present thanks to Slovak representatives co-determining the content of federal political texts, disappeared from this level of Czech and became a Slovak word. Conversely, the outdated term "Čechoslovák" [the Czechoslovak] was returning to Czech public language, living until 1989 in the colloquial language of older generations and non-political texts, and common in contact with foreigners (sports and other national representations). It did not apply in the pre-1989 public political debates. Even if one of the officials authorized to make political speeches spontaneously used it, he would not be allowed to circulate it as political surveillance was behind every such speaker in the

the Versailles conference]. Praha, Melantrich 1989. I would point out that we have in the press a form dismissed by censorship, so without further sources, extreme caution is required in interpreting copyright intent on the basis of the printed version. The promotional and press apparatus not only censored the articles, but also corresponded and transcribed them, often beyond recognition. For a specific case from an area close to our issue, see: GALANDAUER, Jan: Článek Rudého práva k 50. výročí skonu T. G. Masaryka [A *Rudé právo* daily article on the 50th anniversary of T. G. Masaryk]. In: *Masarykův sborník* [Masaryk proceedings], Vol. XIV (2006–2008), Praha 2009, pp. 381–398.

10 MEZNÍK, Jaroslav: *Můj život za vlády komunistů (1948–1989)* [My Life under the communists (1948–1989)]. Brno, Matice moravská 2005, p. 283.

11 At the height of this wave at the end of 1991, there was debate in the media and in the Federal Assembly about the re-joining of Transcarpathia. Compare: ZHRADNÍČEK, Tomáš: Something Missing: Czech Society and Transcarpathia after 1989. In: *Central European Papers*, Vol. 5, No. 1 (2017), pp. 72–80.

form of professional political apparatus workers and media content censorship. The term had a positive effect in the Czech environment, its use by politically informed speakers in the domestic political context in public debates had a special effect after 1989 and meant a dismissive reaction to critics of interwar Czechoslovakia. It included a reminder of the Czech merits of Slovakia's development and a show of pride in the inherited form of this historical identity. This "Czechoslovak," who returned to the Czech political language in the spring of 1990, was thus the proud heir to Czechoslovak unity politics, who either did not know the critics of Czechoslovakism or considered them irrelevant, or pointed out that their authors had historically been the bearers of far more discredited identities than the innocent and at heart positive idea of neighbourly proximity and aid (he described the critics of Czechoslovakism as communists or fascists).

In his article "Naše slovenská otázka" [Our Slovak question] from the *Literární noviny* daily in early May 1990, writer Ludvík Vaculík stated: "I am a Czech of Moravian cloth, as for education, civic opinion and working ambition I am a Czechoslovak. Ever since I was a child I thought of a Czechoslovak state; I had no reason to think separately of Bohemia and Moravia except for some poetic or funny reasons. I considered my territory to be Czechoslovak, all the great Slovaks were Czechoslovaks to me." This generationally distinctive Czech credo in the article resulted in a call for the division of the state for the impossibility of keeping it together because of Slovakia's need for emancipation and also for its practical uselessness. "To be a Czechoslovak, that is a decent task. Being just a Czech will be a piece of cake for all of us before a Slovak," Vaculík asserted. "After all, even security is a very different question in Europe today than when we Czechs were Czechoslovaks. – How everything is changed at once, only when one acknowledges it."¹² Thus ended perhaps the most influential Czech journalistic text of 1990. What did Vaculík's "Czechoslovak" mean? Undoubtedly a national affiliation in the sense of the main civic identity shaped on the basis of Czech "nationality" by education and upbringing. According to other Czech voices from this debate, the "Czechoslovaks" still existed as a significant, according to some estimates even the predominant national identity, but without official standing in the federated republic.

In the spring of 1991, sociologist Vladimír Čermák wrote an essay entitled *Panochida za československý národ* [Memorial service for the Czechoslovak nation], in which he spoke of the existence of a "multi-million Czechoslovak national minority, kept secret from the world and the domestic population," which was not allowed to manifest itself after 1945 because of communist politics and was now subject to nationalist campaigns in both republics. "If we are to witness the death of the Czechoslovak nation, we can at least hope that this disintegration will have a certain culture," Čermák pointed out. In a longer look back at the theory and

12 VACULÍK, Ludvík: Naše slovenská otázka [Our Slovak question], *Literární noviny*, Vol. 1, No. 5 (1990). Cited from: VACULÍK, Ludvík: *Nad jezerem škaradě hrát: Výběr z publicistiky 1990–1995* [Play ugly over the lake: A selection from journalism 1990–1995]. Praha, Ivo Železný 1996, p. 11.

practice of Czechoslovakism, he had only words of praise for it. In fact, he thought the project was ahead of its time as an attempt to integrate the European West and East. He drew attention to the fact that Czechoslovak identity was a practical choice for some citizens of different nations and languages: “For decades before the foundation stones were laid for the integration of Europe, a programme of nation-building, as well as of a nation uniting the peoples of Western and Eastern Europe, was announced and implemented. For decades, those born of mixed marriages have crossed this fictional bridge, young people finding life partners other than their nationalities, those who, for work or other reasons, have found a temporary, sometimes permanent, home on the other side of the republic. They include many of those who originally claimed a nationality other than Czech or Slovak, but embraced the idea of Czechoslovakism, and wanted to live in that state.”¹³ We will see further that census results taken several months after the publication of this text did not confirm Čermák’s numerical estimates.

In May 1990, Vladimír Mináč named this Czech journalistic wave, in a controversy with Vaculík’s article, “new Czechoslovakism” – an opinion rejecting real debate with Slovak partners and the idea of equal partnership in general. According to Mináč, its explosion in early 1990 caused a shock in Slovakia that quickly helped the nascent Slovak separatism to its feet.¹⁴

Mináč’s pejorative-meaning term “new Czechoslovakism” is well suited to describe the Czech restitution phenomenon in domestic political reasoning. It was part of a wider family of return policies, with a succession of laws about the past including, among other things, the return of some nationalized and expropriated property (restitution), the return of symbols and names. A move to “back” to pre-communist governments that communist rule “spoiled.”¹⁵ This was also demonstrated in the Czech-Slovak relationship towards the conduct of the new political representation.

In the thinking of the incoming political elite, the form of the institutions was undesirable. The debate over their change began as early as 1988–1989 on the floor of the opposition’s new political platform – the Civil Liberty Movement. The opening manifesto of October 1988, which originated in the Czech Charter 77 environment, did, in its penultimate, 11th article, endorse the federalization of Czechoslovakia.¹⁶ A little later, however, the editors of the movement’s rapporteur

13 ČERMÁK, Vladimír: Panychida za československý národ [Memorial service for the Czechoslovak nation]. In: *Tvorba*, Vol. 23, No. 19 (1991), p. 3.

14 MINÁČ, Vladimír: Naša česko-slovenská otázka [Our Czech-Slovak question]. In: *Nové slovo*, Vol. 1, No. 21 (1990). Quoted from: *Literární noviny*, Vol. 1, No. 11 (1990), p. XX. Later, the author returned to this controversy by stating that “in every wise Czech an imbecile Czechoslovak is hidden.” MINÁČ, Vladimír: *Návraty k převratu* [Returns to the coup]. Bratislava, NVK International 1993, p. 95.

15 In a regional perspective, the following article perfectly captured this: RUPNIK, Jacques: Revoluce? Restaurace? [Revolution? Restoration?]. In: *Lettre internationale*, winter 1991–1992, pp. 18–19.

16 HLUŠIČKOVÁ, Růžena – CÍSAŘOVSKÁ, Blanka (eds.): *Hnutí za občanskou svobodu, 1988–1989: Sborník dokumentů* [Civil liberty movement, 1988–1989: Document collection]. Praha, Maxdorf 1994, p. 30.

opened the discussion on the new constitution with two questions: “1. Take as a starting point the first constitutional charter of the Czechoslovak Republic of 1920? 2. How to simplify constitutional articles on the Czechoslovak federation?”¹⁷ On these points one can see the practical manifestation of the “new Czechoslovakism” that was actually hampered by federalization, and that looked back nostalgically. When political leadership candidates began reading the constitution in the Charter 77 environment at the time, they found that its text, following the adoption of the constitutional law on the Czechoslovak Federation of October 1968, was mainly concerned with the division of power between the republics and the federation and the complex design of the bicameral federal parliament. It felt like a constitution of a foreign state, and they wondered how to “go back.”

Given rapid political developments, leaders of the former opposition hastily assumed office in late 1989 without elections or constitutional reform. The new president, Václav Havel, tried to convince his partners in Slovakia that the institutional structure of the state institutions, mainly the federal, balancing representation of the republics, should be modified in the course of the waning revolutionary wave. In December 1989 in the environment of the Civic Forum, two written papers, Rychetský’s draft constitution and Vavroušek’s theses, were produced and these are analyzed in literature to this day. Both were treated with extreme restraint by the Slovaks questioned, Ján Čarnogurský and Ján Budaj. The common ground of the Czech initiatives was the view that the inherited form of the Federal Assembly did not belong to the new age, which was justified by a number of political, economic, political and historical arguments.¹⁸

Attempts of the Czechs to Reform the Federal Institutions

Meanwhile, the Federal Assembly was the only truly federated institution in which Slovakia had an equal voice. That other federal institutions should look like this was pointed out by some Slovak members of the previous ruling class when they left the scene in December 1989. Thus, on the floor of the Federal Assembly on 19 December 1989, Ján Riško, the central director of Czechoslovak Radio, declared that the principle of parity, which he lacked in Marián Čalfa’s newly appointed federal

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 95.

¹⁸ Compare for example: VAVROUŠEK, Josef: Volby do zákonodárných sborů [Legislative elections]. *Fórum. Týdeník Občanského fóra*, Vol. 1, No. 4 (1990), pp. 1, 11. Vavroušek introduced proposals to abolish the previous form of the Federal Assembly and announced that the Civic Forum was putting them on hold for the time being to write the new federal constitution because “our Slovak friends from the Public against Violence Coordination Committee expressed concerns about the possible negative reaction of citizens to the insufficiently discussed draft amendments of the legislatures.” As for the “Rychetský constitution,” see: GRONSKÝ, Jan: *Komentované dokumenty k ústavním dějinám Československa* [Guided documents on the constitutional history of Czechoslovakia]. Vol. IV. 1989–1992, Praha, Karolinum 2007, pp. 45–76.

government with the participation of the former opposition, had disappeared by the mid-1970s: “During the establishment of the first federal government, appointed on 1 January 1969, the principle of parity was strictly abided by and was further supplemented by the Department of the Secretary of State. The same was true during the appointment of the second and third federal government. The first time the principle of parity was violated when forming a government was in November 1975 after the resignation of Minister of Transportation Štefan Šutka and the naming of the new minister, Vladimír Blažek. In subsequent administrations, the disparity only worsened – understandably to the increasing discontentment of the Slovak political representation. As a member of the Czechoslovak Communist Party, I must honourably acknowledge that the fault lies not with any other political party or force. Instead, it is a testimony to the fact that the principle of national sovereignty and national parity are, in our situation in which we aim to overcome the theory of Czechoslovakism, struggling to persist even in the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia, which always theoretically and fully recognized them.”¹⁹ This was one of the last speeches of the political career of Ján Riško, whose leaving the parliament was accompanied with a selection of particularly repellent passages from his earlier appearances the Czech weekly *Tvorba*.²⁰

At the time, Czech political groups were making their way to the government, accepting only partially or not at all criticisms of Czechoslovakism. An attempt by the new president in January 1990 to make the Public Against Violence more compliant in the matter ended in another, more acrimonious dispute with Ján Budaj. The behind-the-scenes controversy became public when the president presented at least some of his ideas about formal shifts directly to the Federal Assembly in his first address to parliament. He hoped that MPs would immediately accept the proposals under public pressure, which they did not – instead the so-called “hyphen war” began. This has been described many times in detail, for our needs, let us just recall a few moments here: the new president, Czech Václav Havel, unexpectedly and for the first time ever came to the Federal Assembly on 23 January 1990, asking for the immediate vote to change the name of the state and the state symbolic, thereby encroaching on the powers of all three parliaments. An unintended consequence of the initiative was that all three parliaments began to look to their own autonomy, each in its own particular way (see below). It also turned out that Havel’s charisma did not always work – especially not for the Slovaks when it came to adjusting relations with the Czechs. The president, and with him the Czech public, realized that governance in Czechoslovakia was now conditional on

19 *Společná česko-slovenská digitální parlamentní knihovna* [Joint Czech-Slovak digital parliamentary library], Federal Assembly 1986–1990, Joint meetings of the House of People and the House of Nations, Stenoprotocols, 18th meeting, 19 December 1989, available online: <http://www.psp.cz/eknih/1986fs/slsn/stenprot/018schuz/s018004.htm>, accessed 15 April 2019.

20 *Živá slova Jána Riška* [Live words of Ján Riško]. In: *Tvorba*, Vol. 22, No. 5 (1990), pp. 2, 24.

the ability of an agreement with the Slovaks (or to be more precise, with three-fifths of the members of the House of Nations of the Federal Assembly elected in the Slovak Republic).²¹

From the responses of Czech society, people were basically shocked by the extent of the Slovak Republic's powers, which is evidenced in the letter column of any Czech newspaper in the spring of 1990. Analyzing the texts of the most influential newspaper political commentators has shown an arc in the evolution of public opinion from refusing to give weight to the state-of-the-art issue of Czechoslovakia to trying to delegitimize the bearers of uncomfortable positions (recalling Slovakia's former backwardness, the history of the Slovak state during the war) to stating "than to deal with them further, let them break away."²² As sociologists, examining all aspects of mutual relations since 1990, found, many negative attitudes arising from the political and economic aspects of coexistence had previously accumulated on the Czech side, so that it was possible to state that "the overall vision of the Czechs held of the Slovaks was more negative than positive."²³ The new opportunity for these attitudes to be freely displayed was thoroughly enjoyed by a part of the Czech public.

At the same time, the Federal Assembly, as an institution safeguarding the interests of the Slovak Republic at the federal level, came under the critical spotlight of the Czech debates. An image spread viewing this parliament, or its joint house, as "undemocratic" because it took twice as many votes to elect one member of the House of Nations in the Czech Lands as it did to elect one member of the same house in Slovakia. This mindset, forgetting the existence of two equal republics and their balanced representation, went on to reflect that Slovakia, in its insistence on protecting the interests of the republic, showed a lack of sense of the "civil principle." This, in the Czech imagination, would consist of allowing Slovaks to be overruled by the Czech majority in federal institutions. The notion that the "civic principle" commands the House of Nations to abolish or at least substantially restrict its powers was echoed in hundreds of journalistic appearances in the Czech Lands in 1990–1992 and acted as a widely known fact awaiting its understanding to the east of the Morava River. "A citizen living in the Slovak Republic has a double-strong voice in elections and has twice the chance of becoming an MP.

21 Compare: ŠÚTOVEC, Milan: *Semióza ako politikum alebo "Pomlčková vojna": Niektoré historické, politické a iné súvislosti jedného sporu, ktorý bol na začiatku zániku česko-slovenského štátu* [Semiosis as politics or "hyphen war": Some historical, political and other links of one dispute that was at the beginning of the demise of the Czech-Slovak state]. Bratislava, Kalligram 1999.

22 JIRÁK, Jan – ŠOLTYS, Otakar: *Zobrazení česko-slovenských vztahů v tisku v období 17. 11. 1989 až 31. 12. 1991 – státoprávní uspořádání* [Viewing Czech-Slovak relations in print in the period from 17 November 1989 to 31 December 1991 – Statesmanship]. In: GÁL, Fedor et al.: *Dnešní krize česko-slovenských vztahů* [Today's Czech-Slovak relations crisis]. Praha, Sociologické nakladatelství 1992, pp. 40–67.

23 TIMORACKÝ, Marian: *Verejná mienka o česko-slovenských vzťahoch* [Public opinion on Czech-Slovak relations]. In: GÁL, F. et al.: *Dnešní krize česko-slovenských vztahů*, p. 74.

This system,” wrote Pavel Pavlovský, a candidate of the Civic Democratic Alliance and a lecturer at the Faculty of Arts of Charles University, “unsustainably violates the principle of civil equality.”²⁴ Such thinking by influential public intellectuals merely hid the fact that Czechs effectively refused to recognize the powers granted to the Slovak Republic by the federalization, namely an equal share in some aspects of the federal government and a veto on all the more fundamental issues.

Parliamentary Debates

For the full picture, it is necessary to look at the state of the republic institutions. A more autonomous politics of these institutions was hindered by a strong centre of power until November 1989, which was equally relevant to both the Slovak and Czech environments. With its demise in the final weeks of 1989, the Slovak republic authorities gained room for autonomous politics. In the new political order, federal power toward Slovakia was way weaker when the most effective element of party-line governance disappeared. In the Czech case the matter was more complicated. Here the central power of the former Politburo did not disappear completely, it was partly inherited as a new centre of symbolic power as well as practical politics by the leadership of the Civic Forum and the new president. It was not the case for state authorities within the reach of the presidency that they would lose a strong political centre prepared to manage them, as was evident from the first moments of Havel’s presidency and was fully demonstrated in his speech to the Federal Assembly on 23 January 1990.

The Slovak National Council, among the issues raised by President Havel, was particularly affected by the problem of changing national symbols. By contrast, in the Czech National Council, the focus was put on the 1990 budget, belatedly discussed at the same time. Budget debates between the Czech and federal governments had been taking place behind the scenes for several years, however they were now becoming public. On 25 January 1990, the Presidium of the Czech National Council adopted a resolution requesting “to assert already now the sovereignty of the Czech Republic over the resources being generated on its territory and in the decision on their use,” while demanding that “the federation’s 1990 budget must quantify in detail how large the transfer of resources between the Czech Republic and Slovakia is through a budgetary system so that members of the Czech National Council are given concrete information on this issue.”²⁵ It was a catch-up of older futile efforts and simultaneously the first step on the road to autonomous Czech

24 Skutečnou Sněmovnu národů? [A real House of Nations?]. In: *Český deník*, 21 October 1991, p. 3, cited from PAVLOVSKÝ, Pavel: *Chodte vpravo! Výběr článků z let 1990–1992* [Walk on the right! Selection of articles from 1990–1992]. Praha, H&H 1992, pp. 27–28.

25 *Společná česko-slovenská digitální parlamentní knihovna*, Czech National Council 1986–1990, Prints, No. 1964, No. 164, Report on the activities of the Presidium of the Czech National Council from 28 December to 6 February 1990, available online: http://www.psp.cz/eknih/1986cnr/tisky/t0164_00.htm, accessed 15 April 2019.

politics. The Presidium of the Czech National Council made it before the co-optations that brought representatives of new political forces to the parliament, and before the accession of a representative of the Civic Forum, Petr Pithart, as head of the government of the Czech Republic.

Until the June 1990 elections, the Czech National Council was used as a space for political debate by members of the Czechoslovak Socialist Party in particular, certainly the most prominent political formation of that body in the first half of 1990, with influence far beyond their numerical representation. They were rewarded for their cooperation with the Civic Forum right here. In the person of Jaroslav Šafařík, they had the Speaker of the House, in the person of Josef Hrabáň, they had the Chairman of the Plan and Budget Committee, among the members of the Czech National Council were Čestmír Adam and Stanislav Křeček, Josef Lesák was added by co-optation. They had ample political experience as well as a relatively clear-cut programme, in short, the traditional national socialist subscription to the First Republic, which included defending Czech national interests. This is also true of Slovakia in topical issues as well as in the politics of memory, as demonstrated by MP Stanislav Křeček, who showed his colleagues a copy of a Slovak weekly magazine with Josef Tiso on the cover in the Czech National Council from the speaker's stand. The prominent speaker of the Czech National Council at the time was Čestmír Adam, dating his parliamentary experience since 1945, when he sat in the Provisional National Assembly. He presented the assembly with a vision of the Czech nation emerging from decades of oppression by the communist federal bureaucracy and demanding economic autonomy: "After all, the oppressed Czech nation, like other nations, has the right to political and economic self-determination, to the management of the resources that it works to create, to its own statehood, which has been deliberately suppressed and silenced since 1970," Adam explained in the Czech legislature on 13 February 1990. "It is the money of the Czech people, after all, and they need it to fix the draining of Czech money by the Federal Ministry of Finance over the last 20 years, which has led to damage to Czech economy and which has brought it to the brink of disaster."²⁶

In several remarkable speeches he gave until the elections in which he was no longer running, Adam presented a picture of Czechoslovakia destroyed by the communist government and federalization, serving to dominate the Czech Lands and to drain them economically. The federal institutions, he said, should have been defied by both republics, relations should be directly established, and the common state should be re-established. "Twenty-two years ago, we established the Czechoslovak Federation in this building for the purpose of efficiently procuring well-defined things, which the Czech and Slovak republics waived entirely or partially of their authority. And all that we have not renounced has remained within our complete sovereignty. In no case did the two national republics establish their superior and

26 *Společná česko-slovenská digitální parlamentní knihovna*, Czech National Council 1986–1990, Stenoprotocols, 21st meeting, 13 February 1990, available online: <http://www.psp.cz/eknih/1986cnr/stenprot/021schuz/s021002.htm>, accessed 15 April 2019.

their supremacy in the federation to govern and control them. Neither the Czechs want a new Vienna nor the Slovaks a new Budapest. It is possible that there are people among Czechs and Slovaks who profess and want to spread national resentment. Against it is only one effective defence – constant and open contacts between representatives of the two national republics without any other intermediaries,” Adam exhorted 22 on February 1990.²⁷

Just before the June elections, on 17 May, in a farewell speech to the future Czech National Council, MP Adam called on the future Czech National Council to negotiate a new form of the federation directly with Slovakia, without looking to federal institutions. He called for a new jurisdictional law, under which most economic powers would fall under the republics, and suggested that “the Czech Prime Minister should tell the federal government that if the federal government has established something and has federal territory, then let it manage it.” He went on to point out: “With the Slovak Republic, we must agree that the Federal Assembly cannot handle in a high-minded manner issues of the federation’s constitutional principles, and if the Slovak Republic wishes that the issues of federation, as Professor Plank, chairman of the constitutional commission of the Slovak National Council in Bratislava, indicated, should be dealt with by a treaty between the Czech Republic and Slovakia, then let us accept that.”²⁸ Thus, on the floor of the Czech parliament, in the quoted speeches by MP Adam and other concurrent speeches by his fellow party members, the political debate was dominated by representatives of the traditional Czech nationalist party, through criticism of federalization and efforts to define Czech national interests *vis-à-vis* Slovakia as well as the federal bureaucracy, described as a foreign power over the national republics. This approach counted on further conflictual coexistence within Czechoslovakia, because in the thinking of Adam and his compatriots, at the time of the reunification of Germany, the division of the state was completely out of question for Czech politics. The quoted appeals of the Czech Socialists were heard on the plenary floor, and no one challenged them, but no one joined them either. In the spring of 1990, the Socialists failed in the elections and their representatives disappeared from the parliaments. With them, however, the quoted opinions and suggestions did not fade, they only began to come from other parties with a new mandate.

Only after the June elections did the Civic Forum dominate the Czech National Council, winning an overall majority of MPs. Its shortcoming was that it did not function as a political party capable of acting on agenda and discipline in several institutions at the same time, so candidates nominated by it to individual institutions

27 *Společná česko-slovenská digitální parlamentní knihovna*, Czech National Council 1986–1990, Stenoprotocols, 22nd meeting, 22 February 1990, available online: <http://www.psp.cz/eknih/1986cnr/stenprot/022schuz/s022004.htm>, accessed 15 April 2019.

28 *Společná česko-slovenská digitální parlamentní knihovna*, Czech National Council 1986–1990, Stenoprotocols, 27th meeting, 17 May 1990, available online: <http://www.psp.cz/eknih/1986cnr/stenprot/027schuz/s027007.htm>, accessed 15 April 2019.

failed to cooperate effectively, which had a knock-on effect on political developments in the period that followed.

The new Presidium of the Czech National Council, headed by Dagmar Burešová, as well as the Czech government of Petr Pithart, accepted the Slovak notion that the shape of the state needed to be renegotiated between the republics, as Adam recommended. However, it turned out that this duplication of federal institutions through the direct action of the republics that acted as if they were going to re-establish the common state did not lead to the desired goal, despite partial successes in the form of a consensus to amend the constitutional law on the Czechoslovak Federation in December 1990. Mutual negotiations ended in vain at the time of the incipient election campaign before the new parliamentary elections in June 1992, following the expiration of a shortened two-year term of the constituent parliament, which, however, failed to adopt the constitution.

During this special parliamentary term, 1990–1992, the Czech National Council heard the term “Czechoslovakism” only three times, each time explaining the positions of Slovak partners: once from the mouth of Prime Minister Petr Pithart, the second time from Minister Jaroslav Šabata, the third and last time from the member of the Czechoslovak People’s Party, Miroslav Výborný, when he objected on behalf of his party in the autumn of 1991 to the Czech negotiators taking over the term from the Slovak environment, even with its negative connotation: “The Prime Minister assessed the history of the Czechoslovak state in our view unilaterally and incorrectly. He identified Czechoslovakism as an ideology, and we find it questionable whether it really was an ideology. He claimed that Czechoslovakism was an ideology that took away the Slovak nation’s distinctiveness. We ask, then, whether it was also denying the Czech nation its distinctiveness as well. We would point out that the theory of Czechoslovakism was not invented only by Czech politicians, and that it is not a theory that was somehow artificially revived during the First World War. We do not think that Czechoslovakism would be completely untrue and demeaning to the Slovak nation.”²⁹ Similar defences were voiced in all public forums at the time, in television and radio debates, newspaper articles, more often also in the Czech parliament, but without the term “Czechoslovakism” being mentioned, unless it was brought there by a Slovak speaker present or a Czech rapporteur or negotiator mediating Slovak opinions.

In the Slovak National Council in the same parliamentary term, the term “Czechoslovakism” was used more frequently and in different meanings. In August 1990, the head of the Slovak government, Vladimír Mečiar, informed the members of parliament about the meeting held in Trenčianské Teplice and, as part of a wider description of the opinions of the Czech partners, he also noted the presence of

29 *Společná česko-slovenská digitální parlamentní knihovna*, Czech National Council 1990–1992, Stenoprotocols, 24th meeting, 14 November 1991, available online: <http://www.psp.cz/eknih/1990cnr/stenprot/024schuz/s024047.htm>, accessed 15 April 2019.

“Czechoslovakist tendencies” (in the sense of Mináč’s “new Czechoslovakism”).³⁰ The term was used most frequently by members of the Slovak National Party, who used it in a wide register of meanings. A historian at the Slovak Academy of Sciences, Anton Hrnko, used it on the parliamentary floor in the contexts and forms established in Slovak academia, but his colleagues applied it impressionistically: it came into their mouths when they were looking for a negative characteristic for the past, or if they were putting a negative phenomenon into the period after 1918. For example, in October 1990, MP Ján Petko, supported an application for city status for Spišské Podhradie, recounting its history as the seat of spiritual and ecclesiastical life in Slovakia, which he said was precisely why it “had to be punished, be it by Czechoslovakists or totality from 1918 until today.”³¹ In the spring of 1991, Petko’s fellow member of the Slovak National Party, Vojtech Balážik, spoke of the past “totalitarian power of the Czechoslovakist internationalists” in roughly the sense of what would be called a “communist regime.”³² At the same time, on the other side of the political spectrum, the old vocabulary of communist training flashed through at times. In the solemn atmosphere of the adoption of the Slovak constitution, which was accompanied by a number of personal confessions, the MP of the Democratic Left Party and later Minister of the Environment, Juraj Hraško, confided that he had always been a man of the sensible centre and had “never [...] tampered or messed with anything like Czechoslovakism, but also with primitive nationalism.”³³ Summing up these representative illustrations, we can note from examples from the Slovak parliament that the term “Czechoslovakism” was present as part of a vivid political language, as best evidenced by the fact that it was summoned by speakers of different political orientations and acquired different, often quite different meanings in their speeches, centred around the issue of governance and the cultural and political autonomy of Slovakia.

The Federal Assembly was the ground where the Czech and Slovak political and linguistic worlds met. In the joint meetings of the two chambers in 1989–1992, often broadcast live throughout the territory and widely watched, there were dozens of rhetorical fights between representatives of the two republics over Czechoslovakia’s past. At first, Czech MPs (and with them television viewers) learned to understand Slovak speakers.³⁴ They absorbed the surprising and hitherto unheard view conveyed

30 *Společná česko-slovenská digitální parlamentní knihovna*, Slovak National Council 1990–1992, Stenoprotocols, 3rd meeting, 27 August 1990, available online: <http://www.psp.cz/eknih/1990snr/stenprot/003schuz/s003002.htm>, accessed 15 April 2019.

31 *Ibid.*, Stenoprotocols, 8th meeting, 22 November 1990, available online: <http://www.psp.cz/eknih/1990snr/stenprot/008schuz/s008020.htm>, accessed 15 April 2019.

32 *Ibid.*, Stenoprotocol, 11th meeting, 8 March 1991, available online: <http://www.psp.cz/eknih/1990snr/stenprot/011schuz/s011008.htm>, accessed 15 April 2019.

33 *Společná česko-slovenská digitální parlamentní knihovna*, Slovak National Council 1992–1994, Stenoprotocols, 5th meeting, 1 September 1992, available online: <https://www.nrsr.sk/dl/Browser/Document?documentId=71567>, accessed 15 April 2019.

34 See: GJURIČOVÁ, Adéla – ZÁHRADNÍČEK, Tomáš: Nevítaný pokus o emancipaci: Federální shromáždění v československé revoluci 1989 [An unwelcome attempt at emancipation:

to them by MPs Pavol Bagín, Ivan Mičieta and other Slovak spokesmen during the hyphen war, namely that “the name Czechoslovakia without a hyphen is a relic of Czechoslovakism.”³⁵ One of the new MPs for the Civic Forum, and one-time Pilsen dissident Jindřich Konečný, voiced a collective shared astonishment at the lectern: “These people use the term Czechoslovakism as a slur. It is wrong and undignified.”³⁶

In further developments, Czech left-of-centre members of the older generation with academic backgrounds, such as Zdeněk Jičínský or František Šamalík, were almost exclusively involved in debates with Slovak critics on the parliamentary floor. There were several reasons for this. As veterans of the Czecho-Slovak debates of the 1960s, which only they took part in among the Czechs present, they took advantage of their experience, quickly understood the arguments of Slovak speakers, and also had conventional answers – consistently declaring that, were it not for “Czechoslovakism,” there would not even have been a Czechoslovakia within which a sovereign Slovakia could have evolved.³⁷ Another reason for these polemical engagements was that the veterans in question were led by the notion of reaching a new agreement with Slovakia, which had always been negotiated in previous developments and with their personal contribution in 1968 in the form of federalization, while some other Czech political forces avoided direct controversy with Slovak separatists, presumably because they were growing to be convinced of the need to divide the federation. A relatively open debate on the subject took place in the media of the nascent Czech right. Here, not only federalized Czechoslovakia was depicted as a state corrupted by communists, but also Slovak society as corrupted by the fascist and communist past. “The source of contradictions lies in different thinking,” noted, for example, a comment by Jaroslav Hudec in the *Sobotní telegraph* [Saturday telegraph], a new weekly of the vice-president of the Civic Democratic Party, Miroslav Macek, in December 1991. “The present Czech-Slovak contradiction is motivated nationally only outwardly. [...] The bottom line lies, rather, in a different understanding of the future economic and social arrangements of the state. Indeed, it is hard to imagine that, after the next elections, two equal republics of the common state will be headed by figures as different as by someone from the Civil Democratic Party [ODS] (Václav Klaus is the devil incarnate to much of the Slovak population) and by someone from the Movement for

The Federal Assembly in the Czechoslovak revolution of 1989]. In: *Soudobé dějiny*, Vol. 22, No 3–4 (2015), pp. 348–365.

35 *Společná česko-slovenská digitální parlamentní knihovna*, Federal Assembly 1986–1990, Joint meeting of the House of People and the House of Nations, Stenoprotocols, 26th meeting, 29 March 1990, available online: <http://www.psp.cz/eknih/1986fs/slsn/stenprot/026schuz/s026032.htm>, accessed 15 April 2019, statement of Pavol Bagín.

36 *Ibid.*, available online: <http://www.psp.cz/eknih/1986fs/slsn/stenprot/026schuz/s026035.htm>, accessed 15 April 2019.

37 See, for example: František Šamalík’s autumn 1991 speech. *Společná česko-slovenská digitální parlamentní knihovna*, Federal Assembly 1990–1992, Joint meeting of the House of People and the House of Nations, 18th meeting, 13th November 1991, available online: <http://www.psp.cz/eknih/1990fs/slsn/stenprot/018schuz/s018107.htm>, accessed 15 April 2019,

Democratic Slovakia [HZDS] (the same can be said of Vladimír Mečiar in reverse). In practice, we can only really imagine working together within one system with the utmost imagination or naivety.³⁸

Czechoslovaks without Czechoslovakia

After the 1992 elections, in which the forward-thinking election forecast took place, the weekly *Literární noviny* [Literary journal] published a joint text by 14 of its collaborators, including writers Jiří Kolář, Karel Šiktanc, Karel Pecka, Ludvík Vaculík and Ivan Wernisch, entitled “Úleva z rozhodnutí” [Relief from the decision]. It stated: “For literally the next few days, we wish our politicians do not to waste time and dignity prolonging the past, take the decision of the Slovak nation as a new fact and deal with our, Czech future.”³⁹ Meanwhile, the results of the elections in Slovakia were interpreted as a sign of a fundamental cultural difference. “Two civilizations,” said the main headline of the post-election issue of the weekly *Respekt* [Respect]. In Czech post-election journalism, a federalized Czechoslovakia repeatedly acted as a threat, and Slovak powers in the Federal Assembly as a dangerous option to promote foreign interests. “Parliament and the government,” the writers argued in the manifesto already cited in the *Literární noviny*, “will work more freely, more flexibly, and more cheaply. Without national complications, reservations and comments, they will certainly be able to discuss more matter-of-factly and more quickly the issues that three parliaments and three governments have found so difficult to deal with in the past period and with an outcome that satisfies no one.”⁴⁰

Jan Dus published an article in the daily *Český deník* [The Czech daily] “Why the Czech Republic must leave the federation alone and expeditiously”: “The fastest possible separation of the Czech and Slovak parts of the Czech and Slovak Federative Republic into two independent states is necessary. [This has to be done] [b]efore the non-functioning of today’s legal but dysfunctional, and precisely because of the dysfunctionality of the unreformable Federal Assembly, will lead society into economic and political turmoil. [...] It is necessary to appeal to both Czech politicians and the Czech public urgently to come to terms with the fact that the impending economic and political meltdown cannot be escaped except by a vigorous initiative to quickly withdraw the Czech Republic from the federation before it becomes clear that the Slovaks do not intend leaving it neither alone nor at the same time as the Czech Republic.”⁴¹

38 HUDEC, Jaroslav: Zdrojem rozporů je jiné myšlení [Different thinking is the source of contradictions]. In: *Sobotní Telegraf*, Vol. 1, No. 27 (1991), p. 3.

39 *Literární noviny*, Vol. 3, No. 24 (1992), p. 1.

40 *Ibid.*, in the original highlighted by interlacing.

41 DUS, Jan: Proč musí Česká republika opustit federaci sama a urychleně [Why the Czech Republic must leave the federation alone and urgently]. In: *Český deník*, 1 July 1992, p. 3.

According to Josef Mlejnek Jr. in an article also in the *Český deník*, the Czech Republic imprisoned in the federation was threatened with a “fall into the civilizing zone of the ‘third-world,’” which the Czech and Slovak “rescuers of the unrescuable” refuse to admit either out of political calculation or out of naivety, because “their love of Masaryk’s Republic clouds their eyes and minds.”⁴² On Czech TV’s journalistic programme, *Respekt* columnist Vladimír Mlynář explained it as follows: “Western newspapers almost unanimously say that Czechs, in order to save the reform, must separate from Slovakia. I think that after the experience of the conflict in Yugoslavia, Western politicians will accept the situation without any problems. At the moment, the division benefits both nations. Artificially maintaining the federation at all costs is setting up a problem we can no longer manage. I do not think there simply is any other solution.”⁴³

The language of Czech separatism was surprisingly easy to match with the rapidly growing displays of Czech “Czechoslovaks.” It turned out that this declaratory identity did not need Czechoslovakia or real Slovakia to continue its existence and certainly not Slovaks, who would hold disagreeable debates with it about identity and history and who would participate with their representatives in the rule of the common state. When, in the summer of 1992, writer Jiří Just wrote in a newspaper that he would “remain a Czechoslovak,” it actually meant agreeing to divide the federation and privately retaining the nostalgic language of the First Republic.⁴⁴ By the same logic, the Czech Republic retained the Czechoslovak flag a little later.

In October 1992, the Federal Bureau of Statistics announced the results of a census from March of the previous year, in which for the first time it was possible to give any subjectively felt definition of one’s nationality. Only a negligible fraction of the population, 3,500 people, in the vast majority in the Czech Republic, claimed Czechoslovak nationality on that occasion. The daily *Český deník* ran the headline “There are only 59 Czechoslovaks in Slovakia.”⁴⁵

If we are to summarize this probe into the last years of Czechoslovakia, we must conclude that the term “Czechoslovakism,” applied nationwide and used asymmetrically as part of the ruling doctrine of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia until November 1989, had different fates after the demise of its power in the two republics. It disappeared from the Czech language, and people spontaneously rebelled against its use by Slovak speakers or Czech negotiators as unfair criticisms of the First Republic and the acceptance of the hostile language of its critics. In Slovakia, it remained a part of a vivid language of politics and journalism describing the Slovak experience. “New Czechoslovakism,” a precisely diagnosed movement of Czech public opinion named by Vladimír Mínač in May 1990, was initially hesitant between trying to regain control of the entire country by the central Prague

42 MLEJNEK, Josef Jr.: Demagogie v plné polní [Demagogy in combat gear]. In: *Český deník*, 29 July 1992, p. 3.

43 *Archiv a programové fondy České televize Praha* [Czech Television Prague archive and program funds], Video, *Politics for everyone, or horoscope*, 15 June 1992.

44 JUST, Jiří: Inu, to je pokrok [Well, that is progress]. In: *Lidové noviny*, 26 July 1992, p. 8.

45 *Český deník*, 27 October 1992, p. 2.

government and re-encoding the inherited Czech identity from Czechoslovak to Czech. After modest attempts in the first direction, it quickly evolved into a purely declaratory form of Czech national identity. It did not need Czechoslovakia to continue its existence, and some of its spokesmen became part of the section of the Czech public that advocated the division of the state. This is also suggested by the relatively small number of “Czechoslovaks” recorded by the 1991 census on both sides of the border as well as the total civic passivity at the time of the rapid division of the federation in the second half of 1992.⁴⁶ There was not only a distinct weariness of social mobilization during the rapid evolution of the previous years, but also a new government-promoted and implemented friendly neighbourhood plan for the two successor republics, accompanied by the negotiation of treaties and agreements to further the two countries’ close cooperation.

The Czech version of this article, entitled Debata o čechoslovakismu a čechoslovácích na konci federace, 1989–1992, will be published in the following book: HUDEK, Adam – KOPEČEK, Michal – MERVART, Jan (eds.): Čechoslovakismus. Praha, Nakladatelství Lidové noviny – Ústav pro soudobé dějiny AV ČR 2019, pp. 359–376.

Translated by Tereza Jonášová and Kathleen Geaney

46 Prague’s most turbulent political demonstration of the time took place at the failed presidential election at the Federal Assembly, with participants attacking outgoing Slovak MPs deemed to be the culprits of the unelected Václav Havel. See: GJURIČOVÁ, Adéla – ZAHRADNÍČEK, Tomáš: *Návrat parlamentu: Češi a Slováci ve Federálním shromáždění 1989–1992* [The return of parliament: Czechs and Slovaks in the Federal Assembly 1989–1992]. Praha, Argo – ÚSD AV ČR 2018, pp. 168–170.

Prague Chronicle

Doyen of Czech Contemporary History, Karel Kaplan

Oldřich Tůma

Karel Kaplan's career is a good illustration of the fate of a whole generation of Czech historians. He was not only a historian, but in many respects also an active participant in the recent history of Czechoslovakia. Karel Kaplan was born on 28 August 1928 as the second child of the family of a shoemaker in the village of Horní Jelení near Pardubice in eastern Bohemia. His mother died soon after he was born, and he was raised by his grandmother. He started an apprenticeship at a shoe-making school at the Baťa factory in Zlín in 1943, finishing it in 1947. That same year he joined the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia, influenced, among other things, by his older brother who had joined the communist resistance movement during the occupation of Czechoslovakia and spent several years in a German prison. After 1948, he occupied different positions in the Communist Party apparatus for 16 years. He married in 1948 and soon had two sons and a daughter.

Karel Kaplan did not attend a grammar school, nor did he study historiography at university. He compensated for the lack of formal education with self-study and by attending different types of Communist Party education (long-distance study at the Higher Party School and post-graduate study of history at the Institute of Social Sciences of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia). He took up research on the postwar history of Czechoslovakia as a functionary of the Communist Party apparatus. He specialized on it in 1964 after becoming a researcher of the then Institute of History of the Czechoslovak Academy of Sciences.

In the 1960s, as a historian and a member of several Communist Party commissions reviewing repressions and lawlessness of the 1950s, he had a unique opportunity to analyze otherwise inaccessible documents from the archives of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia. The study of this material was one of the key factors that influenced his views. After some years, Karel Kaplan said: “For instance, I personally felt that if we had filled people’s heads with these lies, then it was also our duty to open their eyes. And I felt that, based on further research, it was my moral duty to comment on what I had written in the past.”¹ For his serious criticism of the lawlessness of the 1950s and the lack of rigour in the early rehabilitations, he was forced to leave the Communist Party apparatus on 1 April 1964.

After the mid-1960s, he was actively involved in attempts to reform the communist system in Czechoslovakia. He participated in the work of several teams preparing this reform. He was a member of Mlynář’s team, which was preparing to reform the political system, as well as of a team led by Radovan Richta, working on environmental issues. In the spring of 1968, he was involved in the preparation of the Action Programme of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia. He was also active in Piller’s commission,² which investigated the illegal processes of the 1950s. At the Vysočany Congress (a congress convened in Prague – while the city was occupied by the Soviet army – which became one of the major acts of opposition to the occupation) held on 22 August 1968, he was elected a member of the Central Control and Revision Commission of the Communist Party Central Committee. But primarily, he assisted (in 1965–1969 as a deputy director) in the transformation of the Institute of History of the Czechoslovak Academy of Sciences, and in the preparation of a new conception of modern history of Czechoslovakia. However, both the process of transformation of the Institute of History into a modern research centre and Kaplan’s academic career came to a halt with the August invasion and the onset of the so-called “normalization.” The Piller commission’s final report, largely drawn up by Kaplan, could no longer be published. In 1970, Kaplan was expelled from the Communist Party and had to leave the Institute of History of the Czechoslovak Academy of Sciences. On 1 January 1971, he started working as a boiler attendant in the state enterprise MITAS. In 1972, he was detained and held in custody for several months. In 1976, he went into exile in the Federal Republic

1 CUHRA, Jaroslav – KOPEČEK, Michal: Jde o to, jestli se k pravdě přibližujete: Rozhovor s Karlem Kaplanem [What matters is whether you get closer to the truth: Interview with Karel Kaplan]. In: PERNES, Jiří (ed.): *Po stopách nedávné historie: Sborník k 75. narozeninám doc. Karla Kaplana* [In the footsteps of recent history: Collection published on the occasion of the 75th birthday of Karel Kaplan]. Praha – Brno, ÚSD AVČR – Prius 2003, p. 27.

2 The report was published in exile: PELIKÁN, Jiří: *Potlačená zpráva: Zpráva komise ÚV KSČ o politických procesech a rehabilitacích v Československu* [The suppressed report: Report of the commission of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia on political trials and rehabilitations in Czechoslovakia]. Wien, Europa Verlag 1970. It was also published in German: *Das unterdrückte Dossier: Bericht der Kommission des ZK der KPTsch über politische Prozesse und “Rehabilitierungen” in der Tschechoslowakei 1948–1968*. Wien, Europa Verlag 1970.

of Germany. As early as 1977, he was deprived of Czechoslovak citizenship in retaliation for his historical publications.

At great personal risk and with the help of others, particularly historian and later émigré Bedřich Loewenstein, Kaplan obtained copies of a large number of documents from the archives of the Communist Party Central Committee and smuggled them out of the country. Until the 1990s, when the archival documents from the period of communism became accessible, this collection offered a unique opportunity to study documents from the archives of a ruling communist party. In his numerous publications (published by exile publishing houses in the 1970s and 1980s, circulated as samizdats and translated into major foreign languages), Karel Kaplan analyzed the operation of the communist regime in Czechoslovakia with precision and little mercy. His works became a unique source of information on the character of regimes behind the Iron Curtain. With only slight exaggeration, we may say that whereas the emigration of many scientists represented a loss to Czech science and society, the case of Karel Kaplan was different: the works that he was able to publish in exile, which were based on the study of primary sources, enriched not only Czech, but also world historiography. In this way he also contributed indirectly to the political and social changes of the late 1980s.

Karel Kaplan returned home immediately after November 1989 and became one of the key figures of the newly established field of contemporary history in the Czechoslovak context. In 1991, he was one of the founding researchers of the Institute for Contemporary History of the Czechoslovak Academy of Sciences. Before his retirement, he greatly influenced and helped to shape the character of this new academic institution in the first decade of its existence. After 1990, he has published dozens of major works, without which the historiography of Czechoslovakia of 1945–1968 would be unconceivable. A bibliography published on the occasion of his 90th birthday clearly shows how rich and extensive Kaplan's work is.³ His work has been translated into dozens of foreign languages and published all over the world. Karel Kaplan is by far the most frequently cited Czech historian of contemporary history on the Web of Science. He is also a walking encyclopaedia of the history of Czechoslovakia after 1945 – he is always willing to provide consultations and advice to colleagues and journalists, which are invaluable for their work. His publications on the establishment of the communist regime in Czechoslovakia: *Nekrvavá revoluce* (The bloodless revolution), *Pět kapitol o únoru* (Five chapters about February), mechanism of the orchestrated political processes of the 1950s: *Největší politický proces, Milada Horáková a spol.* (The biggest political trial: Milada Horáková et al.), *Vražda generálního tajemníka* (The murder of the General Secretary), the social history of Czechoslovakia: *Kořeny československé reformy* (The Roots of the Czechoslovak Reform of 1968), *Proměny české společnosti* (Transformations of Czech society) and many other themes are irreplaceable among the basic

3 ŠTĚPÁNOVÁ, Eva: Bibliografie Karla Kaplana [Bibliography of Karel Kaplan]. In: *Soudobé dějiny*, Vol. 25, No. 3–4 (2018), pp. 615–655.

titles for anyone interested in the study of the postwar history of Czechoslovakia and Eastern Europe, and will continue to be so for a long time.

Occasionally, Karel Kaplan's works are criticized for not reflecting relevant historical literature and for being a mere reproduction of data. Undoubtedly, Kaplan's work method is distinctive. And it is also true that in his work he does not discuss the literature nor comment on it (although, as those who have had the opportunity to discuss history with him know, he is familiar with it). Obviously, not all his works have the same analytical value; some of them are rather a material-based studies. However, even these works are valuable for their accuracy and the information they contain. But most importantly, Kaplan builds on a deeply thought-out and consistent concept of interpretation of Czechoslovak postwar history. His work is therefore much more than a mere reproduction of data from the sources. Some also see Kaplan's work as being less valuable because it is the work of a former Communist Party functionary. Regarding the circumstances under which a historian (and all the more so a historian who had helped to create this past) may help a society to come to terms with its history, Kaplan once remarked: "That is also why I said that first of all a historian has to comment on his own past, on what he has done and written."⁴ Anyone who wants to find out whether Kaplan has in fact done so and has long since compensated through his research activity and civic engagement for his past of a functionary may also analyze the works listed in the above mentioned bibliography.

Karel Kaplan is a real doyen and founder of the study of Czechoslovak contemporary history, not only in the Czech, but principally in the international context. On the occasion of Karel Kaplan's 75th birthday, I wrote: "Those interested in the history of Czechoslovakia during the communist period can only hope that Karel Kaplan will maintain his remarkable invention and work energy." A brief look at Kaplan's bibliography of the past 15 years will reveal that this hope has been fulfilled. And, since no one knows more about the postwar history of Czechoslovakia than Karel Kaplan – and probably no one ever will – it is pleasing to see that his publishing activity is not over yet. New items are still added to his personal bibliography that was published a year ago.⁵

The Czech version of this article, entitled Karel Kaplan – 90 let, was originally published in Soudobé dějiny, Vol. 25, Nos. 3–4 (2018), pp. 612–614.

Translated by Blanka Medková

4 CUHRA, Jaroslav – KOPEČEK, Michal: Jde o to, jestli se k pravdě přibližujete, p. 27.

5 *Politický proces s Miladou Horákovou a spol.: Komentované dokumenty* [The political trial with Milada Horáková et al.: Commented documents]. Praha, Epocha 2019.

Prague Chronicle

Reflections on the Conference “A Hundred Student (R)Evolution(s)”

Jana Wohlmuth Markupová

Last year, it was exactly 30 years since the events of November and December 1989, which we usually call *the Velvet Revolution*.¹ The key role in the revolution was played by the then university students. Their gathering, initially allowed by the authorities, developed into a protest movement of the entire society, eventually culminating in a change of the political regime.

Several years after the revolution, university students also became the focus of the first Czech oral history project, carried out by Milan Otáhal and Miroslav Vaněk. In 1999, the authors released the conclusions of their research in a publication entitled *Sto studentských revolucí* [A hundred student revolutions].²

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- 1 The text was written with the financial support of the Grant Agency of the Czech Republic within the project Student generation of 1989 in longitudinal perspective: Biographical interviews after 20 years (2017–2019, GA0/GA), project No. GA ČR 410/17-14167S. The conference was broadcast live on the Czech TV. The recording is available at: <https://www.ceskatelevize.cz/porady/10000000362-100-studentskych-r-evoluci/>
 - 2 OTÁHAL, Milan – VANĚK, Miroslav: *Sto studentských revolucí: Studenti v období pádu komunismu. Životopisná vyprávění* [A hundred student revolutions: Students during the collapse of communism. Biographical narrations]. Praha, Nakladatelství Lidové noviny 1999. VANĚK, Miroslav et al.: *Sto studentských revolucí: Studenti v období pádu komunismu. Životopisná vyprávění* [A hundred student revolutions: Students during the collapse of communism. Biographical narrations]. Praha, Karolinum 2019.

The publication of the book had an impact on two levels: the civic sphere and the academic circles. On 16 November 1999, immediately after the book was presented at Rock Café in Národní třída, some of the former university students – actors of the revolution and of the presented book – organized themselves to express their discontent with the then political situation, influenced mainly by the existence of the so-called opposition agreement. Their declaration was published a day later under the title *Děkujeme, odejděte!* [Thank you, now leave]. But whereas this initiative did not transform into any important political force in the long term, in academic circles the first oral history project remains of relevance to the present time. On 1 January 2000, it served as a basis for establishing the Centre of Oral History (COH) at the Institute for Contemporary History of the Czech Academy of Sciences, with the aim of further developing this method. During the two decades of the existence of the centre, its employees carried out a number of different projects, focusing on themes such as former communist elites and dissidents, activities of the young generation during the so-called “normalization” and the weekenders, independent music genres and so-called normal people.³ However, it seems as if the COH research team deliberately avoided contact with the narrators who had been involved in the first oral history project mentioned above.

Everything changed as recently as 2016, when Miroslav Vaněk decided to take up the project again and asked 100 original narrators the following seemingly simple, but more comprehensive question: *What has happened in your life since we last saw each other?*

The conclusions of this follow-up longitudinal research were published in a book entitled *Sto studentských evolucí* [A hundred student evolutions].⁴ The authors and the interviewers of the project shared the results of their research at a conference dedicated to both books entitled *Sto studentských (r)evolucí* [A hundred student (r) evolutions], which was held in the Václav Havel Library in Prague on 24 May 2019. In addition to the authors of the research – Miroslav Vaněk, Petra Schindler-Wisten, Veronika Pehe and Jana Wohlmuth Markupová – the speakers at the conference, which was organized under the auspices of the Institute for Contemporary History of the Czech Academy of Sciences and the Faculty of Humanities of Charles University (namely the Department of Oral History-Contemporary History), included Pavel Mücke and Pavel Urbášek (who was the only speaker representing another institution, namely the Archive of Palacký University in Olomouc). What the latter speakers have in common is that both of them participated in the project as interviewers (although each in a different phase of the project) and that both focus their research on the issue of universities, or rather, the role of university students in Czech history.

3 For more details, see: <http://www.coh.usd.cas.cz/projekty/ukoncene-projekty/>.

4 VANĚK, Miroslav et al.: *Sto studentských evolucí: Vysokoškolští studenti roku 1989. Životopisná vyprávění v časosběrné perspektivě* [A hundred student evolutions: University students of 1989. Biographical narrations in a longitudinal perspective]. Praha, Academia 2019.

The introduction to the first panel, entitled *Rám výzkumu* [The framework of the research], was given by Miroslav Vaněk, the head of the research project and director of the organizing institution, the Institute for Contemporary History of the Czech Academy of Sciences. In subsequent contributions, speakers focused on the historical and methodological context of the project.

The first speaker, Pavel Mücke, presented a paper entitled *O dějinách a paměti studentů (a studentek) z časů “velkých” událostí českých soudobých dějin* [On the history and students' recollections of the “big” events of contemporary Czech history] dealing with the specific role students have played in the history of Czechoslovakia in the 20th century, particularly during the landmark years of 1939, 1945, 1948, 1968 and 1989, which brought about major social changes. After that, in a presentation entitled *Vysoké školy v době mezi přestavbou a revolucí* [Universities in the period between the *perestroika* and revolution], Pavel Urbášek described the situation at universities in the period immediately prior to the Velvet Revolution.

The next two speakers focused on the methodology of the oral history project. In his contribution, entitled *Proč studenti a proč napodruhé? Časosběrnost a orální historie* [Why students and why for the second time? Longitudinal approach and oral history], Miroslav Vaněk reflected – as the title shows – on his initial concerns whether to continue with the 1990s project or not. He was concerned about reinforcing the heroic self-presentation of a few former student activists. However, as he himself said, these fears had not been realized during the course of the project. Vaněk also commented on the problems that he and his collaborators faced during the preparation of the longitudinal oral history project.

While the longitudinal approach is quite common in the sphere of the arts (mainly in cinematography) or in social sciences (e.g. psychology), it is less so in historiography, or more specifically in oral history. Vaněk mentioned a longitudinal project with holocaust survivors, consisting of interviews recorded by the same interviewer at different times.⁵ However, the main difference between the two projects is in quantity: whereas the Czech project worked with 100 former students, the holocaust project captured “merely” eight narrators. Another project with student activists from Tiananmen Square in Beijing in 1989, carried out by Roweny Xiaoqing He, covers a period of 10 years and is based on interviews with even fewer narrators – only three.⁶

Although the number of interviewees may not always be decisive and despite the fact that some of the observations in these projects had been used as a source of inspiration, they could not serve as a learning-base for the practical operation of the Czech project. Consequently, Miroslav Vaněk also talked about the inspiration

5 LAUB, Dori – BODENSTAB, Johanna: Wiederbefragt: Erneute Begegnung mit Holocaust-Überlebenden nach 25 Jahren. *BIOS – Zeitschrift für Biographieforschung, Oral History und Lebensverlaufsanalysen*, Vol. 20, No. 2 (2007), pp. 303–315.

6 HE, Rowena Xiaoqing: *Tiananmen Exiles Voices of the Struggle for Democracy in China*. Basingstoke, Palgrave Macmillan 2014.

he drew from artistic circles, namely from Helena Třeštíková, the famous author of longitudinal (film) documentaries.

The panel continued with a contribution by Petra Schindler-Wisten entitled *Jak naskočit do rozjetého vlaku? Tazatelské reflexe a metodologické aspekty výzkumu* [How to jump on a moving train? Reflections of the interviewers and methodological aspects of the research]. Petra Schindler-Wisten provided a valuable summary of the experiences of those interviewers who had not participated in the first phase of the project; that is, of all the interviewers involved except for Miroslav Vaněk. The situation of the new interviewers differed in that, among other things, they could not ask the narrators the very first question: *what has happened in your life since the last time we saw each other?* This is because the “new” interviewers often only saw their “narrators” for the first time during the interview. This detail in itself signalled substantial changes in the interviewer-narrator interaction.

The first two contributions met the primary objective of placing a specific research project in the context of the situation at Czech universities at a given time, or in general in the context of the role of students in Czech contemporary history. In contrast, the following two contributions can, in a sense, be seen as pioneering because, among other things, they deal with the first longitudinal oral history project in the Czech Republic, which, together with its methodological reflections may be inspirational for many colleagues.

What I in fact see as methodologically most significant is a detail that has only been mentioned in passing, but which has influenced most of the specific characteristics commented on in the last contribution. Initially, the project on the university student activists of 1989 was not intended as longitudinal. The original authors – at that time novices in the method of oral history – had not foreseen the possibility of expanding on the project in the future, because, as Miroslav Vaněk said, they had not even given this any thought. That is also why the interviews and the interpretative study of the first phase of the project ended in 1990. But in the “classical longitudinal project,” they should have finished at the then “contemporary period,” that is, at the end of the 1990s. The unplanned continuation of the project created almost a decade-long gap which had to be covered ex-post.

Although it is understandable that this situation could arise (incidentally, the other longitudinal projects referred to were only finalized several years after the publication of *Sto studentských revolucí*), it serves, in my opinion, as an excellent reminder for all of us who work with “living people,” contemporary witnesses: we never know when we or someone else might want to follow up on the project. Therefore, let us not fail to create oral history sources, simply because we think *at the present moment* that they are not necessary...

The second and longest (in terms of the length of the conference papers) panel of the conference, entitled *Sametová revoluce jako symbolické centrum* [The Velvet Revolution as a symbolic centre], presented the conclusions of the three main chapters of the publication mentioned previously, *Sto studentských revolucí*. It was

opened by Marie Pětová, Dean of the Faculty of Humanities of Charles University and the representative of the second organizing institution.

In her paper, *Variace revoluce* [Variations of the revolution], Jana Wohlmut Markupová first briefly commented on the concept of a symbolic centre (associated mainly with the work of Miloš Havelka), which defined the perspective from which the authors viewed the research themes and oral history sources: the Velvet Revolution was seen here as a symbolic centre of Czech history. After that, she presented three different ways in which the former student activists related to their personal experience with the revolution. She called this trilogy “revolution as a commitment,” “revolution as a complied obligation” and “revolution as a prepared chance.” She also focused on how this trilogy of relations might have affected their present engagement/non-engagement in politics or in civil society, and alternatively, on how this was influenced by the prominent figure of the Velvet Revolution, Václav Havel.

Another panellist, Veronika Pehe, presented a paper entitled *Zlatá devadesátá?* [Golden 1990s?], in which she analyzed how, 20 years later, the former students recalled their youth in the decade after the Velvet Revolution. She paid special attention to the contradiction between the narrators’ memories of “the small” and “the big” history: whereas in the private sphere the narrators often talked about a subjective feeling of “historic winners” (of the revolution) and about “a golden age when everything was possible,” they were much more critical of social development (mainly of political affairs). The author then interpreted this contradiction as a manifestation of the historicization of the analyzed period of the 1990s, which should be further elaborated. Incidentally, the period of the 1990s is now becoming a new field of research for historians of contemporary history.

The panel was concluded by Miroslav Vaněk’s presentation entitled *Generace* [The generation]. The speaker focused on the generation issue from two different perspectives: first, he tried to outline the differences in the intergenerational relations of the narrators with their parents on one hand and their children on the other. This allowed him to point to the ambiguity with which the Velvet Revolution is viewed in the families of the student activists: whereas the narrators’ parents did not necessarily perceive it as positively as their children (former activists), the generation of narrators’ children showed little interest in the experience of their parents, regarding the 1989 events as long forgotten history. But this was only rarely criticized by the parents – narrators, who appreciate their children’s freedom to live their present and future lives as they wish. Secondly, the author focused on the perception of the 1989 students as a generation. However, on the basis of his research, the author significantly re-interpreted often repeated and generalized media reports and stated that the demonstrating students constituted only a minority of the university students of 1989.

Perhaps the most memorable question, which in a way also summarizes the prevailing tone of the following discussion, was raised by Pavel Urbášek, the speaker of the first panel and the interviewer of the first phase of the project. With his question *Has the student generation of 1989 failed?*, he reacted to all three speakers:

to Miroslav Vaněk, who had mentioned that the group of students of 1989 partly considered themselves “the knights of Blaník who would arrive in time of greatest need”; to Jana Wohlmuth Markupová, who had talked more about the civic activity of the narrators than about their willingness to aspire to political posts; and to Veronika Pehe, who had emphasized the contradiction between the way the narrators remembered the 1990s in the private and social spheres. Although the narrators felt that many political mistakes had been made during this period, they dissociated themselves from them. In their memories, the 1990s was a period of “the wild youth” when they could fulfil their individual goals and, in general, had no political aspirations.

Whereas Pavel Urbášek expressed the conviction that the student activists should have assumed greater political responsibility, other speakers refrained from any harsh judgement and rather tried to explain the perspective of the narrators. Still, the discussion finally brought up a question which had been implied in some of the interviews with the narrators and which should be addressed by someone other than historians, whose focus is on the past and not on the present, let alone on its evaluation: *Has the group of student activists of 1989 failed in any way?* And let me add: Is this question not motivated more by our own discontent with the political situation than by a “real” vacuum on the political scene?

The conference culminated in a panel discussion with the participants of the student strike of 1989 (and the narrators) Zdena Kolečková, Tomáš Ctibor and Martin Štainer, which was moderated by Miroslav Vaněk and Jana Wohlmuth Markupová.

Despite the fact that the majority of the guests taking part in the discussion had not been present at the previous debate and that the moderators therefore decided not to take it up again, a distant echo of the period of 20 years ago could still be heard: if at that time the presentation of the book (about themselves) gave the former student activists “the necessary” pretext to unite again and make a public appeal after a decade of disparate activities, it seemed as if this time they called for someone “from outside” who would bring them together. The last question from the public was surprisingly raised by Zdeněk Jana, another narrator and former student activist. Addressing the conference organizers and speakers, rather than his “fellow activists,” he asked: “When will you organize a similar meeting again? I think it is really necessary in the present time.”

In a general sense, the last question confirmed the overall feeling raised by the conference, which – despite its basis in history – seemed to focus more on the present than on the past, more on what the main historical actors did not do than on what they did or would do in the future. From the methodological and thematic perspective, the project opened the door to a different concept of research of contemporary history. It showed both the possibilities and limits of longitudinal oral history research, which is in fact rarely used in the Czech Republic and abroad. This may be due to the novelty of the approach, and also due to the time and finances necessary, or possibly due to its risky character. From the thematic perspective, this project revealed that it may not only be valuable to speak to the

participants in “the big history” about how they set the course of history, but also about how this experience “set the course” of their own lives in the following years and decades. This gives us a unique opportunity to step outside the framework of historians, who usually provide answers to questions, and in contrast show how the researched reality cannot be answered definitively and also how it changes itself through this questioning. Because, while we already know what the presentation of the first phase of the project motivated the former student leaders to do, we can only guess whether the second phase will have a similar effect, and what this could possibly be.⁷ Nevertheless, one thing is almost certain: the authors have already made plans to repeat the project for a third time.

Translated by Blanka Medková

7 This text was written in the summer of 2019.

Review

A Thrown Gauntlet

Josef Serinek and Jan Tesař as a Challenge for Current Research into the History of the Roma in the 20th Century

Helena Sadílková

TESAŘ, Jan: *Česká cikánská rapsodie* [The Czech gypsy rhapsody]. Vol. 1: *Vzpomínky Josefa Serinka* [Recollections of Josef Serinek]; IDEM: *Místo epilogu: Rozhovor s Josefem Ondrou* [Instead of an epilogue: An interview with Josef Ondra; Documents]; *Dokumenty* [Documents]; Vol. 2: IDEM: *Komentáře ke vzpomínkám Josefa Serinka* [Comments on the recollections of Josef Serinek]; Vol. 3: *Mapy, tabulky, diagramy: Partyzáni na Vysočině* [Maps, tables, charts: Partisans in the Vysočina region]; IDEM: *Serinkovské inspirace* [Serinkian inspirations]. Praha, Triáda 2016, 502 + 635 + 208 pages, ISBN 978-80-87256-86-2.

Tesař's trilogy entitled *Česká cikánská rapsodie* [The Czech gypsy rhapsody], dealing principally with the fate of Romani partisan Josef Serinek during the Second World War, is unique for several reasons. The individual aspects of its exceptional nature – seen in this text mainly from the perspective of our existing knowledge of the history of the Roma in Czechoslovakia in the first half of the 20th century – can be summarized as follows: Tesař's work depicts a story of a man who came from a Romani family living in Bohemia, or, to be more precise, in the western part of Sudetenland, and captures his life between 1914 and 1945, and is extraordinary

due to the fact that he managed to escape from the so-called gypsy camp at Lety u Písku, where he was interned with his whole family; after months of travelling and hiding, he joined the resistance movement in the Vysočina region and became one of its key organizers and figures. What is so unique about Serinek's testimony, given in 1963 and 1964, is first its extensiveness (Tesař carried out a total of 18 interviews with Serinek over the course of 17 months), and secondly the thorough care with which Jan Tesař verified, contextualized and interpreted Serinek's testimony. In the following text, I would like to analyze these individual aspects further and also focus on some other issues raised by this book. Despite long-time research, there are still numerous "gaps and blanks" in our existing knowledge of the history of the Roma in the Czech Lands between 1914 and 1945. In his work *Česká cikánská rapsodie*, Tesař not only fills in some of these "gaps and blanks," but, through his approach, also invites other researchers to expand existing research in terms of the explored themes and facts, as well as in terms of employed methodology and interpretation – and by doing so he quite clearly reveals the Achilles heel of our existing knowledge and approaches to the matter. Serinek's testimony itself also offers a number of interesting details, inspiring us to raise further questions.

One of the "gaps and blanks," which Serinek's story itself – and also the way Tesař works with it – completes in a monumental fashion (and which also invites others to expand on it), is Romani participation in the struggle for the liberation of Czechoslovakia, or in a broader perspective, Romani participation in the army (and the struggle for Czechoslovakia) in both World Wars. The issue of Romani participation in the "national liberation struggle" of the First and Second World Wars, resulting, too, from their participation in European armies – for example, in the Czech case it was primarily their participation in the legions, which is mentioned by Serinek at the beginning of his narration – is a virtually unexplored theme, even at a global level. There are some passing references to this topic in relation to Bohemia and Moravia in the work of Ctibor Nečas. Detailed research into the issue has recently been conducted by Lada Viková.¹ In Nečas's texts, apart from references to several Romani legionaries, we can also find information on another Romani partisan, Antonín Murka from the Zlín region.²

Like Serinek, Antonín Murka was interned, but in the other Protectorate "gypsy camp" located in Hodonín u Kunštátu. In May 1943, he managed to escape from

1 NEČAS, Ctibor: *Špalíček romských miniatur* [A bundle of Romani miniatures]. Brno, Centrum pro studium demokracie a kultury 2008. Currently, an intensive research is being carried out by Lada Viková – see her forthcoming text: VIKOVÁ, Lada: Adolf Ištvan – romský legionář z Bohusoudova a jeho dopisy [Adolf Ištvan – A Romani legionary from Bohusoudov and his letters]. In: *Romano džaniben*, Vol. 25 (in preparation). See also her text popularizing the issue: Romové v československých legiích v Itálii a jejich smutné osudy [Roma in the Czechoslovak legions in Italy and their sad fate]. In: *Romano voři*, Vol. 16, No. 9 (September 2018), pp. 18–20. Accessed at: <http://www.romea.cz/cz/romano-vodi/romove-v-ceskoslovenskych-legiich-v-italii-a-jejich-smutne-osudy>.

2 NEČAS, Ctibor: *Romové na Moravě a ve Slezsku (1740–1945)* [Roma in Moravia and Silesia (1740–1945)]. Brno, Matice moravská 2005.

the camp with three other prisoners (they came from the same region and knew each other, but were not related). All his fellow escapees were eventually captured one by one – whereas Bohuslav Dydy and Blažej Dydy were returned to the Hodonín camp, Ludvík Murka was executed at Pankrác Prison. Out of these four men, it was Blažej Dydy who has attracted most attention, since he was one of the four Czechoslovak citizens tried after the war for their involvement in Protectorate “gypsy camps.”³ Blažej Dydy, who was himself held prisoner in Hodonín u Kunštátu and Auschwitz-Birkenau on grounds of his race, was also the only one who was tried very severely⁴ – his death sentence was reduced, “given the circumstances of his acts,” to a life sentence – for the atrocities he committed as a member of the prisoner self-administration of the camp at Hodonín and later also in the so-called gypsy family camp in Auschwitz-Birkenau.⁵

Despite the fact that Antonín Murka’s testimony on his escape and the circumstances of his joining the partisan section in the Valašsko region was gathered by Ctibor Nečas in 1987,⁶ his destiny has not yet been documented in detail. As Murka told Nečas, following his escape from the Hodonín camp, he hid near the village of Březůvka in the Zlín region and later, after meeting a Slovak refugee who sought ways to join the resistance movement, he entered the partisan brigade of

3 See: PAPE, Markus – DVOŘÁK, Joachim (ed.): *A nikdo vám nebude věřit: Dokument o koncentračním táboře Lety u Písku* [And nobody will believe you: A document on the concentration camp Lety u Písku]. Praha, G plus G 1997; SCHUSTER, Michal: *Proces s Blažejem Dydy na základě materiálů Mimořádného lidového soudu v Brně roku 1947* [The trial of Blažej Dydy based on the materials of the Extraordinary People’s Court in Brno in 1947]. In: *Romano džaniben*, Vol. 20, No. 1 (2013), pp. 73–101. Accessed at: <https://www.dzaniben.cz/article.html?x=l&a=f6518e28e408316b8b8f93eb385d523a&m=002b666e42d85f921a8ee0ee4a290105&t=376>. All these four trials are being explored in detail by Jiří Smlsal – see his forthcoming text: SMLSAL, Jiří: *Holocaust Romů v retribučním soudnictví* [Holocaust of the Roma in retributive justice]. In: *Romano džaniben*, Vol. 25 (in preparation), written on the basis of his dissertation *Holocaust českých a moravských Romů: Společenské předpoklady a aktéřská perspektiva* [Holocaust of Bohemian and Moravian Roma: Social preconditions and actors’ perspective], defended at the Institute of Economic and Social History of the Faculty of Arts of Charles University, Prague 2018.

4 Apart from Blažej Dydy, the commanding officer of the Lety u Písku camp Josef Janovský also faced trial at the Extraordinary People’s Court, but was acquitted of all charges. The so-called commissions for the exoneration of public servants judged the acts of the Lety camp guards Josef Hejduk (he was acquitted) and Josef Luňáček (he was given an official reprimand).

5 Blažej Dydy was interned in the Hodonín camp in August 1942 together with his pregnant wife and one year-old son, who died in November 1942. Dydy’s wife and his baby son, born in the Hodonín camp, were deported together with Blažej Dydy to Auschwitz-Birkenau. His wife and son were killed during the “liquidation” of the local so-called gypsy family camp in August 1944, whereas Dydy, as a person fit for work, was relocated and gradually deported to several other Nazi camps.

6 The testimony of Antonín Murka was published by Nečas seven years later: NEČAS, Ctibor (ed.): *Nemůžeme zapomenout / Našti bisteras: Nucená táborová koncentrace ve vyprávěních romských pamětníků* [We cannot forget: Recorded memories of Romani survivors of concentration camps]. Olomouc, Univerzita Palackého v Olomouci 1994.

Jan Žizka of Trocnov and participated in the liberation of the town of Vizovice. Is it possible that at some time he heard about the “Black partisan,” Serinek, or even met him (in the postwar period)? Did any other Roma who had managed to escape persecution enter the resistance groups in the Czech Lands? Did they know about each other? And what was their postwar destiny in comparison with what we know about Serinek, thanks to Tesař?

Ctibor Nečas assumed that out of the original Czech and Moravian Roma and Sinti who formed the pre-war Roma population of the Czech Lands, several hundred saved themselves from the war genocide by either escaping to Slovakia or hiding in the Protectorate.⁷ This was also the case for “the first Romani university student in the Czech Lands,” Tomáš Holomek, who survived thanks to his escape to Slovakia. After the Second World War, he finished his law studies and became a military prosecutor and a member of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia (as a number of prominent postwar Romani figures – it would be interesting to use these examples to explore further one of the main lines of Tesař’s commentary on Serinek’s narrative connected with the narrator’s identification with communism). Mainly in order to protect their children from another similar tragedy, even after the war, part of the Roma survivors decided not to make, if possible, their ethnicity public – sometimes by not speaking the Romani language to their children or at least by not talking about the war tragedy of their former families. By contrast, Tomáš Holomek, together with a group of other survivors from different Romani communities in Moravia, publicly sought Roma’s participation in designing the policies of post-February Czechoslovakia regarding “the gypsy population,” as well as the establishment of a national Romani organization (it was established and operated in the Czech part of the republic under the name Union of Gypsies-Roma between 1969 and 1973).⁸ Nothing is known about the Slovak episode of Tomáš Holomek’s life (his closest family survived in the Protectorate thanks to protection offered to them by their non-Roma relatives and neighbours), nor there is any detailed biography of his life in the postwar period.⁹ The absence of such a biography, as well as biographical information about other prominent figures of the

7 IDEM: *Holocaust českých Romů* [Holocaust of the Czech Roma]. Praha, Prostor 1999. Serinek’s narrative is an eloquent testimony on the main problems of hiding in an environment of permanent persecution, even by the inhabitants of the Protectorate.

8 See: SADÍLKOVÁ, Helena – SLÁČKA, Dušan – ZÁVODSKÁ, Milada: *Aby bylo i s námi počítáno: Společensko-politická angažovanost Romů a snahy o založení romské organizace v poválečném Československu* [So that you count on us too: Politico-social engagement of Roma and their efforts to establish a Romani organization in postwar Czechoslovakia]. Brno, Muzeum romské kultury 2018.

9 So far the most detailed biographic data have been published by Ctibor Nečas in his article “Uplatnění prvních romských studentů z Moravy” [Employment of the first Romani students from Moravia]. In: *Romano džaniben*, Vol. 12, No. 1 (2005), pp. 45–49. The pre-war history of the Holomek family was documented by Jana Horváthová (see, for example: HORVÁTHOVÁ-HOLOMKOVÁ, Jana: Možnosti integrace na příkladu moravských Romů [The possibility of integration as illustrated by the example of Moravian Roma]. In: *Ibid.*, Vol. 1, No. 1 (1994), pp. 8–19.

Romani society in postwar Czechoslovakia, only proves that there are further “gaps and blanks” in our knowledge of the history of local Roma and also the fact that our historiography does not offer as many footholds, backed by a meticulous and detailed heuristics, as one could expect. Against the background of this incomplete picture, the exceptional quality of Tesař’s work on Josef Serinek and his testimony stands out even more clearly.

This situation can be better illustrated by a short digression into the situation in Slovakia, on which Tesař also comments, but without any reference to the Roma. Yet there was probably a relatively large number of Roma who joined the partisan struggle in Slovakia both actively, as members of individual units, or as supporters of the partisans. During times of extreme poverty they provided them at the very least with information and shelter, or when possible also with food. Gypsy settlements, being relocated to remote areas of towns or villages on the basis of Slovak anti-gypsy war decrees, in a way provided an ideal opportunity for this. Testimonies of some of the Roma war survivors in Slovakia were gathered by Milena Hübschmannová, and a selection of them was published in 2005 in a collection that is as monumental and unique as Tesař’s work.¹⁰ These interviews (which, however, in comparison with Serinek’s narration, lack a thorough verification of facts mentioned in individual testimonies and a detailed commentary) are practically the only fairly extensive published material featuring at least partial biographies of some of the Romani partisans in Slovakia.

It is typical of the current state of knowledge of the history of the Roma in Czechoslovakia that the involvement of the Romani population in the local partisan movement in Slovakia is generally taken as a fact, even though details about their involvement remain rather blurred. Their involvement and support of partisans (either real or suspected) were also motives for the execution of individuals or groups, or even the extermination of entire Romani communities during the suppression of the Slovak National Uprising, an event which represents an exceptionally dark chapter of the war destiny of the Roma in Slovakia.¹¹ Whereas at least some individual cases of execution and mass murder were (with varying amounts of detail)

10 HÜBSCHMANNOVÁ, Milena (ed.): *Po Židoch Cigáni: Svědectví Romů ze Slovenska 1939–1945*, sv. 1 [After the Jews, the Gypsies: Testimonies of Roma from Slovakia 1939–1945, Vol. 1]. Praha, Triáda 2005. The involvement of Roma in the partisan movement is described in the last chapter of the first volume, containing in total 15 testimonies of direct participants or their relatives. The first of the publication’s two planned volumes is 900 pages long and contains testimonies published in the original language of the recording, mostly in Romani (or in Slovak and Czech) as well as their Czech translation from the Romani language. The second volume has not been published yet. Tesař mentioned that his interview with Serinek had been recorded a long time ago to the editor of the Triáda publishing house Robert Krumphanzl after he had accidentally learned about the preparation of Milena Hübschmannová’s publication. This eventually resulted in their decade-long cooperation on publishing the book *Česká cikánská rapsodie*.

11 See: NEČAS, Ctibor: *Českoslovenští Romové v letech 1938–1945* [Czechoslovak Roma in 1938–1945]. Brno, Masarykova univerzita 1994.

documented,¹² so far no one has focused in detail on the fate of Romani partisans or the specific forms of their support and involvement in the resistance movement.

Thus, there is also no detailed biography of Anton Facuna, one of the most prominent Romani figures in the Slovak resistance movement. According to recent findings, as a soldier in the Slovak army, he was first sent to the battlefield in Russia and then deployed in Italy, from where he deserted. Later, he was trained by the Americans as a paratrooper and dropped into Slovak territory in 1944. Hübschmannová could only record an interview with his sister, and more, though very brief, biographical information has been published only recently.¹³ Hübschmannová also noted that as a former American paratrooper Facuna attracted the attention of the curators of the Museum of the Slovak National Uprising in the town of Banská Bystrica. Information on his life was included in the former version of the local exposition, albeit without any reference to his ethnic origin. After the war, Facuna – just like Tomáš Holomek and his nephew Miroslav Holomek in the Czech Lands – became a key figure of the Romani political movement in Slovakia, seeking the representation and participation of Roma in designing state policies regarding Romani communities. As early as 1958, he presented a request to the Slovak authorities to establish a nation-wide organization of the Roma. This was eventually established in 1968. For a short period, he was also the chairman of the organization. Therefore, he was apparently a significant figure, not just “an ordinary man” living his civilian life and attracting little public attention.

In this regard, we should at least mention the involvement of Romani soldiers from Slovakia in the army of General Ludvík Svoboda¹⁴ (according to postwar police data, there were as many as 1,500 Roma fighting in Svoboda’s army).¹⁵ This provides not only further example of the direct involvement of Roma in the liberation of Czechoslovakia, but unfortunately also of the very poorly researched and documented history.

If we go back in time in Serinek’s narration, it is also invaluable for its testimony on the internment and conditions in the so-called gypsy camp at Lety u Písku during the first weeks of its existence. (Given the periodically recurring debate in Czech public space on the character of these camps, it should be noted that Serinek consistently refers to the Lety camp as “a concentration camp”.) First, Serinek

12 *Ibid.* See also: MANN, Arne B.: Význam spomienkového rozprávania pre výskum dejín rómskeho holocaustu [Importance of oral history narratives for research into Roma holocaust history]. In: *Romano džaniben*, Vol. 20, No. 2 (2013), pp. 37–51 (on the massacre in Čierny Balog); HÜBSCHMANNOVÁ, Milena (ed.): Tři výpovědi o tragické události ve Slatině (Vánoce 1944) [Three testimonies on the tragic events in Slatina (Christmas 1944)]. In: *Ibid.*, Vol. 5, No. 4 (1998), pp. 32–41.

13 DONERT, Celia: *The Rights of the Roma: The Struggle for Citizenship in Postwar Czechoslovakia*. Cambridge, Cambridge University Press 2017, p. 136; SADÍLKOVÁ, H. – SLAČKA, D. – ZÁVODSKÁ, M.: *Aby bylo i s námi počítáno*, p. 136.

14 Compare: HÜBSCHMANNOVÁ, M. (ed.): *Po Židoch Cigáni*, pp. 197–406.

15 See: JUROVÁ, Anna: *Rómska menšina na Slovensku v dokumentoch 1945–75* [The Romani minority in Slovakia in documents 1945–1975]. Košice, Spoločenskovedný ústav SAV 2008, p. 7.

describes the deportation to the camp, the forced sale of part of his family's property and police registration. His memories of life in the camp and local conditions essentially reveal feelings of great frustration over his helplessness in the face of imprisonment, the harsh regime and the brutal treatment of all prisoners, including women and children (Tesař also provides a sensitive commentary on this). What is valuable is that Serinek provides details of daily life in the camp and the somewhat milder conditions at the workplaces outside the camp, which also allowed communication with family members who had not been imprisoned yet (in the case of Serinek, it was paradoxical as it were those family members who did not leave the Sudetenland after its annexation to the Reich and who were deported to concentration camps "as late as" 1943, i.e. later than Serinek and his family). Even in the first months following his escape, Serinek could therefore maintain contact with his sister, who was living in the town of Most, and through her with the family he had left behind in Lety, mainly with his daughter, who was assigned to a work unit in the village of Zbonín.

Serinek comments that there were as many as 5,000 Romani prisoners and 200 prison guards in the camp at Lety u Písku. This comment brings to the fore one of the key and still unresolved issues related to the operation of this camp – the number of prisoners interned in the camp, which remains unclear. Despite Tesař's sensitive commentary on the data provided by Serinek, in which he interprets the number as vastly overestimated, it is evident that there were more prisoners at Lety than the 1,300 people on the list compiled by Ctibor Nečas from the camp documentation (as preserved in the Archive of the town of Třeboň) in the 1980s.¹⁶ Another reason for some exaggeration in Serinek's memory of Lety, which is, however, absent in Tesař's commentary, may be the fact that Serinek did not experience the conditions in Auschwitz-Birkenau. For him, the horror of concentration camps was therefore forever symbolized by the camp Lety u Písku.

Serinek's testimony on the conditions at Lety, although recorded some 20 years later, is one of the earliest testimonies available on this camp. There are some even earlier testimonies by former prisoners of the Protectorate "gypsy camps." They were given in the immediate aftermath of the war (between 1945 and 1948) by Roma who testified to the police and in court at the trial of Josef Janovský, head of the camp at Lety, and particularly at the trial of Blažej Dydy, prisoner guard in the camp at Hodonín u Kunštátu. All these testimonies were, however, given at the

16 NEČAS, Ctibor (ed.): *Pamětní seznam, sv. 1: Jména a údaje o nebožácích, kteří byli násilně koncentrováni v tzv. cikánském táboře I (Lety, 1942–1943)* [Memorial list, Vol. 1: Names and data of the poor people interned in the so-called gypsy camp I (Lety, 1942–1943)]. Nymburk, Vega-L 2012; IDEM: *Andr'oda taboris: Vězňové protektorátních cikánských táborů 1942–1943* [Prisoners of the Protectorate gypsy camps 1942–1943]. Brno, Městský výbor Českého svazu protifašistických bojovníků v Brně 1987. Based on the preserved camp documentation, Nečas also reconstructs in detail the number of the camp guards, varying from 20 camp guards in the first months of the existence of the so-called gypsy camp (that is at the time when J. Serinek had been interned there) to 54 men in the first three months of 1943. NEČAS, C.: *Holocaust českých Romů*.

behest of and within institutions (and actors) that took part in the prosecution of the testifying witnesses during the war. The earliest testimonies of the surviving Protectorate Roma discovered, which had been written down voluntarily and in a literary form, include primarily an extensive (and so far unpublished) manuscript entitled “Housle a kůň” [The violin and the horse] by Rudolf Daniel from the early 1950s. The author came from the town of Oslavany in South Moravia, and in his manuscript, apart from his own life, he documented the life of the entire local Romani community, which was by then already non-existent.¹⁷ However, Rudolf Daniel was not imprisoned in any of the two Protectorate “gypsy camps.” Like the majority of Roma from Oslavany, he was deported directly to the concentration camp at Auschwitz-Birkenau.¹⁸ The first so far discovered testimony written by a Romani survivor from the Czech Lands was Leon Růžička’s brief contribution to the newspaper of the Union of Anti-Fascist Fighters (*Svaz protifašistických bojovníků*) in 1957. It was elaborated a year later, presented in the Union’s literary competition and published in 1959.¹⁹ (Did Tesař know about Růžička’s text at the time he visited Serinek’s family?) Before the war, Leon Růžička lived in the Most region. After the annexation of the Sudetenland, he moved to the town of Kladno where his relatives lived. From there, he was deported, together with other members of his family, again directly to Auschwitz-Birkenau. Therefore, not even Růžička’s text contains any information on the Lety camp. Another of the early testimonies written by Roma holocaust survivors is the testimony of Barbara Richter, published in the Italian Roma magazine *Lacio Drom* in 1965 (it was therefore written essentially at the same time as Tesař started visiting Serinek). A unique feature of this testimony is that Barbara Richter was also a prisoner at Lety for several months. Like Serinek, Barbara Richter managed to escape from the camp (in 1942 and also thanks to being assigned to the working units outside the camp). Following her escape, she hid in Prague, but was reported and again detained by the criminal police in March 1943. Then she was deported to Auschwitz-Birkenau.²⁰ Tesař’s interview with Josef Serinek, recorded between 1963 and 1964 (though published only much later), thus presents the earliest documented research interview with a Romani holocaust survivor from the Czech Lands, although Serinek was not interviewed

17 Compare: ZÁVODSKÁ, Milada: Rukopis Rudolfa Daniela “Housle a kůň”: Příspěvek k problematice autorství. Dílčí výsledky výzkumu a několik poznámek k historické metodologii, též z hlediska romistiky [Manuscript of Rudolf Daniel “The violin and the horse”: Contribution to the issue of authorship. Partial results of research and a few notes on the methodology of historical research, also through the lens of Romani studies]. In: *Romano džaniben*, Vol. 18, No. 2 (2011), pp. 100–104.

18 See: NEČAS, C.: *Romové na Moravě a ve Slezsku*.

19 See: SADÍLKOVÁ, Helena – ZÁVODSKÁ, Milada – RŮŽIČKA, Leon: „Včera a dnes: Vzpomínka cikána na nacistické lágry.“ Komentovaný memoár z r. 1958 [“Yesterday and today: A gypsy’s memories of the Nazi camps.” Commented memoirs from 1958]. In: *Romano džaniben*, Vol. 20, No. 1 (2013), pp. 141–155.

20 A brief portrait of Barbara Richter, including a reference to her testimony in *Lacio drom*, was published in Markus Pape’s book. See: PAPE, M. – DVOŘÁK, J. (ed.): *A nikdo vám nebude věřit: Dokument o koncentračním táboře Lety u Písku*.

by Tesař primarily as a Romani holocaust survivor, but as a (Romani) participant in the Czech resistance. Researchers focusing already directly on the fate of the Roma and Sinti in the Protectorate began their research several years later (the interviews collected by them also date later, and the selection of these interviews could be published only after 1989).

In the light of what has been said about the authentic testimonies written by the Romani survivors and their determination to give or possibly even publish testimony on the war fate of their murdered families and vanished communities, it seems very significant to me that, as Jan Tesař comments, Jan Serinek also wrote in more detail about his life and that this manuscript covered the interwar and possibly also a part of the war period (this manuscript had, however, not been found by the time *Česká cikánská rapsodie* was published). To a certain extent, this confirms the feeling that there could be more Roma who sought to write detailed memoirs – as Rudolf Daniel did. Apart from Serinek, there was the case of the previously mentioned Leon Růžička (in a newspaper article in 1957, he stated his intention to write a book about his life, and recently members of his family confirmed the existence of a manuscript of this “book,” but it seems that it has been lost), and there are also written memoirs of another former prisoner of the Lety camp, but for the time being available only to her family. It cannot be ruled out that other similar manuscripts may have been written.

Serinek’s testimony was gathered by Tesař at the beginning of a period in which first Czech historians began to deal in detail with the fate of the Roma in the Protectorate²¹ – probably as early as the 1960s it was Milena Hübschmannová (who started to document testimonies on the war fate of Roma in Slovakia), at the end of the 1960s it was mainly Ctibor Nečas (who focused on Roma in the Protectorate and later also in Slovakia) and apart from him, also Vlasta Kladivová (who documented the life of Romani prisoners in the so-called “gypsy family camp” at Auschwitz-Birkenau). Nečas and Kladivová published the first results of their research in the early 1970s. At first, Nečas mainly worked with archival documents, but later in the 1960s and 1970s he was also in contact with contemporary witnesses (at least within the Brno-based central committee of the Union of Gypsies-Roma). The selection of testimonies of Romani survivors from the Protectorate, gathered by these two researchers and their collaborators in cooperation with the survivors in the 1970s and 1980s, was published only in the early 1990s.²² However, as much as two thirds of the testimonies were given by Roma from Moravia, and only five out of the 30 witnesses, whose testimonies were included in this selection, had been interned in the Lety camp. However, these published testimonies – with the exception of the testimony of Berta Berousková, who at least briefly describes

21 On the history of the Roma holocaust research in the Czech Lands, see: LHOTKA, Petr – ZÁVODSKÁ, Milada: Profesor Ctibor Nečas: Historik a zakladatel vědeckého zkoumání holocaustu Romů [Professor Ctibor Nečas: A historian and founder of the research on the holocaust of the Roma]. In: *Ibid.*, pp. 7–19.

22 NEČAS, C. (ed.): *Nemůžeme zapomenout.*

conditions in the Lety camp – mostly mention Lety only as a transit stop before their transport to Auschwitz-Birkenau, and thus from them we learn no more than with whom and when each of these witnesses was interned.²³

The earliest testimonies in the above mentioned collective volume include those gathered by Vlasta Kladivová in the mid-1970s and by Ctibor Nečas in the mid-1980s. Did these two researchers come across the transcription of Serinek's narration? Probably not. And the other way around – it would be interesting to learn what Jan Tesař knew about the Roma in the Protectorate and the existence of Protectorate “gypsy camps” at the time when he started his visits to Serinek. Until 1963, this part of the history of the local Roma and Sinti and Czech society's relations towards them was covered only by Zdeňka Jamnická-Šmerglová in an extremely ideologically biased text published in 1955.²⁴ Any later comments on this issue in literature come only from the second half of the 1960s.²⁵ What effect did Serinek's testimony on the Lety camp have on Tesař? To what extent was this completely new information for him, and in what context did he set it? Did he, for example, consider this issue a theme that should be worked out in more detail – similar to Nečas whose inspiration to focus on holocaust of the Roma was based on the research into the archival documents from the so-called gypsy camp in Hodonín, containing also some references to the Lety camp, which he had found in the late 1960s? In this respect, we can only regret that Tesař did not comment on his experience with this part of Serinek's testimony.

Finally, I would like to comment on Serinek's testimony related to interwar Czechoslovakia and the preceding period. What is valuable about it is that in this part of his narration he describes the life of his family in western Sudetenland (and after the annexation of Sudetenland in central Bohemia). So far, only very few testimonies of Roma living in the Czech Lands at that time have been published, and very little attention has been paid by researchers to their life in the first 30 years of the 20th century. Thanks to life-long efforts of Ctibor Nečas, who focused in his microstudies on individual Romani communities in Moravia and Silesia and on different aspects of the lives of the local Roma and Sinti, we have quite a detailed knowledge of their life, contemporary status in the society and its changes, as well as about the relations between them and the authorities – from the local

23 An extensive collection of testimonies of Romani survivors exclusively on the camp in Lety was published in the mid-1990s by American writer Paul Polansky (POLANSKY, Paul: *Těživé mlčení: Svědectví těch, kteří přežili Lety* [Black silence: Lety survivors speak]. Praha, G plus G 1998). However valuable these testimonies are (also if we take into the consideration the above mentioned), as resources they were unfortunately considerably devalued by the unprofessional approach with which they were obtained, principally due to the language barrier, lack of knowledge of the issue and basic methods of oral history research (for more details, see: HORVÁTHOVÁ, Jana: Fenomén Polansky [Phenomenon Polansky]. In: *Romano džaniben*, Vol. 22, No. 1 (2015), pp. 87–104).

24 JAMNICKÁ-ŠMERGLOVÁ, Zdeňka: *Dějiny našich cikánů* [The history of our gypsies]. Praha, Orbis 1955.

25 LHOTKA, P. – ZÁVODSKÁ, M.: Profesor Ctibor Nečas.

to the central level.²⁶ However, very little is known about the life of Roma and Sinti in the Czech Lands before they were interned in the Lety camp or dragged to Auschwitz-Birkenau. Among a number of interesting points raised in the book *Česká cikánská rapsodie*, which gives us plenty of food for thought and further research, I have selected just two.

In the first place, it is Serinek's testimony on the consequences of the First Republic's law No. 177/1927 Sb. [Col.], on "itinerant gypsies," which compelled Roma to acquire "passports" in order to be able to travel within the territory of the republic. In his commentary, Tesař interprets this law as an effort to solve the existing social problem and as "adequate pressure in favour of social integration" (Vol. 2, p. 27). It is true that the cited law did not ban traditional nomadic life – it "only" put "nomadic gypsies" under very intensive control of administrative authorities and the police. For these purposes, obligatory so-called gypsy identity cards were issued for all "nomadic gypsies" over 14 years of age. Apart from basic personal information, the identification cards contained a detailed description of the given person, including special identifying marks, full fingerprints and photographs. The relevant (including the police) authorities naturally kept records of all the data. It is interesting that if Serinek (and also his wife and older children) was a holder of this identity card, as he mentioned, he did not comment on this practice of detailed official record and police evidence. Was he not aware of this control or its implications? Or perhaps it is because he did not wish to digress from the main line of his narration? We may also interpret his silence as a display of at least a neutral approach towards this law.

However, the existence of "gypsy identity cards" gradually led to a relatively clear segregation of people considered to be "gypsies." It was not only about "nomadic gypsies," because – as Tesař also notes in his commentary – the identity cards were also gradually being issued to settled "gypsy" families. In official correspondence from late 1939 and early 1940, when an obligatory settlement of the previously "wandering gypsies" was ordered in the Protectorate, an instruction was issued which specified that the settlement of these people was not a reason for returning their identity cards or for not issuing new ones. The obligation to carry a special identity card was applied only to "(nomadic) gypsies," and the authorities (including the police) then recorded them as a special group of the population. The law prescribed the ways "gypsies" were allowed to travel, and by applying specific sanctions (for example, camping in "groups bigger than individual families" was banned, there was a complete ban on possessing any arms, a ban on entering quite a large number of villages or towns, etc.) not only were they deprived of some of their civic rights, but they were also criminalized. The way this existing official evidence began to translate into the later practices of identifying some Czechoslovak citizens as "gypsies" or dangerous "anti-social individuals" for society – with all the tragic implications arising from that – is quite obvious.

26 Results of this long-term work were published by Ctibor Nečas in 2005 in the book *Romové na Moravě a ve Slezsku (1740–1945)*.

The law also allowed municipalities to rid themselves of nomads altogether – by restricting the entry of “nomadic gypsies” to their territories. For example, in Moravia and Silesia, this restriction applied to more than 200 villages and towns, including all three regional centres (Ostrava, Olomouc and Brno), as was documented by Nečas.²⁷ Only those “(nomadic) gypsies” who had the right of domicile in the municipality, were allowed to stay in their cadastral territory. All others, including their relatives, violated the law when staying in these villages or towns. Unfortunately, we once again have no notion on how many Czech municipalities applied this kind of restriction. In this context, if we interpret integration as a spontaneous inclusion of specific groups of the population into the structure of the whole society, it is somewhat problematic to label the First Republic’s law aimed at “gypsies” as well as its practice as an attempt to integrate this part of the population. Nevertheless, it is also true that the same law implied that “a nomadic life” was not illegal and that other municipalities had an obligation to accept the nomads on their territory – for a limited number of days. It is also known that some Roma made a concerted effort to settle in a specific village or town, an effort which was usually strongly opposed by the municipalities, and that the higher authorities intervened in favour of some of the Romani applicants, although sometimes an intervention of the highest authority was necessary. This policy is much closer to the idea of integration. Serinek’s narration on how he helped to claim the right of “nomadic people” to camp in one of the villages in Central Bohemia is inspirational as it raises the question of how many other villages or towns restricted the entry and camping of “nomadic gypsies” in their territory without any foundation, and particularly how many others entered into conflict with the villages or towns, or with its individual inhabitants, when they claimed their right to stay in their territories. This way of using the law in favour of nomadic Roma is new and unknown from the existing literature.

Quite unique also is Serinek’s recapitulation of his pre-war efforts to “organize nomadic people” and his plan to organize an international “meeting of nomadic nations” in Teplice in 1933. But I have to agree with Tesař that better contextualization of this testimony is complicated considering how little we know about the political organization and emancipation of Roma in Czechoslovakia (and Europe) in the interwar period. At that time, similar organizations to the one that Serinek planned to establish at least in the Czech Lands already existed in some of the countries of Central and Eastern Europe – in Romania as early as the end of the 19th century and then again in the 1930s, in Bulgaria the first efforts to organize Roma politically can be traced back to the early 20th century, Romani organizations existed in the latter half of the 1920s in the Soviet Union and in the 1930s also in Poland.²⁸ So far, the only text that mentions Romani efforts of

27 *Ibid.*, pp. 201–210.

28 On the interwar development and political emancipation of Roma see, for example: MARUSHIAKOVA, Elena – POPOV, Veselin: *The Roma – a Nation without a State? Historical Background and Contemporary Tendencies*. In: BURSZTA, Wojciech – KAMUSELLA,

self-organization in Czechoslovakia is the study of Anna Jurová and Eva Zupková on the Roma in the interwar town of Košice/Kassa in eastern Slovakia and some of the associations that had been established there: a professional organization Union of Czechoslovak Gypsy Musicians (*Únia československých cigánskych hudobníkov*), branch Košice (established in 1926), Lavutarisz – Cultural and Social Society of Gypsies in Slovakia (*Lavutarisz – kultúrny a sociálny spolok Cigánov na Slovensku*, established in 1936), Sporting Club of Slovak Gypsies – Roma Košice (*Športový klub slovenských Cigánov – Roma Košice*, established in 1930).²⁹ To what extent was Serinec inspired by these Slovak (and foreign) activities? And if he was, how did he learn about them (perhaps during his stay in Košice?), or what was his relationship with their organizers? These are only very basic questions that we should ask. Were there any other initiatives to organize Roma in the Czech Lands? Let us hope that we will be able to expand on Serinec's reference sometime soon thanks to the current international project led by Elena Marušiaková and Veselin Popov, focusing on the issue of Roma political emancipation in Europe, including the territory of Czechoslovakia, in the interwar period.³⁰

Last but not least: in terms of interpretation of Serinec's life story, Tesař repeatedly condemns the genocide of Czech and Moravian Roma and Sinti as, first, immeasurable human suffering and – mainly – an irreplaceable cultural-social loss for the “Czechoslovak nation.” On several occasions, Tesař also explicitly writes about Czech society's share in the responsibility for the extermination of its Romani fellow citizens. A similarly explicit statement on “Czech complicity” in the wartime genocide of the Roma was already made before Tesař by German journalist Markus Pape and American writer and genealogist Paul Polansky. In contrast to Tesař, Pape and Polansky limited themselves to this statement, given within the framework of pro-Roma activism, however important at the time (in the mid-1990s). Also thanks to their contribution a battle began for securing a dignified memorial site for the Holocaust of Sinti and Roma on the site of the former Lety camp (instead of a pig-farm) and Hodonín camp (instead of a recreational compound) as a symbol both of Czech society's involvement in the genocide, as well as of the fact of it being erased from collective memory. In this context, we must also note the role played

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- Tomasz – WOJCIECHOWSKI, Sebastian (ed.): *Nationalismus Across the Globe*. Poznan, School of Humanities and Journalism 2005, pp. 433–455; O'KEEFFE, Brigid: *New Soviet Gypsies: Nationality, Performance, and Selfhood in the Early Soviet Union*. Toronto – Buffalo – London, University of Toronto Press 2012; BARANY, Zoltan: *The East European Gypsies: Regime Change, Marginality and Ethnopolitics*. Cambridge, Cambridge University Press 2002.
- 29 JUROVÁ, Anna – ZUPKOVÁ, Eva: Rómovia v Košiciach v 1. ČSR v kontexte doby i regionu (1918–1938) [Roma in the town of Košice during the First Czechoslovak Republic in the context of the period and region (1918–1938)]. In: *Bulletin Muzea romské kultury*, Vol. 16. Brno, Muzeum romské kultury 2007, pp. 105–111.
- 30 For more information on this research, see: Roma Interbellum: Roma Civic Emancipation between the Two World Wars. In: University St Andrews [online]. [quoted 2018-09-30.] Accessed at: <https://arts.st-andrews.ac.uk/romainterbellum/>.

by the Museum of Roma Culture in the care of the memorial site at Žalov at the place of the mass grave of the Hodonín gypsy camp's prisoners, and the role of its predecessors from the Union of Gypsies-Roma, which celebrated the very first public ceremony in commemoration of Roma victims at Žalov in 1973. The ceremony was also attended by Ctibor Nečas, who later successfully advocated that the place of the memorial site in Lety u Písku should be proclaimed a cultural heritage site or that a commemorative plaque should be installed at the site of the Brno slaughterhouse, where Roma from Moravia were gathered before being transported to Auschwitz-Birkenau in 1943.³¹

Unlike Pape and Polansky, Tesař further expands on the line of Czech involvement in the genocide of the Roma. He analyzes how fundamental an impact the denial and suppression of this fact had on the consciousness, self-confidence and contemporary state of "the Czechoslovak nation" and to what extent this tragedy (mainly alongside the holocaust of the Jews) was a significant loss for the definition of the term "Czechoslovak nation" and for its cultural content. Therefore, the war extermination of a great part of the original Romani population is related by Tesař not only to the Roma themselves – as a wrong that has not been redressed and a crime committed against them also by their Czech fellow citizens – but also, and this is very important, to Czech society itself. He thus converts the holocaust of the Roma into a historical event which fundamentally affects the entire Czech society, however much it is not accepted (or perhaps precisely for that reason) to this day – although the events of the past two years indicate some important shifts in this attitude. In relation to Roma as victims of war genocide, his text on partisan Serinek has yet another dimension, crucial in the context of writing about the holocaust and the narrative of victims dominating it. Apart from a clear statement on Czech involvement in the persecution and genocide, he draws a picture of Serinek as not being only an outlaw and fugitive, but also a person who did not give up and fought, and who by making use of his life experience with hiding in the woods also significantly helped to develop a new strategy and tactics for the local "Czech" resistance.

The importance of this way of interpretation and presentation becomes perhaps more clear against the background of information on the postwar life of Josef Serinek and his offspring, which is only hinted at in the book itself but recurs in a debate on Tesař's book with his grandson Zdeněk. Zdeněk Serinek was raised without knowing about his grandfather's past as a partisan (Tesař refers in detail to the reasons for this approach to Josef Serinek's past, however, without explicitly stating to what extent Josef Serinek's family recognized his partisan past and how his relatives, including postwar children, felt about it). But what is more, Zdeněk Serinek, was also raised without knowing that his grandfather was a Rom and that he could identify himself (or be identified) as (partial) Rom or – "gypsy." Zdeněk Serinek spoke about a quarrel in his childhood when someone referred to him as

31 See: LHOTKA, P. – ZÁVODSKÁ, M.: *Profesor Ctibor Nečas*.

“you gypsy,” and how surprised he was when he subsequently learned at home that he indeed had inherited “gypsy blood” from his grandfather.³²

In this new light, the issue of Serinek’s self-identification with the Roma and its development, also reflected in Tesař’s comments, recurs once again and becomes even more urgent. In this context, we should also emphasize that Serinek’s narrative provides a truly unique opportunity to follow – if we can trust the accuracy of its recording – the alternating use of the expressions “gypsy” and “Rom,” or other terms used for referring to the Roma by Serinek in his 1963 interview with Tesař (“our people” and similar expressions). This raises an acute and still topical question about local inter-ethnic relations, or more precisely about the position of the Roma in Czech society: who, when, how and under what circumstances was voluntarily willing to identify themselves during, before or after the war in the Czech Lands as a “gypsy” or “Rom”? And how is this particular condition of the Czech society, in which a number of people still face the same decision every day, influenced by the way the history of the Roma is written and by the space and image reserved for the Roma by historiography within “Czech” history...?

The text was created in the framework of the research program Progress (Q13) Places of Clashing: Strategic Region Between Europe, North Africa and Asia (Faculty of Arts, Charles University, Institute for the Study of Strategic Regions).

The Czech version of this review, entitled Hozená rukavice: Josef Serinek a Jan Tesař jako výzva pro současný výzkum dějin Romů ve dvacátém století, was originally published in Soudobé dějiny, Vol. 25, Nos. 3–4 (2018), pp. 510–522.

Translated by Blanka Medková

32 Zdeněk Serinek appeared in a debate on Jan Tesař’s book, which formed part of the accompanying programme of the conference “European Roma Identity in the 20th Century through the Lens of Holocaust Victims Documentation,” organized by the Terezín Initiative Institute in Prague on 11–13 May 2017.

Review

Ethnic Composition of Czechoslovak Units during the Second World War

Martin Čížek

MARŠÁLEK, Zdenko: “Česká,” nebo “československá” armáda? Národnostní složení československých vojenských jednotek v zahraničí v letech 1939–1945 [A “Czech” or “Czechoslovak” army? The ethnic composition of Czechoslovak military units abroad 1939–1945]. Praha, Academia 2017, 528 pages, ISBN 978-80-200-2608-8.

Historian Zdenko Maršálek works at the Centre for the History of Minorities of the Institute for Contemporary History of the Academy of Sciences of the Czech Republic. He focuses, in particular, on the military history of Czechoslovakia and other Central European countries between 1918 and 1945.¹ He has also cooperated with

1 See: MARŠÁLEK, Zdenko – HOFMAN, Petr: *Dunkerque 1944–1945: Ztráty Československé samostatné obrněné brigády během operačního nasazení ve Francii* [Dunkerque 1944–1945: Losses of the Czechoslovak independent armoured brigade group during its operational deployment in France]. Praha, Nakladatelství Lidové noviny 2011; HOFMAN, Petr – MARŠÁLEK, Zdenko: *Československá samostatná obrněná brigáda a obléhání Dunkerque 1943–1945* [The Czechoslovak independent armoured brigade group and the siege of Dunkerque 1943–1945]. Praha, Československá obec legionářská 2011; MARŠÁLEK, Zdenko et al.: *Interbrigadisté, Československo a španělská občanská válka: Neznámé kapitoly z historie československé účasti v občanské válce ve Španělsku 1936–1939* [Interbrigadiers, Czechoslovakia, and the Spanish

the Military Central Archives – Military Historical Archives in Prague on databases of Czechoslovak soldiers fighting in the Second World War.²

As its very title suggests, the book deals with the ethnic composition of Czechoslovak military units abroad during the Second World War. The author makes use of numerical methods known as “history in numbers.” In doing so, he set four basic objectives for his work: to thoroughly map the development of the ethnic structure of personnel of Czechoslovak military units; to point at possibilities of electronic processing of personal data and to outline methods combining electronic databases and period press; to bring attention to some basic aspects of ethnic issues in Czechoslovakia between 1918 and 1945; and, last but not least, to offer the work as an example which can be used to demonstrate problems of compatibility of methods of exact sciences and humanities (p. 98). Maršálek’s book disproves some myths on Czechoslovak foreign resistance and also offers a reflection on ethnic self-identification issues during the first Czechoslovak Republic and the Second World War.

The book is divided into six parts. After a foreword and an introduction, there is a chapter dealing with methods of statistical capturing and record-keeping of ethnicity in Czechoslovakia and the Czechoslovak army and explaining changes of related definitions, criteria as well as the influence of political pressures.

The cornerstone of the book is its fourth part, “On different fronts,” which is also the most extensive one and in which Maršálek focuses on ethnic issues in Czechoslovak units, from France in 1939 and 1940 to the Middle East and Great Britain and later the Soviet Union. It is divided into chapters and subchapters reflecting its subtopics. In this part, the author also made 12 applications (probes) into military units of different sizes and analyzed the possibilities of recruiting additional soldiers. The data presented therein indicates essential differences between local recruitment sources in France and in Great Britain, which were manifested in practically every area. As to the units in France and Britain, Zdenko Maršálek presented possibilities and results of his detailed work drawing from the database of the Military Central Archives – Military Historical Archives in Prague. When dealing with Czechoslovak units built in the Soviet Union, he decided to show, in order to demonstrate his point, what kind of results could be achieved if their base consists only of widely available published documents and books.

Civil War: Unknown chapters of Czechoslovak participation in the Spanish Civil War]. Praha, Ústav pro soudobé dějiny AV ČR, v. v. i. 2017.

2 MARŠÁLEK, Zdenko – FIDLER, Jiří – HOFMAN, Petr: *Databáze padlých, zemřelých a nezvěstných československých vojáků československých a spojeneckých zahraničních jednotek za 2. světové války* [Database of Czechoslovak soldiers of Czechoslovak and allied foreign units killed, perished or missing in action during the Second World War]. Praha, Vojenský ústřední archiv – Vojenský historický archiv 2004; MARŠÁLEK, Zdenko – PILÁT, Vladimír – BROŽ, Miroslav – HOFMAN, Petr ad.: *Databáze příslušníků československých zahraničních jednotek za 2. světové války* [Database of members of Czechoslovak foreign units during the Second World War]. Praha, Vojenský ústřední archiv – Vojenský historický archiv 2005–2013.

In the fifth part, named “From different shores,” the author deals with Jewish and Carpatho-Ruthenian ethnics in the Czechoslovak army. In the part entitled “Lessons learned, conclusions, and hypotheses,” Zdenko Maršálek summarizes, in a broader context, the findings he has arrived to, and outlines new questions associated with ethnic and technical aspects of Czechoslovak units abroad during the war. All the chapters contain altogether 106 tables. A list of sources and literature, a list of abbreviations, a Czech and an English abstract, plus an index of names, are at the end of the book. The book’s text is supplemented by 24 pages of appendixes divided into two parts. The first one reprints documents from the collections of the Military Central Archives – Military Historical Archives; the second one contains charts and tables illustrating continuous changes of Czechoslovak foreign units during the war in terms of their numbers, organization, and internal structure. Individual examples of soldiers, which are a good complement of data on larger military units and illustrate the diverse fates of the soldiers, or even provide a freshening and witty digression from the text,³ are a welcome feature of the book.

The author’s methodological intention was to restrict himself, to the maximum extent possible, to numerical processing techniques and to reduce other influences as much as possible. The work under review, however, is not to be a comprehensive coverage of the selected topic. On the contrary – the one-sided quantitative approach has helped reveal some facts which would have remained undisclosed had a different method been used. Yet, numerical data have been set in a basic historical context. The goal was to lay the groundwork for finding out whether and how three factors – the real personnel structure of the units, specific conditions of different territories where the units were being formed, and political directives of exile civilian and military leaders – were influencing each other.

The author himself warns that the data found in documents must always be taken with a pinch of salt when evaluated. “The soldiers cannot be *a priori* regarded as Czechs, Slovaks, Germans, Hungarians, etc., but only as persons who provided information on their mother tongue or nationality in the questionnaire” (p. 83).

The most important source of subsequent interpretations and analyses is the numerical data obtained from the electronic database of all members of Czechoslovak exile military units, which has been built in the Military Central Archives – Military Historical Archives (*Vojenský ústřední archiv – Vojenský historický archiv*) since 2005. The database contains some 90,000 personal files with a huge amount of diverse information only a small part of which is related to ethnicity in one way or another. Parts of the database are also available on the Internet,⁴ but the original records, which the author drew from, are used solely for internal purposes of the institute. The primary data item of the database and related documents is the personal

3 Thus, for example, a rookie named Funk (which means radio or radio station in German) was assigned to a signals platoon in France in the spring of 1940 (p. 205, footnote 539).

4 Military History Institute (*Vojenský historický ústav*), MHI Database: *Databáze příslušníků čs. vojenských jednotek v zahraničí za 2. světové války* [Database of members of Czechoslovak military units abroad during the Second World War] [online]. [Cit. 2018-06-18.] Available at: <http://www.vuapraha.cz/fallensoldierdatabase>.

identification number in records of Czechoslovak foreign units. Combined with a full-text search, it permits substantially better identification of persons and groups of personnel. The author was able to perform cross comparisons, particularly between confessions and ethnicities. By placing the comparisons in a chronological context, he could also focus on potential correlations between the category of ethnic determination and other, in particular sociological, categories (age, education, profession, health condition, etc.). The methodology used by the author brings a possibility of getting detailed results, the more detailed the more thorough the selected width of the topic coverage is. The author made use of it to construct 12 analytical probes reaching down to the platoon level. At the same time, he managed to verify that period evidence and older historical works were more or less consistent with findings based on data from the database referred to above.⁵ Still, the author has encountered and pointed out limits of evidential value of period sources.

It would be recommendable to cover the Czechoslovak legion in Poland and air units in Great Britain and the Soviet Union, including their ground support personnel, along similar lines. The content of the book's subtitle would then be completely fulfilled.

The author has summarized results of his research in 10 conclusions and three hypotheses. His basic findings include diversity of personnel of Czechoslovak units abroad; compared to other exile armies, their ethnic composition was by far the most heterogeneous. The diversity and the level of representation of different ethnicities were varying both geographically, depending on the regions where the units were being formed, and in the course of time. However, they were invariably different from the ethnic structure of both the interwar Czechoslovak army and the Czechoslovak legions during the Great War.

The ethnic composition of the officer corps resulted from several factors. The decisive one was the ethnic composition of the officer corps of the First Republic's army, in which the Czechs held an overwhelming share. No officer of German or Hungarian ethnic origin was involved in foreign resistance.

Military authorities of the Czechoslovak exile were consistently trying to mix different recruitment sources. The main key was the promotion of "Czechoslovakism," with a visible preference of the Czech nation. At the same time, there was an obvious mistrust toward non-Slavic nationalities as a whole. The concept was upset by the communist exile in Moscow, which – in cooperation with the Slovak National Council – pushed through a complete abandonment of the earlier principles. However, their approach to the ethnic issue was just a tactical move in their search for allies against the official exile government.

5 See, for example: BROD, Toman: *Tobrucké krysy* [Tobruk rats]. Praha, Naše vojsko – Svaz protifašistických bojovníků 1967; Collective of authors: *Vojenské dějiny Československa* [Military history of Czechoslovakia], Vol. 4. Praha, Naše vojsko 1988; Collective of authors: *Za svobodu Československa* [For the freedom of Czechoslovakia], Vols. 1–3. Praha, Naše vojsko 1959–1961; KULKA, Erich: *Židé v československé Svobodově armádě* [Jews in Svoboda's army in the Soviet Union]. Praha, Naše vojsko 1990; IDEM: *Židé v československém vojsku na Západě* [Jews in the Czechoslovak army in the West]. Praha, Naše vojsko 1992.

The importance of different ethnic groups in the army reflected neither their arithmetic numbers nor their percentages. The selected methodology permitted Maršálek to identify an extensive intersection between language- and confession-defined categories, in particular to quantify, or at least estimate, the proportion of persons of Jewish descent in each category, hitherto perceived as “ethnic.” Making use of the available data, it is possible to formulate a (purely working) hypothesis about the influence of the “racial element” on the level of support, which the anti-Nazi “Czechoslovak German” exile was showing to Czechoslovak foreign resistance.

Tens of thousands of soldiers were serving in Czechoslovak foreign units during the war. As to Czechs, the author has come to a rather surprising conclusion, namely that, save for big cities, the participation in foreign military resistance was in fact marginal, and perhaps even a rarity. This fact must have had a significant impact on the formation of historical memory.

The number of Czechs from the Czech Lands who fought in units in the West substantially outnumbered those serving in units on the Eastern front. This is something that the author’s third hypothesis is based on, which claims that there are significant differences in the reflection on foreign military resistance in the collective memory between regions of the Czech Republic and former Czechoslovakia.

The process of the step-by-step and sometimes multiple change of ethnic self-identification showed a relatively high level of perviousness of different ethnic categories. At the same time, many people must have experienced a loyalty conflict toward these groups.

An important factor in determining the ethnicity was the individual personal self-identification, i.e. a subjective factor. However, personal data in contemporary military records were officially supposed to be an objective criterion. Many people, and even whole groups, assigned little or no importance to ethnic or national self-identification. On the other hand, a relatively large group changed their personal records to manifest their political opinions.

The author comes to the conclusion that his attempt to operationalize the phenomenon of dual or multiple self-identification has failed. Theoretically, methods employed in the theory of fuzzy sets could be mechanically used. However, the crucial problem was the definitional vagueness of primary criteria of the different categories. It is true that fuzzy logic can offer some theoretical analogies, but it cannot be realistically used in this particular case.

I have noticed just a few inaccuracies in the text, and I would like to mention some of them here. I assume that French divisions were equipped with “motorized” rather than “motoric” assets (p. 142). I believe that the French situation was not as bad as that. In addition, in my opinion, it is better to stick to the original German name *Afrikakorps* rather than take over the expression *Afrika-Korps* used in publications written in English (p. 370). Neither the Czech nor the Czechoslovak system of ranks contains the “seržant” rank (p. 479). In the British army, the “sergeant” is an NCO, its approximate Czech equivalent being *četař*. For this reason, it would be better to give the rank in the original language or to use its Czech equivalent.

I was quite surprised by the author's "obsession" with an allegedly wasted opportunity to emphasize the high numbers of soldiers belonging to ethnic minorities, including non-Slavic ones, in the Czechoslovak foreign army, and to present them as a proof of support of all segments, and in particular ethnic groups of the population, to the struggle of democracy against Nazism (e.g. pp. 12, 27, and 238), although in other places he fairly correctly analyzes the situation and admits that these ideas were generally not much rooted in the population, as the people, having learned from previous developments, were convinced that the First Republic's democracy had not fared that well, and a majority of those involved in the resistance even wished, to a varying extent, its change (pp. 74–76). Indeed, it is not the best practice to project today's views and opinions into the past, when the situation and the people's experience were different.

Similarly, I do not think that quoting whole sentences in English in a book written in Czech (e.g. on pages 79 and 84) is appropriate. An English publication on a similar topic would hardly contain a quotation in Czech without a translation into English. On some pages, the extent of footnotes is larger than that of the text itself. It reminded me of Jan Werich's quotation from the play *Heavy Barbora*: "And the explanatory notes are often thicker than the book they are supposed to explain."⁶ It is therefore worth considering whether it would not have been better to incorporate the content of some of the footnotes directly into the text. However, as said above, these are just trivial details (and in some cases reflecting my own opinion or taste), which do not debase the value and quality of the book.

By way of conclusion, an appeal addressed to the publishing house: a book as extensive as this one would deserve a hard cover. The paperback form may be suitable for thinner publications, or those expected to be shelved in a bookcase without being (repeatedly) read. However, I believe that Zdenko Maršálek's work will find its place among titles which those interested in the topic will repeatedly return to.

The Czech version of this review, entitled Národnostní složení československých jednotek za druhé světové války, was originally published in Soudobé dějiny, Vol. 25, Nos. 1–2 (2018), pp. 258–263.

Translated by Jiří Mareš

6 See, for example, the recording of the theatrical performance of the play *Těžká Barbora* [Heavy Barbora] by Jan Werich and Miroslav Horníček dating back to 1960. In: Youtube [online], 14.10.2014, track 1.55.35–1.55.40. [Cit. 2018-06-18.] Available at: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=V5inGoS-B_Q.

Review

The Persistent Bond of Socialism

Petr Chalupecký

SUK, Jiří: *Veřejné záchodky ze zlata: Konflikt mezi komunistickým utopismem a ekonomickou racionalitou v předsrpnovém Československu* [*Public lavatories made of gold: The conflict between communist utopianism and economic rationality in Czechoslovakia before August 1968*]. Praha, Prostor 2016, 325 pages, ISBN 978-80-7260-341-1.

Jiří Suk's book is a major contribution to the development of economic thinking during the Prague Spring in 1968. However, the author does not focus only on the development of Czechoslovak economic theory in the 1960s, but also examines its broader historical context from a rather philosophical and sociological perspective. Jiří Suk is primarily interested in the form and viability of the new economic model, or the Czechoslovak concept of "socialism with a human face" to be more precise. He analyzes all of this in the context of the 1960s which were, in a way, a global turning point in postwar development, both from the point of view of real economic and social relations and from that of the thought paradigm. The underlying message of the monograph is the idea that, despite their efforts to abandon the traditional Soviet economic model and the associated ideology of Marxism-Leninism and to adopt changes in favour of market economy and contemporary economic theories, some essential elements of this thinking persisted in the minds of the creators of the Czechoslovak reform. Some of these elements reflected also the paradigm formed during the Age of Enlightenment the same as the evolution of the industrial society, including, for example, belief in progress,

scientific optimism, and the virtues of socialism in general. As a matter of fact, changes taking place in global economy and society in the 1960s started casting doubt on the above mentioned paradigm. The new model of socialism thus included some irreconcilable contradictions which made the implementation of the project utopian and also gave room to (fairly justified) criticism of conservative factions which were complaining that the project was abandoning socialism as they had known it in favour of returning to capitalism.

The message of the book is also reflected in its name, although it may seem rather mysterious at first sight. However, it becomes clear when the reader opens the book on the page containing the main motto, namely a quotation of Vladimir Ilyich Lenin dating back to 1921: “When we are victorious on a world scale I think we shall use gold for the purpose of building public lavatories in the streets of some of the largest cities of the world. [...] Meanwhile, we must save the gold in the RSFSR, sell it at the highest price, buy goods with it at the lowest price. When you live among wolves, you must howl like a wolf, while as for exterminating all the wolves, as should be done in a rational human society, we shall act up to the wise Russian proverb: ‘Boast not before but after the battle’” (p. 13). The statement succinctly expresses the contradiction between the objectives which Lenin himself believed viable and the then existing social and economic reality postponing their implementation to a distant and vague future.

The book is divided into eight chapters (plus a conclusion, which can be, to some extent, regarded as the ninth chapter) combining methodological and theoretical reflections with an analysis of the actual evolution of Czech economic thinking in the 1960s. The opening chapter outlines the genesis of Soviet political economy of socialism in the context of the evolution of socialism and Marxism so as to reflect topics resonating in discussions around the Czechoslovak economic reform in the 1960s. In doing so, the author emphasizes, in particular, the determinism and historicism of Karl Marx’s thinking. The traditional perception of Marx¹ enables him to identify elements which Lenin and the Russian Bolsheviks subsequently drew from, the most essential of which is an eschatological outcome of the historical process into an ideal communist society. The author naturally reflects Lenin’s own input into Marxist theory, which partly revises it and, in particular, lies within in a concept of a revolutionary avant-garde which would lead the proletariat toward communism as a set objective. The influence of local conditions in Russia on Lenin’s practice and thinking is not left out either. As stated above, the author dwells on

1 Some interpretations question this traditional perception, which is based on the late works of Engels and works of Karl Kautsky. See, for example: KUŽEL, Petr: Marx nebyl prorok ani historicista [Marx was neither a prophet, nor a historian]. In: *Britské listy*, 28. 3. 2007 [online]. © 2019 [cit. 2019-02-17]. Available at: <https://legacy.blisty.cz/art/33585.html>. For a short and selective review of recent interpretations, see, for example: ELBE, Ingo: Between Marx, Marxism, and Marxisms: Ways of Reading Marx’s Theory. In: *Viewpoint Magazine*, 21. 10. 2013 [online]. © 2018 [cit. 2019-02-18]. Available at: <https://www.viewpointmag.com/2013/10/21/between-marx-marxism-and-marxisms-ways-of-reading-marxs-theory/>.

a rather conceptual level, and therefore does not pay much attention to Russian intellectual stimuli for Lenin's economic thinking, as well as to certain changes in his thinking between the beginning of the 20th century and 1917, which proved important in view of his later political strategy. This would, of course, suggest a much deeper revision of Marx's learning than that represented by the party as the avant-garde of the proletariat or the conviction that a socialist revolution is viable in backward Russia.

When commenting on developments in Soviet Russia in the early 1920s, the author stresses the role of ideology in the formulation of Bolshevik general and economic policies as opposed to that of socio-economic reality. It is possible to agree that the New Economic Policy was, in the eyes of Lenin and most of his fellow party members, a temporary measure, a "step aside" of sorts. How long it was expected to function is something else. Its abandonment in the second half of the 1920s was certainly affected by power and opinion clashes among the different factions in the leadership of the Communist Party, which the author does mention. On the other hand, one should not ignore real economic causes which were at least a pretext for the termination of the New Economic Policy. As a matter of fact, the division of labour between cities and the country collapsed, with farmers unwilling to supply foodstuffs to markets for prices set by the government, which resulted in a severe lack of food in cities and towns in 1927. On top of that, the author fittingly describes Stalin's versions of Marxism and his ties to Lenin's and Bukharin's theories, as well as differences between the ideas of Stalin and those of Lenin or Trotsky.

At the end of the opening chapter, Jiří Suk outlines essential problems of the Soviet version of the centrally planned economy. Here I would perhaps add that even if prices reflecting demand had been introduced, separate price circuits would have rendered the adaptation of supply to demand very complicated, if not downright impossible. Consequently, the elimination of the imbalance between supply and demand in the consumer market could not be expected.²

The second chapter summarizes the development of Czechoslovak economy from the late 1940s until mid-1960s. In its first three parts dedicated to principles and trends, I would only put straight a statement on the decline of consumption on the part of Czechoslovakia's population in the foundation period of the communist regime (p. 79). It was only a relative decline. In absolute terms (year-on-year), the consumption dropped only in 1953 as a result of the currency reform. As to the previous period, it had been growing, although at a significantly slower pace compared to the Five-Year Plan. Similarly, a few pages later the author mistakenly mentions a steep decline of the domestic product at the turn of the 1940s and 1950s (p. 82). As a matter of fact, only the domestic product growth rate dropped, not the domestic

2 Should there be any future re-editions, it would be advisable to correct the sentence on page 73: "The 'extended socialist reproduction' requires that the growth of labour permanently exceeds the growth of salary." The correct wording should be as follows: "The 'extended socialist reproduction' requires that the growth of labour *productivity* permanently exceeds the growth of salaries." As a matter of fact, this rule is viewed rather macro-economically and does not hold true for just any economic or business entity.

product as such. An absolute year-on-year decline of the domestic product was an exceptional phenomenon in communist Czechoslovakia. According to official data of the time, it occurred only twice, in 1963 and in 1981.

In my opinion, the fourth segment of this chapter, titled “This is not a plan, this is astrology,” is one of the most interesting parts of Suk’s book. It describes the condition of Czechoslovak economy as seen by analysts of the State Security and the Communist Party apparatus. Remarkable are not only dismal opinions on Czechoslovak economy and behaviour patterns it was producing, but also changes in the focus of operations of the State Security at the turn of the 1950s and 1960s. While its members had been previously chasing down alleged saboteurs, subversive elements, and class enemies, they started monitoring how Czechoslovak economy was working and what its actors, in particular managers, thought about it. Presented security reports thus retrospectively confirm or concretize some descriptive analyses of the Soviet-type economies undertaken in the 1980s by Czech economists, in particular Zdislav Šulc or Lubomír Mlčoch, as well as experts in other Eastern Bloc countries, notably Hungarian economist János Kornai. The criticism pointed out included, for example, political interventions into the economy, the practice producing economic units to overestimate their needs and underestimate their production potential, but also – and this is perhaps the most valuable segment of this part – problematic behaviour of management bodies, including departmentalism, bureaucratic chaos, underrating of critical signals from below, especially at low- and middle-management levels, and widespread efforts to avoid individual responsibility – i.e. the basic principle Czechoslovak economy had been (or should have been) built on since the early 1950s. The result was a weakening, or rather a dysfunction, of the function of the plan as the essential tool of economic coordination and management, and systematic coordination failures arising therefrom.

The third chapter maps the scientific and political career of the main protagonist of the Czechoslovak economic reform, the then director of the Institute of Economy of the Czechoslovak Academy of Sciences, Ota Šik, reflecting mainly his intellectual transformation from an active supporter of Stalin’s political economy into one of its principal critics and proponent of a specific version of market socialism which he later, after completing his theory while in exile, labelled “the third way.” The author emphasizes the time when Šik was gaining his education and when he, still relatively young, started his career as a scientist/researcher and a lecturer.³ According to Suk, this formative stage actually continued to influence Šik even during the key period of the implementation of reforms and quite some time thereafter,⁴ thus setting the limits of his economic thinking. Suk concludes that Šik was leaving Marxist-Leninist positions very slowly and that even his dissertation entitled

3 He was teaching pedagogues of the then existing University of Economic Sciences the basics of Marxism-Leninism as early as in the late 1940s.

4 After all, even his “third way,” because of its dialectic structure, bears a Marxist touch.

*Economy, interests, politics*⁵ and texts dating back to 1963 and 1964 are strongly influenced by these ideas, in particular insofar as the main pillars of the socialist system, such as the role of planning or the leading role of the Communist Party, are concerned. Notable are also his faith in the advantages of socialism or the language of the work itself. In this respect, however, political and diplomatic aspects should be taken into account as well: to what extent were the statements quoted by Suk a libation to the Communist Party so that the texts could be published and would not jeopardize the acceptance of the reform, as claimed by Šik in his memoirs or remembrance interviews a few decades later? And to what extent did Šik express his true opinions in these texts dating back to the first half of the 1960s? This question is very difficult to answer, although the information value of Šik's memoirs must definitely be taken into account. After all, even Suk admits this possibility a few chapters later in connection with Ota Šik's political activities. If we used Šik's language and style to track down the legacy of his Marxist-Leninist education in his works produced at that time, the "bipolar" rhetoric is obvious in them. In this respect, I must agree with Suk's conclusions. Also beneficial is Suk's attempt to distinguish between reformism and revisionism and to view the dynamics of Šik's thinking in the 1960s through this optics.

Insofar as this part of the book is concerned, I would perhaps add that it is true that the then official ideology strongly emphasized the moral stimuli of motivation. However, even Marxist-Leninist orthodoxy did not dismiss profit as a motivation factor. Its role was to ensure rational economic management. Yet, it was not supposed to depend on market prices or expropriated by private individuals.⁶ The question is whether it actually did and could fulfil this role in the system. Similarly, *khozraschyot*, or economic accounting, which was expected, *inter alia*, to streamline management of allocated resources in relation to planned objectives, was not an innovation of Khrushchev's reforms, but had already be implemented as part of the New Economic Policy.

The next chapter, "Science without history, history without science," provides an outline of the development of Czechoslovak economic thinking from the late 1940s until the end of the 1960s, including the bitter fates of some postwar economists. The author follows not only the rise and strengthening of Stalinist political economy, but also the losses which the process brought about. Apart from the persecution of a number of interwar and postwar non-Marxist and Marxist economists, the main consequence was the disruption of continuity with world's science and the previous development. Jiří Suk logically interprets the period from the late 1950s until the Prague Spring as a process of rediscovering the lost and also of searching for tools allowing to capture and scientifically examine social reality, i.e. real and

5 ŠIK, Ota: *Ekonomika, zájmy, politika: Jejich vzájemné vztahy do socialism* [Economy, interests, politics: Their mutual relations in socialism]. Praha, Nakladatelství politické literatury 1962.

6 See, for example: OLIVA, Felix: *Funkce zisku* [The function of profit]. In: *Plánované hospodářství*, Vol. 1, No. 8 (1948), pp. 219–220.

existing socialism, rather than its idealistic concept. The creation of the new concept of economics was to be a product of a free and critical discussion which was also supposed to re-evaluate hitherto rejected non-Marxist theories. As a matter of fact, empirical studies of capitalist economies were indicating certain economic backwardness of Czechoslovak socialism compared to the West. The inspiration by some contemporary trends in capitalist economies was to help socialism to advance to a higher level of development, so that the premises it had been endowed with by the classics were not just hollow phrases.

I would again correct some minor inaccuracies here. The University of Political and Economic Sciences was established by a merger of the University of Economic Sciences and the University of Political and Social Sciences in 1949, not in 1948 (p. 127). And the Czech translation of Samuelson's *Economics* was made only for the Institute of Economy of the Czechoslovak Academy of Sciences. Its publication for a broader audience was thwarted by the invasion of Warsaw Pact troops and the subsequent onset of the so-called "normalization."

Another interesting chapter bears the name "The long shadow of Stalin." Using documents of the State Security, it illustrates the interest of the political police in theoretical and partly also in practical activities of the economic community, and its efforts to curtail some of the latter's public activities. Here Jiří Suk attempts to create a comprehensive picture of the period and to point out that, in spite of the acceleration of the liberalization process in the second half of the 1960s, the nature of the regime was basically unchanged and repressive elements, although operating under more difficult conditions, continued to be an important player of the ruling power. Using selected economists as examples, the author illustrates the stubbornness of the State Security as well as the limits it was forced to operate within by the ongoing liberalization process. It is true that Jiří Suk does not give their names, only their initials (with an exception of US economist John Michael Montias, who was focusing predominantly on financial and economic issues of Eastern Bloc economies), but he provides enough indicative information allowing an informed reader to decipher their names. These are: Vladimír Nachtigal, an expert in statistics, in particular national economy balances; Miroslav Koudelka, a top-ranking official of the Ministry of Finance; Jaroslav Habr (original name Halbhuber), a pupil of Josef Macek and an active member of the National Economic Commission of the Central Council of the Trade Unions in the second half of the 1940s; and Bedřich Levčik, who ranked among important members of Šik's team in the 1960s.

The next three chapters, sixth to eighth, are of key importance for the book's orientation. Using some essential topics as examples, the author analyzes opinion shifts and discussions of the then reformists in order to identify elements of realism, or utopianism, in their efforts. All of this, including changes taking place in global thinking in the 1960s, is set in the context of the period.

The sixth chapter, "The reform discourse in the political economy of the 1960s," uses source documents to examine manifestations of utopianism, revisionism, and reformism in the concepts of the new model of socialism in the minds of economists,

sociologists, and philosophers. Suk notices the tension between the reality of the country stumbling not only behind orthodox concepts of socialism, but in many respects also behind contemporary capitalist countries, and efforts of reformist intellectuals to stick to the basic premise of the superiority of socialism over capitalism. In Suk's opinion, the tension was generating utopian features in Czechoslovak thinking in the field of humanities and social sciences in the 1960s. If its protagonists were to define their position relative to weaknesses and failures of the Stalinist version of socialism without rejecting the fact that the Stalinist version had been a socialism of sorts and, at the same time, wished to avoid an accusation that they were only after a plain return to capitalist or bourgeois institutions, they were logically left with no option but to place excessive demands on the future system, far beyond Czechoslovakia's capabilities at that time. And it is likely – which is also the crux of Suk's argumentation – that it was not, for most of them, just a tactical move in their efforts to push the reform through.

These conclusions naturally imply a sceptical view of the outcome of the so-called “renaissance” process in that it would have been a somewhat broader than a national impulse if it had not been stopped by force and been able to develop. However, if we used the definition of utopia by German philosopher Karl Mannheim, which the author works with – i.e. as something which is not only a mental project of sorts, but also an impulse for a change, and not just a particularistic one – then we would have to admit that Czechoslovak reformists were flattered into believing in their fine idea also by reactions which the Prague Spring had abroad. Paradoxically, it was its unfinished nature which made the hopes and illusions associated therewith survive for decades. Another question is to what extent the ideas or echoes of the Prague Spring indeed helped form up the efforts aiming for social changes in other countries, at least in those of the Soviet Bloc.

The unfinishedness of the Prague Spring also prompts a question (which Suk does not ask explicitly) which way the reforms would have gone if it had not been for the invasion of the Warsaw Pact armies. Aware of his historian's profession, Jiří Suk refrains from such speculations, but he provides a lot of indications that cast doubts on any excessive hopes. First, he correctly notes the instrumental rationalism of economists which was keeping their ideas closer to the ground and also suggested the probable course of the reform toward a restoration of a market economy with some historical and period specifics. However, it should be added that, insofar as the operation of a market economy system was concerned, even the economists cited by the author succumbed to an idealization of sorts – in particular with respect to control of state-owned property – as a result of their level of knowledge and experience at that time. Suk correctly mentions another key problem, namely a “social comfort” of sorts, if we use the term devised by Ota- kar Turek, connected with the Soviet type of socialism, a partial disassembly of which would have certainly produced resistance among a substantial segment of the population, and thus jeopardized the reform's success and continuation even without the “allied” invasion.

In this respect, I would like to mention the dual meaning of the word “revision.” Jiří Suk uses it, in particular, to denote a re-evaluation of validity of the existing theories and ideologies, but also to denote a re-vision, i.e. the creation of a new vision. Suk’s text shows that revisionism in both senses of the word was present in the discussions and projects of the Czechoslovak reform in the second half of the 1960s.

In terms of their respective names and contents, the seventh and eighth chapters are opposites of each other, but they both follow the chronology of events. The former (“Politics under pressure of science and culture: An attack against ‘dogmatism’”) describes the rise of a technocratic, or expert, community as a political group, which was made possible by the existing non-functional management system into which, moreover, the reform was bringing additional elements of decomposition. On the other hand, the following chapter (“Science and culture under the pressure of politics: Dealing with the ‘revisionism’”) analyzes the counter-reaction of the post-August powers against this community in the early years of the so-called “normalization.”

Jiří Suk correctly places the political rise of experts and intellectuals into context with the deepening dysfunctionality of the existing management system. Needless to say, the group of experts and intellectuals was in an advantageous position, as the Communist Party and state leaders urgently needed to solve the crisis the economy and the system as a whole found themselves in and which the leaders’ know-how and experience were unable to deal with, and also thanks to a scientific ethos and optimism which the Communist Party had been building its ideas on the superiority of socialism since as early as the turn of the 1950s and 1960s. Using plenty of examples, Suk shows that the methodological mindset of reform economists dispensed with the basic Marxist-Leninist paradigm only exceptionally. At the same time, he does not miss the fact that, in spite of their relatively limited influence on the implementation of the economic reform, which these economists had exercised at least until 1968, they managed to further rock the already shaken system, and thus, under changed conditions, strengthen their influence on the course and development of the reform. In doing so, they found themselves increasingly in disagreement with decision-makers, whether economic and political bodies of the state or Communist Party leaders, over the future of the reform. All of the above was reflected in different opinions regarding the continuation of the reform which – burdened by a lot of compromises – failed to meet the expectations of neither group.

After the onset of the “normalization” process, the goal of Husák’s leadership was to restore the power position of the Communist Party and the ideological realm of Marxist-Leninist orthodoxy. On this occasion, Jiří Suk seems to return to the beginning of his book to describe in detail fundamental pillars of the ideology and the power of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia as a Leninist-type party. Suk fittingly summarizes the key pillar into a so-called trinity of power dogma, in which the power of all working people is put on a par with the power of the working class represented by and embodied into its leading power, i.e. the Communist

Party. He then assesses the arguments the “normalizers” were using to deal with key players of the economic reform and the economic thinking of the 1960s from this point of view. He furnishes evidence of the “normalizers” efforts to denounce the reform economists and their concepts not only as revisionist, i.e. departing from true Marxism-Leninism, but also as utopian, i.e. putting the future of socialism as such and of the country at risk. They were successful in the former, at least for the next 20 years. But they were only partly successful in the latter, their success being more or less formalistic and at the expense of voiding the contents. While the so-called “normalization” power narrowed the space available to non-Marxist economic theories opened in the second half of the 1960s, the Marxist, or Marxist-Leninist ethos of that period notwithstanding, it was unable to close it completely. The theories continued to develop even during the so-called “normalization,” albeit under harder conditions compared to the previous decade. Simultaneously, the Marxist-Leninist paradigm was gradually evaporating among both the new-generation and the “68-er” economists. As a matter of fact, this is indicated by both the last sentence of the eighth chapter (“the ideology pushed science on the edge, but was unable to swallow it,” p. 274) and by the conclusion of the book which follows the connecting line between economic thinking and the reform of the 1960s on the one hand and the economic transformation of the 1990s and its mental background on the other.

The book *Public lavatories made of gold* is an important work, indeed a pioneering one in Czech historiography, which attempts to set Czechoslovak economic thinking of the 1960s and the entire economic reform process taking place at that time into a broader historical, in particular paradigmatic, context, to determine and analyze the framework in which the process was taking place, and to stake out the limits of actions and thinking of each of its actors. Moreover, the book is written in a very vivid language. In spite of its specialized nature, it is therefore open also to reflective members of the lay community.

The Czech version of this review, entitled Neodbytné pouto socialismu, was originally published in Soudobé dějiny, Vol. 26, No. 1 (2019), pp. 122–129.

Translated by Jiří Mareš

Review

The Unbearable Lightness of Women's Rights?

Adéla Gjuričová

WAGNEROVÁ, Alena: *Žena za socialismu: Československo 1945–1974 a reflexe vývoje před rokem 1989 a po něm* [Woman under socialism: Czechoslovakia 1945–1974 and the reflection of the development before and after 1989]. (Gender sondy [Gender probes], Vol. 12.) Translated from German by the author. Praha, Sociologické nakladatelství 2017, 262 pages, ISBN 978-80-7419-252-4.

It is rather unusual to review a book that was published more than 40 years ago. And all the more so if it was written on a theme, the concept of which has changed so dramatically and developed in terms of theoretical and conceptual frameworks. The book on women in socialist Czechoslovakia was written in 1974¹ following Alena Wagnerová's arrival in the Federal Republic of Germany where she encountered a patriarchal model virtually unknown to her from "real-socialist" Czechoslovakia. As she explained in the reprinted "Introduction to the German edition of 1974": "As regards the situation of women, moving to the Federal Republic of Germany was like taking a journey back in time. My everyday life became a permanent

1 WAGNEROVÁ, Alena: *Die Frau im Sozialismus: Beispiel ČSSR*. Hamburg, Hoffmann & Campe 1974.

confrontation with the traditional model of the women's status, its demands and expectations" (p. 14). This experience motivated her to look at the socialist model of Czechoslovak women's emancipation and their situation after 1945 from a distance and try to describe it both for herself and the German public. Her analysis was mainly based on major empirical surveys of Czechoslovak public's attitudes carried out between the 1960s and the early 1970s.

The first Czech edition of the reviewed book published by Sociologické nakladatelství includes not only Wagnerová's translation of her own work previously published in German, but also her other shorter texts written between 1986 and 2017, in which she dealt with the later development of the situation of women, including the period after 1989.² The editors also added another text written by Czech sociologist and writer Jiřina Šiklová in 2006.³ Nevertheless, the main reason why this thin book deserves to be reviewed is that it offers a remarkable testimony from the depths of the 1970s. The emancipation of women in socialist Czechoslovakia was later seen with considerable criticism, both through the lens of anti-communism and gender theory. Drawing on a confrontation between German and Czechoslovak practice as mirrored in empirical sociological surveys, Wagnerová offered a historical explanation, refuting the black-and-white perception of "forced emancipation." Without actually knowing and using the term gender at that time – she still used the term *pohlavní role* [sex role] – she saw very clearly in both the Czech and German reality the socially constructed concepts of natural femininity and masculinity, as well as all the stereotypes and inequalities that were later targeted by feminist theories. And it is precisely a historically anchored interpretation that is often absent even in the latest and very detailed gender studies on the period of state socialism.⁴

2 Druhé ženské hnutí v Německé spolkové republice v letech 1967–1990 [The second feminist movement in the Federal Republic of Germany in 1967–1990] (2017, pp. 190–199), Reálná rovnoprávnost – ženy v Československu téměř po čtyřiceti letech [Real equality – women in Czechoslovakia after nearly 40 years] (1986, pp. 200–213), Ve vztahu od člověka k člověku změnit svět... "aneb ženské jméno Charty 77" [To change the world in a relation of human being to human being... "or the woman's name of the Charter 77"] (1991, pp. 214–219), Emancipace a vlastnictví [Emancipation and ownership] (1995, pp. 220–231), Feministické zapominání [Feminist forgetting] (2012, pp. 241–245).

3 ŠIKLOVÁ, Jiřina: Pár poznámek ke změnám v postavení žen v České republice po převratu v roce 1989 [A few words on the changes in the status of women in the Czech Republic after the revolution of 1989], pp. 232–240.

4 See, for example: HAVELKOVÁ, Hana – OATES-INDRUCHOVÁ, Libora (ed.): *Vyvlastněný hlas: Proměny genderové kultury české společnosti 1948–1989* [An expropriated voice: The transformation of gender culture in Czech society 1948–1989]. Praha, Sociologické nakladatelství 2015. Compare with Polish studies on this issue: FIDELIS, Małgorzata: *Kobiety, komunizm i industrializacja w powojne nnej Polsce* [Women, communism and industrialization in postwar Poland]. Warszawa, Foksal 2015; JARSKA, Natalia: *Kobiety z marmuru: Robotnice w Polsce w latach 1945–1960* [Women of marble: Women workers in Poland in 1945–1960]. Warszawa, Instytut Pamięci Narodowej 2015. For more on this issue, see also: Adéla Gjuríčová's review of the book *Vyvlastněný hlas* in the *Dějiny – Teorie – Kritika* journal (Vol. 13, No. 1 (2016), pp. 183–186).

The struggle for women's rights in Western Europe was usually marked by heated confrontations and open conflicts, not limited solely to the dramatic struggle for women's suffrage. The German wave of feminism of the 1970s began when female student activists realized that women's rights were not to be included in the programme of the men-led student revolution of 1968. Thus, as early as September of the same year, instead of making coffee for the leaders of the student movement at a meeting of student councils in Frankfurt on the Main, women revolutionaries threw tomatoes at their male colleagues. Wagnerová states that, in contrast to the situation in Western Europe, the Czechoslovak feminist movement drew on the tradition of early Czech women activism and an environment of remarkable consensus between the women activists and men: Vojta Náprstek, a Czech politician and philanthropist, along with Karolína Světlá, a female Czech writer, was the co-founder of the American Club for Ladies (*Americký klub dam*), and Professor Tomáš Masaryk, Czechoslovakia's first president, considered himself an advocate of feminism. Women members of the Czech dissident community also described a similar coalition with men when recalling the life in opposition in the 1970s and 1980s: "I made no differences between men and women, what mattered to me was the difference between us and the policemen."⁵

Despite the fact that Czech women did not have to involve themselves in radical actions like their Western counterparts, there was a traditionally high representation of women in cultural and public life and a highly developed feminist movement in Czech society. However, after February 1948, the life of organizations, projects and careers of interwar women activists took a strange twist when the Communist Party, among other things, took up the banner of advocates of women's emancipation. On the one hand, Communist Party leadership took the extreme step of having one of the key representatives of the women's movement in Czechoslovakia, Milada Horáková, executed. On the other hand, it gave green light to the parliament to approve a new family law. And paradoxically, this new law drew on a draft prepared by Milada Horáková, who was at the time of its adoption already in prison. The law abolished the institute of the "head of the family" and the exclusive right of men to decide on a number of family issues, granting equal rights to men and women (a corresponding law was not approved in Western Germany until 1977). Wagnerová also observed that the emancipation model implemented since the late 1940s was based on a mechanical understanding of equality, on the idea of making men and women equal through closing the employment gap between them. Women and men were to contribute equally to the production and building of socialism. As the then Prime Minister, Antonín Zápotocký, said in 1949: "The best way women can prove their emancipation is through joint work with men" (p. 31). As a result of the campaign, within just a few years, work outside the household became a normal part of the women's role. However, this incredibly rapid change

5 LINKOVÁ, Marcela – STRAKOVÁ, Naďa (ed.): *Bytová revolta: Jak ženy dělaly disent* [Revolution begins at home: How women did dissent]. Praha, Academia – Sociologický ústav AV ČR, v. v. i. 2017, p. 120, interview with Helena Klímová.

was not accompanied by changes in other spheres, and Czech women continued to have full responsibility, for example, for housework and child-raising.

The growing overburden of women became an issue only in the 1960s. According to empirical surveys carried out at that time, women accepted this with a kind of a “heroic” attitude – acknowledging the difficulties of their situation, but stating that they “could cope with it” (p. 35). More attention at that time was attracted by a debate on the issue of the deprivation of children growing up in collective educational facilities. It was only then that the conflict between the work of women and their maternal role became part of the then public discourse, a notion which remained present in the discourse for the remaining period of socialism and which is present in all the strategies that seek “to reconcile” both roles to this day. In 1968, maternity leave lasting 26 weeks was introduced in Czechoslovakia, already at that time the longest in Europe. Criticism of the radical policy of the 1950s and the subsequent search for a more complex model of emancipation thus led, to some degree, to an unconsidered adoption of some of the traditional patterns. In the description of the contemporary debate about “the effectiveness of women’s employment,” Wagnerová illustrates the line of thought on the example of a new economic model of the Czech economist and politician, Ota Šik. Within this model, doubts over the female workforce were expressed by including the costs of state child-care facilities in the calculation of the financial costs of women’s employment (p. 86).

Based on collected data, Alena Wagnerová also provided examples of contemporary stereotypes and discrimination. Women’s average salary in 1970 was only 64 percent of the men’s. This is basically the same pay gap that existed in the West at that time. However, under socialism, this was caused, among other things, by preferences of whole sectors, or rather, by salary discrimination of those sectors, in which women predominated. It was also a consequence of “punishing women for maternity,” because the remuneration of women was calculated taking into account the number of years worked, etc. What was also typical for women’s employment in socialist Czechoslovakia was an unequal representation of women on different qualification levels in a given sector. The ratio of women in higher posts was far from proportional to their level of employment and qualifications. The more senior the position, the less likely that a woman would hold the post. Although one in every four of the deputies of the federal and national parliaments was a woman (in the same period, there were less than six percent of women in the German Bundestag), there was only one female minister in the federal government. Moreover, out of the 115 members of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia, only eight were women, and out of 20 members of the Communist Party Presidium, only one was a woman. “Women in socialism remained a second gender,” concludes Wagnerová (p. 83).

Daily work outside households brought women greater economic independence and greater powers within the family. Though women still did the vast majority of the housework (according to data from 1971, they spent as much as 4.4 hours doing household chores such as cleaning, cooking and shopping during the working day and 6 hours during their days off – see p. 136), in comparison with traditional

families they had much more power to decide on issues such as schools for the children, holidays, family investments, etc. This shift also allowed men to participate more actively in family care. Based on the surveys, the author concludes that only husbands of employed women took an active part in child care, and what is more, it was also socially acceptable in these cases: "A man rushing from a meeting which finished later than expected to pick up a child from a nursery school is already a thinkable situation in Czechoslovakia. This would hardly be possible in the Federal Republic of Germany [in 1974]" (p. 103). According to Wagnerová, whereas in Czechoslovakia the secularized role of the father as a practical helper predominated, in the German conception the paternal role in education represented a sort of philosophic alternative to the female role. The author shows that the new Czechoslovak family law of 1963 emphasized emotional ties and aimed at the concept of an egalitarian family bound by emotional ties. Therefore, in real life it was not only the father who represented the family in the outside world, but every member of the family in his or her respective social group. The family was to offer intimacy while remaining open to the outer world.

However, Wagnerová argues that this challenging shift was not really embraced by men. The surveys reveal that under the shell of socialist equality men still preserved conservative attitudes. Much later, a Czech sociologist, Ivo Možný, talked about "men living in the families of women, who felt discontent with the family."⁶ The same idea had already been implied by Wagnerová. For women emancipated by the socialist model, marriage was primarily an emotional relationship. According to the surveys, women stayed in non-functional marriages only for the sake of the children, but they no longer depended economically on it nor needed it to be accepted socially. Hence the predominance of women among the applicants for divorce in the 1970s. There was also a dramatic difference in the divorce statistics between the Czech Lands and Slovakia (in 1970, there were 24 and 9.5 divorces, respectively, per 100 marriages – see p. 108). Based on demographic data, Wagnerová also commented on some other phenomena typical of socialist Czechoslovakia, such as the decreasing age at the time of the first marriage, baby boom between 1975 and 1980, and the shocking number of abortions (in 1990, as many as 111,000 abortions as compared with 130,000 births). She also tried to show factors influencing the greater number of abortions, namely those of ideological (shift from medical to moral concerns in the evaluations of the requests for abortion by the abortion commissions), technical (insufficient research on contraceptives) and cultural (much bigger influence of religious beliefs before submitting request for abortion in Slovakia) character.

6 MOŽNÝ, Ivo: *Moderní rodina: Mýty a skutečnosti* [Modern family: Myths and reality]. Brno, Blok 1990, p. 111. For more details see, for example: VODOCHODSKÝ, Ivan: Patriarchát na socialistický způsob: K genderovému řádu státního socialismu [Patriarchy in a socialist way: On gender order in "state socialism"]. In: *Gender, rovné příležitosti, výzkum*, Vol. 8, No. 2 (2007), pp. 34–42.

Yet, the collected data and, in particular, the way the author interprets them, is at times problematic. Statistical data tend to homogenize individual social groups, and this was also why Wagnerová was later criticized by gender research. Women's identities were much more variable and "a strong socialist woman" was only one of its possible forms. There were also women who lacked self-confidence or were considerably more influenced by loyalty to men.⁷ Moreover, in some parts of the book, the author draws far-reaching conclusions from quantitative data without analyzing them any further, that is, only rhetorically. The editors of the book could also have been more meticulous with the figures, names and similar information. Nevertheless, the principal aim of the book was to capture the differences between the situation in Czechoslovakia and the German Federal Republic at the time. The author's motivation to write the book was not merely a wish to vent her frustration at moving to a country where most women would leave their jobs after marriage. What she wanted to emphasize by comparing the situation in the two countries in 1974 and providing historical context was the fact that gains in women's rights could be lost again. This is shown mainly by her posterior texts, attached to the Czech translation, which (with one exception) deal with the further journey of women and women's movements in both countries, or, more precisely, with how the desires and organization of interests had been affected by political ideologies, social moods and historical traumas.

When the movement, inspired by the second wave of feminism in Western Germany, started advancing women's employment and liberation, as symbolized by legalized abortion, it threatened the traditional gender order, which drew, among other things, on a huge volume of unpaid women's work. In defence of the traditional gender pattern, conservative circles used the then modern theory of deprivation, countering, according to Wagnerová, "with amounts of repression surprising in a democratic system" (p. 192). Children of employed parents were compared to those raised in children's homes, considered incapable of developing close emotional bonds with other people.⁸ It should be noted that German women had already lost their jobs once: in the postwar period, their employment was very high due to the casualties of war. However, whereas in the German Democratic Republic it remained high with the support of the socialist emancipation ideology, in the German Federal Republic, conservative patterns were eventually re-established and, as it seemed, the war experience had only a relatively minor effect on the self-confidence of women. Nevertheless, the feminist movement of the 1970s had already achieved a permanent change of the paradigm: the new family law of 1977 eventually made both genders equal, and throughout the 1980s the authorities

7 See, for example: ZÁBRODSKÁ, Kateřina: Mezi ženskostí a feminismem: Konstruování identity "české socialistické ženy" [Between femininity and feminism: Shaping identity of "the Czech socialist woman"]. In: HAVELKOVÁ, H. – OATES-INDRUCHOVÁ, L.: *Vyvláštěný hlas*, pp. 285–317, mainly p. 311.

8 In contrast to the straightforwardness of the German conservatives, Wagnerová puts "very differentiated" campaigns of Zdeněk Matějček in Czechoslovakia, for example the documentary *Děti bez lásky* [Children without love] (1963).

systematically sought “an equal partnership between men and women.” This society then aimed for parental leave to be used alternately by both parents, the possibility to work part-time for several years, etc.

In her text of 1986, the author looked back at the position of women in Czechoslovakia, emphasizing that although the double burden of women was not an issue at all in this period, they had their own status, which was not derived from men.⁹ The socialist rupture of previous – patriarchal – property structures played a part in this. She was equally merciless in her other text, in which she bluntly characterized the development after 1989: “The rapidity with which men rediscovered after the November Velvet Revolution their hunting grounds in business, commerce and liberal professions lost 40 years ago allows us to measure the scope of humiliation suffered by them under socialism.”¹⁰ And when referring to women, she added: “Most Czech women do not want to hear about emancipation, women’s movement or even feminism. [...] Czech women are not yet aware of how quickly women’s rights can be lost.”¹¹

In the final essay of the book entitled *Feministické zapomínání* [Feminist forgetting], written in 2012, Alena Wagnerová summarized why she keeps her distance from both Czech opposition to feminism (a movement, which, nevertheless, established a permanent and positive social change) and some trends in academic theory and institutionalized gender studies. She explains that originally the concept of gender was to draw attention to phenomena around us, considered as natural and automatic. We were to become aware of their social artificiality, power aspects behind them, as well as learn to communicate about them and renegotiate them. Nevertheless, institutionalization of gender research and studies also resulted in a certain entrenchment of language and methods, and especially in limited communication with other disciplines and learning from them. What Wagnerová implicitly criticized current gender studies for is that they pay closer attention to cultivating their own terminology, but fail to see some Czech and Czechoslovak specifics, as well as connections with specific historical events. By interpreting data from the early 1970s, the author has offered us a remarkable historical interpretation of the extent to which women in socialist Czechoslovakia lived real equality, enjoying it as something they took for granted and which they did not have to struggle for.

The Czech version of this review, entitled Nesnesitelná lehkost ženských práv, was originally published in Soudobé dějiny, Vol. 25, Nos. 1–2 (2018), pp. 264–269.

Translated by Blanka Medková

9 WAGNEROVÁ, A.: Reálná rovnoprávnost – ženy v Československu téměř po čtyřiceti letech.

10 IDEM: Emancipace a vlastnictví, p. 230.

11 *Ibid.*, p. 231.

Review

The “Velvet Revolution” in a Kaleidoscope of Fates of “Ordinary People”

Lucie Rajlová

VANĚK, Miroslav – MÜCKE, Pavel: *Velvet Revolutions: An Oral History of Czech Society*. New York – Oxford, Oxford University Press 2016, 251 pages, ISBN 978-0-19-934272-3.

Oral history is a research method which has for many years held a firm place in the Czech historical environment. Oral history is seen as a full-fledged method by an increasing number of projects, publications, or students' works. Miroslav Vaněk and Pavel Mücke, its local founders and leading promoters, cannot be denied many years of stubborn efforts dedicated to the current state of affairs to become reality. Both historians also deserve unquestionable credit for Czech *oral history*, represented mainly by the Oral History Centre of the Institute for Contemporary History of the Czech Academy of Sciences (which had been led by Vaněk before he was appointed the Institute's director), ranking among the globally recognized and respected ones.

In 2016, Vaněk and Mücke scored a tremendous success, unparalleled and exceptional in the area of Czech historical research, when Oxford University Press published their book *Velvet Revolutions: An Oral History of Czech Society*. It is a pioneering work which uses oral history to systematically mediate and interpret perceptions, thoughts, opinions, and attitudes of “ordinary people” during more than

two decades after the Prague Spring until the fall of the communist regime and democratic transformation. Moreover, thanks to its focus on international readership, it attempts to promote understanding of the period across the mental barrier of the former Iron Curtain. The impulse to write the book was given by Nancy Toff, editor of Oxford University Press, who approached the authors at a conference of the Oral History Association in Denver in 2011. The book took four years to write. The authors were well aware whom their book was intended for, and styled their narration accordingly, explaining some events, relations, or facts in a more detailed manner and in a broader context of Czech history than a Czech reader would need.

The publication is based on an analysis and interpretation of more than 300 methodologically led interviews conducted mainly between 2006 and 2013, the purpose of which was to capture stories and experiences of “ordinary people” during the period under scrutiny and in a structured manner, in relation to several fundamental topics. Each group of narrators was selected on the basis of several research criteria. The common denominator were the experiences of the invasion of Warsaw Pact armies to Czechoslovakia in August 1968 and of the “Velvet Revolution” in November 1989. Another selection criterion demanded that all interviewees had been actively working during the last 20 years of the communist regime and the transformation period, which made their year of birth, save for a few exceptions, fall between 1935 and 1955. It was important to ensure that a variety of professional and social groups was represented in the interviews (workers, farmers, intellectuals, teachers, employees in the sector of services, members of armed forces, factory foremen, managers and marketeers). Their views on the topics dealt with in the survey were, in some respect, quite different, reflecting their different life stories and different factors entering them.

The authors were not only using oral sources, but also comparing the interviews with sociological public opinion surveys conducted at that time. The purpose of the study was to acquaint foreign readers, not so well versed in Czechoslovak and Czech contemporary history, with a representative segment of historical facts, lifestyle, values, and opinions of the local society at the time of the so-called “real socialism,” as well as their major changes under the influence of the political and economic transformation taking place after 1989. The authors’ interest was primarily focused on topics commonly occurring in human lives (family, education, value of labour, leisure, freedom, travelling, public sphere and relations to it, perception of foreigners and foreign countries). It was not an easy task, as each of the extensive topics could be dealt with in several specialized publications, even without recollections of contemporary witnesses. The authors’ decision to add the narrator’s first name and surname, date of birth, and profession at the end of the excerpts from the interviews makes the orientation in the text of the book easier and allows for a comparison of narrated stories. The reader can thus see how various groups of people differ in their views on the same topic.

The book opens with the authors’ introduction and its body consists of seven chapters with an identical structure. The authors always outline a theoretical-historical framework on the first few pages, set into which are excerpts from the conducted

interviews, thematically segmented into shorter subchapters; each chapter ends with the authors' own generalized conclusion. The first chapter, "I Want to Be Free! Civil and Political Rights," attempts to show how contemporary witnesses viewed the phenomenon of citizenship, what importance they were assigning to it, and how they were (not) trying to flesh it out through their own activities both before and after 1989. The fact that they were not exactly talkative in this respect basically tallies with the deep-rooted picture of Czechoslovak society's passive attitude toward the public, particularly the political sphere during the so-called "normalization" period. The narrators were more comfortable when speaking about lack of freedom or restrictions before the Velvet Revolution than when talking about their own activism and quest for liberty.

The next chapter, "Transformation of the Family during Socialism," proceeds from the public sphere to the private one, concentrating on the family, family relations, values, and habits. Many Czech families upheld an unwritten rule that what is said at home should not be voiced at school or in public. Many of the narrators recall how they used to hear "the main thing is not to tell anyone!" from their parents or grandparents. It is true that the anxiety resulting from the discrepancy between the relative openness of private speech and the cautious public expression disappeared after 1989. However, most families found coping with the capitalist economy and social changes difficult.

The third part, named "Friends and the Others," presents views of Czech society on differences between the West and the East in the late stage of the Cold War. It is obvious that the narrators were aware, during the 1970s and 1980s, that the picture of the Western world presented by official propaganda differed from the real one. It is true that the narrators' opinions on life abroad and inhabitants of foreign countries were based mainly on hearsay rather than on their own trips and meetings, but they often describe colourful experiences related to symbolic or real border-crossing in their interviews.

The next chapter, "Education – the Gate to Success," is devoted to what Czech schools teach about the socialist era, but also to the value of education before 1989, memories of teachers, and changes of the education system before and after the fall of the "old regime." Many contemporary witnesses perceived socialist education as the state's tool of discrimination and control of students and families. Their memories and feelings related to post-revolution schools are more divergent, but most of the interviewees agreed that an educated society was important. Views of pedagogic workers, who were disappointed that consumerism often prevailed at the expense of non-material values after 1989, are somewhat different from those of others.

The fifth chapter, "From Mandatory Employment to Unemployment," focuses on professional careers of the interviewees, efficiency (or rather its absence) of the socialist economy, problems of the capitalist labour market, and an increasingly wider gap between richness and poverty. The narrators often recalled notorious queues for shortage goods in the pre-November period, but they also did not hesitate to express their concerns about unknown life in the capitalist system and loss

of their jobs. One of the consequences of the capitalist transformation was a much higher investment of time that people had to make into their jobs, which sometimes had an adverse impact on their private lives. The chapter also brings interesting recollections of ex-soldiers concerning their service in the Czechoslovak People's Army, which are otherwise quite rare in historical publications.

The content of the penultimate part is characterized by its name: “The Importance of Free Time: Work, Family, Leisure.” In the socialist era, free time and leisure was concentrated on weekends, which the interviewed contemporary witnesses used to spend in typical ways, such as at their cottages, gardening, or trips around Czechoslovakia. Summer holidays and vacancies at the Black or Adriatic Seas were not exceptional, but travelling abroad is mostly related to the opening of the borders after 1989 in the narrations, and it is obvious that the interviewees still enjoy it even 30 years later. It is especially in this chapter that different views of women and men on a given topic are most visible, and the difference, or sometimes even incongruity, in their everydayness. The narrations show that women, who were running the family and the household, often regarded leisure and its programme as work after work, a “second shift” of sorts.

The last chapter's title is “Us and Them,” and it is the notional division into these two categories that the interviewees comment on there. In principle, the chapter deals with the perception of communist and post-communist elites, different ways of enrichment, connections, and corruption both at the time of “real socialism” and during “real capitalism.”

There are two annexes accompanying the body of the book. The first of them introduces Jindřich Štreit, a world-renowned documentary photographer and pedagogue, whose black-and-white photographs were fittingly used by the authors as a graphic accompaniment. The second annex comprises 12 pages with basic biographic data of all narrators, including their first names and surnames (sometimes replaced by initials), year and place of birth, achieved education, profession, number of children, and other private information the narrators agreed with. The book also contains indexes of names and facts and a list of published sources which the authors made use of.

I will now dwell on footnotes which conclude the publication. While the authors briefly explain a broader context of events in each chapter, they also use footnotes to provide more detailed information and documents to make the orientation in the book and understanding of cited recollections easier for foreign readers. However, some questions would deserve a more detailed explanation, for example the founding “Declaration of Charter 77” (pp. 31 and 33).

The Czech reader is likely to notice some notional or emotional shifts caused by the translation from Czech into English. For example, fireman X. J., born in 1962, recalls, on the very first page of the book, how people at a demonstration were chanting “Havel for President.” The translation loses some of the power of the chant “Havel to the Castle!” (literal translation), which only those who participated in the events can remember.

The effort of both authors has resulted in a vari-coloured view and a very colourful picture of contemporary Czech history since 1968, based on analyses and interpretations of interviews. These show, as a rule, that not everything was grey during the so-called “normalization” period and that “common people” were living their lives to the utmost within the limits allowed by the political regime. For readers who know more about the topic, the book brings rare captured details in narrations of contemporary witnesses, which vividly complement the picture of the past. The book *Velvet Revolutions* cannot replace textbooks or basic historical interpretations of the period of Czechoslovak, or Czech, “real socialism” and the democratic revolution, nor does it aspire to do so. However, it offers a view of events taking place at that time and the seeming motionlessness of the society “from below,” speaks about them in a multitude of voices of authentic witnesses/actors, and, above all, conveys its intended message in a manner comprehensible and attractive for foreign readers. The success of the work of the two Czech historians is confirmed by the fact that another book of theirs, which Oxford University Press is going to publish in 2019 on the occasion of the 30th anniversary of the Velvet Revolution, is being prepared for publication.

The Czech version of this review, entitled „Sametová revoluce“ v kaleidoskopu osudů „obyčejných lidí“, was originally published in Soudobé dějiny, Vol. 25, Nos. 3–4 (2018), pp. 537–541.

Translated by Jiří Mareš

Summaries

Essays and Articles

Ten Propositions about Munich 1938

On the Fateful Event of Czech and European History – without Legends and National Stereotypes

Vít Smetana

This essay examines, in ten clearly formulated propositions, the causes and the long-term impact of the Munich Agreement of September 1938. This complex theme is approached through not purely national lenses. The term “betrayal” as a dominant label of the actions of the two West European democratic powers is thus questioned. The author claims that the British and French unwillingness to go to war because of Czechoslovakia’s border regions is, in the light of previous historical developments, understandable and, in a way, even rational. He also points out certain deficiencies in the Czechoslovak treatment of its German minority. At the same time, Czechoslovakia’s political leaders were playing a strange game with their people in September 1938, alternately stirring up and moderating their patriotic feelings – depending on where the behind-the-scenes negotiations on Czechoslovak border regions were heading at a given moment. Also the alleged Soviet preparedness to come to Czechoslovakia’s assistance in September 1938 is more than questionable; Stalin intended to intervene only in a European war, not to help lonesome Czechoslovakia. Nonetheless, Munich has had, and unfortunately continues to have, a fundamental influence on the Czech “mental map” of Europe. The lesson according to which the West should not be trusted and it would therefore be advisable to look for protection and alliance in the East still lives on in minds of a number of Czech politicians and of a not negligible segment of the public. On the other hand, the “lessons of Munich,” according to which it is not advisable to make concessions to any aggression or blackmailing, became a part of policies of

Western statesmen confronting expansionist dictatorships, and the other life of Munich thus continued to complicate the use of “negotiations” as a method of dealing with international crises by Western politicians in the Cold War and beyond.

When We Walk Down Wenceslas Square...

A Picture of the Return of Czech Legionnaires to Their Homeland in Their Recollections and Autobiographic Novels

Dalibor Vácha

The study stems from the author’s long-time interest in the history of the Czechoslovak foreign resistance during the Great War, particularly in Russia. As to its sources, it draws from a collection of published recollections of Czechoslovak legionnaires and their autobiographic novels and other texts of prose. The author attempts to reconstruct the picture of the return of Czechoslovak legions from Russia to their home country; due to the nature of his sources, however, his intention is not to convey an authentic experience of the return in the first days and weeks, but rather to examine the construct created by the legionnaires’ memories and novels. In this respect, he makes use of, in particular, Anglo-Saxon historical literature dealing with similar topics. The key issues include how individuals or whole social groups were coping with the reality of the newborn republic, which was rather different from the visions of the home country they had been dreaming about while away. An important factor affecting their reflections was also the required political non-affiliation of organizations of legionnaires, as well as the criticism of the situation not just among the veterans, but in the entire society. The extent of the idealization of Russia, which was a fairly frequent phenomenon among them, was directly proportional to the disillusionment after their return, and was a mirror image of their previous idealization of home while they had been in Russia. In the author’s opinion, the topic of the return of Czechoslovak legions home and their life in their home country is far from exhausted; this is why the present study should be just a springboard to further broadly conceived research.

Jozef Tiso: My Enemy – Your hero?

Jan Rychlík

The author first summarizes the career of Jozef Tiso (1887–1947), a politician and a Roman Catholic priest. His entire political life was linked to Hlinka’s Slovak People’s Party; he was always a representative of its moderate faction, and even represented it as a minister of the Czechoslovak government. In 1939, he became its chairman. In the First Czechoslovak Republic, he was a dyed-in-the-wool federalist; since the proclamation of the Slovak State in March 1939 until the end of his life,

an advocate of Slovakia's independence. As the president of the Slovak Republic between 1939 and 1945, he was responsible for Slovakia's political regime, alliance with the Nazi Germany until the end of the war, and deportations of Slovak Jews. After the war, he was tried by the National Court of Justice, sentenced to death, and executed in 1947. The author analyzes in detail the accusations brought against Tiso during the trial and Tiso's defence, as the arguments presented by both parties were later used by Tiso's adversaries and sympathizers. Czech politicians and general public after the war were united in their condemnation of Tiso; in their eyes, Tiso's biggest crime was his share in the destruction of the common state. On the other hand, the Slovaks' view on Tiso depended on their attitude toward the previous political regime in Slovakia. Furthermore, the author monitors how Tiso's cult was formed in the separatist segment of the Slovak exile since the end of the war. It was spreading mainly in the United States, Canada, and Argentina, but the efforts aimed at Tiso's moral purification were unsuccessful. The article also pays special attention to Tiso's reflections in the Czech and Slovak dissent in the 1970s and 1980s. In the end, the author describes disputes over Tiso which broke up after 1989 in Slovakia and which were a part of the "return of history" to the public space. They were related to attempts for Tiso's commemoration and historical rehabilitation, and found their way to the media, politics, and historiography. The essay is concluded by a statement that the Czech society is not interested in Tiso as a historical figure, but that Tiso still divides the Slovak one: a minority of the Slovak society sees Tiso as a hero and a martyr, while most Slovaks perceive him as an unsuccessful and discredited politician.

Cleansing of Industrial Plants from Collaborationists and "Anti-Social" Elements in 1945

A Political Machination, Retribution Excess or an Incubator of Revolutionary Morals?

Jakub Šlouf

Using results of extensive research in central and company archives, the author studies the cleansing of industrial plants from collaborationists and so-called anti-social elements in Czechoslovakia in 1945. He describes it as a standard-setting process during which the form of a new revolutionary value system and guilt criteria in relation to the occupation past arising therefrom were negotiated and established in practice in factories and plants. Both escalated nationalism and social egalitarianism, sometimes developing into class antagonism, found their use in it. In addition to acts prosecuted under official legislation, the cleansing process incorporated various minor conflicts of employees during the occupation, in particular disputes between subordinates and superiors. For this reason, mainly top-ranking white collars, human resource officers, rate setters, and shop foremen were removed from their positions. The articulation of guilt of the above group also worked as an absolution of others, particularly rank-and-file workers and white collars, at

the symbolic and psychological level. The selected guilt criteria were subsequently becoming a part of the legitimization pattern of the ongoing revolution.

The study illustrates how company councils, acting through investigation commissions which, nevertheless, had to create their own legal rules as they had no position or status defined in official legislation, were trying, since mid-May 1945, to regulate, formalize, and unify initial spontaneous actions of employees. However, the legal uncertainty in factories led to a decline of respect to superiors, deterioration of working morale, and devaluation of expertise. In mid-July 1945, organs of the Revolutionary Trade Union Movement intervened into the cleansing process, as they were interested in improving the performance of the nationalized industry. Appeal chambers were established at regional trade union councils as second-instance bodies deciding disputes submitted by industrial plants. In doing so, they were demanding a higher quality of submitted legal documents and supporting assigning the individuals affected by the cleansing to adequate working positions in the production process. In October 1945, results of the company cleansing process were incorporated, under the pressure of trade unions, into official legislation under the so-called Small Retribution Decree. The resulting legal framework was thus an apparent compromise between pre-war legal conventions and moral criteria established during the May 1945 revolution.

“You Have to Fight the Struggle Yourself”

The Political Role of the Soviet Army and Its Local Allies in “Normalization” of Czechoslovakia (1968–1969)

Marie Černá

The study deals with political activities of the Soviet Army in Czechoslovakia after the intervention on August 21, 1968, and its sympathizers from the ranks of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia. The authoress examines the topic in the early stage of the so-called normalization (until the spring of 1970), focusing on the local level; however, she sets her research into a broader period context and derives general conclusions from its results. Although the official agreement on the temporary stay of Soviet troops in the territory of Czechoslovakia declared that the Soviet Army should not interfere with domestic affairs of the Czechoslovak state, the Soviet leadership kept devising plans how to make use of the presence of Soviet troops for political purposes. Soviet officers participated in the dissemination of Soviet propaganda, established contacts with local anti-reform party officials, spoke at their forums, complained about hostile attitudes of Czechoslovak political bodies, and thus kept pressing for a legitimization of the political arrangements. The authoress shows that local pro-Soviet activists, who had maintained contacts with the Soviet Army from the very beginning and been taking over its political agenda, were playing a crucial role in the success of these efforts. In line with Soviet intentions, they were implementing the normalization process “from below”,

initiating purges in various organs, demanding the dismissal of officials protesting against presence of the Soviet Army, participating in the subsequent political vetting. They were actively pushing through a change of the official approach to the Soviet Army and helped break its boycott by the Czechoslovak society, which had initially been almost unanimous. In doing so, they were making use of their personal contacts to organize manifestation “friendship” meetings and visits of Soviet soldiers to Czechoslovak schools and factories. The authoress analyzes the reasons of the attitude of these activists, most of whom came from the ranks of “old” (pre-war) and “distinguished” members of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia, and illustrates the development outlined above by specific examples. By way of conclusion, she notes that, although different forms of the Czechoslovak-Soviet “friendship” since 1968 are often viewed as mere formalistic acts without any deeper meaning at the level of “lived” experience, they were, from the viewpoint of the Soviet policy, well thought-out and centrally planned propagandistic activities which contributed to the promotion of the Soviet interpretation of the Prague Spring and the Soviet invasion and discredited its opponents.

Debates on Czechoslovakism and Czechoslovaks at the End of the Federation, 1989–1992

Tomáš Zahradníček

This article focuses on the early post-1989 period when the “Slovak question” returned with full force to the gradually democratizing political arena and surprised Czech society and its budding political elite, who were both unprepared to address the question. The author reveals the imbalance of “Czechoslovakism” – its story and historical lesson – between the two sides of the once united country. In Slovakia, Czechoslovakism was “part of the living language of politics and journalism of the Slovak experience,” whilst in Czech society, its reception was lukewarm and superficial. Thanks to his insight into federal and republican politics in the early days of democratic revival, the author presents his readers with a fascinating breakdown of the factual-historic presence of Czechoslovakism at a time when its word-historical presence was minimal. He analyzes how Slovakia stepped into democracy by exercising its national sovereignty in federal structures and played as active a role as ever in Czech-Slovak relations. Meanwhile, the Czech side remained merely reactive. In contrast to the Slovak scene, Czechs were engaged in a “politics of returns,” buttressed by a resolutely idealized image of the First Republic and a renewed spirit of “Czechoslovakness,” which was deceptively refreshing for Czech society. These were two political worlds, able to find a common denominator only with great effort. The author explains that Czech politics were de facto forced – by the Slovaks, who were developing federal principles and creating policies for national sovereignty – into lackluster policy-making of their own national sovereignty. Even

so, these forced politics had their advocates, such as national-socialist politicians in the Czech National Council at that time.

Prague Chronicle

Karel Kaplan – 90 years

Oldřich Tůma

In his contribution, Oldřich Tůma describes the life story of historian Karel Kaplan, who celebrated his 90th birthday in 2018. His career is a typical example of fates of a whole generation of Czech historians – it also holds true in the sense that he was not only a historian, but in many respects also a participant in and co-creator of the latest Czechoslovak history. He was born on August 28, 1928, in Horní Jelení in the region of Pardubice in eastern Bohemia. Since 1948, he worked for sixteen years in different positions in the apparatus of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia. He became a full-fledged historian in 1964, when he started working at the Institute of History of the Czechoslovak Academy of Sciences. In the 1960s, he was a member of several commissions of historians investigating acts of illegal persecution taking place in 1950s, which substantially changed his views. In 1970, he was dismissed from the Communist party, worked as a stoker, and spent a few months in detention. In 1976, he went to exile in the Federal Republic of Germany and he began to intensively publish there. In his numerous monographs and studies many of which were translated into major languages of the world, he described and mercilessly analyzed the operation of the Communist regime in Czechoslovakia. Upon his return home, he was one of the leading personalities of the newly established Institute for Contemporary History in Prague. Since the 1990s, he has published further dozens of essential works without which the Czechoslovakia's historiography of the 1945–1969 period would be unimaginable.

Reflections on the Conference “A Hundred Student (R)Evolution”

Jana Wohlmuth Markupová

This text offers a reflection of the conference “A Hundred Student (R)Evolution”, which took place in the Václav Havel Library in Prague on 24 May 2019. Its main purpose was to present conclusions of an oral history based longitudinal research about Czech student activists from 1989, published in a book *One Hundred Student Evolutions* (Prague, Academia 2019), which is a continuation of a book *One Hundred Student Revolutions* (first published in 1999). The author sums up key moments

from all presented contributions and focuses also on the discussion and its overlap from a historical conference to the present days.

Book Reviews

A Thrown Gauntlet

Josef Serinek and Jan Tesař as a Challenge for Current Research into the History of the Roma in the 20th Century

Helena Sadílková

TESAŘ, Jan: *Česká cikánská rapsodie* [The Czech gypsy rhapsody]. Vol. 1: *Vzpomínky Josefa Serinka* [Recollections of Josef Serinek]; IDEM: *Místo epilogu: Rozhovor s Josefem Ondrou* [Instead of an epilogue: An interview with Josef Ondra; Documents]; *Dokumenty* [Documents]; Vol. 2: IDEM: *Komentáře ke vzpomínkám Josefa Serinka* [Comments on the recollections of Josef Serinek]; Vol. 3: *Mapy, tabulky, diagramy: Partyzáni na Vysočině* [Maps, tables, charts: Partisans in the Vysočina region]; IDEM: *Serinkovské inspirace* [Serinkian inspirations]. Praha, Triáda 2016, 502 + 635 + 208 pages, ISBN 978-80-87256-86-2.

The authoress comments on the three-volume publication *Czech Gypsy Rhapsody* from the perspective of the current state of knowledge of the Romani history in the territory of Czechoslovakia. She states it is an inspiring work, both thematically and factually and in terms of methodology and interpretation. She emphasizes the uniqueness of the narration of Josef Serinek (1900–1964), recorded by historian Jan Tesař in 1963 and 1964, as one of the oldest sources of Romani provenience on the history of the Romani nation in the Czech Lands in the first half of the 20th century, including their wartime genocide. She dwells for some time on several topics closely related to specific moments of Serinek’s narration, namely the involvement of Romanies in fights for the liberation of Czechoslovakia, evidence concerning the so-called gypsy camp in Lety u Písku, consequences of the First Republic’s law on “itinerant gypsies”, and Romani self-organization attempts in inter-war Europe. The strongest aspects of Tesař’s work are, in her opinion, Tesař’s interpretation of the holocaust of Romanies in the Protectorate, which caused significant damage to the whole Czechoslovak society, and the way in which Tesař sets Serinek, a Romani survivor and also a freedom fighter, into the narration about the genocide which the Czech population made a substantial contribution to. The authoress shows how fragile and unobvious is the Tesař’s picture of Serinek as a “Romani hero of the Czechoslovak fight for freedom” in the collective memory of the Czech society, including its Romani segment.

Ethnic Composition of Czechoslovak Units during the Second World War

Martin Čížek

MARŠÁLEK, Zdenko: *“Česká,” nebo “československá” armáda? Národnostní složení československých vojenských jednotek v zahraničí v letech 1939–1945* [A “Czech” or “Czechoslovak” army? The ethnic composition of Czechoslovak military units abroad 1939–1945]. Praha, Academia 2017, 528 pages, ISBN 978-80-200-2608-8.

The author examines in detail the ethnic structure of Czechoslovak units which were formed in France, Great Britain, Soviet Union, North Africa and Middle East during the Second World War. His work is based mainly on a statistical analysis of an extensive set of data stored in the complete electronic database of soldiers of the Czechoslovak foreign army of the Central Military Archives – Military History Institute in Prague. The reviewer describes the numerical methods used, including their benefits and limitations, and presents the author’s conclusions and hypotheses. In his opinion, the most significant finding of the book is that concerning the diversity of the Czechoslovak units abroad; compared to other exile armies, the Czechoslovak Army’s ethnic structure was by far the most diverse one. The diversity of and percentages of different nationalities in the units depended on the place where they were formed and the time of their formation.

The Persistent Bond of Socialism

Petr Chalupecký

SUK, Jiří: *Veřejné záchodky ze zlata: Konflikt mezi komunistickým utopismem a ekonomickou racionalitou v předsrpnovém Československu* [Public lavatories made of gold: The conflict between communist utopianism and economic rationality in Czechoslovakia before August 1968]. Praha, Prostor 2016, 325 pages, ISBN 978-80-7260-341-1.

In the reviewer’s opinion, this book is an important contribution to studies of the evolution of economic thinking in Czechoslovakia in the 1960s and of the reform process culminating in the Prague Spring in 1968, hitherto unparalleled in Czech historiography. However, the author does not focus only on the economic theory prevailing at that time, but also examines it, mainly from philosophical and sociological perspectives, in a broader historical context, including paradigmatic Marxist works and Soviet disputes concerning the economic policy after the Bolshevik revolution. He is interested in the form and viability of the new economic model, or the Czechoslovak concept of the “socialism with a human face”, including its internal conflicts and limits of thinking and acts of various players. The greatest deal of attention is paid to Ota Šik (1919–2004), then Director of the Institute of Economics of the Czechoslovak Academy of Sciences and the principal author of the

“third way” economic concept; the author also describes the restorative reaction of the political regime against the concept after the defeat of the Prague Spring. The reviewer presents the content of each chapter of the book and formulates some partial reservations.

The Unbearable Lightness of Women’s Rights?

Adéla Gjuričová

WAGNEROVÁ, Alena: *Žena za socialismu: Československo 1945–1974 a reflexe vývoje před rokem 1989 a po něm* [Woman under socialism: Czechoslovakia 1945–1974 and the reflection of the development before and after 1989]. (Gender sondy [Gender probes], Vol. 12.) Translated from German by the author. Praha, Sociologické nakladatelství 2017, 262 pages, ISBN 978-80-7419-252-4.

The publication is a Czech translation of Alena Wagner’s book *Die Frau im Sozialismus: Beispiel ČSSR* (Hamburg: Hoffmann & Campe, 1974) which was originally published in German, supplemented by several later essays dealing with the situation of women and women’s movements in Czechoslovakia (Czech Republic) and the Federal Republic of Germany. The Czech writer and cultural historian explains her motivation to write the book by a sharp contrast between the emancipated status of women in Czechoslovakia and the traditional patriarchal model she encountered after her arrival to West Germany in the early 1970s. Based on results of previous sociological surveys, she used the example of Czechoslovakia to describe the model of socialist emancipation characterized by a high level of employment of women and their full equality under the law. The reviewer believes the forty years old study of Alena Wagner is very remarkable, primarily because the authoress analyzes gender issues (without actually using the term “gender”) against a specific historical background, an aspect that is often absent in today’s works in the field of *gender studies*; she also foresees findings of later sociological analyses, and weighs pros and cons of the emancipation model she analyzes.

The “Velvet Revolution” in a Kaleidoscope of Fates of “Ordinary People”

Lucie Rajlová

VANĚK, Miroslav – MÜCKE, Pavel: *Velvet Revolutions: An Oral History of Czech Society*. New York – Oxford, Oxford University Press 2016, 251 pages, ISBN 978-0-19-934272-3. If a publishing house as renowned as Oxford University Press publishes a book representing it, it is in the reviewer’s opinion an exceptional success of the Czech historiography. As a matter of fact, this is what Miroslav Vaněk and Pavel Mücke have achieved with their *Velvet revolutions: An oral history of Czech society*. It is a pioneering

work which, using oral history, systematically conveys and interprets perceptions, thinking, opinions, and attitudes of “ordinary people” during the period of more than two decades from the Prague Spring to the fall of the Communist regime and democratic transformation; moreover, being focused on an international audience, it enables such perceptions, thinking, opinions, and attitudes to be understood across the mental barrier of the former Iron Curtain. The publication is based on an analysis and interpretation of more than three hundred methodologically conducted interviews most of which date back to between 2006 and 2013 and whose purpose was to record stories and experience of “ordinary people” during the period in question in a structured manner, i.e. with a focus on several central topics, including politics, family, school and education, employment and unemployment, perception of the West, travelling, and leisure.

Authors

Marie Černá (1972) is a sociologist and researcher of the Institute for Contemporary History of the Academy of Sciences of the Czech Republic in Prague. Her research topics include the history of the Czech society between 1945 and 1989, with an emphasis on the cadre policy of and personal vetting in the Communist system, promotion of Communist education and ideology in the Czechoslovak society, and social consequences of the presence of the Soviet troops in Czechoslovakia between 1968 and 1991. She is a co-author of the collective monograph *Prověrky a jejich místo v komunistickém vládnutí: Československo 1948–1989* [Political screenings in Communist Czechoslovakia. General remarks] (with Jaroslav Cuhra et al., Prague 2012). Under the “Czechoslovakia 38–89” project, she cooperated on the development of educational computer simulations presenting milestones of the contemporary Czech and Czechoslovak history.

Martin Čížek (1977) is a historian and a guest lecturer at the Institute of International Studies of the Faculty of Social Sciences of the Charles University in Prague. His field of research is the history of the 20th century, with an emphasis on international relations and military issues. He has published, inter alia, the publications *Nikomu vás nedáme...: Vojensko-politické aspekty sovětské invaze do ČSSR v srpnu 1968* [We will not give you to anybody...: Military-political aspects of the Soviet invasion to Czechoslovakia in August 1968] (Prague 2014) a *Letadla zrazeného nebe: Československá vojenská letadla v roce 1938* [Aircrafts of the betrayed heaven: Czechoslovak military aircrafts in the year 1938] (Prague 2015).

Adéla Gjuričová (1971) is a researcher and head of the Political History Department of the Institute for Contemporary History of the Academy of Sciences of the Czech Republic; she deals mainly in metamorphoses of the ideological discourse of the right-wing part of the Czech political spectrum since 1989 and, as the working group head, also in research of the Czechoslovak parliamentary system during the post-Communist transformation. She is a co-authoress of the fourth volume of the textbook titled *České země v evropských dějinách* [Czech Lands in

European history], which covers the period from 1918 to 2004 (together with Jaroslav Cuhra, Jiří Ellinger and Vít Smetana, Prague – Litomyšl 2006), and of the collective monograph *Rozdělení minulosti: Vytváření politických identit v České republice po roce 1989* [Divided by past: Formation of political identities in the Czech Republic after 1989] (together with Michal Kopeček, Petr Roubal, Jiří Suk and Tomáš Zahradníček, Prague 2011). Together with Tomáš Zahradníček, she is the author of the monograph *Návrat parlamentu: Češi a Slováci ve Federálním shromáždění 1989–1992* [The return of parliament: Czechs and Slovaks in the Federal Assembly] (Prague 2018).

Petr Chalupecký (1975) is a senior lecturer at the Department of Economic History of the Faculty of National Economy of the University of Economics in Prague. He specializes in the economic history of post-war Czechoslovakia and history of the Czechoslovak economic thinking. He is, inter alia, a co-author of the collective monograph *Mezinárodní hospodářské vztahy států střední Evropy v první polovině 20. století* [International economic relations of Central European states in the first half of the 20th century] (Prague 2015).

Lucie Rajlová (1988) works at the Military History Institute in Prague while simultaneously studying contemporary European history at the Faculty of Humanities of the Charles University. She focuses on modern Czech and European history, in particular oral history and history of the Czech theatre and ballet. She is the editor and co-authoress of the collection *Historie zrozená z rozhovoru: Interview ve výzkumu soudobých dějin* [History born from dialogue: Interview in research of contemporary history] (Prague 2018).

Jan Rychlík (1954) is a professor of history and researcher of the Masaryk Institute and Archives of the Academy of Sciences of the Czech Republic in Prague; he also lectures at the Institute of Czech History of the Faculty of Arts of the Charles University in Prague and at the Faculty of Science, Humanities and Education of the Technical University in Liberec. He is an expert on modern Czech and Slovak history and on the evolution of Balkan nations and Carpathian Ruthenia. He published a number of monographs, studies, and editions, including a two-volume book on the history of Czech-Slovak relations titled *Češi a Slováci ve 20. století* [Czechs and Slovaks in the 20th century] (Bratislava 1997 and 1998), which was subsequently amended and published again with the subtitle *Spolupráce a konflikty 1914–1992* [Cooperation and conflicts, 1914–1992] (Prague 2012 and 2015), *Rozpad Československa: Česko-slovenské vztahy 1989–1992* [The break-up of Czechoslovakia: The Czech-Slovak relations, 1989–1992] (Bratislava 2002), *Rozdělení Československa: 1989–1992* [The split of Czechoslovakia, 1989–1992] (Prague 2012), *Cestování do ciziny v habsburské monarchii a v Československu: Pasová, vízová a vystěhovalecká politika 1848–1989* [Travelling abroad in the Habsburg Monarchy and Czechoslovakia: Passports, visas, and emigration policy, 1848–1989] (Prague 2007), or *1918: Rozpad Rakouska-Uherska a vznik Československa* [1918: The break-up of Austria-Hungary

and creation of Czechoslovakia] (Prague 2018). Together with Vladimír Penčev, he published the monograph *Od minulosti k dnešku: Dějiny českých zemí* [From past to present: History of the Czech Lands] (Prague 2013 and 2018), which had previously been published in Bulgarian (Sofia 2010) and Macedonian (Skopje 2014); together with Magdalena Rychlíková, he published the monograph *Podkarpatská Rus v dějinách Československa 1918–1946* [Ruthenia in the history of Czechoslovakia, 1918–1946] (Prague 2016); he and Miroslav Kouba published *Dějiny Makedonie* [History of Macedonia] (Prague 2003 and 2017), with Milan Perenčević *Dějiny Chorvatska* [History of Croatia] (Prague 2007), with Paul Magocsi and Bohdan Zilynsky *Dějiny Ukrajiny* [History of Ukraine] (Prague 2015), and with other co-authors *Dějiny Bulharska* [History of Bulgaria] (Prague 2000 and 2016) and *Dějiny Slovinska* [History of Slovenia] (Prague 2011). A book of Rychlík's interviews with journalist Vladimír Kučera was published under the title *Historie, mýty a jízdní řády* [History, myths and timetables] (Prague 2015).

Helena Sadílková (1977) is an expert in Romani studies, senior lecturer, and head of the Romany studies seminar at the Department of Central European Studies of the Faculty of Arts of the Charles University in Prague, also working at the Institute for Contemporary History of the Academy of Sciences of the Czech Republic in Prague. She focuses on the post-war history of the Romany people in the territory of the former Czechoslovakia and on Romany socio-linguistics; she also edits and translates literary works of Romany authors. Together with Pavel Kubaník, she is the editor-in-chief of the *Romano dzhaniben*, a journal of Romani studies. In cooperation with Dušan Slačka and Milada Závodská, she published a book of studies and an edition of documents under the title *Aby bylo i s námi počítáno: Společensko-politická angažovanost Romů a snahy o založení romské organizace v poválečném Československu* [So that we would also be taken into account: Social-political involvement of Romas and efforts to found Romani organizations in postwar Czechoslovakia] (Brno 2018); together with Jana Kramářová, she arranged an anthology of prosaic texts of Romany authors from the Czech Republic under the title *Chalo voďi – Sytá duše* [A filled soul] (Brno 2007).

Vít Smetana (1973) is a senior research fellow and head of the Department of Global Conflicts and Their Consequences at the Institute for Contemporary History of the Academy of Sciences of the Czech Republic. He also teaches modern international history at the Faculty of Social Sciences, Charles University in Prague. His area of expertise includes the history of international relations during the Second World War and the first phase of the Cold War, particularly the international role of Czechoslovakia in this period. He is the author of *In the Shadow of Munich: British Policy towards Czechoslovakia from the Endorsement of the Renunciation of the Munich Agreement (1938–1942)* (Prague 2008) and *Ani vojna, ani mír: Vel-moci, Československo a střední Evropa v sedmi dramatech na prahu druhé světové a studené války* [Neither war, nor peace: The Great Powers, Czechoslovakia and Central Europe in seven dramas on the eve of the Second World War and the Cold

War] (Prague 2016). With Jaroslav Hrbek, he is the main co-author of the two-volume *Draze zaplacená svoboda: Osvobození Československa 1944–1945* [Dearly paid freedom: The liberation of Czechoslovakia 1944–1945] (Prague 2009). Together with Mark Kramer, he edited the book entitled *Imposing, Maintaining, and Tearing Open the Iron curtain: The Cold War and East-Central Europe, 1945–1989* (Lanham – New York – Plymouth 2014).

Jakub Šlouf (1982) is a researcher of the Department of Research of the 1945–1989 Period of the Institute for the Study of Totalitarian Regimes in Prague and an archivist of the Department of Non-State Funds and Archival Collections of the National Archives in Prague. His research interests include the post-war development of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia, public protests of the population during the period of state socialism, transformations of the relationship of industrial workers to the Communist Party dictatorship, and history of the Plzeň region. He has published the monographs *Spříznění měnou: Genealogie plzeňské revolvy 1. června 1953* [Bound by currency: A genealogy of the Pilsen rebellion of 1 June 1953] (Prague 2016) and *Podvedená strana: Zrod masového komunistického hnutí na Plzeňsku, jeho disciplinace, centralizace a byrokratizace 1945–1948* [A deceived party: The emergence of mass communist movement in the Pilsen region, its disciplining, centralization a bureaucratization in 1945–1948] (Plzeň 2016).

Oldřich Tůma (1950) is a senior research fellow and between 1998 and 2017 the director of the Institute for Contemporary History of the Academy of Sciences of the Czech Republic in Prague. Initially a byzantologist, he has been studying mainly modern Czech and Czechoslovak history (in particular the 1968–1989 period), history of Central Europe and the Cold War since the early 1990s. Apart from a number of studies and edited collections, he is the author or co-author of the publications *Byzantská společnost* [The Byzantine society] (with Věra Hrochová, Prague 1991), *Zítřka zase tady! Protirežimní demonstrace v předlistopadové Praze jako politický a sociální fenomén* [Tomorrow here again! The anti-regime demonstrations in the pre-November Prague as a political and social phenomenon] (Prague 1994) and *České průšvihy aneb Prohry, krize, skandály a aféry českých dějin let 1848–1989* [Czech bummers, or: The losses, crises, scandals and affairs in the Czech History, 1848–1989] (with Jiří Kocian and Jiří Pernes, Brno 2004).

Dalibor Vácha (1980), a historian/writer, he defended his doctoral thesis at the Historical Institute of the Faculty of Arts of the University of South Bohemia in České Budějovice. He now teaches at the Secondary Medical School and the Higher Vocational School of Medicine, also in České Budějovice. His subjects of study include everyday history, history of comics, and, in particular, the thinking and fates of Czechoslovak legionnaires in Russia. He has published the monographs *Bratrstvo: Všední a dramatické dny československých legií v Rusku 1914–1918* [The brotherhood: Ordinary and dramatic days of Czechoslovak legions in Russia, 1914–1918] (Prague 2015) a *Ostrov v bouři: Každodenní život československých*

legií v ruské občanské válce (1918–1920) [Islands in the storm: Everyday life of Czechoslovak legions in the Russian Civil War (1918–1920)] (Prague 2016); he dedicated a biography named *Srdce tak bohaté na život: Rudolf Medek a jeho doba* [A hearth rich with life: Rudolf Medek and his times] (Prague 2017) to the well-known legionnaire general, writer and politician Rudolf Medek. He is also the author of historical novels depicting the life of the legionnaires, namely *Červenobílá* [A red-white] (Prague 2014, Literary Award of the Book Club) and *Cestou* [On the way] (Prague 2016), dating back to the Second World War: *Hranice* [The frontiers] (Prague 2015); or the Prague Uprising: *Hoří už Praha?* [Has Prague already been set on fire?] (Prague 2017). He also writes fantasy, horror, and sci-fi stories.

Jana Wohlmuth Markupová is a lecturer and head of the Department of Oral History – Contemporary History at the Faculty of Humanities, Charles University in Prague. She has also collaborated on several projects with the Institute for Contemporary History of the Academy of Sciences of the Czech Republic. She has published a historical biography called *Ivan M. Havel: Od Puzuka k Sakatekovi (1939–1989)* [Ivan M. Havel: From Puzuk to Sakateka (1938–1989)] (Prague 2017) and she is a co-author of several oral history books such as *(K)lidová věda? Proměny a konstanty v práci i životě vědců a vědkyň v letech 1968–2008* [Folk science? Changes and constants in works and lives of scientists in the years 1968–2008] (together with Lenka Krátká and Miroslav Vaněk, Prague 2018) or *Sto studentských evolucí: Vysokoškolští studenti roku 1989: Životopisná vyprávění v časosběrné perspektivě* [One hundred student evolutions: University students of 1989: Biographical interviews in longitudinal perspective] (together with Miroslav Vaněk et al., Prague 2019). In her PhD thesis she focuses on biography and microhistory.

Tomáš Zahradníček (1971) is a senior research fellow at the Institute for Contemporary History of the Academy of Sciences of the Czech Republic and the director of Museum of Czech Siberia. His research focuses on political and cultural history in Central Europe in the 20th century. He is the co-author of monographs *Návrat parlamentu: Češi a Slováci ve Federálním shromáždění 1989–1992* [The return of parliament: Czechs and Slovaks in the Federal Assembly] (together with Adéla Gjuričová, Prague 2018) and *Za svobodu, spravedlnost a solidaritu: Dějiny sociální demokracie v českých zemích* [For freedom, justice and solidarity: History of Social democracy in the Czech Lands] (together with a team of authors, Prague 2016). He also co-authored the book *Šest kapitol o disentu* [Six chapters on dissent] (together with Jiří Suk, Michal Kopeček, Kristýna Andělová, Tomáš Vilímek and Tomáš Hermann, Prague 2017).

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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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