

"WE WANT THE LIGHT! WE WANT TO STUDY!"*Demonstration of Students from Praha-Strahov University Campus on 31 October 1967*

BY JAROSLAV PAŽOUT

In the evening of 31 October of 1967 the lights went out again across the whole of the Strahov campus. This resulted in a spontaneous demonstration by students to protest against the emergency situation in the residential part, already long neglected. The demonstrators faced intervention by the Public Police forces whose action, verging on brutality, resulted in many injuries, some of them severe. The police intervention, as well as the reaction taken by the relevant authorities, outraged university students and the general public. For students, who were the biggest critics of Antonín Novotný's regime, the Strahov events became the turning point. The following weeks in the universities of Prague were spent in fervent discussion on the further existence of organisations of the Czechoslovak Union of Youth, whose show of loyalty to the regime discredited them in the eyes of the students. From the end of 1967 students actually began to establish a new system of self-government outside the Union's organisations. The Strahov events, together with the failure to resolve the economic crisis, harsh disputes with the Slovaks and conflicts with the cultural scene, documented the incompetence of Antonín Novotný's regime in facing up to the state's problems, and eventually contributed to his dismissal from his position as the first chairman of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia at the beginning of January 1968.

OPERATION "LYAUTEY"

BY PETR CAJTHAML

This study describes a propaganda campaign in *Rude pravo*, the central daily of the Czechoslovak Communist Party, in June 1969. A series of articles informed on an alleged secret scheme hatched by the British intelligence under the cover name of Lyautey, which aimed at removing Czechoslovakia from the Soviet bloc. The campaign was based on the documents the Soviet KGB's headquarters sent to Czechoslovakia in 1966. Documents, the authenticity of which cannot be verified, give the impression of being the original material of the British intelligence service. They describe the general plans of the British intelligence service in the first half of 1950's and some particular operations aimed at impairing Soviet-Chinese relationships. The propaganda campaign intentionally exchanged the target area of the documents which were the basis and claimed they were a British plan to disrupt Czechoslovak-British relationships. The series of articles was prepared by the Press Department of the Ministry of the Interior from the documents provided by the State Security forces. The publication of the alleged plan of the British intelligence was part of a broader campaign to present the 1968 Prague Spring events as a result of the operations of western intelligence services and thus to justify the occupation of Czechoslovakia by the Warsaw Pact armies in August 1968. The series published in *Rude pravo* was assessed as very effective, and the Operation Lyautey motif was later often used as one of the arguments in the Czechoslovak state security propaganda. "Operation Lyautey" then became a universal cliché which was used to illustrate the methods and targets of the western intelligence services. The last part of the study presents several cases where Operation Lyautey was used in propaganda documentaries made by Czechoslovak T.V. in the 1970's.

CAMPAIGN AGAINST "THE AMERICAN BEETLE" AND ITS POLITICAL CIRCUMSTANCES

BY PAVLÍNA FORMÁNKOVÁ

The 1950's in Czechoslovakia were marked by countless massive propaganda campaigns organised by the Communists. They were supposed to assist in strengthening the communist government and defame their opponents. The campaigns attacked those respecting the democratic values of the First Republic, those involved with the Western resistance, Catholic church representa-

tives, farmers, businessmen as well as small businesses, artists whose work was found objectionable by the communist culture leaders, and also "western imperialists and their agents and collaborators from the treacherous emigration". Paradoxically enough, the key role in one of the campaigns was even played by an insect, in particular the Colorado potato beetle (*Doryphora decemlineata*). The infestation of the potato beetle, seen in Europe in 1950, was used by the propaganda in the Czech Republic, East Germany and Poland. It was described as an intentional act carried out by American imperialists who planted the pest beetle artificially "with the assistance of clouds and winds" to destroy our economy. This study describes the organisation and conduct of the propaganda campaign both in the state line and the party line. Seek-and-collect days were announced, to be obligatory for workers and youngsters at school. All media, i.e. press, radio and film, were used for the campaign. The contemporary caricature used the stout appearance of the beetle with its stripey wing-cases which, with a bit of perverse imagination, were reminiscent of the stripes on the American flag. The posters and press cartoons often depicted the beetle with small human heads wearing Uncle Sam's top hat or an American soldier's helmet. The study also mentions diplomatic notes exchanged between the USA and Czechoslovakia. It also touches upon some cases of people sentenced for treason and sent to prison for many years because of their alleged dissemination of the beetle, thus striving to "subvert our people's democratic establishment". The largest campaign was held in 1950; however, the "American beetle" which was "intentionally brought to our country by the American imperialists" was fought against in Czechoslovakia throughout the whole of the 1950's.

FEBRUARY 1948 AND THE PERSECUTION OF MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS EMPLOYEES

BY IVANA KOUTSKÁ

Although the Communist Party strove to seize power over the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MZV) in 1945-48, they failed due to the unquestionable credit of Czechoslovak diplomacy in the effort to renew the Republic during World War Two. The employees of the foreign representations, however, were under the control of the Intelligence Department of the Ministry of the Interior from 1945, led by the communists. The unit of the Czechoslovak Communist Party in the MZV was founded by V. Hajdu in 1945 and it had 60-70 members during the February coup. As of 1 January 1948, MZV had 1256 employees, of this, 602 of whom were employed as of 31/12/1938. The February coup actually resulted in the transformation of the Ministry following the Soviet example - 70-80% of the staff of foreign representations was to consist of foreign intelligence officers. This conversion to a residency of the Soviet intelligence service could not be achieved with the existing staff nor with Minister Jan Masaryk. After his as yet unexplained death on 10 March 1948, the communist Vlado Clementis became his successor, already in the Ministry from 1945 as a State Secretary, and put the planned transformation into practice. The changes were accompanied by a power struggle inside the Party unit. Some of the coup organisers were removed from the Ministry, in line with the practice usual in the Soviet totalitarian system, and V. Clementis was sentenced to death and executed as part of the trial with Rudolf Slansky. The post-February "purge" was conducted by the Action Committee of the National Front (*Akcni vybor Narodni fronty*), which also included the representatives of non-communist parties; however, personal affairs were actually decided on by a committee of "leading comrades from the MZV" (V. Borek, G. Sekaninova, V. Bures, V. Hajdu, A. Tauber and V. Cerny) which held meetings at the Central Committee of the Communist Party with Bedrich Geminder. From the latter half of 1948, someone being designated as a politically unreliable person or as so-called "former people" sufficed for the MZV to have them persecuted. Changes in the law, adopted in 1948-1950, especially Act 231/1948 of 6 October 1948, allowed anyone to be punished for anything. In the chaotic spirit of fear after February 1948, notices were despatched to employees following already prepared lists; they were forced out of their offices and removed from foreign representations. In protest against this injustice, foreign representation officials in democratic countries made mass resignations and fled illegally from Czechoslovakia. Initially so-called objective reasons were tried to be found for

withdrawing officers from their offices, such as retirement age or reorganisation. Former diplomats were replaced by the dedicated comrades whose social behaviour often caused severe diplomatic conflicts. A total of 205 officers were dismissed from February 1948 to 1 October 1949 according to the archives of the MZV. Diplomats who resigned from their offices as representatives of embassies in non-communist countries became leaders and organisers of foreign resistance against the Communist totalitarian regime. They protested against the communist coup, with the best known protest being that of Jan Papa-nek with the United Nations in New York. The Communist justice reacted quickly to the resignations – already on 28 April 1948 all the property of these people in Czechoslovakia was confiscated prior to a court verdict. From February 1948 to 17 March 1950, only according to the archives of the MZV, a total of 182 MZV employees resigned or went into exile. The diplomats who remained in Czechoslovakia were an easy target for allegations ranging from espionage to high treason. Their names can be found in virtually every large political trial in the 1950's, such as A. Sum, J. Palivec, J. Jina, O. Albrecht, A. Ozabal, S. Moncek, F. Fryc, M. Bystrov, V. Halabrin and V. Vasko. The unjustly sentenced and imprisoned diplomats did not see full rehabilitation until after 1989.

“IT'S THE BEST TIME TO DO AWAY WITH THEM...”

The Role of the Church Departments at the Regional Council in Jihlava and the District Council in Moravske Budejovice in the Babice Case in 1951
BY MICHAL STEHLÍK

This study attempts to view the Babice case of 1951 from another perspective than it has usually been seen. The murder of three communist officials in Babice on 2 July 1951 triggered large-scale repression against the farmers and clergy, especially in the Jihlava Region, but Babice was to be the deterrent case for the whole country. This was seen especially in the campaign in Rude pravo, the party daily. The study does not deal with the as yet unclear question of the role of Ladislav Malý but is focused on the intervention of the communist regime against the church. At first it is the activity of the so-called Church Sections (*cirkevní referat*) both in the Jihlava Region and in the districts of Trebic, Moravske Budejovice and Dacice. The church played a key role in this primarily agricultural region, and resistance against collectivisation went in hand with the strongly religious nature of the region. The Babice case thus eventually strengthened repression against rural regions and the church. The study focuses on the system of work of the Church Sections as offices striving to systematically restrain the influence of the favourite clerics, eventually intended to weaken the church itself. The procedure taken against the church and specific members of the clergy was also strengthened by the fact that some of the districts in the Jihlava Region were border districts. The study describes the reports from the Church Secretaries immediately prior to, and especially shortly after, the Babice murder. These reports, amongst other things, imply the fact that the public in the broad region, and particularly in Babice, was well aware of the everyday presence of the State Security before the act, and the communication implies the continuous selection of the problematic clerics, some of which (Pariš, Drbola and Bula) were later executed. It is a brief contribution to the well-known Babice case, trying to describe the system of work of the communist machinery in its fight against the church, thus helping to describe the Czechoslovak society of the 1950's.

“PROKOP DRTINA IN PLZEN: AN ATTEMPT TO ORGANISE A REACTION POWER SCHEME”

A Look into One Rumour behind the Reorganisation of the Ministry of the Interior, 1947–1948
BY PAVEL ŽÁČEK

From the autumn of 1947 the top officials of the Ministry of the Interior, led by the communist Vaclav Nosek, reorganised their machinery. The headquarters of the executive security forces were unified under the “Security Group” (*Skupina bezpečnost-*

ni), commanded by colonel F. Janda and his deputy, department counsel J. Vesely, at a time when the intelligence and state security units in the Ministry already played an important role in the political struggle and persecution of the political opponents of the Czechoslovak Communist Party. In mid-December 1947 the “Security Group” was transformed into the “Department III: Security” (*Odbor III. Bezpečnost*), under the continuing command of colonel Janda. His deputy and also the chief of Group III/A was again J. Vesely. Besides the High Command of the National Security Forces (*Hlavní velitelství Sboru národní bezpečnosti*) and the Crime Investigation Headquarters (*Kriminální ústředna*), Department III also commanded the executive body of the state security service – State Security Headquarters (*Ústředna státní bezpečnosti*), headed by J. Hora. On 1 January 1948 the state security services had a total of 1535 employees and the political intelligence had 738 employees. Altogether, including units in Slovakia, this made a total of 2804 employees. Early on 20 February 1948 J. Vesely, the chief of Group III/A, received a communication from the Plzen branch of the intelligence service stating that the Minister of Justice, Prokop Drtina, had met several officials and supporters of the National Socialist Party in the apartment of B. Barcal in Plzen on the previous day. Those were to include the Chief of the Plzen National Security Directorate (*Reditelství Národní bezpečnosti*) J. Meiner, the journalist F. Naxera, and K. Rehor. Moreover, the alleged meeting was indirectly linked with another passage in the communication reporting the opinions of a Canadian officer, McKenzie, who thought that riots would break out in Plzen if the Communists tried to seize power in Czechoslovakia. After midday on the same day, the chief of Sector III-Aa, Stefan Placek, received an informer's report processed on the basis of a ciphered message from the Regional Office of State Security (*Oblastní úřadovna státní bezpečnosti, Ostb*) in Plzen claiming, from the very title, that Drtina was trying to organise a plot to seize power in Plzen. J. Vesely, the chief of Group A, made an agreement with J. Hora to immediately send several officers, led by dr. Vaclav Pisecký, to Plzen to investigate the case. Pisecký, in his secret letter on the checks upon these reports, reflected the chaos in the security forces, apparently in line with the culminating national political crisis. The officers furthermore discovered that the report on Drtina was completely false and worthless. Drtina did not actually go to Plzen on Thursday 19 February 1948 at all; that evening he was proved to have been giving a speech at the public meeting of the National Socialist Party in Prague. The Prague officers made it clear that no-one could be punished on the basis of these findings. They therefore decided to check how the communication occurred and how it could be designated as having been verified. They visited the informer who submitted the report; however, they did not seek to find his real name. The informer claimed to have received the report from two confidants but in the meantime had found it to be false and that only someone acting as a liaison was in Plzen instead of Drtina. He claimed that the false message had originated with National Socialists themselves. Other “intelligence information” from this man, described as an official of the Ministry of the Interior, was stated as pack of utter nonsense by the committee from the State Security Headquarters. The culmination of the government crisis several days later apparently brought an end to all investigation. The Ministry of the Interior and its units became involved in strengthening their power. Despite Pisecký's final report, questioning the agency information and the informer himself, the subordinate units were ordered to verify the contents of the communication. The logical outcome of the rumour was the investigation into Balcar and Rehor by the officers of Ostb Plzen and eventually J. Meiner's escape abroad. What makes this affair interesting is the fact that already in February 1948 there was a control mechanism inside the Ministry of the Interior through which the command of Department III tried to objectify the flow of information from the regional offices. We can only guess as to whether the verification of the communication on the alleged visit of Minister Drtina in Plzen relates to the strict readiness, or a requirement, of the Communist Party to uncover any activities that could hinder the assumption of power. Despite questioning the source of information, the reality of February 1948 forced the use of the information to further repress the already losing political opponents.