

OF GUILT, REPARATION AND OBLIVION THE 1950'S AND 1960'S IN CZECHOSLOVAKIA

Petr Hrubý

Renowned literary historian Petr Hrubý describes the stories of nineteen intellectuals who succumbed to the persuasion of communism, took an active part in the consolidation of the totalitarian communist regime, ignored all signs of its illegality during the 1950s, only to sober up gradually in the 'thaw' during the years after Stalin's death and try more or less to join the process of democratisation in the 1960s. And it is especially this contrast between saying almost idiotically 'yes' to the communist power and the subsequent efforts at amending their evident mistakes, at least in part, that can help us to view personalities such as economist Ota Šik, philosopher Karel Kosík, and writers Pavel Kohout and Milan Kundera more soberly. It was them who intellectually covered the back of the regime that imprisoned thousands of other intellectuals without any apparent guilt. Nowadays many of them still form a common opinion of the era they lived in and also of themselves.

THE PROSAIC REALITY OF THE LYRIC AGE: ON THE FATES OF CZECH WRITERS AT THE TIMES OF THE COMMUNIST COUP

Rudolf Vévoda

Rudolf Vévoda's overview of the development of the writers' community and its relation to the regime at the turn of the 1940's and 1950's can be seen as a counterpart to Petr Hrubý's study. While Hrubý describes how writers built the new order, Vévoda depicts the demolition of the old one. Renowned journalists such as Ferdinand Peroutka were put aside, writers and poets with a different philosophy of life were silenced and the publishing of their works forbidden while they were forced to live on the verge of society socially as well as materially. Those whom the regime considered to be potential troublemakers were consciencelessly put behind bars and some of them, for example Závěš Kalandra, were executed or escaped capital punishment narrowly (as Zdeněk Rotrekl did). It resulted in the destruction of the rest of our cultural elite, which escaped the Nazi atrocities but was defenceless against the communist ones. The subsequent years of peaceful „socialist“

creation led to a complete inhibition of other literary streams and a fatal loss of quality of the Czechoslovak literature.

FRANTIŠEK HAVLÍČEK – A VICTIM OF TWO TOTALITARIAN REGIMES

Petr Mallota

František Havlíček was born on December 2nd, 1908, so he would be 100 years old this December. Two monstrous totalitarian regimes invaded his life, passing the sceptre in Czechoslovakia inconspicuously. He succeeded surviving under the first regime, the Nazi one, although he was imprisoned and his relatives executed; but the second, communist regime cut his life short violently. His fate is a memento for us. It illustrates the malpractices of both regimes and the whole machine serving them. But this should not be all. It also shows us that there were people who would not put up with evil, regardless of whether it was "black" or "red" evil, and resisted it with everything available to them. František Havlíček, a hero of the anti-Nazi resistance and a retired policeman, was sentenced to death in one of many fabricated communist trials.

ACTION "ISOLATION" – AN EFFORT OF THE CZECHOSLOVAK SECURITY TO REDUCE THE ATTENDANCE OF THE CAPITALISTIC COUNTRIES' EMBASSIES AT THE TURN OF THE 1940'S AND 1950'S

Milan Bárta

The Czechoslovak State Security (StB) started working on projects aiming to interrupt all ties between Czechoslovak citizens and entities in the western countries immediately after the coup. One of such projects was the "Action Isolation" aimed at reducing the attendance of embassies by Czechoslovak citizens. Citizens in contact with western diplomats were monitored on the pretext of their own safety. A member of the state security who took part in "Action Isolation" recalled later: "The main idea was to cut all foreign embassies off from any ties except for those with our agents [...] Every visitor [...] was screened and summoned for interrogation [...] As a result of those contacts, many persons were worked on with the purpose of recruiting them for cooperation or working on them as objects of interest". Violating basic civil rights grossly, the action continued

until 1952 when it mutated, for example, into attempts at decoying prostitutes and establishing their contacts with foreign diplomats in order to obtain compromising evidence against them. This activity, illegal even under the socialist law, was investigated in the 1960's but nobody was punished for it.

LET THEM TAKE BERAN, HE IS DANGEROUS AT HOME

Stanislava Vodičková

Josef Beran is one of the most important representatives of the Catholic Church in Czech history. He was predetermined for and raised towards priesthood from his childhood; he adopted it and served it with zeal, which brought him to the Dachau concentration camp first and then led him to battle the communist regime that was coming to power after the war. He was appointed the Archbishop of Prague in the autumn of 1946 and became a symbol of catholic resistance against the political left, which was gaining power. After the coup d'état he refused to collaborate with the communists and the regime put him under house arrest, which lasted from 1951 to 1965. In 1965 was Beran allowed to leave for Rome where he took an active part in the exile movement. He died in 1969 and was buried in St. Peter's Cathedral upon Pope Paul VI.'s own request.

ACTS OF VIOLENCE COMMITTED AT THE PLZEŇ-BORY PRISON BETWEEN 1948 AND 1952

Tomáš Bursík

The name of the Bory prison near Plzeň is a synonym for Czechoslovak penitentiaries. Built in the second half of the 19th century, this prison saw its darkest period in the middle of the 20th century when political prisoners of the communist regime served their sentences. Not only were the accusations imposed upon them false, their trials fabricated, and confessions, if any, forced by violence – the terror continued throughout the actual imprisonment. Tomáš Bursík reveals particular cases of torturing prisoners, names specific wardens responsible for it, and describes their atrocities as well as the subsequent investigation in the 1960's. While the investigation shed some light on the crimes committed behind the walls of the Bory penitentiary, it did not lead to the punishment of the culprits in the end.