



Behind the Iron Curtain



We Were Unhappy and Have Begun Not to Know It

Interview with Jiří Gruša on
the lack of virtuousness and
the threshold of memory

Political Executions in Communist Czechoslovakia

Intentional misuse
of the implementation
of justice

Far-Reaching Battle Over the Secret Policemen's Files

Post-Velvet Revolution
scandal that shook the
government

Internet Portal of Survivor Accounts

WWW.MEMORYOFNATION.EU



www.memoryofnation.eu is a digital archive of survivor and witness accounts collected on the basis of oral history methodology. The portal collects audio recordings, video clips, photos, texts, archival documents and professional commentaries, allows easy comparison of accounts, and enables the passing on of 20th-century history through the words of those who experienced it firsthand.

The goal of the project is to facilitate exploration of the accounts of those who survived 20th century totalitarian regimes. The Web site currently exists in 9 language versions. The witness's story is always in his or her own native language, with a short annotation in English, for universal accessibility. The long-term objective is to make the portal into a digital archive featuring testimonies compiled from oral history projects in all European countries.

This project is the result of cooperation between the Institute for the Study of Totalitarian Regimes (www.ustrcr.cz), the Post Bellum civic association (www.postbellum.cz) and Czech Radio (Český Rozhlas, www.rozhlas.cz).

www.memoryofnation.eu

Dear Readers,

One of the most important tasks of the Institute for the Study of Totalitarian Regimes is the presentation of our research findings on an international level. With the passing in the Czech Republic of Act No. 181/2007 Coll. and the creation of the Institute and Security Services Archive, our country finds itself in a unique situation providing for the comparatively rapid attainment of a similar level of social discourse as in other post-Communist countries which established parallel institutions in recent years.

Research findings in unusually wide open archival collections of the former Communist security services and new digitization technology are making it possible to convey up-to-date knowledge of the mechanisms of Nazi and Soviet totalitarian power from former Czechoslovakia to the wide international research community in real time. The Institute thus fulfills, even in the context of supranational fora, the legal purpose for which it was established.

Reconciling with the totalitarian past is a complex and internally structured process, which over one generation after the fall of the Communist totalitarian regime in Central and Eastern Europe is reaching a new phase. Political, institutional and personnel changes in our region no longer fundamentally threaten the routing to Euroatlantic structures; nevertheless, a thorough knowledge of totalitarian mechanisms and defenses against them is not yet destined exclusively for historians and politologists. The experience of the post-Communist part of Europe must be taken into account as an inseparable part of a common European historical memory.

For this reason the Institute, within the scope of the Czech Republic's presidency of the Council of the European Union, has initiated the process of establishing a common European platform intended to ensure



standards in research, museum and grant areas, to be applied towards the overcoming of Europe's 20th century totalitarian residue. We expect that the integration of opinions in this area, commencing with a detailed discussion at the workshop organized in cooperation with the Office of the Government of the Czech Republic in November 2008 and culminating in the hearing in the European Parliament in the middle of March 2009, will not only buttress the sometimes even Sisyphean work of our partner institutions, but will also unite the occasionally still distinct approaches of Western and Central-Eastern

Europe. Not only Nazism, but also Communism, with which the states and citizens of the former Iron Curtain to the East have additional tragic experiences, deserve detailed and systematic attention.

In order to protect and further develop an open, democratic society, the realities of the closed past have to be revealed and impartially evaluated. This is the Institute and Archive's specific legal mandate, yet it will be accomplished much more effectively in partnership than alone.

Sincerely,
Pavel Žáček, Institute Director

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Behind the Iron Curtain

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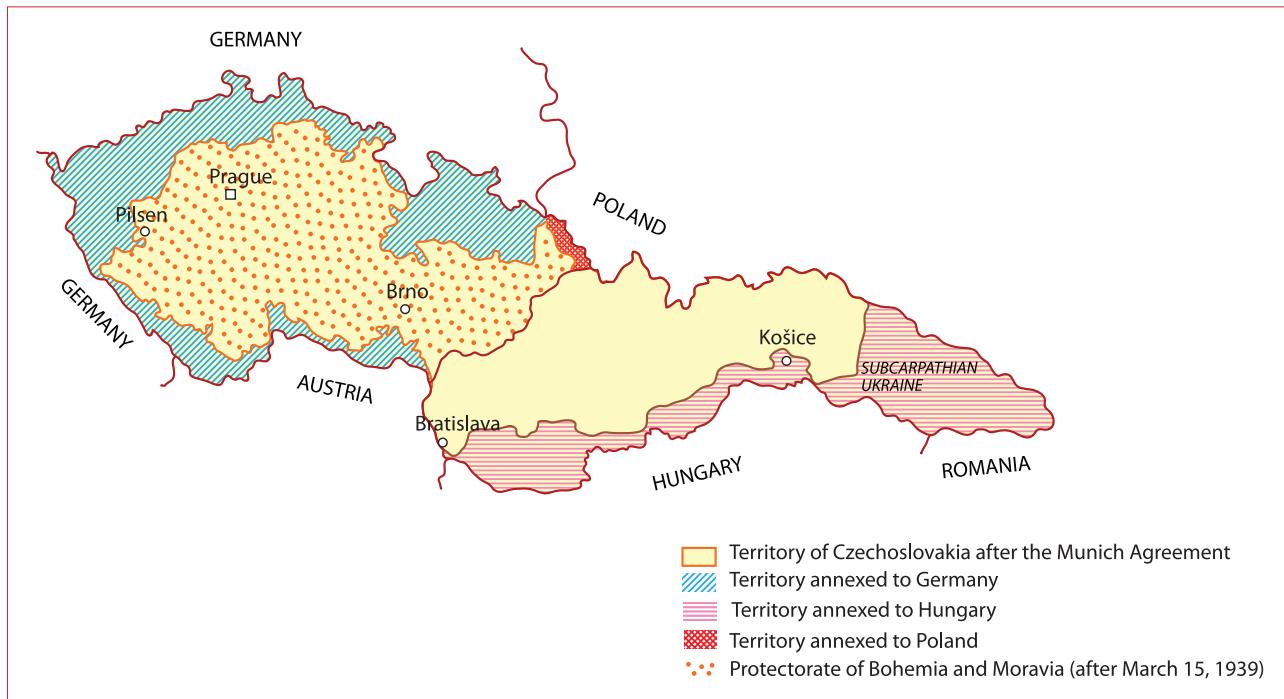
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Jiří Reichl, Peter Burgstaller, Jiří Gruša, Ladislav Kudrna.

Cover photos of Czechoslovak prisoners who were eventually
executed on political grounds, after their arrest by the State
Security Service: Karel Bacílek, student - 29 years old (executed
in May 1949); Květoslav Prokeš, soldier - 52 years old (executed
in November 1949).

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Milestones in Recent Czech History (1938–1989)



Czechoslovakia after the Munich Agreement (October 1, 1938–March 15, 1939).

1938

September 29. Adolf Hitler, Neville Chamberlain, Benito Mussolini and Édouard Daladier sign the Munich Agreement, ceding the Sudeten border regions and much of the country's natural and man-made defenses. Those regions subsequently decide on incorporation into the German Reich.

1938

October 5. President Edvard Beneš resigns as president and leaves the country. His position is taken by Emil Hácha on November 30. In the wake of Munich, the government of so-called Second Republic embarks on

a new path, limiting parliamentary democracy and trying to ingratiate itself with Nazi Germany.

1939

March 15. German forces occupy the remainder of Czech territory left after Munich. Slovakia had declared its independence one day earlier. Adolf Hitler announces the Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia the next day from Prague Castle.

1939

November 17. Nine students, identified as ringleaders in an anti-Nazi demonstration, are executed. The demonstration took place at the funeral

of medical student Jan Opletal on November 15, four days after he died from wounds received at an anti-Nazi protest on the October 28 anniversary of Czechoslovak independence.

1941

September 27. Nazi control is tightened with the appointment of Reinhard Heydrich as acting protector of Bohemia and Moravia.

1942

May 27. Acting Protector Reinhard Heydrich is injured in a Prague suburb during an attack by Czechs and Slovaks parachuted in from Britain. He dies from blood poisoning on June 4,

the highest ranked Nazi official to be assassinated during the war. His death unleashes a bloody reprisal.

1943

December 12. Edvard Beneš signs a friendship treaty with the Soviet Union, binding postwar Czechoslovakia to closer economic and military links with Moscow.

1945

April 4. Creation of the Košice National Front government, with Communists given key ministries.

1945

May 5. With US forces stopped on the outskirts of Pilsen and the Red Army still distant, Prague rises against the Nazi occupiers with initial help from General Vlasov's Russian soldiers, who turned against their German masters. Soviet troops enter the city and put down German resistance four days later.

1945

October 28. Four presidential decrees announce the nationalization of large sectors of the economy, including key heavy industries, banks and insurance companies.

1946

May 26. First postwar elections give Communists a leading 37.93% of the vote and 93 seats in the 300-seat parliament, resulting in Communist leader Klement Gottwald's third government, created from a continuing uneasy National Front coalition.

1948

February 20. Non-Communist ministers from three parties in the National Front coalition government resign following a clash over Communist moves to tighten their grip on the state security apparatus.

1948

February 25. President Edvard Beneš accepts a Communist-dominated government after accepting the



Klement Gottwald, Chairman of the Czechoslovak Communist Party (KSC) and Czechoslovak Prime Minister, during his speech from the Kinský Palace balcony, Prague Old Town Square (Staroměstské náměstí), February 1948. Left, in the background, is Czechoslovak Foreign Minister Vladimír Clementis (later sentenced in the Slánský trial) and photographer Karel Hajek.

Source: ČTK

resignation of non-Communist ministers and refusing to bring forward general elections due that year.

1948

June 14. Klement Gottwald becomes president following the resignation of Edvard Beneš.

1948

October 6. Parliament passes Act 231, establishing the grounds for treason, which will form the basis for many political trials.

1950

May 31-June 8. Show trial of Milada Horáková and co-defendants.

1951

July 11. Parliament passes a law giving border guards security and military powers as part of steps to secure frontiers with Western states.

During the succeeding show trial, he is sentenced to death along with 10 others, with the punishment carried out just over a year after his arrest.

1953

March 14. Death of President Klement Gottwald. Antonín Zápotocký replaces him on March 21.

1953

June 1-2. The government's announced currency reform sparks a full-scale revolt against the Communist regime by factory workers in Pilsen. The center of the city is only reclaimed by authorities with the help of more than 10,000 security police and tanks.

1957

November 13. President Antonín Zápotocký dies. Communist Party First Secretary Antonín Novotný becomes the new president.

1960

The so-called Socialist Constitution is adopted, with the adjective socialist now appearing in the name of the coun-

try, and the leading role of the Communist Party enshrined in the text.

1967

June. The fourth Czechoslovak Writers' Congress launches criticism of Novotný's leadership of the Communist Party.

1967

October 31. A protest march by more than 1,500 Prague students following another blackout in their residence halls is brutally suppressed by the security police, who beat, kick and use tear gas on the demonstrators.

1968

January 5. Antonín Novotný is replaced by Alexander Dubček as Secretary General of the Czechoslovak Communist Party.

1968

March 21. Antonín Novotný is pressured to resign as President in a move which signals the further weakening of the hardliners.

1968

June 27. Leading newspapers publish Ludvík Vaculík's appeal "Two Thousand Words," which expresses support for the democratization movement and cautions against anti-Communism and outside interference (the threat of Soviet occupation).

1968

August 20–21. Soviet and forces from four other Warsaw Pact countries invade Czechoslovakia to quash the reforms implemented by the Czechoslovak Communist Party.

1969

January 16. Student Jan Palach sets himself on fire in Prague's Wenceslas Square in protest against the Soviet occupation and retreating reforms. He dies three days later.

1969

April 17. Dubček is replaced as Communist Party leader by Gustáv Husák

(who as of May 1975 also becomes the president of the Czechoslovak Socialist Republic).

1969

August 22. The so-called truncheon law, giving security forces and the police reinforced powers to protect public order, is adopted with immediate effect and signed by Dubček, President Ludvík Svoboda and Prime Minister Oldřich Černík. It allows detention for up to three weeks instead of the former 48 hours and dismissal from work or studies (a total of 1,526 citizens are punished under this provision).

1976

March 17. Police arrest members of the underground rock band Plastic People of the Universe and later put them on trial, a move which helps to rally and unite opposition to the regime.

1977

January 1. Charter 77, a manifesto calling for the Czechoslovak government to respect the human rights obligations of the Helsinki Final Act, is unveiled with 242 signatures.

1978

April 24. VONS (The Committee for the Defense of the Unjustly Persecuted) is created to monitor cases of unjust legal persecution of those who expressed their beliefs or who became victims of the arbitrary behavior of the regime.

1987

December. Gustáv Husák steps down as General Secretary of the Communist Party, to be replaced by Miloš Jakeš.

1988

December 10. The first opposition demonstration is permitted to take place in Prague's Škroupovo Náměstí on Human Rights Day, coinciding with the visit of French President François Mitterrand.

1989

January. Repression is used by the Communist authorities to suppress "Palach Week," a series of demonstrations to mark the anniversary of Jan Palach's self-immolation.

1989

June. Publication of "A Few Sentences," a call by dissident leaders for the release of political prisoners, open and free discussion on all aspects of public life, including thorny historical issues, and the end of censorship.

1989

November 17. Security police block and then violently break up a students' march in central Prague, sparking the "Velvet Revolution."

1989

November 19. The Civic Forum (Občanské Fórum) is created to unite opposition to the Communist regime in the wake of the outcry against the suppression of the students' march and mistaken reports of one student death.

1989

November 20. A university strike starts with a demonstration in Prague's Wenceslas Square, attracting more than 100,000 protesters. The demonstration is the first of many which helped convince the regime it had lost support.

1989

November 24. The Communist Party's general secretary and its entire central committee step down, opening the way for a switch in power.

1989

December 4. State borders are opened.

1989

December 29. Dissident leader Václav Havel elected president of Czechoslovakia, replacing Gustáv Husák.



Coming to Terms With the 20th Century Totalitarian Past



November 17, 1989 student demonstration on Národní třída in Prague just before the brutal police intervention commenced. Freedom! ("Svobodu!") is written on the banner.

Source: ČTK

1945–1947

Retribution courts are established on the basis of the presidential decrees of June 19, 1945 regarding the punishment of Germans, collaborators and traitors and pursuant to the May 15, 1945 decree No. 33 of the Slovak National Council, in connection with the effort to punish war criminals. Active membership in Nazi and Fascist organizations, participation in the elimination of domestic and foreign resistance, informing, etc. are punishable. Special People's Courts and the National Court try 38,316

cases, from which 33,463 individuals are sentenced. 713 of these receive the death penalty, while the verdict of life imprisonment is delivered to 741 (of which 50% are Germans, 35% Czechs and Slovaks and 15% of other nationalities).

1989

November 29. The Federal Assembly abolishes Article 4 of the Constitution of the Czechoslovak Socialist Republic (ČSSR), which had established the leading role of the Communist Party.

1990

January 4. The ČSSR government presidium detaches the III. Directorate of the Security Police (National Security Corps – SNB), covering military counterintelligence, from the control of the Federal Ministry of the Interior, and incorporates it into the Ministry of National Defense.

1990

January 31–February 16. Selected sections of the SNB are dissolved under orders of the Federal Ministry of the Interior and their staff withdrawn from active service.

1990

April 23. The Federal Assembly of the Czech and Slovak Federal Republic (FS ČSFR) passes Act No. 119/1990 Coll. on judicial rehabilitation, under which sentences are cancelled across the board and the rehabilitation of over 230,000 people is determined, especially for those with convictions of a political nature. The state also compensates victims for time spent in detention and prison.

1990

May 21. The ČSFR government issues Act No. 212/1990 Coll. on the forfeiture of state property which had been in long-term use by the Czechoslovak Communist Party (KSČ), pursuant to Article 79 of constitutional law No. 143/1968 Coll.

1990

June 8–9. Free parliamentary elections are held.



Ladislav Adamec (left) greets Václav Havel at the November 28, 1989 negotiation between delegations representing the then Communist government and the Civic Forum.

Source: ČTK

1990

October 2. The Federal Assembly passes Act No. 403/1990 Coll. on property rehabilitation, which aims to alleviate the consequences of property violations and facilitates the return of moveable and immovable property confiscated after 1955.

1990

November 16. The Federal Assembly passes constitutional law No. 496/1990 Coll. on the restitution of Communist Party property to the people of the ČSFR and constitutional law No. 497/1990 on the return of Socialist Youth Association

(SSM) property to the people of the ČSFR.

1991

February 21. The Federal Assembly passes constitutional law No. 87/1991 on extrajudicial rehabilitation, aimed at redressing the consequences of property and other violations resulting from civil, workplace and other administrative acts which took place between February 25, 1948, and January 1, 1990, and which were in conflict with the basic principles of a democratic society.

1991

September. Creation of the Department for the Documentation and In-

vestigation of State Security Service (StB) activities at the Federal Ministry of the Interior, pursuant to that Ministry's Order No. 95/1991. The Department's director answers directly to the Interior Minister.

1991

The Federal Assembly passes Act No. 451/1991 on conditions for holding certain positions in state bodies and organizations (the "big lustration law"). This and later acts (nos. 279/1992, 422/2000, 424/2000) establish the criteria for filling certain top state posts and excluding members and collaborators of the State Security Service (StB), People's Militia, military coun-

terintelligence and pre-November 1989 members of the Communist Party from occupying these positions.

1992

June 4. An unofficial and incomplete list of StB collaborators is released in Petr Cibulka's "Uncensored News-paper."

1992

October. The Constitutional Court decision nos. 14/1992 Coll. and 351/1991 Coll. confirm the right of a democratic state to take necessary measures to avoid the risk of subversion, the return of totalitarian rule, and to take steps to reduce these risks.

1992

October. The Federal Ministry of the Interior orders the creation of the Office for the Documentation and Investigation of StB activities, under the control of the Czech Police's investigation unit.

1993

February 23. The Chief Prosecutor of the Czech Republic creates the Coordination Center for the Documentation and Investigation of Violence against the Czech People from May 8, 1945 to December 31, 1989, in compliance with an agreement with the Ministry of the Interior. The Center, governed by the Chief Prosecutor's office, is tasked to help implement the law on judicial rehabilitation.

1993

July 9. Parliament passes Act No. 198/1993 Coll. on the illegal nature of the Communist regime and on resistance against it. The law states that the Communist Party leadership and membership were fully responsible for the actions of the Czechoslovak government between 1948 and 1989, including the destruction of traditional European values, the abuse of human rights, breaking the law and international obligations, using repressive measures against its own citizens, and conducting judicial murders and staged trials. The Com-

munist regime is denounced as criminal, illegitimate and condemnable, and thus resistance by citizens against this type of government deemed legitimate, just, moral and deserving of recognition. The state is also obliged to abolish or reduce penalties not addressed by the law on judicial rehabilitation if it can be shown that the condemned was acting to protect basic human and civil rights and freedoms through clearly proportionate means. The position of this law within the legal system of the Czech Republic is problematic, to say the least, as it is purely declaratory, and has thus not been rigorously applied in individual cases.

1995

January 1. The Ministry of the Interior, in its order No. 83/1994 Coll., creates the Office for the Documentation and Investigation of the Crimes of Communism (ÚDV). The Center for the Documentation of Illegalities Committed by the Communist Regime, which came into being in January 1994 under the direction of the Chief Prosecutor's office, is incorporated into the ÚDV, now answerable to the Czech Police and with investigative authority.

1996

April 26. Parliament passes Act No. 140/1996 Coll., rendering some StB files accessible. This law opens up around 60,000 files from the former counter-intelligence service of the StB, although only to Czech citizens, and with sensitive material thoroughly blacked out.

1997

June 22. The Government of the Czech Republic passes Act No. 165/1997 Coll. on lump-sum financial compensation for the unjust actions of the Communist regime with respect to condemned individuals, those retained in custody, and individuals sent to forced labor camps or interned.

1998

May 20. Parliament passes Act No. 148/1998 Coll. on secret information, under which most of the archival ma-

terials from the former Central Committee of the Communist Party Archive and the Archive of the Ministry of the Interior are declassified during the following year.

2002

March 8. Parliament amends its 1996 law with Act No. 107/2002, distinctly widening the range of accessible files and comprehensively changing the approach to StB documents. Public access is granted to at least part of the intelligence and military counterintelligence files, and theoretically also to the files of the Surveillance, Intelligence Technology, and Passport and Visa directorates, as well, with access rights extended to foreign citizens.

2002

April 9. Act No. 172/2002 Coll. is passed, granting compensation for citizens deported to the Soviet Union or to camps established by the Soviet Union in other states.

2004

June 30. Parliament passes Act No. 499/2004 Coll. on archival science, under which the absolute majority of archival documents from the period of the Communist regime – from repressive services as well as organizations of the National Front – are rendered accessible without limit.

2005

May 3. Act No. 203/2005 Coll. is passed, granting compensation to some victims of the occupation of Czechoslovakia by the armies of the Soviet Union, German Democratic Republic, Polish People's Republic, Hungarian People's Republic and Bulgarian People's Republic.

2007

June 8. Parliament passes Act No. 181/2007 Coll., on the Institute for the Study of Totalitarian Regimes and Security Services Archive. The law comes into effect on August 1, 2007, and the institutions begin operation on February 1, 2008.



Inception and International Cooperation of the Institute and Archive



Chairman of the Polish Institute of National Remembrance Janusz Kurtyka (left) signed a three-way cooperation agreement with the Institute and Archive in Prague.

Source: Jiří Reichl

The creation of the Institute for the Study of Totalitarian Regimes followed a prolonged and arduous path, with the outcome unclear only months ahead of its February 1, 2008 launch. While inspiration for the creation of an independent body dedicated to examining the recent totalitarian past came from already operational institutes in neighboring Germany, Poland and Slovakia, differing perspectives

about the need, remit and shape of such an institution abounded in the Czech Republic.

Backers of the Institute's creation argued that the body dealing with the security files of the former Communist regime, the Office for the Documentation and Investigation of the Crimes of Communism (ÚDV), did not adequately fulfill its role as an archives custodian, and had no man-

date for fostering or furthering historical research. The ÚDV, which falls under the Police Presidium, is a purely investigative body, charged with examining files and recommending whether criminal proceedings should be brought against former Communist functionaries. Its management of the archives housed within the Ministry of Interior was primarily focused on processing and interpreting

them for its own direct needs. Historians complained they had no clear picture of what was in the various collections and that they were only given partial access to them. These criticisms persisted even though some symbolic steps were taken to improve access, including the publishing of some of the pre-1989 civil intelligence files on the internet.

The creation of the Nation's Memory Institute in Slovakia in 2002 was a particularly poignant catalyst, as it increasingly resulted in historians and researchers being offered better access to the past in one part of the former Czechoslovakia than the other. Further, a newly created body would centralize all the records concerning the security services, then spread around different ministries, and give a much needed impetus to the weak attempts so far to research and come to terms with the recent totalitarian past, and in particular its key security apparatus.

While historians contended over the size and scope of a newly created institute and its archives, they were generally agreed that one of its key missions would be to remedy the public's – and especially schoolchildren's – acute ignorance of their recent turbulent history.

They further concurred that a new body would boost international historical cooperation, particularly between like-minded institutes and organizations in Central and Eastern Europe.

The precise format of the new body was thrashed out by politicians. Initial proposals counted on the creation of two separate bodies, with a separate security services archive being born alongside the institute. That scenario was eventually dropped in favor of a single body, with largely autonomous archives still under institute control, and the latter responsible for overseeing the major task of digitizing the collection. The institute's remit was also widened to cover the so-called era of non-freedom – the period of Nazi occupation, from 1938-1945.

The new institution's responsibility for independent, objective research was laid down in its founding act, with its ruling seven-strong council selected according to a procedure intended to diversify input. Council members are nominated by the President of the Republic; the lower house of Parliament; and civic associations focused on history, archival science, research, education and human rights, as well as groupings representing former political prisoners or resistance and opponents of Communism and Nazism. The upper house – the Senate – votes to fill the Council from the list of nominees. The Council appoints the Institute's director, who in turn names the director of the Security Services Archive. Criminal investigation into Communist crimes remains the responsibility of the ÚDV.

Since opening their doors in February 2008, the Institute for the Study of Totalitarian Regimes and the Security Services Archive have taken a lead in forging international links.

From an historical viewpoint, the logic of close cooperation between Central and Eastern Europe institutions created around security services archives is compelling. Simply put, these countries share a common totalitarian past that cannot be fully understood at a national level.

All were subject in varying degrees to Nazi domination with the strings immediately, or soon after, being pulled from Moscow.

Through a series of bilateral agreements with counterparts in Germany, Poland, Slovakia, and Hungary, and a wider six-nation international accord taking in Romania and Bulgaria, the Institute is advancing the goal of creating an institutional framework encouraging cooperative research. A similar agreement has been signed with the US Holocaust Memorial Museum, while a further bilateral agreement with Ukraine is underway.

Practical benefits include the prospect of easier access to archive documents from institutions in other countries and the possibility of study placements or *stages* abroad for researchers. The Institute is also seeking to share its know-how with other post-Communist countries, such as Albania, which are in the initial stages of creating bodies dealing with their authoritarian past. Such cooperation increases individual institutes' chances of achieving their shared goals. "We will be stronger together than when we act alone," explains president of Poland's Institute of National Remembrance, Janusz Kurtyka.

The Institute also cooperates with a series of museums, organizations and institutions, mostly in Central and Eastern Europe, dedicated to shedding light on the recent totalitarian past.

Cooperation at these different levels has helped the Institute stage a series of international conferences and seminars putting the spotlight on key moments or themes in the countries' shared history.

Europe-wide moves to break down the vestiges of the Cold War divide that still hover over the continent are being promoted by the Institute. In November 2008, the Institute hosted a working group aimed at establishing the framework for a European platform of memory and conscience which would foster cooperation and a common approach to tackling Europe's totalitarian past. Representatives from 19 countries backed the concept of such a platform, to exist side by side with national institutions and provide a forum for encouraging joint research and education projects, increasing public awareness of the continent's collective history and bolstering democratic values. The Institute seeks to build on this foundation during the Czech Presidency of the EU Council during the first half of 2009, with a European Parliament hearing over the platform proposal scheduled on March 18.



Highlights of Institute Activities

RESEARCH

Achieving a better understanding of the Nazi and Communist totalitarian regimes through unbiased research is an integral part of the Institute's broad mandate. The main research themes focus on how and why pre- and post-WWII democracies were undermined, and understanding who supported and resisted the totalitarian regimes that succeeded each other after a relatively short gap.

The regimes' crimes, the anti-democratic and criminal actions of state bodies, in particular the security services, the Communist Party, and organizations which took a lead from the party (such as the army, border police and people's militias), are all included in documentation efforts.

Long-term research seeks to understand to what extent the short-lived Second Czechoslovak Republic, born in the wake of the Munich Agreement and lasting until the Nazi occupation in March 1939, was a precursor to what followed by tracing the penetration of totalitarian and repressive tendencies. Study also focuses on the psychological blow of "Munich" on Czechoslovak society and its role in undermining democracy.

The apparatus of Nazi repressive control during the Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia, collaboration with and resistance against it, and the way the Communist movement at home and abroad sought to position itself to seize power form a separate thread of research. The scope here is wide, with a final total of Czech victims of the Nazi regime still not finalized.

A third line of investigation looks at direct and indirect links between the two totalitarian regimes, either regarding the persons and structures used to gain and maintain power or the methods adopted. The breadth of the archives collections, often allowing the activities of individual departments to be charted over decades, greatly contributes to this task.

Piecing together a fuller picture of the development and organizational structure of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia at a central and regional level is one of the Institute's fundamental goals.

The party's place within the broader Communist international structure and the freedom it had to follow its own path versus accepting direct orders from Moscow, as well as the overall extent of "Sovietization," is being researched. Descriptions of how the party apparatus evolved and who occupied top party posts are being drawn up (the first results have already been published on the internet) with the final result helping to determine the extent of individuals' responsibility.

The same approach will also be used to chart the organization, staffing and role of the security machinery, mostly housed in the Ministry of the Interior, with a bibliographic dictionary of its hierarchy one of the planned results. In particular, research will try to pinpoint where the security service took a lead, as opposed to serving merely as a tool for repression.

Research further seeks to fill in considerable gaps in knowledge about another major pillar of the Commu-

nist regime, the Ministry of Justice, and its transformation into an agent of "class justice." Today, more is known about the victims of Communist justice than the individuals who staffed the apparatus and to what degree they determined punishments and helped shape the system.

The development of the prison system between 1938-1989 as a key element of repression, and the charting of the fates of political prisoners, is another major theme for research. Long-term goals include an encyclopedia of prison facilities, study of political prisoners' situation during the post Prague Spring period of "normalization," and an exhibition about the prison system.

In a different area, research aims to uncover the life stories, motivations and actions of those people who opposed the Communist regimes in what has been described as the "third resistance" movement. The focus is divided between the period during which the regime gained and consolidated its power from 1948-1956 and the following period until 1989, with extensive research in the security services archive collection a priority.

Finally, research attempts to shed fresh light on one of the turning points in recent history, the Prague Spring and its violent demise, in particular by tracing the non-Communist roots of the demands for reform and the way the security services themselves reacted to these changes.

The incorporation of the military and security intelligence and counter-intelligence records within the overall archive is expected to open



Jozef Kycka, survivor of the Barbora, Nikolaj and Rovnost camps in Jáchymov, tells his story near the former gatehouse of the Rovnost camp, which serves today as a vacation cottage.

Source: Adam Hradilek

up the door to studies that will more clearly establish the role of these Czechoslovak services within the broader context of Soviet-bloc moves to export Communism and undermine the West.

ORAL HISTORY

Another of the Institute's aims is to collect on tape and film the memories of those directly involved in key as-

pects of Czech history, compiling a digital databank of recollections alongside the existing written records. The priorities of the **Memory and History of Totalitarian Regimes Project**'s small documentation team are set with one eye on the Institute's research and exhibition needs, but a bigger eye on the clock ticking on the lives of some of the aged witnesses. For this reason,

interviewing some of the few remaining Czech survivors who were sent to Soviet gulags after the German occupation of what remained of Bohemia and Moravia in March 1939 was one of the 2008 priorities.

Four survivors who slipped across the border into the Soviet Union, only to be arrested as spies and sent to prison camps, were interviewed. Many Czech occupants of the gulag, now in their eighties, only earned their release by offering to join the Czechoslovak army fighting on the Eastern Front as part of the Soviet WWII war effort. To complete this project, the Institute has teamed up with a parallel French initiative, "Audio Archives of the Gulag," which collects recollections of Gulag victims from the countries of the former Soviet Union and its satellite states.

The Institute, backed up by around a dozen external helpers called in to help with the workload, has also sought to gather the accounts of those involved in the so-called "third resistance" against the Communist regime, Czech agents recruited by Western governments and groups persecuted by the authorities.

Victims of Communist moves to collectivize agriculture and confiscate property left in private hands after post-war nationalization and the accounts of political prisoners during the entire period of the regime's 41 year rule have also been the focus for the Institute's initial efforts, with a total of around 80 video recordings made by the end of 2008.

The Institute has also been a leading player in the launch of Europe's biggest internet portal for historical accounts, **Memory of Nation**. The multilingual portal (www.pametnaroda.cz or www.memoryofnation.eu), a joint venture between the civic association Post Bellum, Czech Radio, and the Institute, was launched on October 28, 2008, after two years of preparations. It draws on accounts that have been collected for almost a decade, including memories of WWII soldiers, those involved in wartime

resistance, opponents of Communism in the 1950s, political prisoners, and leading officials of the regime and its apparatus.

One of the main aims of the project is to provide an attractive and meaningful opening into modern history for elementary and secondary school and even university students, with the accounts providing primary material and a source for inspiration for further study.

By the end of 2008, 939 witness accounts had been collected, amounting to 2,471 separate sound recordings. A start has also been made on inputting the accounts of some of the nine foreign partners which have agreed to help build the portal into a representative European collection of recollections. These partners are: the Brücke Foundation, Germany; the International Commission for the Evaluation of the Crimes of the Nazi and Soviet Occupation Regimes in Lithuania; the Institute for National Remembrance, Poland; the Imperial War Museum, Britain; the Nation's Memory Institute, Slovakia; The Institute for Information on the Crimes of Communism, Sweden; The Institute for the Study of Communist Crimes, Romania; the Museum of Occupation of Latvia; The Office of the Federal Commissioner, Germany.

EDUCATION AND PUBLISHING

The Institute's educational mandate represents one of its core activities, and was one of the main reasons for its creation. The task of informing and stimulating interest in the recent totalitarian past can be broken down into two main areas: those directed at schools and those targeting the wider public, albeit with significant overlap between the two.

A special working group has been created within the Institute's research department aimed at improving teachers' ability to teach and pupils' capacity to learn. There is little doubt about the need being addressed. Surveys show that the teaching of modern history seriously lags

behind that of other historical eras both in terms of the time and quality of education afforded. Many young people born since the fall of Communism in 1989 have only the sketchiest ideas of what the regime meant, often based on clichés such as queues for bananas.

Expert help is offered to history teachers, mostly those in middle schools, offering guidance on how they can tackle what is still a highly sensitive subject. This includes the running of free courses for teachers and the preparation of books and teaching aids, including videos and DVDs, for classroom use. For 2009, the focus of training will be widened to take in the Nazi occupation and Czech Protectorate as well as the Communist regime, with comparisons being drawn between the two totalitarian regimes.

The Institute has been quick to grasp the opportunities offered by film and audio archives to compile lively and challenging multimedia packages which can supplement traditional textbooks. Historians and researchers at the institute's disposal help select the medium best suited to get the message across.

One of the early results of such work has been the production of 2,000 educational DVDs for distribution to middle and elementary schools explaining the events of 1968 (see article on page 50).

A long term goal of the Institute is to build up a collection of TV and film material that can be used both in seminars for students and teachers as well as in historical presentations for a wider public. Staff also provide presentations in schools on key historical topics, drawing on the Institute's experts where needed.

Within a short space of time, the Institute has established itself as a significant niche publisher, as well. Books published in its first year have touched on myriad topics, including the lifetime account of a Czech pilot forced to flee his country because of the Nazi occupation, a biography

of longtime top Communist party leader and minister for information and culture, Václav Kopecký, and a profile of Iron Curtain border guards units and escape attempts. The 40th anniversary of the 1968 suppression of the Prague Spring provided the impetus for one of the year's hallmark publications, *Victims of the Occupation*. The book, published in separate Czech and English editions, not only updates the death toll of the Soviet-led occupation, but provides new details and destroys some established myths (see article on page 52).

The Institute's main periodical, aimed at the general public, is the quarterly review *Pamět a dějiny* (Memory and History). Its liberal mix of articles, studies, interviews and reviews has won praise for putting difficult aspects of modern history before a mass audience. The bi-annual anthology, *Securitas Imperii*, offers more detailed studies of the evolution and functioning of the Czechoslovak security apparatus.

The Institute has taken a flexible approach to publishing, in some cases acting as the sole publisher, in other cases acting in partnership with other institutions or offering its services for parts of the process. That flexibility has been drawn on for the production of booklets, studies and anthologies to accompany Institute organized exhibitions and events. These frequently cross the boundary between education projects aimed at schools and the wider public. Seventeen books and studies are planned for publication in 2009.

The Institute also intends to make increasing use of the internet, with its Web site (www.ustrc.cz) constantly being updated. The results of fresh research into the Czech cultural underground in the 1960s-1980s, a description of how the security services intelligence service evolved, and biographical dictionaries of top Communist and Ministry of Interior functionaries are expected to be published online this year.



Formation and Priorities of the Security Services Archive

The collection of records managed by the Security Services Archive, in the process of being opened up to researchers, is an unrivaled resource for understanding the development and functioning of totalitarian power.

The total collection comprises just under 20 kilometers of records, including films, tapes, microfilm reels and almost half a million sheets of microfiche. Around two-thirds of the material comes from the Ministry of the Interior, but additional material has been handed over by the Ministry of Defense (including the files from military counterintelligence) and the Ministry of Justice (records about the operations of the prison system, for instance).

Communist authorities performed sporadic clean outs, getting rid of files they regarded as no longer operational or of interest. For this reason, the greatest amount of material relates to the 1970s and 1980s, especially in the case of film material shot by institutions for educational and training purposes and films from individual surveillance operations mounted by the State Security Service.

With the creation of the Archive, this dispersed material relating to the operation of the totalitarian security apparatus has for the first time been placed under one body. Furthermore, the Archive has the mandate to render the greatest possible access to material, not only to academic researchers, but to the general public.

Surprising as it may seem, many records were only opened up to the public with the launch of the Institute for the Study of Totalitarian Re-

gimes and Security Services Archive in February 2008. Files from the ministries of Defense and Justice were simply not open to the public before then.

Legal steps had cautiously been taken to open up the Interior Ministry records, but until a change in the archive rules in 2004, much of the material available was still heavily blacked out. That little publicized but key change in the rules far from threw the doors open to research, researchers or the public.

The last step in the process of declassifying secret material did not take place until 2007, after only starting in 1999, with a very cautious swing from the institutional viewpoint that documents should remain under lock and key rather than be open.

Practical problems also existed. The inventories of materials in existence at the Interior Ministry were often faulty, especially those dating back to the 1950s, while in the case of the files at the Defense and Justice ministries, no inventories or other research aids existed at all. "Researchers often had no full idea of what was available. Most got something, but no-one got everything," comments deputy archive director Miroslav Urbánek.

A fundamental change in the approach to archives - from limited and begrudging access to near total access - has now taken place. "We have one of the most open regimes compared with neighboring states with Communist security archives. There are almost no limits," Urbánek explains. The two limits that do remain



One of the depositories of the Security Services Archive. Source: Jiří Reichl

apply to personnel files containing sensitive material about the health of individuals and families, and files which could threaten state security. In the latter case, a committee is convened to decide whether some or all of the requested material can be handed over. Both decisions made so far have been in favor of the applicants.

Archive staff are taking further steps to make material more acces-



Archive documents ready for digitization and conservation.

Source: Jiří Reichl

Conservation was an unknown concept before the creation of the Archive. Documents were stored without regard to whether or not they would survive normal wear and tear or aging.

This has resulted in many records, especially those dating from the Protectorate era and the 1950s, being handed over in a pitiful state.

In one case, the diary of a rank and file anti-Nazi resistance member judged to be of exceptional interest, is in such a fragile state that it cannot be used by researchers or made available to the public before it is stabilized and digital copies of it made for further use.

One of the main problems Archive staff face is the poor quality, thin paper used by Communist authorities for their reports in the 1950s, which has made it brittle and easily liable to damage.

"Many reports were type-written on both sides of the paper, and over time have become unreadable," adds deputy archive director Miroslav Urbánek.

Stopping and reversing the aging process using de-acidifying technology is one of the steps the Archives is taking. It is currently in the process of sealing a broad agreement with the Czech National Archive, a leader in the field of preservation and restoration, for more advanced treatment of valuable documents within the security services collection and the training of Archive staff so that they can carry out more than just basic conservation work in the future.

version of which is already in operation at the Czech National Archive – which would allow different searches to be keyed in for all material in the collection.

Digitization of material, for the dual purposes of protecting fragile documents and allowing them to be called up electronically, is also taking place at the Institute with the help of sub-contractors. The massive task will probably take the best part of a decade to complete. Priorities for digitization are set by the Institute, taking into account the need to conserve material in heavy demand, such as records from the major Communist show trial of Milada Horáková, records relating to the self-immolation of student Jan Palach in protest of the Soviet-led crackdown on the Prague Spring, and files relating to the dissent movement and Charter 77, as well as its own research, educational and exhibitions agenda.

sible. Existing Ministry of the Interior inventories are being checked and re-written to get rid of mistakes, with new inventories drawn up for the hidden files from the Defense and

Justice ministries. Inventories have been digitized and put on the internet.

Work has also started on the use of an electronic database – an earlier

We Were Unhappy and Have Begun Not to Know It

With Jiří Gruša on the lack of virtuousness and the threshold of memory

Jan Hanzlík, Jiří Reichl

The expression “coming to terms” with Communism is a favorite empty phrase. What should we understand from it? How should such a process take place?

Justice is, together with wisdom, courageousness and a sense for moderation, the foundation of free and creative societies. The main element of justice is balance, or evaluation of the difference between causes and consequences of human behavior. It is an act ensuring immunity, and thus

also the activity of social organisms. There exists such a thing as ideological AIDS, with fatal consequences. Czechs, in contrast with Austrians, for example, have always been blind in the left eye. We were the only nation in Europe to ride down Communism with a ballot in the hand. It is important to know why this happened to us. And why exactly this Czech deed damaged so many Czechs and of course even Slovaks, including its initiators. It's not about revenge,

which rules out balance, because it organizes a counter-attack, rather than an antidote, but about a description of beliefs and disease.

Nineteen years have passed since the fall of Communism. How has the Czech perception of the period of totalitarianism developed during that time?

Seifert, in his recollections of his youth during the First Republic, which also lasted that long (or short),



Source: Jiří Reichl



From the Prague Spring conference at the Diplomatic Academy in Vienna: (from left) Ludvík Vaculík, Peter Huemer, Gerd Bacher, Jiří Gruša, Antonín Liehm and Barbara Coudenhove-Kalergi

Source: Peter Burgstaller

once wrote: *We were happy and have begun not to know it.*¹ Today we could say: *We were unhappy and have begun not to know it.* That wouldn't be so bad if it implied a healthy aging process. But it implies health as such.

How actually should the debate on the past be led, so that it reaches the greatest number of primarily young people?

Debate is a good thing, but a database is its prerequisite – and digitalization, of course, plus the greatest possible number of young researchers. And that's again a question of scholarships. I recommend looking for European sources, as well. Research on the Czech type of totalitarianism is crucial. It was the only one in Western European society, and again for almost twenty years it has passed

without the presence of Soviet troops.

It is said about Austrians that they consider themselves as Hitler's victims, not at all as his flunkies – in other words, that they have rejected a kind of reflection of their own mistakes. Is it really like that? And if so, what effect does it have on contemporary Austria?

If we look beyond the linguistic definition of a nation, that is, from Herder and his success, especially in Czech meadows and groves, we are actually one nation. By that I don't mean to say that a linguistic definition is not significant, but it determines the telling – narrative – of a given collective, not its passing. "National socialism" is a Czech logo from

the year 1895, which, with the help of a translation from Cheb (Eger), transformed into a world label. Communism is a Rhineland story, which we listened to more sincerely than all Germans. In Czech you could say "national socialist" even after '45 and vote for the only "bourgeois party" where it didn't matter that it had the same name as its German enemy. From Austrian "flunkies," they became victims after everything that happened, because they took the wrong train. Just as in our country in 1948 two million people thought that they were taking the right one, when they bought the ticket of the Communist Party. For the Austrians with their Austrianness, it was not clear after 1918 – it was a symbol of defeat. For that reason, many thought that they would correct this thing if

¹ Translator's note: A reference to the verse of Jaroslav Seifert (1901-1986), Czech poet, author and 1984 Nobel Laureate in Literature.



Source: Jiří Grusá

they became Greater Germans. Already before that, a relatively solid number of them maintained that *Ohne Jud' und Slav und Rom, bauen wir den deutschen Dom.* Without a Jew, Slav or Roman, only thus will the cathedral of "Germanness" glitter (free translation of the author). While we, with the aid of our self-importance, could only embrace that great Russian oak tree over there,² because it was clear that the Russians would not speak Czech to please us, and the Austrians could forget that the Imperium Romanum, which they had so long governed, was successful not only as a German-Roman, but – through the Czechs – also Slavonic structure, with a proto-federal shape. And that its difficulties began at the

moment when it added to its score the modifier of the German nation, which in the neo-national sense was not yet ready.

But Hitler was an Austrian.

But also a typical mutt on promenade, from the Czech-Austrian borderlands. From among his relatives there appears the name Roubal; his best friend's name is Kubíček. Such self-identification with a bigger and more secure hunting region characterizes Napoleon and Stalin, too. But here it was topped up with the pathological desire for racial purity of a man who did not intend to conceive children, but instead caused human victims on modern mass front lines. Austrians didn't want him; Vienna vomited him up. He got flunkies only as a representative of a political epidemic. Similarly to another old Austrian mutt with the classic Czech name Gottwald³. Societies that have lost their collective immunity behave like an infection. Czechs are blind in the left eye because they had to clamber up from the left – that is, with the help of social ascent and its ideology. Austrians are blind in the right, because they wanted to guard against social slippage, which they themselves caused with their postponing of social-political reforms. Thus the European political blind man was created, reliant on the immoral soothsayer of the left and the right. And something from that tradition has lasted until today. Look at the latest election results in our country and in Austria. But careful! Two small notes regarding our irony towards Vienna. All Hitler had to do was send the army to Austria to have his zest assured. But in '45, Stalin was able to withdraw his soldiers from Czechoslovakia and still get the jubilating

Czechs in his camp, whereas in Austria in that same period, not even the Red Army's presence helped him attain his coveted election victory. For that reason, the rest of the century was funnier on the Danube than on the Moldau.

It almost seems as if there were a few dozen individuals responsible for our Communist tragedy. But on average it appears that every citizen of the ČSSR had at least one relative in the party. Where are they all?

Well, at the election urns! But they don't know that with that they will not change the diagnosis of the previous era, nor for a long time the climate of the current one. It was not a chivalrous offense which one doesn't speak about in high society, but a fatal epidemic which must not return. And that, please, even in their interests.

By contrast, in Germany, which you know very well, reflections carried on for instance with the delay of one generation. Isn't this time lag necessary?

There exists something called the threshold of memory. This threshold is necessary to attain in recovery from social traumas. It's a sixty- to eighty-year period, after which history stops hurting as personal trauma, without ceasing to function as a source of experience. It is a three-generation feat. In the first phase you have to learn not to enforce justice as clean retribution. In the second comes reflection as description of the shock. Here institutes are founded, like yours. And then the third generation sees itself as *demos* of democracy, not as a cannibalistic people.

² A reference to the verse of Ján Kollár (1793-1852), poet, linguist and historian of Slovak origin, in which he depicts Russia as a great oak tree.

³ A reference to Klement Gottwald (1896-1953), long-time leader of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia, later Czechoslovak prime minister and, from June 1948, president.

And when we wait for a similar approach, for instance, in Russia, where to this day the wider public considers the invasion of Czechoslovakia as brotherly help or doesn't even have so much as an idea about it?

Russia is authoritarian today, not despotic. That is, if you will, progress. If it does not, however, invest in its social infrastructure or raise its social IQ as the only non-fossil source of energy, its old problems will return. At the moment that fossil energy gives out, so will fossil regimes. That moment is not in the unforeseeable future. Getting rid of political fossilism is everything. Modern power is not the power to hurt someone, but the ability not to harm its talented ones. As long as Russian bigwigs see in democracy the imperial ideology of their rival, and not the imperative of creativity, they will have a hard time, and they will not avoid a further implosion.

In the year 1950, you were twelve. What kind of memories do you have of the 1950s?

Non-unionist.⁴ My father, who directed a small dairy, refused to join the Party when they came to him with the offer that with membership, he would keep his place. Then he had to go to the mines and I with my mother to Pardubice. There, until the year 1950, I went to the oratory of the Salesians, who one night were seized and taken away to work battalions. When dad left the dairy, it stopped producing cheese. And when the Salesians were away, the boys in Jesničánky started to fight more.

To live through the years of adolescence in one of the darkest periods of this country must have

been an utterly specific experience. How would you describe it?

What doesn't destroy you makes you stronger. It was, however, an era of *unnatural selection*. A parody on Darwin, in English: *Not the fittest won, but the faintest*. The most competent was not rewarded, but instead he with the worst ways. This did not end up repaying everyone. The capable ended up on the *waste heap of history*, as the weeding out of the class unsuitable was called in the jargon of Lenin's Golden Horde.⁵ From these, however, grew a splendid biotope of new growth.

How did the Prague intellectual environment look in the period between Stalin and Kruschev?

Well, like a beach full of Robinsons, who shipwrecked but didn't drown.

From today's perspective it seems practically incomprehensible how many intelligent people aligned unconditionally with a party of a criminal regime, and how long it took some of them to see through it. How is something like that possible?

Intelligence means also appraisal of threat. The first thing that a decrease in immunity of a given system weakens is human fortitude. In Latin it's called *fortitudo*, or strength. And it was esteemed virtuousness. Less virtuousness implied less quality of life. The first thing that then plays a role is instinct: one time as self-preservation, another as aggression. And most often you get it as a not always easily distinguishable combination of the two. Self-preservation advised being among the powerful. Not to look back, to go forward, and not to designate the

direction oneself. This has consequences, however. When you go where you didn't want to, you maintain that the direction was not your fault, but you don't take kindly to it. Thus resentment is created, the worst form of human behavior.

Informing, it seems, is common Czech practice. Why?

Because we are a non-aristocratic society – viz. virtuousness – and below it always paid off.

How, with the hindsight of several weeks, would you describe the "explosion" and development of the "Kundera scandal"?

It's not about an explosion, but a classic act of the ancient Greek goddess of rumors named *Pheme*. In Czech we still use the word *fáma*. The ancient Greeks built her monuments and brought victims, so that where possible she would notice those who didn't venerate her. Pheme always combines truthful detail about you with the benefit of your enemy. It doesn't begin if there is not something in it that will scatter. We thus do not have a Kundera scandal, but a scandal of Communist writing after the year 1948. And it is "Kunderized" in that today our only truly world-renowned *literat* started as *agitprop*.

That means that in this discussion rebound reflections of our Communist past?

No, it means that the shadow cast on Kundera maybe illuminates the first decade of ideologized writing in post-February Czechoslovakia.

Does that help refine the discussion, or relativize and aggravate it?

⁴ Gruša refers here to the Československá svaz mládeže (ČSM), lit. Czechoslovak Union of Youth, the umbrella youth organization founded by the Czechoslovak Communist Party in 1949.

⁵ A reference to the Russian designation for the 13th century Mongol khanate, often associated specifically with Genghis Khan.

⁶ Literally, "What is said in joke is with the devil," or more freely translated, perhaps "Said as a joke, up in smoke."

As said, at the end of the second phase of historical memory comes specification; however, that does not mean belittling Kundera's literary achievement.

Did anything in the tone or style of the debate which broke out after the publication of Hradilek's article surprise you?

No, it has the classic dimensions of post-modern mediality. These, of course, are not always encouraging.

Along with re-discussing the role of Milan Kundera in the 1950s comes returning anew to the question of the circumstances of the author's life and his work. How do you perceive this relationship in the context of the "Kundera scandal"?

No work is created without biographical sources, but neither is any shielded by them. The Czech proverb: "What is said in joke is with the devil" - *co je žertem, to je s čertem*⁶ - is a philosophical, not literary science sentence. Literary science is nevertheless literature about literature. So there is some irony if Kundera's great novel about the 50s, *Žert* (The Joke), suddenly has such a devil connotation.

What is your personal opinion on the whole thing?

Those who think that they will minimize Kundera are mistaken.

Have you ever found yourself in a situation comparable with the one in which Milan Kundera perhaps found himself? Can you guess at what your behavior would have been, if you had been

confronted with a similar problem?

Luckily no. There were two years for sedition the year they jailed me for *Dotazník*⁷; in the 50s, there was the rope. And when Böll raised his voice, they let me go. When Einstein protested in the 50s against the death sentence of the famous woman Horáková, he sped up the execution. For the paragraph "*věděl, nepověděl*"⁸ which concerned the non-reporting of suspicious things, you served up to ten years then. In spite of that, there didn't exist only fiery young "unionist"⁹ literatures, but also their contemporaries, like Kolář, who served time in the 50s, and Kalandra, who did not survive that decade, or Zahradníček, who spent it in a concentration camp and died after they had barely released him, as a result of imprisonment. At that time there were also world-renowned authors, like Hostovský, who had already had to leave the country. Pavel Janský, my poet friend, then a beginning poet, wrote a few critical verses in '48 and vanished to jail in Bory.¹⁰ He had to wait for his first book until the thaw of the 60s, only to be banned again. As was the case then for all quality authors, without regard for the political accent of their own beginnings. I met with Kohout already in *samizdat*, and with Kundera in exile.

Arnošt Lustig declared that people are not born as fighters. They have to live ordinary, placid lives. But what should their "correct" behavior be like when there are not conditions for a placid life?

Arnošt is right. *Heroika* is not a common commodity. Otherwise it

wouldn't even work. Achilles first runs around in girl's dresses and doesn't know if he likes boys or girls more. It is much simpler to live in the unending and chaotic randomness of the everyday as an inconspicuous dodger, than to think about whether in the middle of this refuse there might exist some kind of chancy connections and to reach for them. But only thus are created the contextual pluses of our life and the heightened plane of its inhabitance. And it is also known about Arnošt that he bravely came through the hell of the holocaust.

Jiří Gruša, born November 10, 1938, Czech poet, prosaist, translator, literary critic, diplomat and politician. He studied at Prague's Charles University (Philosophy and Literature) and worked as an editor for the magazines *Tvář* (Face), *Sešity* (Notebooks), and *Nové knihy* (New Books). In 1968 he was banned from publishing, whereupon he worked for a building contractor and contributed to the dissemination of samizdat literature. He was one of the first to sign Charter 77, and was imprisoned in 1978. He was released upon the intervention of the German writer Heinrich Böll, was permitted to travel to the USA, and in 1981 was involuntarily deprived of his Czechoslovak citizenship. Jiří Gruša lived in the Federal Republic of Germany 1982-1990. In 1990 he returned to Czechoslovakia, where he entered diplomatic service. He served as ambassador to the Federal Republic of Germany (1991-1997) and Austria (1998-2004). From 1997-1998 he was also Minister of Education, Youth and Sports of the Czech Republic. In 1999 he was awarded the Goethe-Medaille. In 2003 he became president of the International PEN Club; since 2005, he is the director of the Diplomatic Academy, Vienna.



⁷ Gruša's experimental novel *Dotazník aneb Modlitba na jedno město a přítel* (lit. Questionnaire, or Prayer for One City and Friend) was initially published in *samizdat* in the late 1970s.

⁸ A reference to the infamous Czechoslovak Socialist Republic legal article, lit. "knew, didn't tell."

⁹ Another reference to the Czechoslovak Union of Youth.

¹⁰ Bory is to this day the name for the Pilsen prison, located in the Bory section of the city.

Getting to Grips With Munich's Painful Legacy

The Munich Agreement was greeted with relief in the West, but stunned Czechs and Slovaks. It postponed war, yet left the truncated Czechoslovak state and its beliefs in tatters. The long-term effects are still a live issue and subject of debate.

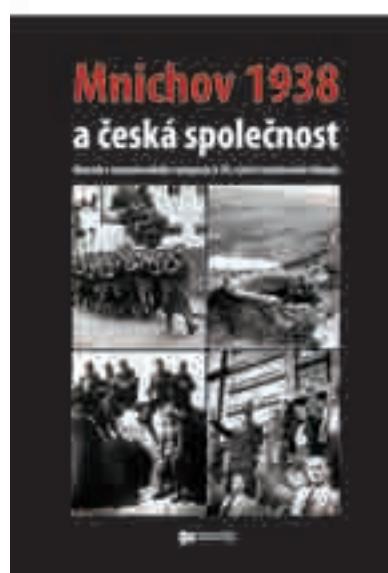
Czechs, although not only Czechs, recalled the 70th anniversary of the signing of the Munich Agreement in Autumn 2008, a year crowded with historical anniversaries falling on the often fateful “eight.”

Basically, the agreement between the four European powers (Britain, France, Italy and Germany) at the end of September 1938 resulted in the staged handing over of Czechoslovakia’s border territories to Nazi Germany.

For many in Western Europe, the deal relieved international tension and raised hopes that peace could be maintained. For Czechoslovaks, however, it represented a deep disappointment and feeling that they had been betrayed by their recent allies.

The Munich saga severely shook the self-confidence of Czech society, which in the upcoming confrontations with two totalitarian regimes of the 20th century, despite brief moments of respite, would be further trampled.

Many aspects of “Munich” continue to influence and affect Czechs long after the event. It posed significant historical and moral questions which have continued to be asked by today’s generation. The most basic one: “Should we or should we not have defended ourselves?” is still a subject for debate.



Cover from the Institute's publication, Munich 1938 and Czech Society: Anthology from the International Symposium on the 70th Anniversary of the Munich Agreement.

Munich also opened up discussion about the possibility of long-term co-existence between Czechs and Germans. The Sudeten question still remains, mainly at a national level, but it should be remembered that it was part of the much larger question of determining the Eastern borders of the modern German state and German identity in the 19th and 20th centuries.

During the crisis, Czechoslovaks did display a determination to defend their state. Immediately after the agreement was signed, future anti-Nazi resistance began to take shape.

For Czech society, Munich was in fact the starting point of the Second World War, which came to represent for them the sole chance of renewing the state’s sovereignty in its “pre-Munich” form. It was here also that their five decade long struggle with two totalitarian regimes began, the consequences of which are still being come to terms with today.

The fate of some soldiers who refused to accept the Munich capitulation is revealing. Some committed suicide; others became active in the resistance. Several noble families also declared their support for the Czech state within its traditional boundaries.

It was with the aim of tackling some of the different questions raised by “Munich” that the Institute for the Study of Totalitarian Regimes convened an international symposium of experts on September 18, 2008, in Prague.

The aim was not to go into the details of the events of 1938 leading up to and following the agreement. Much has already been written in the intervening 70 years about its causes,



Neville Chamberlain returns to Britain after Munich, promising peace. Czechoslovakia faced a starker reality.

Source: ČTK

results and consequences. Contributions from participants instead attempted to reflect on the long-term impact of "Munich" on Czech society, evaluating how this appreciation has changed over the last 70 years and at the same time focusing on some aspects lesser known to the public.

Contributions to the debate were made by established, well-known historians as well as young researchers from Germany and the Czech Republic. Those taking part included Robert Kvaček (Charles University, Prague), Hans Henning Hahn and his wife, Eva (Oldenburg University, Germany), Miloš Trapl (Palacký University, Olomouc), Václav Kural, and Ladislav Kudrna and Zdeněk Hazdra from the Institute.

The papers were published by the Institute at the end of 2008 in the anthology *Munich 1938 and Czech Society*.

The event attracted significant public and media interest. Czech Television broadcast live interviews with some of the speakers. Czech Radio compiled and broadcast an hour-long program drawing on edited extracts.

For the public, the presentations provoked what was by Czech standards a lively discussion, giving the impression that most of them were seeking their own solution to "Munich's" significance not just for the Czech Republic but for Europe's 20th century history.

2009 brings its own crop of anniversaries that also deserve consider-

ation. Together with the start of the Nazi occupation in March 1939, this includes the outbreak of World War II.

The war, which claimed the lives of millions worldwide, was welcomed by most Czechs in the newly created Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia. It launched the process of overturning the legacy of Munich and recreating the Czechoslovak state, though the less visible scars could not be healed so easily.

This article was written by Zdeněk Hazdra, an historian at the Institute who specializes in the lead up and aftermath of the Munich Agreement and the Nazi Occupation that followed soon after.

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Wartime Wounds Cast Long Shadow over Czech Society

Czechs were among Nazi Germany's first foreign victims, with Prague the last capital to be freed at the end of World War II. Capitulation, occupation and oppression cast a long shadow which persisted into the post-war period.



Adolf Hitler looks out from Prague Castle over the city soon after his troops marched into the country on March 15, 1939.

Source: ČTK

The Munich Agreement of September 30, 1938 and subsequent cession of border territory, the Second Republic (October 1, 1938 – March 14, 1939), German occupation on March 15, 1939 and the creation of the

Czech and Moravian Protectorate were significant shocks for Czech society that had far-reaching consequences.

Aspects of the former democratic system gradually began to disappear, sparking a broad-based drive to salvage what remained of Czech sovereignty in the face of the occupying German administration. This was displayed in everyday expressions of discontent with the occupying power and its proclamations of German superiority.

The occupier at first attempted to give an impression of continuity by leaving a Czech government in place as a guarantee of some local autonomy within the German Reich.

In spite of the parallel Czech and German administrative frameworks, real power lay in the hands of the Reich Protector – the Nazi appointed governor – and the system created to serve him. The only exception to his sway was the German security system, with the Gestapo and intelligence service, the SD (*Sicherheitsdienst*), directly answerable to Berlin.

Organized Czech resistance began to take shape in the Summer and Autumn of 1939, with the creation of four main resistance groups: Obrana Národa (ON), Politické Ústředí (PÚ), Petiční Výbor Věrni Zůstaneme (PVVZ) and the Communists. They

masterminded mass demonstrations against the occupier on October 28, the 21st anniversary of the founding of Czechoslovakia.

The reaction to the demonstrations was rapid. On November 17, 1,850 Czech students were rounded up, with more than 1,200 sent to the Sachsenhausen-Oranienburg concentration camp. Nine, picked out as ringleaders of the demonstration, were executed without trial. Czech universities were shut down. The Gestapo stepped up arrests of resistance members at the end of November and start of December, hitting the ON and PÚ hardest, although no organisation was immune.

Resistance abroad also began to take shape around former president Edvard Beneš. The Czechoslovak National Committee was formed in October 1939 as the leading organ for foreign action. Its target was the restoration of Czechoslovakia according to its pre-Munich borders.

Official British recognition of the London exiles followed the fall of France. Beneš assumed the role of President-in-exile, with full powers to form his own government and pass, change or abolish laws.

By Spring 1940, the domestic resistance had recovered from its initial reverses and started to mobilise, albeit facing the fundamental chal-

lenges of mounting actions in a densely populated country with few mountainous areas and a shortage of weapons.

The main focus for action was therefore intelligence and drawing up an economic and social programme for the post-war period. With these main goals, the three non-Communist resistance organisations created a coordination committee, ÚVOD, at the end of April 1940. Following the Nazi attack on the Soviet Union in the Summer of 1941, talks were launched with the Communist Party to create an umbrella organisation that would coordinate all domestic resistance.

These promising steps were dashed by a Gestapo clampdown which resulted in the effective destruction of ÚVOD in October. Increasing sabotage actions and strikes against the occupier had already provoked a switch in German strategy towards the Protectorate, with the hardline head of the Reich Central Security Office, Reinhard Heydrich, replacing the more moderate Constantin Von Neurath as Protector.

Immediately after taking office, Heydrich declared a state of emergency and introduced court martials to provide summary justice without proper trial. During his period in power, 489 death sentences were handed down, while another 1,673 individuals were sent to concentration camps.

The repression formed part of a greater German design aimed at dividing Czech society into different groups more easily manageable for war work. The eventual solution of the "Czech Question" – eliminating or Germanising the population according to racial criteria – was postponed until a more favourable moment during or after the war.

The remnants of Czech administrative autonomy were swept away as German officials were drafted in to take over their work. The next step was to be the depoliticisation of Czech society through the establishment of



Reinhard Heydrich steps out from his Mercedes Benz in the centre of Prague in April 1942, about a month before the assassination attack which left him mortally injured.

Source: ČTK

various professional groups, on the basis of the reorganised unions, which would provide the focus for public activity.

The Autumn Gestapo clampdown cut links with the exiled government in London, prompting it to parachute in units to reestablish connections, reignite resistance and gather intelligence. One unit, Anthropoid, was given the special mission of assassinating Heydrich. The attack took place in Prague on May 27. Heydrich died of his wounds on June 4, the highest ranked Nazi to be assassinated during the war.

Reprisals followed, symbolised by the destruction of the Lidice and Ležáky villages, with 1,585 executions on Czech soil, and thousands more killed in concentration camps. These

took the total death toll to around 5,000 by October 5.

The reprisals contributed to solidifying domestic hatred against the Germans and the further conclusion that their expulsion would be the only solution once Czechoslovakia was re-established.

Beneš, who had maintained some links with the exiled, mostly Social Democrat, Sudeten opposition to the Nazis, and who held out the possibility of modifying post-war borders in his early years in exile, swung round to that radical standpoint by the middle of the war.

This article was written by Lukáš Vlček, who specializes at the Institute in research on the period from 1938-1945 and on the development of Czech-German relations.



Cautious Preparations for the Černínský Palace Revolution

The Communists quickly won control over key ministries after World War II to prepare an eventual bid for power. The Foreign Ministry held out against their traditional methods but could not defy the tide.

The Czechoslovak Foreign Ministry, housed in the impressive Černínský Palace, was one of the main bastions holding out against Communist attempts to take control until their February 1948 seizure of power.

Earlier attempts by the party to win control over the Ministry after the end of the war, which met with success elsewhere, were foiled by the make up of a ministry still dominated by individuals imbued with the democratic values of the First Republic.

Their numbers were boosted by those who had served with the exiled government of Edvard Beneš in London. Diplomats serving abroad formed the basis for the exiled government's administrative structure and foreign affairs expertise during WWII.

Many of the Foreign Ministry officials who stayed behind were in the forefront of opposition to the Nazi occupation after it occupied the remainder of the Czech state in March 1939.

Through their contacts, they were often able to provide the exiled government with key information. Their wartime contribution meant that they were unlikely candidates for the post-war anti-collaboration clean outs which the Communists used with such effect to find places for their friends and to get rid of their enemies in other government offices.



Jan Masaryk (left) with his father, Tomáš Garrigue Masaryk, first president of independent Czechoslovakia.

Source: Kettner, P. and I.M. Jedlička: Proč zemřel Jan Masaryk, Praha 1990

As of January 1, 1948, around half of the Foreign Ministry's over 1,256 staff had already been in place at the end of 1938.

A further stumbling block for the Communists was the fact that the

non-party son of the First Republic's founder, Jan Masaryk, headed the Ministry on his return from London. He had a mission to restore the Ministry to its pre-war status.

After the liberation, civil servants who had been banished from the Foreign Ministry due to their views following the Munich Agreement and under the German-controlled Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia were allowed to return to service if they so chose.

These were supplemented by those who had served at the Foreign Ministry of the exiled government in London and newcomers, essentially those who had taken part in the domestic resistance and foreign armies (for example those assigned to military missions). On the orders of Beneš's Košice government, based in the eastern Slovak city ahead of Prague's liberation, 30 percent of all jobs across all pay categories were to be set aside for Slovaks.

Thorny retribution cases were to be solved by a clean-up commission created under presidential decree. An investigative commission dealt with cases handed to administrative offices by the Germans after March 15, 1939. Representatives of National Front political parties on the Coordination Committee in the autumn of 1946 created a special clean-up commission to check on the records of those holding national and state positions and the political reliability of all employees.

Continuity with prewar Ministry practice even meant the return and respect of service rules at all levels of the hierarchy.

Participation in the resistance, unquestionable service to the diplomatic service during the republic's renewal, and the functioning of the machinery according to prewar rules and procedures helped to preserve the Ministry's personnel structure along its First Republic lines between 1945-1948 and safeguard it from a Bolshevik takeover, although the Communists did their utmost to achieve this.

A single unified union was created at the Ministry, answerable to the Central Council of Unions, in place of the three former organizations

representing top, middle and other staff.

Retribution proceedings, which could have allowed the Communists to push through their goal of a significant shake-up of Ministry staff, did not finally bring such changes about.

As of 1945, staff at diplomatic missions were already under the watchful eyes of the Ministry of the Interior's intelligence service, who reported on the behavior of individual diplomats, what relations they maintained, and whether the subject preferred contacts with Soviet counterparts. This information ended up in the hands of the Communist Party loyalist Foreign Ministry State Secretary Vladimír Clementis.

Within the Foreign Ministry, Vavro Hajdú launched the buildup of the Communist Party structure in 1945. At the time of the February seizure of power, the Party claimed 60-70 members.

Besides these, preparations for the takeover were also in the hands of secret Party members among the ranks of Ministry staff, including Karel Dufek and Oldřich Chýle.

A degree of Communist infiltration was aided by the wartime agreement setting aside posts for Slovaks throughout the state administration.

Preparations for an imminent purge of staff by Communists were also underway. The Foreign Ministry and Masaryk himself were clearly in the sights of the Communists once they took power in February 1948. Masaryk, dressed in his pyjamas, was found dead at the foot of his private Ministry apartment on the morning of March 10.

In spite of the suspicious circumstances, suicide was the explanation jumped upon by the government. That version of events was unquestioned until a new investigation was allowed during the short-lived Prague Spring of 1968.

That investigation suggested that one reason why Masaryk had taken his own life was the fact that the Communists had already outmaneu-



Vladimír Clementis, the former Slovak poet and journalist, used his position as State Secretary to help win the Foreign Ministry over for the Communists.

Source: Archive of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs

vered him into being little more than a figurehead, with real power in the hands of his deputy, Clementis.

On the same day his body was discovered, Masaryk was due to approve a sweeping clean-out at the Ministry targeting many of his closest colleagues and friends. Altogether 90 Ministry staff were earmarked for removal, 18 of them to be swept from service abroad.

The post-February "purge" was initiated with leading Communists directing the staff changes. Consultations were held at the Central Committee of the Communist Party with Bedřich Geminder, who headed its international department. The clean out was facilitated by pre-prepared lists of undesirable foreign office staff.

Vetting of officials stepped up at the end of March to include questions about where they had lived since 1938 and their party allegiance. The information was processed by



The death of Foreign Minister Jan Masaryk in the Ministry's courtyard symbolized for many the final chapter in the Communist power grab, but the page had already turned.

Source: National Archive

the Ministry of the Interior's Intelligence section.

In the early stages of the purge, pretexts for staff changes were usually found, but by the end, such window dressing was no longer deemed necessary. Legal changes between 1948-1950, and primarily the act of October 6, 1948, meant that anyone could be punished for anything, and removal could occur without explanation.

Some diplomats staged protests against the takeover, with mass resignations at residencies abroad and domestic staff fleeing the country.

The most prominent protest was made by United Nations ambassador Jan Papánek, who presented a motion against Soviet interference in Czechoslovak internal affairs in February 1948. It was blocked by Soviet delegates.

Those who protested were quickly the target of court proceedings at home, with Papánek on a growing list of those whose property was to be confiscated.

According to Ministry archives, two hundred and five officials were dismissed, retired early or transferred from the Ministry between February 1948 and October 1949, when the initial purge was coming to a close.

The role of the Ministry was also reshaped. With Czechoslovakia clearly lined up with the Soviet bloc, there was no need for a traditionally independent Foreign Ministry pushing national interests.

The Ministry was instead redirected to act as the intelligence eyes and ears of the Soviet Union, with foreign based diplomats acting as "agents of influence." Around 70-80% of staff based abroad were earmarked to be intelligence officers, primarily tasked with picking up news of their host government's activities from the corridors of power.

Problems remained, however, even in the context of the Foreign Ministry's curtailed ambitions and scope of action. New staff with excellent

class and ideological credentials did not fit well into diplomatic service or have the language skills that went with the job.

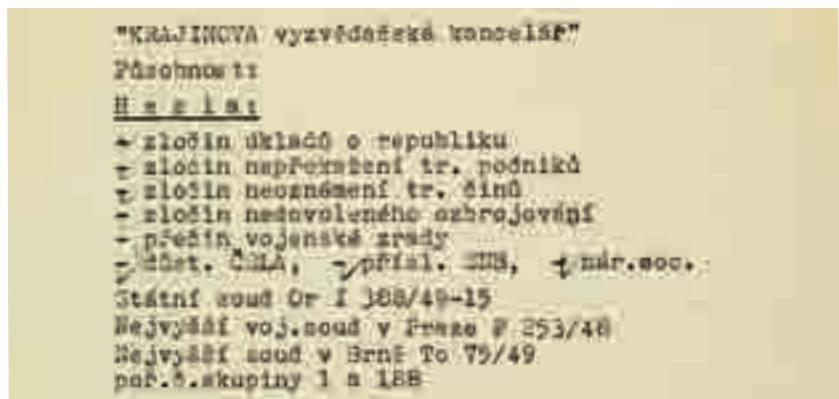
Some of the relatives of top Communists appointed to foreign posts turned out to be public embarrassments, such as Richard Slánský, who had to be withdrawn from his Iranian posting and replaced by a diplomat drawn from the ranks of the discredited old timers. Such was the dearth of suitable staff that a workers' diplomatic school was launched in June 1949 to fill the gaps.

But for many of the Ministry's former staff, the worst was not over. Their foreign contacts and opposition to the new regime meant many were easy targets when the regime launched political trials. The names of most were not cleared until after 1989.

This article is based on an original study in the Institute's journal *Paměť a Dějiny* written by Ivana Koutská.

Communist Regime Investigative Aids Help Historians Uncover Secrets

State Security aids for discovering and identifying enemies and opposition, combined with modern computer technology, are providing invaluable assistance to historians trying to map out resistance to the regime.



An example of the card index details with bare facts and an English translation of the text.

Source: Security Services Archive

"KRAJINA'S espionage office"

Activity:

Entry:

- The crime of treason against the republic
- The crime of interference with a state (class) company
- The crime of non-declaration of criminal acts
- The crime of illegal possession of weapons
- Military treason

Officer in the ČSLA (Czechoslovak People's Army), National Security Corps (SNB) serviceman. National Socialist (Party)

State Court Or I 388/49-15

Highest Military Court Prague P 253/48

Supreme Court Brno To 75/49

File sequence number Group 1 and 188

The Czechoslovak Communist regime began to victimize citizens as soon as it seized power on February 25, 1948.

Around 205,000 people passed through Communist prisons between 1948-1989. Around 4,500 died as a result of injuries or were killed in pris-

on facilities. Another 248 people were executed for political reasons, including twelve prominent Communists - among them Rudolf Slánský and Bedřich Reicin.

At least 270 were shot or mortally wounded while trying to cross the

state border. Around 20,000 were sent without trial to forced labor camps,¹ and another 20,000 to technical support squads. Between 1948-1987, 170,938 Czechoslovaks fled abroad.²

The number of victims of Communist despotism calculated so far is

1 Lubomír Blažek: Tábory nucené práce (Forced Labour Camps), p. 76. In Lukáš Babka and Václav Veber's *Za svobodu a demokracii III. Třetí (protikomunistický) odboj* University of Hradec Králové, published by M&V, Hradec Králové 2002.

2 Compare: <http://www.ustrcr.cz/cs/dokumentace-popravenych-politicke-duvody-48-89>; <http://totalita.cz/seznamy/seznamy.php> where there is an inventory of basic literature on the anti-totalitarian resistance and opposition.

not, of course, final. It goes without saying that this toll does not convey the material and, above all, psychological damages that still have to be dealt with by further generations.

Czechoslovaks did not accept the violence of the newly constituted Communist power with bowed heads. Democratic-thinking citizens began to react, within the bounds of possibility, during the February power grab, developing opposition against moves to impose the new order and a growing resistance that took on a wide variety of guises.

Even members of the State Security Service (StB), financial inspectorate and prison service joined the resistance. Such activists had one thing in common, by the standards of the day - their actions were illegal, even if they were rooted in the experience of the anti-Nazi struggle.

Pitted against them there was not, however, a clearly defined enemy, but rather citizens from their own state.³ For this reason, we often encounter instead of the terms anti-Communist and anti-totalitarian, the Communist expressions "anti-state" and "against the people." It is a testimony to the enduring success and strength of Communist propaganda that this terminological pulp and confusion endures in a substantial part of the population even today.

The totalitarian state permeated everything, and together with propaganda, as the historian Václav Veber wrote, gave birth to a special type of person untrained for life in truth and freedom.⁴

Just as we are unable to deduce the precise total of victims of the Communist regime, we have not yet been able to map out the full extent and strength of anti-Communist resistance and opposition. This is a complex question with, on the face of it, many facets; it will take much time and effort to answer.⁵

We know that members and officials of political parties from the 1945-1948 era were engaged in acts of resistance, along with members of groups and organizations mostly dating from the First Republic (1918-1938) or earlier, including Sokol, the Scouts, Junák and Orel (respectively the Czech scout group and Christian youth group). Demoted army officers also joined the ranks of the regime's opponents, as well as other members of the Czechoslovak armed services. Priests in their actions and sermons took a stance against the Communist regime, and attempted to use their authority to stem the spread of evil.

The scope of opposition ranged from the printing and distribution of leaflets and other anti-state publications to guiding individuals across

the border and staging acts of sabotage. Among the exceptional instances of opposition were the attempts to strike fear into Communist officials, for instance by liquidating individuals, albeit mostly low ranking members of the Communist Party apparatus.⁶

The regime's violence against citizens was applied across the board, affecting the whole spectrum of society, without targeting specific sociological or professional groups. Basically, every citizen felt that his or her fate was bound up with the "new" Communist ideology, which invaded every area and aspect of human life.⁷

The machinery of repression and instrument for the Communist Party's application of violence was the State Security (StB) apparatus,⁸ without which it is impossible to imagine the difficult 1950s and 1960s. It was precisely the StB whose actions drove the wheels of repression, on the directions and guidance of the Communist Party leadership.⁹

Apart from violence, its essential brutality was marked by rigorous and systematic work in which it is possible to distinguish further components of the push to take control of society.

Proof of the systematic work of the StB, notably the 2. Department of the I. Special Section of the Ministry of

3 Václav Veber: *Místo úvodu. Komunismus - totalita - odboj*, s. 16 In Lukáš Babka and Václav Veber's *Za svobodu a demokracii III. Třetí (protikomunistický) odboj*. University of Hradec Králové, published by M&V, Hradec Králové 2002.

4 Ibid.

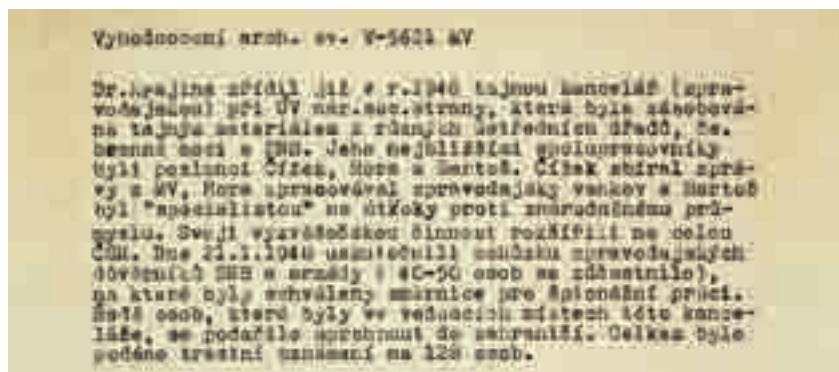
5 More on this can be found in Tomáš Bursík's: *Protikomunistický odboj v českých zemích - několik poznámek. Pokus o stručný nástin problému*. The paper has been prepared for publication in an anthology of the presentations made at the international expert conference on the anti-Communist opposition and struggle in Slovakia 1948-1989 (Bratislava, Historical Institute of the Slovak Academy of Sciences and Slovak National - May 2008).

6 Tomáš Bursík: *Osud odbojových organizací Černý lev 777. Příspěvek k historii ozbrojeného odporu proti komunistickému režimu v Československu*. OABS MVČR, Prague 2007.

7 From the wide range of material it is possible to select Vilém Hejl: *Zpráva o organizovaném násilí*. Univerzum, Prague 1990; Otakar Liška et al: *Tresty smrti v Československu*. Úřad dokumentace a vyšetřování zločinů komunismu, Prague 2006; Jaroslav Vorel, Alena Šimánková: *Československá justice v letech 1948-1953 v dokumentech I. až III*. Úřad dokumentace a vyšetřování zločinů komunismu, Prague 2003/2004.

8 Karel Kaplan: *Nebezpečná bezpečnost: Státní bezpečnost 1948-1956*. Brno, Doplněk 1999. As above *StB o sobě: výpověď vyšetřovatele Bohumila Doubka*. Úřad dokumentace a vyšetřování zločinů komunismu, Prague 2002.

9 Jiřina Dvořáková: *Státní bezpečnost v letech 1945-1953 (Organizační vývoj zpravodajských a státně bezpečnostních složek)*. Úřad dokumentace a vyšetřování zločinů komunismu, Prague 2007.



An example of the card index evaluation and an English translation of the text.

Source: Security Services Archive

the Interior, and from April 1966 the 2. Department of the Statistic-Registration Section of the StB Main Directorate,¹⁰ can be found in the specially created overview of individuals and groups which were to have carried out so-called anti-state illegal acts between 1948-1955.

Using the contents of documents lodged with the courts (the Supreme State Court, State Court, regional courts, and the Supreme Military Court), and from the investigation documents of the StB, in 1965 staff at the Ministry of the Interior started to carry out an evaluation of the archival collections devoted to the "anti-state" activities of individuals and groups sentenced during the 1950s. The aim was to survey and document so-called anti-state behavior.

This evaluation, for the most part in the form of reports typed out on A4 paper, maps out "anti-state" behavior in Czechoslovakia through 1955. Individuals and groups are ordered numerically, according to a serial account. By the end of 1966, Ministry of the Interior staff had processed around 1,255 investigative documents containing the details of more than 7,890 convicted individuals using this method.¹¹

To make work on the evaluated archival collections easier, between 1965-1968 a card index of the collections was created. This index facilitates a concise overview of "anti-state" activities carried out by specific individuals and groups.

The mostly two-sided cards have serial numbers relating to the archival collections on illegal individuals and groups, together with basic personal details and the code name for their "anti-state" act.

With the aid of a computer database developed using the ACCESS program, the Institute has been able to extract data from the Action 48¹² card index and categorize it into seven tables. So far, around 380 dual-sided cards have been processed in this way. The results will allow faster reference of the individuals and groups involved in so-called anti-state actions, and the nature and location of their acts. Although we can appreciate the evaluation records and card index as an exceptional and important finding aid, one pitfall should not be overlooked. It does not cover all aspects of resistance activity or indicate all those who took part in it. Not only are the contents of the materials in the Action 48 card index a product of their time (a

Evaluation of archive collection V-5621 MV.

In 1946, Dr. Krajina had already created a secret (espionage) office within the central committee of the National Socialist Party that was supplied with secret information from different central administrations, the Czechoslovak armed forces, and the National Security Corps (SNB). His closest collaborators were the lawmakers Čížek, Hora and Bartoš. Čížek collected information from the Ministry of the Interior, Hora gathered material in the country and Bartoš was a "specialist" in attacks on nationalized industry. His espionage activity was spread across the whole of Czechoslovakia. On January 21, 1948, they held an information meeting with an StB (State Security) and army confidant (40-50 people took part) at which the direction of future espionage was agreed. A series of highly placed people in this office were able to flee abroad. A total of 128 were charged with criminal offences.

caveat that applies to the evaluation records, as well), but they amount to thoroughly abbreviated archival materials which were - and still are - intended only for basic orientation.

We should not forget that the conception for its use – within the scope of propaganda aimed against "enemies of the regime" (which manifests itself in processing methods, language used, and the viewpoints of "evaluators") – undermined the work on Action 48, although the results might appear professional from period and historical perspectives. At the same time, it should be noted that contemporary historians can discover in the Action 48 material period characters who are interesting in and of themselves, and who are rightly becoming the subject of historical research. In short, the Action 48 card index represents an important aid for researchers and historians.

This article was written by Institute historians Martin Tichý and Olga Bezděková.

10 Compare: <http://www.abscr.cz/cs/seznam-utvaru-sn>

11 Security Services Archive, f. A 34, inv. j. 2928.

12 Security Services Archive, card index in the collection of investigative documents including the evaluative documents of Action 48.



Political Executions in Communist Czechoslovakia

Czechoslovakia experienced not one but two totalitarian regimes in the 20th century that intentionally misused the implementation of justice.

Political executions in Czechoslovakia during the period of the Communist regime were one of the many forms of persecution which this dehumanized totalitarian power used against its own citizens. At the same time, it is necessary to say that this fact was neither an error nor a mistaken version of "Communist dogma," nor an expression of unsettled affairs during the period of the beginning of the Cold War. Political executions were first and foremost a reflection of a perverse ideology that called for the necessity of "class struggle," and they formed an integral part of Czechoslovak Communists' plans to seize and maintain power. Success, without which the local dictatorship would not last long, figured as a necessary condition. Finally, it is by no means a coincidence that absolute punishments motivated in this way were the reality in other Communist countries, as well, and above all in the Soviet Union.

From the perspective of political executions, the case of Czechoslovakia is unusual in one regard. Within a short period there alternated in this country two totalitarian regimes – the Nazi (1939–45) and Communist (1948–89) ones – for which the cynical and programmatic liquidation of actual and potential opponents was common practice. It is a sad truth that the motives and methods of these re-

gimes were very similar. Both calculated on the necessity of disposing of the morally most mature part of the population and paralyzing the remainder through actively creating and diffusing an atmosphere of fear.

Judicial murders of Communist origin in Czechoslovakia have their outset in February 1948. This is when the Communist putsch, which marked the definitive farewell with the democratic traditions of the First Republic, took place. After a bloody six-year German occupation and almost three years of truncated post-war democracy, the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia forced its way through. In line with demands from Moscow, the Party was not about to allow any return to the "old order," and thus began with political trials very early on. Instruments were used in their preparation and realization which had no match in their arbitrariness and brutality, if we leave out the aforementioned years of the German protectorate. The imprisoned were psychologically and physically tortured by the State Security Service (the Communist secret police – StB) or organs of military defense intelligence. Many did not survive the interrogations and harassment connected with their detention; others preferred to commit suicide. The StB took its inspiration from the practic-



Milada Horáková in the dock at her show trial.

Source: ČTK/ Novák Rostislav

es of the Gestapo, as well, of course, as the methods of its Soviet comrades in the NKVD. Their motto became that the interrogated himself would serve as evidence enough; no additional evidence was necessary.

The independence of judicial powers, common practice in democratic countries, ceased to exist in Communist Czechoslovakia. During this period, justice became a dutiful instrument of the Communist Party, fulfilling its wishes and instructions.



Boris Kovaříček after his arrest by the State Security Service.



Source: Security Services Archive

Sentences of a political nature were determined well before the trial even began. It is therefore possible to reliably say that the trial itself was merely a pretense of true unbiased decision-making – in fact, theater. This doubly applies in the case of so-called show trials – large trials in which the ruling *nomenklatura* had particular interest. These include, for example, the well-known trial of the lawyer Milada Horáková, in which she and three more people were sentenced to the death penalty and executed on June 27, 1950.

The very method of execution administered by the Communist power was exceedingly cruel. A primitive gallows was used for the execution itself; almost every regional prison was equipped with one. The prisoner spent 10-15 minutes dying in agony

on this gallows, as it did not break his neck, but instead gradually suffocated him. Their bodies were taken afterwards to autopsy, later cremated and buried in a mass grave. The remains were not given to the bereaved; at the most they were – in some cases – permitted to participate in the cremation, during which they were vigilantly guarded by the StB¹. A similar approach was taken with the farewell letters written by the victims in the last hours of their lives, in their death cells. These letters, for “security reasons,”² were never delivered to their addressees.

An important question is that of how many politically motivated executions actually took place in Communist Czechoslovakia. It is necessary to say that various figures come up here, differentiated by selection

method. In some cases, it is quite difficult to differentiate between crimes of a political and criminal nature. A further ethical problem sets in with the classification of executed Communists functionaries. Although these people themselves eventually became victims of terror, they were also its active co-creators, and thus bear direct responsibility for the deaths of many of those slain. Nor is it possible to leave out those condemned in the re-established retribution courts, who certainly would not have been executed had the Communists not seized power and re-established these courts in time. These people, however, were sentenced for acts committed during the Second World War. We come across the number 248³ or the number 262⁴, although both of these include those who were sentenced for utter-

¹ In this context it is worth mentioning that on the basis of laws valid at that time, this did not concern only physical liquidation of the condemned. In addition, the executed was confiscated of all property (including the clothing he was wearing before the execution, or his wedding ring). Because of this, the families of the executed found themselves at rock bottom, flat broke.

² The bereaved were able to read them only after the collapse of the Communist government in November 1989. Some of the letters wait to this day in the trial or investigation files, never read by those to whom they were addressed.

³ LIŠKA, O. a kol.: *Vykonané tresty smrti. Československo 1918-1989* (Death penalties performed, Czechoslovakia 1918-1989). Praha, ÚDV 2000.

ly fabricated criminal acts, as well as those who were condemned for actual anti-Communist resistance. Even in this case, the difference between these two groups is complicated; the sentences most often allege the criminal act of treason, military perfidy, espionage and sabotage. Vladivoj Tomek, whose life was taken at Pankrác in Prague on November 17, 1960, is most often considered the last of those executed for political reasons.

BORIS KOVÁŘÍČEK (1927–1949)

22-year-old student of the Law Faculty at Charles University in Prague. During the Second World War, he was imprisoned by the German Gestapo for his resistance activities. After the Communist coup in February 1948, he founded the student resistance group "Šeřík," aimed against the Red dictatorship (focused on the distribution of anti-Communist pamphlets and the maintaining of contacts with like-minded people). In the course of illegal activities, he unwittingly linked up with a provocateur of military armed intelligence. On December 18, 1948, he was arrested and subjected to brutal interrogations (after which he was neither able to stand or sit). The main trial in the State Court took place over five May days (May 12–16, 1949) and resulted in the death penalty and confiscation of all property for the alleged crime of treason and espionage. After the denial of his appeal by the Supreme Court on May 23 and the refusal of a pardon, he was executed early on the morning of May 24, 1949 in the courtyard of Prague's Pankrác prison.

FRANTIŠEK HAVLÍČEK (1908 – 1952)

44-year-old colonel of the National Security Corps, father of a 13-year-



František Havlíček after his arrest by the State Security Service.

Source: Security Services Archive

old daughter. During the Second World War he was imprisoned in a German concentration camp for listening to foreign broadcasts; his father-in-law and brother-in-law were executed for the same offense. As of 1948 he was a member of the anti-Communist resistance group which transmitted reports abroad on conditions inside Czechoslovakia and helped persecuted Czechoslovak citizens escape to the West.

He was arrested on August 23, 1951, and in the trial that followed, sentenced for the alleged crimes of treason, espionage and sabotage to the death penalty and confiscation of all property. He was executed at Prague's Pankrác prison on November 12, 1952 at 5:25 a.m. His wife was sentenced to a twenty-year heavy jail term.

MILADA HORÁKOVÁ (1902 – 1950)

Politician and lawyer, mother of a 16-year-old daughter. After the breakup of democratic Czechoslovakia and its occupation by the Germans, she linked up with the anti-Nazi resistance and was imprisoned from 1940 to the end of the war (the death penalty was recommended for her already

during that period). She was later awarded several decorations for her resistance activity. After the war she became a Member of Parliament and engaged in women's issues. During the rise of Communist totalitarianism, she did not cease in her efforts to defend fundamental democratic principles; for this reason, as well, she was selected for the biggest political trial of the Communist era. In an abnormally fabricated trial that tried to stir up mass hysteria, she was sentenced to the death penalty for alleged treason and espionage, and in spite of the protests of the world public and eminent personalities, was executed in Prague's Pankrác prison on June 27, 1950, at 5:45 a.m. Her final words were [...] "I leave this world without hatred towards you." She thus became the only woman executed by the Communists for political reasons in Czechoslovakia.

This article was written by Petr Mallota, an Institute historian specializing in the crimes of communism in Czechoslovakia. He is currently compiling the documentation project *People executed on political grounds 1948–1989*.

⁴ RÁZEK, Adolf: *Seznamy popravených: Vykonané tresty smrti z politických důvodů od 25. 2. 1948 do 29. 12. 1989*. Úřad dokumentace a vyšetřování zločinů komunismu [online], 14. 11. 2005 [cit. 30. 6. 2008]. The number 262 includes high-ranking Communist functionaries (13 people) and those executed in the re-established retribution courts (22 people).

A Cheap and Disposable Tool for Uranium Extraction

Long-term imprisonment involving forced labor in mines under inhumane and degrading conditions was one way of getting rid of “class enemies” without attracting too much attention to the Czechoslovak Communist regime.



The Ležnice prison camp at Horní Slavkov, West Bohemia, in 1950.

Source: Security Services Archive

According to the regime's carefully plotted plans, those condemned for “anti-state crimes” were not expected to return to a world without bars and barbed wire.

All steps, from the original arrest, examination and punishment in prison or labor punishment camp, were prepared in advance. In this respect, the Communist approach was the same as those of the Nazis and other totalitarian regimes.

In its worst forms, the condemned were treated as cheap slave labor, with physical violence inflicted alongside measures aimed at breaking down the victim's spirit.

In the early stages, at least, the prison regime helped bolster the authorities, although the procedure was

sometimes given the ideological gloss of helping inmates achieve social consciousness.

The labor camps represented an effective tool for terrorizing the population and isolating “enemies of the people's democratic system” which could represent a threat to it. Communist steps to gain and consolidate power were akin to those taken during a civil war.

Terror was justified as a political phenomenon of class war, with imprisonment recognized as one of the most significant weapons in the regime's repressive armory against its own citizens.

“We were brought face to face with something new, until then unknown. It was a deliberately thought out con-

spiracy of the leadership against everything that separates man from other beings,” recalls former political prisoner Dagmar Šimkova. “It was not so much about physical destruction as about suppressing a person's mind, his thinking, so that tons of lies, terror and propaganda could flow through... When a person lost self-consciousness, his body was no longer a danger. He could finally be used as a cheap working tool. The human body needs less maintenance, less care than some expensive machine. And it can work longer without replacement parts than a milling machine, crane or combine.”

The decision to use prisoners for work in uranium mines was made at the very beginning of the labor camps' existence. The reason was simple: the basic lack of manpower in the uranium industry as well as the mounting interest of the Soviet Union in Czechoslovak uranium for the production of atomic weapons. Slave labor was used under similar conditions in other areas of Czechoslovak industry.

For the Jáchymov uranium mines in the far west of the country, the mass influx of slave labor also represented a considerable financial advantage in extracting this strategic raw material.

The camps themselves varied in



A prisoner shot trying to escape from the Bytíz camp near Příbram on December 5, 1963.

Source: Security Services Archive

size and character. Most prisoners were lodged in 42.5 x 12.5 meter wooden barracks, in which accommodation was sited on the sides of a central corridor. Facilities were extremely basic. Some camps were formerly used by prisoners of war and were taken over in a virtually uninhabitable state.

Prisoners were little more than numbers for camp authorities, with the inmates having little or no recourse against the conditions they endured. Their best hope for improving their conditions lay in their own efforts and cooperation with other prisoners.

The camps' character depended on a series of factors, including their size, distance from mine works, and the make-up of the prison population - for example, the mix of political prisoners and ordinary criminals.

In the early years, from 1949-1953, the technical, equipment and living and hygiene conditions in camps were in a critical condition. They were unprepared for the massive influx of the new prison population. Over time, the state of most camps improved.

Inside, camp commanders played a decisive role in setting the tone, as they held the power to decide on almost every matter that took place behind the barbed wire fence. But a tough line with political prisoners was a matter of course during the period of heightened Cold War tension and "class struggle against reaction" at the start of the 1950s.

A series of mass escape attempts and the camps' takeover by the Ministry for National Security in June 1951 sparked a change for the worse. A climate of fear and heightened repression reigned in most camps where political prisoners dominated. Hunger was also a constant underlying factor given the short rations, but basic survival and the ability to conserve some hopes were the main factors determining prisoners' fates.

Authorities imposed a system of incentives and punishments with inmates. In practice, these were mostly used as an excuse for inflicting further penalties and bolstering the control system.

Prisoners were not the only ones being punished. The regime subscribed to the theory of collective

guilt, with sanctions also meted out on families of individual prisoners.

Many of the methods used in the Czechoslovak uranium camps were liberally adopted from the operation of the Soviet gulags; for example, rewarding extra rations to those who exceeded work quotas, and the incorporation of privileges (letters, packages and visits) and their denial into the system. In other aspects, the model appeared to be the Nazi Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia and Nazi Germany.

In the second half of the 1950s, some attempts were made to redress the shortcomings of the prison system, although the methods of Socialist justice were by then already habituated and often passed on.

As uranium reserves around Jáchymov and nearby Horní Slavkov dried up, and more modern methods of mining were adopted, the overall number of prisoners used for production started to ebb. The evolution of a sufficient world market to supply arms production needs also cut the price of uranium, while peaceful uses of the element were only beginning to develop.

An overall amnesty in 1960 embraced many political prisoners, as the Communist regime attempted to come to terms with its former policy of covert liquidation. But for those released then and earlier, no compensation for their suffering was offered. To the state apparatus, these victims still remained enemies, and the security services continued to pay them particular attention. They were banned from returning to their previous professions, and in most cases were forced to earn their living from manual labor.

The burden of being political prisoners lived on, in many cases until today.

This article was written by Tomáš Bursík, who has authored a book on the work camps used to mine uranium from 1949-1961 that is now being prepared for publication.



Hope, Warnings and Lessons From Across the Border

The Prague Spring of 1968 represented a remarkable social movement aimed at pushing back the boundaries to freedom. Its brief existence, and Moscow's decision to crush it, led to hope, despair and, in some, a resolve for further resistance at home and abroad. It also shaped the Soviet Union's stance toward future challenges. The international impact was explored during a three-day conference jointly organized by the Institute.



Street barricades proved no match for heavy armor in the streets of Prague.

Source: National Archive

Czechoslovakia's social and political thaw coincided with economic reforms in neighbouring Hungary. For the Hungarian leadership, the

outcome could either be that the changes in Czechoslovakia would be accepted in Moscow, putting Prague and Budapest in the forefront of re-

form in the Soviet bloc, or crushed militarily, in a repeat of 1956. The latter step could, the Hungarian leadership imagined, either put their own reforms in peril, or put them in a better light by highlighting their moderation and essentially non-political economic character as a lesser evil.

Budapest differed from Moscow on economic relations with the West in general, and on relations with West Germany – its main economic partner – in particular. Leader János Kádár, who had helped brutally crush the 1956 rising, is often portrayed as a reluctant interventionist in 1968.

The fact is that that Kádár totally backed Moscow and the rest of the Warsaw Pact's right to intervene in Czechoslovakia if counter-revolution threatened. His position differed with Moscow in that he did not believe that the precise moment had yet arrived in August 1968. Even so, he recognised that the potential was there, warning the Czechoslovak leadership at the Dresden summit: "These events can turn any one of you into an Imre

Nagy,” a reference to the executed Hungarian leader of 1956.

Kádár’s priority was to avoid any scenario in which Hungary’s own reforms would be endangered. This was the main motivation behind his cautious warnings to the Czechoslovak leadership not to press too far. Even so, he regarded the publishing of the “2000 words” manifesto as anti-revolutionary, and was offended by the publication in *Literární Noviny* of an article describing the execution of Nagy as wrong and describing him as a martyr.

In hindsight, Moscow’s assessment of the scope of democratisation in Czechoslovakia was probably not wide of the mark. The Czechoslovak Communist Party was on the road to fast decay under the pressure of freedoms demanded and conceded, the evaporation of its legitimacy and pent up pressure for change within society. Left alone, Czechoslovakia would probably have taken the same path as that taken by Hungary later, in 1989, when amid reduced fears of Soviet intervention, the Communist Party agreed to hold free elections.

According to Russian accounts of their meeting, Kádár said he would support intervention on July 3, although Hungarians present said this was still only in the context of an action of last resort.

Kádár’s last bilateral meeting with the Czechoslovaks on August 17 showed them unaware of the danger they were facing, or unwilling to alter course if they were. On the invasion’s eve, Kádár called for the Czechoslovak leadership to be given the chance afterwards to reestablish order with minimum Soviet interference, drawing attention to the success of that policy in Hungary and Poland after 1956. It was a line he stuck to in the wake of the invasion, and which was broadly backed by Moscow in the face of calls for a more dictatorial solution. That at least left the Hungarian leader free to push ahead with his non-political, economic changes.



“Occupiers! Out of Czechoslovakia,” a German banner protesting the 1968 invasion put up by two youths in a village outside Freiberg, East Germany, a few days after the event.

Source: RHG Berlin

Walter Ulbricht’s East Germany was a world away from the newfound freedoms being enjoyed across the border as a result of the Prague Spring, a fact that many citizens sadly reflected upon when they headed home from visits. Whereas Czechoslovakia was enjoying the rebirth of civic society, East Germans in 1968 were still getting used to the restrictions resulting from the building of the Berlin Wall, a cultural clampdown in 1965 and a hard line against anything that differed from the official stance.

In Party terms, a new constitution was put in place, which not only limited the role of the Evangelical church, but also enshrined the leading role of the Communist Party. The move was interpreted by the local press as the definitive break with imperialist West Germany.

Not surprisingly, Ulbricht was one of the fiercest line critics of the Czechoslovak leadership for stepping out of the socialist line and one of the biggest backers of intervention.

Hopes among some citizens that Ulbricht might relax his restrictive policies following the example of Czechoslovakia were dashed. East German media were whipped into an anti-reform campaign, although internal information from the authorities showed many citizens were happier to rely on Western news sources and were taking up inappropriate class positions on events in Czechoslovakia.

East Germany’s participation in the crushing of the Prague Spring created a wave of protest. The country’s security services counted more than 2,000 “unfriendly” acts, including ex-



Polish units from the Warsaw Pact invasion force.

Source: IPN

pressions of sympathy with Czechoslovak citizens. Walls were daubed with the slogan "Long live Dubcek, Ulbricht is a traitor," and thousands of protest leaflets were distributed.

The widespread reaction was to view the armed intervention as an abuse of international rights, in conflict with the wishes of the Czechoslovak people. Many drew unfavourable parallels with the Nazi actions in 1938 and after and questioned the official media's two-faced stance in upholding the "brotherly intervention" while at the same time condemning US intervention in Vietnam.

For the regime, '68 had one significant hangover. Many of those who later came to prominence in the East German dissident opposition of the 1980s traced their fallout with the regime to the various anti-invasion protests, with some describing it as a milestone removing the Soviets' last vestiges of credibility.

Polish reactions to the Prague Spring and its termination were com-

plicated by its own student uprising and the regime's repression of intellectuals and the anti-Jewish campaign that followed – the so-called "March events." In sit-down strikes and meetings, Polish students demanded the same freeing up and democratisation of the Communist system that appeared to be taking place in their neighbouring country.

Authorities reacted by launching a cultural clampdown in which many intellectuals and leading professionals were the targets, forced to quit their jobs and, in many cases, seek exile. Under the thin veneer of anti-Zionism, their campaign quickly targeted the country's small Jewish population. Minister of the Interior Mieczyslaw Moczar's aims in leading the campaign and the puzzle of whether he intended to overthrow Communist leader Wladyslaw Gomulka, or just establish himself as second in command, are still unclear.

The events helped create "the '68 generation," which, like in East Germany, became active in anti-Communist opposition in the 1970s, and a decade later helped shape the Solidarity trade union.

During the Polish crisis of 1980–1981, the Czechoslovak experience helped Solidarity map out just how far it could go in its demands without sparking Moscow's intervention. They had learned from '68 that the existence of civic organizations independent of the Communist Party, abolition of censorship and the loss of the Party's leading role were steps too far. Only in the first instance did Solidarity's very existence cross the borderline.

The Czechoslovak experience also demonstrated to Moscow the limits of an armed intervention policy. While the August 21 invasion was deemed a military success, it was not a political one. The Moscow leadership failed to immediately install a puppet loyalist government, and found itself negotiating with Alexander Dubcek and many of the Prague Spring leaders.

Condemnation of the invasion by Communist movements worldwide and the birth of the more independent strand of Eurocommunism weakened the Soviet Union and caused it to think twice about taking the same path in Poland.

In distant Lithuania, the events of 1968 had a less immediate impact than those of Hungary in 1956, but nonetheless brought about a shift in opposition to the Soviet regime and the workings of the local KGB. The intervention by Warsaw Pact forces prompted an immediate upsurge of anti-Soviet protests – mostly the tearing down of Soviet flags, daubing of slogans on walls and distribution of anonymous leaflets.

There was also a transformation within Lithuanian dissident movements, with many adopting the formula of "organization without organization." Individuals and groups shared the same aims, but there was no real framework for their action, making outright retaliation against it more problematic for authorities.

After '68, the KGB itself became more active and repressive, but also tried to learn from the perceived mistakes of the Prague Spring, which included being out of touch with changes in society. The result was increased use of agents and attempts to wage a public relations battle in favour of the regime, rather than merely trying to clamp down on select dissidents and groups.

This article draws from selected lectures given during the international conference "The Security Apparatus, Propaganda and the Prague Spring," in particular contributions made by Csaba Békés, Tomáš Vilímek, Jerzy Eisler, Lukasz Kamiński and Kristina Burinskaité. The September 7–9 conference was jointly organised by the Institute, The Polish Institute of National Remembrance, the Institute for the History of the 1956 Hungarian Revolution, the Polish Institute and Charles University's Faculty of Philosophy and Arts in Prague.



Student's Self-Sacrifice Scrutinized on Anniversary

Jan Palach's life and shocking death have come under even greater focus as Czech society looks back after 40 years on the act which has become lodged in the nation's collective memory.



A floral tribute at the memorial plaque to Palach on Prague's Wenceslas Square.

Source: ČTK

The 40th anniversary of 1968 was marked last year by an explosion of media, public and expert interest in the resurgence that took place prior to the occupation of Czechoslovakia by five Warsaw Pact powers.

Attention was paid to the intellectual aspect of the "Prague Spring," for example the attempt by the weekly *Literární noviny* (Literary News) to

arrange a debate between Milan Kundera and Václav Havel on the theme of Kundera's essay "The Czech Deal," as well as discussions on contemporary political machinations and examinations of aspects of the military occupation in commemorative publications, exhibitions and special television broadcasts.

One event inextricably linked to the memories of the now 40-year-old Czechoslovak reforms and August 21 invasion is the self-immolation of Jan Palach, then a 20-year-old student at the Faculty of Philosophy and Arts of Prague's Charles University.

Palach's act on January 16, 1969 is perhaps the most well-known symbol of the beginning of the process usually referred to as "normalization," the moves by the regime to smother the political, social and cultural surge for freedom.

If the Prague Spring and August response to the invasion, including most of the population's backing of the reform leadership and opposition to the invaders with available means in the first weeks of occupation, are the source of overwhelmingly positive recollections, Palach's act recalls a period which scarcely qualifies among the highlights of Czech history.

It is possible to interpret this political suicide in various ways. It can be viewed as an extreme expression of resistance, an attempt to shake up

a society which had lost the élan of the pre-invasion period and August days and sunk into a political and general civil lethargy.

According to a letter written on January 16, Palach himself understood his act in this way. "Taking into account that our nation finds itself on the verge of hopelessness and giving up, we have decided to express our protest and awake the nation's consciousness...January 1968 started from above, January 1969 must start from below (if it is to start)." From this perspective, Palach's was a radical political act.

From another perspective, Palach's decision can be taken as a justification of the resignation and insipient normalization apathy, as an illustration that any attempt at resistance was useless and destined for failure.

In this case, Palach's self-immolation can be understood as a futile expression, a naïve and tragic attempt to find an escape from an inescapable situation and a confirmation of the impossibility of taking effective political action in the face of the developing "consolidation." Such an interpretation uses Jan Palach's gesture as an alibi for the minimal desire of most Czechs to continue their opposition and as an excuse for the stance characterized by the phrase: "Everything is lost, we are not able to do anything about it..."

Perhaps it is through the tension of these starkly conflicting interpretations that Palach's strong symbolism derives. The resounding echo of Palach's act made it one of the most significant symbols in Czech history.

The fact that symbols are frequently given different interpretations is confirmed in both normalization propaganda (where Palach was portrayed as a victim in the counterrevolutionary game) and in the strengthening civic opposition at the end of the 1980s (such as the demonstration of the so-called Palach week in January 1989, on the occasion of the 20th anniversary of his act).

This year's 40th anniversary of his death has put even greater focus on

Jan Palach. One of the most significant acts has been the publication of **Jan Palach '69**, the most exhaustive work devoted to the subject so far.

The volume is the work of a collective headed by Petr Blažek, Patrik Eichler and Jakub Jareš. It was published jointly by the Institute for the Study of Totalitarian Regimes, Charles University's Faculty of Philosophy and Arts and the publisher Togga.

The more than 600-page volume includes a wide range of material, chiefly historical studies. Petr Blažek closely maps out Palach's act in what sets out to be a detailed historical reconstruction. Patrik Eichler deals with the other Czechoslovak cases

of "live torches," specifically with Jan Zajíč and Evžen Plocek. The Central European dimension of this self-sacrifice is dealt with by Łukasz Kamiński in relation to the self-immolation of the Pole, Ryszard Siwiec, on September 8, 1968, in protest of the invasion of Czechoslovakia by Warsaw Pact forces. Tomáš Vilímek studies the 1976 suicide of Lutheran pastor Oskar Brüsewitz by the same method to highlight the East German state's repression of religion.

Another angle is provided by three studies of the artistic reaction to Palach's act. Jan Kolář examines the film documentary legacy surrounding Palach, Veronika Jáchymová and Michala Benešová look at the literary output related to him, and Eva Nachmilnerová investigates Palach's echo in Czech classical music.

The second half of the collection is composed of essays evaluating Palach's suicide from different standpoints. Some of the essays were specially written for this collection; others have been published previously. Authors include Jindřich Chalupecký, Ladislav Hejdánek and Martin C. Putna. Journalist Jiří Lederer's work *Jan Palach. Account of the Life, Acts and Death of a Czech Student*, first published in 1982 in Switzerland, bears a close relation to the collected essays.

The volume also includes a large collection of source material put together by Petr Blažek. Many of the 80 documents from the 1969-1974 period come from the State Security Service (StB) investigation files collected together under the title "Operation Palach." The book closes with a series of photographs, many previously unpublished, and facsimiles of documents. A DVD of the same name, which includes the Stanislav Milota film, *Jan 69*, contemporary newsreel films, photographs and documents, accompanies the book.

This article was written by Vítězslav Sommer, an Institute historian specializing in the international context of Czechoslovak Communism.



Jan Palach's funeral ceremony in Prague's Old Town Square on January 25, 1969.

Source: ČTK



The NKVD/KGB – The Service That Came In For the Cold War

The three-day international conference “NKVD/KGB Activities and its Cooperation with other Secret Services in Central and Eastern Europe 1945-1989 II” was one of the most ambitious and successful events which the Institute helped stage in 2008. It demonstrated how historians are using the archival materials now becoming publicly accessible to draw a fuller picture of the region’s secret services’ scope, methods, and cooperation.

With the Soviet secret service files largely closed to historians, a picture of its massive network and operations at home, in allied countries and abroad can only be pieced together by examining operations in individual countries, especially those in satellite states which were often turned to for specific expertise.

The activity of Soviet security units, particularly State Security known throughout the world under the acronym KGB, remains one of the most important subjects for 20th century research in Central and Eastern Europe. The functioning and operation of this apparatus, which surpassed the activities of the police in countries with democratic systems severalfold, had a significant and direct influence on the shape of the totalitarian framework; the actions of party members of the Communist nomenclature; and the form, methods and extent of the repression of ‘class enemies’ and, in the final instance, upon innocent representatives of various socio-political groups.

Additionally, the supranational Cheka elite, created in line with Communist ideology, were not only supposed to take part in the repression

of political opponents, but also in the casting of a new man (being), carrying out the will of the superior nomenclature. That was one reason why the selection of members of the secret political police was so strict.

International cooperation is needed in order to reconstruct and present the breadth, extent and influence of Soviet security units in our key region. In view of the inaccessibility of primary Russian sources, we must attempt to piece together the mosaic of information that is scattered throughout Central and Eastern European archives.”

Thus Pavel Žáček, Director of the Institute for the Study of Totalitarian Regimes, introduced the context and aims of the international conference “NKVD/KGB Activities and its Cooperation with other Secret Services in Central and Eastern Europe 1945-1989 II,” which took place on November 19-21, 2008, as a follow-up to the conference on this identical subject held in Bratislava in November 2007. That first conference was initiated by the founder of Slovakia’s Nation’s Memory Institute, Ján Langoš, who also played an instrumental role in the founding of the Czech Republic’s In-



Diploma upon graduation from a one-month course at the KGB's university in the USSR. It was granted to Deputy Chief of the Czechoslovak National Security Corps' I. Directorate Vilém Václavek, AKA Kainar, on June 26, 1985.

Source: Security Services Archive



Zbysek Brezina (right) of Bethany College, Kansas, USA, who presented his study on MVD/KGB activities in the U.S. in the 1950s at the conference, in conversation with fellow conference participant Richard Mariáš, a double StB-FBI agent in the 1980s.

Source: Jiří Reichl

stitute for the Study of Totalitarian Regimes, and after whom the Institute's library is named.

Under the auspices of the Committee on Foreign Affairs, Defense and Security of the Senate of the Parliament of the Czech Republic, and in cooperation with Poland's Institute of National Remembrance and the Institute of Historical Studies of the Slovak Academy of Sciences, the Prague conference "NKVD/KGB Activities and its Cooperation with other Secret Services in Central and Eastern Europe 1945-1989 II" attracted scholar-presenters from Bulgaria, Germany, Hungary, Latvia, Poland, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia, the UK and the USA, in addition to the significant contributions of local scholars and an attendance of over 100.

Over the course of three days, participants engaged in a series of five panels, addressing the following overarching themes: Archives of Security Services of Central and Eastern European Countries; Establishment of the Security Apparatus in Soviet Satellite States after WWII; Central and Eastern Europe as a Starting Point for Intelligence Infiltration Into Western Societies; Development of Cooperation of the NKVD/KGB with

Satellite Intelligence Services; and Operations of Communist Intelligence Services, Joint Operations Managed by the KGB.

The accompanying mini-exhibit, on display at the conference entrance in the Wallenstein Palace chambers of the Czech Senate, mapped out the Soviet Secret Services in Czechoslovakia through six detailed panels: Agreements With "Friends"; Negotiations With the KGB; Operative Cooperation Between the KGB and Czechoslovak State Security (StB); the KGB and the StB's Joint Efforts; Study in the USSR; and Disinformation and Active Measures. Participants further had the opportunity to view Latvian political scientist and documentary director Edvins Snore's film "The Soviet Story." The 2008 documentary, which addresses the actions and intent of the Soviet regime and its legacy today, relies heavily on recently uncovered archival documents, and was sponsored mainly by the UEN Group in the European Parliament, where the film had its premiere in April 2008.

On the occasion of the first Bratislava conference, "NKVD/KGB Activities and its Cooperation with other Secret Services in Central and East-

ern Europe 1945-1989," the directors of five participating partner institutions signed a declaration, which reads in part:

"Our common awareness of the importance of dealing with the Communist dictatorship - on the one hand, in the context of the number of victims of Communism, and on the other hand, as a warning for the present and the future - brings us to joint efforts for cooperation. Fully dealing with Communism overruns the possibilities of every individual former Communist state. The aims that arise out of Communism's ideology were global - infiltration, subversion, and domination of the free and democratic parts of the world. Communist states' intelligence services, first and foremost the Soviet KGB, played a significant role in meeting this target. The aforementioned founded, dominated, and managed the intelligence services of the Communist bloc states, following its own role model.

Unfortunately, 17 years after the fall of Communism, the former Soviet archives are still inaccessible in contemporary Russia. But to understand the events in present-day Russia and the situation in Central and Eastern Europe, it is necessary to analyze Communism in the leading Communist power, the former Soviet Union. We are led by the common aim to shed light on the whole truth about Communism...In accordance with the resolution of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe 1481/2006 on the 'Need for international condemnation of crimes of totalitarian communist regimes,' we regard our cooperation to be a contribution to the research and the presentation of objective facts on a European level."

The essence of this declaration formed the foundation on which not only the 2007 Bratislava and 2008 Prague conferences were built and carried out, but will also inform a third conference on the same topic, planned to take place in the coming year, most likely in Hungary.



The Far-Reaching Battle Over the Secret Policemen's Files

The “Velvet Revolution” put a new set of inexperienced leaders in charge of a still unreformed political and security apparatus. A scandal over the use of secret police files shook the government, but forced it to get to grips with key questions over their management and use.

“Sachergate,” as it was dubbed after the first post-Communist Czechoslovak Minister of the Interior, Richard Sacher, who was at its epicenter, exploded as the new government’s first scandal surrounding the former regime’s secret police files, threatening the stability of the government and position of President Václav Havel.

The scandal put the spotlight on the StB files, which in the wrong hands could be manipulated to tarnish the reputations of post-Communist politicians trying to lay the foundations for a new democratic state or protect those who had collaborated with it.

Above all, it underlined democratic leaders’ faltering steps to get to grips with the unreformed state police apparatus and hierarchy by systematically screening the new leadership and its inherited Communist apparatus on the eve of the first democratic elections.

The roles of top Ministry of the Interior officials, with past records of loyal service to the Communist regime, in particular raised questions of whether they and the police were working in the interests of their new masters, their former ones, or themselves.

The scandal hit the weak post-Velvet Revolution political scene in two stages in the crucial months leading



Federal Interior Minister Richard Sacher (left) in conversation with the Chairman of the “government of national understanding,” Marián Čalfa
Source: ČTK/Černík Vladimír

up to the first democratic elections in June 1990.

The first stage was sparked by the revelation that Sacher had on April 2, 1990, given instructions that key StB files on top politicians, including the president, members of the Federal Government and Federal Assembly, Czech and Slovak governments and party leaders, be locked away immediately with instructions that they should not be used without his approval.

The wide ranging instruction putting the files in the so-called “Z” col-

lection effectively meant that a whole top swathe of the new political elite could not be practically screened regarding their Communist pasts. Their background, from the perspective of the available StB files, had ceased to exist.

Sacher, already under fire for his refusal to clear out former StB officers from the Ministry, rode out a stormy parliamentary debate on April 4. He defended himself by saying that the step was part of a battle with the Institute for the Protection of the Con-

stitution and Democracy over access to the files.

But the startling revelations five days later from the deputy chairmen of the central screening commission, Radovan Procházka and Jan Kozlík, to lawmakers that some state officials had already been screened for their Communist pasts, meant that "Sachergate" had erupted in full.

In the absence of Sacher, First Deputy Minister Viliam Ciklamini tried to shed light on the revelations that deputies themselves had been checked. He was told by Major Václav Novotný, head of the Ministry's internal and organizational administration, that the orders to carry out screening had come from above.

A phone call from a worried President Havel to Deputy Minister Andrej Sámel calling for guarantees that the screening process be stopped and warning that it could lead to a government and parliamentary crisis, and perhaps worse, put the event in stark context.

It emerged that 137 members of the Federal Assembly had been screened, fueling unfounded fears that their "fall" would prompt immediate elections and the end of the government of national understanding.¹

Sámel went over Ciklamini's head, giving orders to district offices banning access to StB files for screening.

Sacher was only told of the affair when he landed at the airport on his return from an international drugs conference. He was soon in the midst of a battle over his running of the Ministry and acrimonious relations with his deputy ministers.

Ammunition for his critics was supplied by a report into the Ministry's workings by former Charter 77 spokesman, Ladislav Hejdánek, which found Sacher's faults more serious



One of Sacher's most prominent critics – Chairman of Parliament's Defence and Security Committee and former Charter 77 spokesperson Ladislav Lis.

Source: ČTK

and more dangerous than those of his underlings.

One of his fiercest critics, Chairman of the Parliamentary Defence and Security Committee Ladislav Lis, accused Sacher of doing almost nothing to clean out the StB during his four months in office. Sacher hit back, claiming moves to unseat him were part of a plot to take over the Ministry and paralyse the security system and government.

Sacher's skin was saved by a compromise arrived at between leading Civic Forum members and Havel, which in part involved the appointment of Jan Ruml as a deputy interior minister and Jiří Müller as head of the Institute for the Protection of the Constitution and Democracy, one of the new democracy's safeguarding bodies which had been incorporated within the Ministry.

In the meantime, demands for the systematic screening of public figures and office holders gathered steam. An open letter from the chairman of the Christian Democratic Party,

Václav Benda, called for all candidates to be screened at forthcoming general elections, without the results being made public. Those incriminated could face the alternatives of quietly retiring or trying to defend their reputation. As he explained, forcing members of parliament to resign after being elected was a far worse alternative than forcing them to retire before the vote.

By mid-May, Sacher also relaxed earlier instructions from the start of April, and allowed the screening of Ministry staff to recommence, drawing on the archives of the key section for statistical and personal files, SEO, comprising around 890,000 cards with details of individuals, for the most part drawn from StB operations, and including the names of police informers and agents. But his ban on providing material for screening outside the Ministry without his approval remained in force.

An Austrian newspaper's revelation that Deputy Foreign Minister Věra Bartošková and People's Party (ČSL) leader Josef Bartončík had collaborated with the StB swung support in favour of screening ahead of the June elections, with the Federal Assembly agreeing to the step as long as candidates were willing.

Thus one of the main results of Sachergate was an agreed screening process of candidates on the eve of the vote. Other questions about the ever twisting affair, including the main issue of whether its root cause was an attempt by the former Communist structure and especially the StB, often described as a state within a state, to continue exercising power and influence still remain unanswered.

This article is based on an original study in the Institute's journal *Paměť a Dějiny* written by Pavel Žáček.



¹ Fears based on the phrase "137 positively screened deputies" were later shown to be exaggerated. A Ministry official revealed that among the files were just two police confidants, one candidate for secret cooperation and one agent.

Exhibition Elaborates on How War Raised the Hopes of the Downtrodden and Disillusioned

The outbreak of WWII and German occupation six months earlier defined the issues for Czechs after the Second Republic's slide towards authoritarian government.



Czechoslovak volunteers lining up in front of the Czechoslovak consulate in Cracow (Poland) in 1939. Richard Tesařík, later a hero of the Soviet Union, is first on the left, in the second row.

Source: Archive of Ladislav Kudrna

This year the Czech Republic, like the rest of the world, marks the 70th anniversary of the start of the worst conflict in world history – WWII. For most European countries, September 1, 1939, has a dark significance. The war meant six years of horrific suffering, with many fearing for their survival.

The Czechs, however, already had a tumultuous period behind them. Following the euphoria of the September 1938 mobilization – which was accompanied by a massive demonstration of public will to defend the

republic – came the Munich Agreement, consequent carving up of the border territory, and cruel disillusionment which continued to spread. Conservative forces, the right-wing of the Agrarian Party in particular, stepped into power as the former political elite, the target of fierce criticism, gradually quit the scene. The democracy founded by Masaryk and Beneš and the political system associated with them were identified as the main culprits of the national tragedy. Thus the so-called Second Republic was born.

The new forces in power after Munich – primarily the governing Party of National Unity (Strana Národní Jednoty) – attempted to establish an authoritarian political system, and designed its foundations so that they would meet the demands of Nazi Germany and save the “remnant state.”

It was however precisely the ever increasing pressure from Berlin which terminated such attempts. All concessions departing from the democratic political system and change in the Republic's domestic political make-up in the direction of an au-

thoritative democracy were not and indeed could not bring the hoped-for guarantee of the existence of a diminished but still enduring Czechoslovak Republic. The new governing elite proclaimed the desire to build relations with the Third Reich based on friendly partnership and did not reject the idea, evoked by contemporary media, that this could be a relationship between a "feudal lord" and "dutiful vassal."

One result of these moves was the deepening of the moral crisis which accompanied the deviation from traditional values of national history and culture and the growing disparagement of the principles of humanism, tolerance and democracy.

The Nazi occupation of March 15 and declaration of the Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia can therefore be regarded, perhaps with some exaggeration, as a certain "liberation" from these totalitarian tendencies. Czech society now had a clearly defined enemy in the form of the German occupation administration and gradually began to pin its hopes on an early war which might bring about the defeat of Nazi Germany and offer the possibility of renewing Czechoslovakia according to its pre-Munich frontiers.

The six months which remained until the outbreak of war were therefore marked by the establishing of illegal resistance organizations, distributing of illegal printed matter, and staging of mass demonstrations (such as the transfer of Czech poet Karel H. Mácha's remains and religious pilgrimages) which clearly showed the Czechs' relationship with their occupiers.

In exile, former president Edvard Beneš took charge of foreign operations and attempted to coordinate the work of the developing foreign resistance centers.

The Protectorate's inhabitants during these dark times had to get used to Gestapo raids, censorship of the press and, from October 1939, rationing. A further change which impacted virtually all citizens was the switch to right-hand driving.



The nation displayed singular resolve not to give in, and to defend democracy and freedom. The army was prepared to fight, but politicians drew the conclusion that it would be irresponsible to lead the nation into a doomed war. The writing on the storefront reads: "Buy people's gas masks with filter and box."

Source: Lukas, Jan: Pražský deník 1938-1965, Praha 1995

The occupation decidedly affected the lives of all citizens. In spite of that (or perhaps because of it) the outbreak of war on September 1, 1939, was greeted by the public with anticipation and hope.

The exhibition "Czech Society between Munich and the War," on display in Prague from March 13-27, 2009, aims to give visitors a feel for the events and atmosphere from the fateful Munich events through the period of the Second Republic, the founding of the Protectorate and the outbreak of the Second World War - how Czech society experienced these months and perceived them. It is divided into three thematic parts - the period of the Second Republic, the Protectorate, and personal memories of witnesses of these events. Twenty panels are dedicated to political

events, constitutional changes, domestic and foreign resistance and daily life and shifts in the cultural sphere. The panels include photographs, some of which are on public display for the first time.

The exhibition has been organized by the Institute for Totalitarian Regimes in collaboration with the Prague 6 city district, the civic association Post Bellum and Czech Radio's "Radio Česko," and is open to the public at Prague 6's "Pisecká brána" culture center, located at K brusce 5/208, 160 00 Prague 6 - Hradčany, every day except Mondays from 1- 7 p.m.

This article is based on a report by Institute historian Lukáš Vlček, who specializes in German-Czech relations and the period leading up to and including WWII.



New Exhibition Highlights Resistance Activity During Early Years of Communist Tyranny

On the Cold War Front - Czechoslovakia 1948-1956 is dedicated to thousands of Czechoslovak citizens who actively fought against the totalitarian regime that was established in their country after the Communist Party seized power on February 25, 1948. It focuses in particular on those who battled tyranny in Czechoslovakia on both sides of the country's borders in the years 1948-1956.

Many of these people worked as cross-border undercover agents or "couriers" who gathered intelligence information from local sources and relayed it to democratic Western powers seeking to counter the threat posed to their way of life by the Soviet Union and its nascent system of satellite states.

The contribution made by these intelligence groups in the fight against communism has been largely forgotten until now. *On the Cold War Front - Czechoslovakia 1948-1956* seeks to highlight the significance of their activities in combating the spread of Soviet totalitarianism. It also hopes to emphasize how their resistance helped establish a tradition of defending freedom in this country, which can be used as a reference point for future generations.

Czechoslovakia's position in the heart of Europe meant that it was destined to witness dramatic Cold War clashes between East and West. Although these did not result in open conflict, there is no doubt that the border activities of the anti-communist resistance networks were important in helping democratic powers contain the spread of communism. In acknowledging their contribution and describing their activities, we can begin to appreciate the value of the sacrifices they willingly made.

More than fifty years have passed since the couriers' operations, but the topic is still little known, and historians have dealt with it in a very hap-

hazard manner. Many documents are yet to be made available - mostly from democratic countries' archives.

This exhibition attempts to clarify what happened during this period while redefining its significance, as well as to answer questions concerning the importance of this resistance activity and emphasize its achievements. It recalls the thousands of Czechoslovak citizens who were imprisoned, executed or killed on the border, and who embarked on a war against totalitarian power, conscious of the huge risks this involved for both themselves and their families. Last but not least, the exhibition reminds viewers of the anniversary of the communist coup in Czechoslovakia, which prompted thousands of people to bravely resist totalitarian power.



Miroslav Svatoň, age 22, died on the entrenchment barbed wire on May 16, 1953 in the Rozvadov area. He was probably crossing the border from Germany to Czechoslovakia.

Source: Security Services Archive

The State Security Service (StB) succeeded in capturing around 4,000 people who participated in intelligence operations in Czechoslovakia as couriers, foreign coordinators or local agents.

Approximately 250 couriers were sentenced to long-term imprisonment. Nineteen couriers were executed. At least seven died on the border, and eleven ended their days in jail.

Not all of them were textbook heroes. They lived in an era that placed immense demands on each individual. Yet they risked their lives for what they believed in and deserve our respect.

On the Cold War Front - Czechoslovakia 1948-1956 runs from February 25 to May 2, 2009 at the Prague City Museum, Na Poříčí 52, Prague 8. Open daily from 9 am to 6 pm. (closed Mondays). The exhibition is held under the auspices of the mayor of Prague 1 Ing. Petr Hejma and the mayor of Prague 8 Josef Nosek. The Institute for the Study of Totalitarian Regimes wishes to thank all those who participated in the preparation of the exhibition, especially the Prague City Museum (Muzeum hlavního města Prahy) and the Czech Police Museum (Muzeum Policie ČR).

This article is based on an introductory text prepared by the exhibition's author, Prokop Tomek.

Film and History – Institute Publishes New Multimedia Teaching Resource

1968: Shattered Hopes is a three-hour set of educational DVDs prepared by the Institute for the Study of Totalitarian Regimes. It looks at the tumultuous events surrounding the Soviet-led invasion of Czechoslovakia, which brutally suppressed the country's attempts to introduce a less authoritarian form of socialism in the late 1960s.

Drawing on news reports and film footage from the period in question, this project seeks to explain the background behind the violent suppression of the so-called "Prague Spring". It provides information on the protagonists who helped shape events, such as the hard-line communist president Antonín Novotný and the reformist socialist leader Alexander Dubček. It also places the 1968 invasion in an international context and looks at how the reformist impulses of this period gave rise to an "underground" movement, which ultimately played a key role in bringing about the fall of the Iron Curtain.

The DVDs have been produced as part of an initiative by the Institute for the Study of Totalitarian Regimes to provide high-quality materials for teaching modern Czechoslovak history in schools. Fulfilling an educational role is one of the Institute's core activities within its mandate to inform and stimulate interest in the recent totalitarian past. There is little doubt that this is a subject that needs to be addressed. Surveys by the Czech Schools Inspectorate have shown that the teaching of late-twentieth-century history seriously lags behind that of other historical eras, both in terms of the time and quality of the education offered.

1968: Shattered Hopes is the first of a number of videos intended to help redress this balance. It comprises two DVDs. The first is broken down into



DVD 1968: Shattered Hopes

thematic episodes and is accompanied by teaching aids and materials for instigating debates and discussions in class. The second DVD consists of a compilation of short films made around the time of the Warsaw Pact invasion, which will give students a real sense of the atmosphere that prevailed in Czechoslovakia during this period.

Two thousand copies of the DVD set have been produced and these will be distributed free of charge to secondary and primary school teachers who participate in special training seminars organized by the Institute. Anyone interested in acquiring

a copy can order it in the mail. They will only be required to pay a small handling fee to cover post and packaging.

Two more DVDs are currently being prepared by the Institute to help schools teach students about the totalitarian era in Czechoslovakia. The first video will deal with the brutal collectivization of Czech agriculture after the communists seized power in 1948, while the second will look at the events surrounding the eventual collapse of the communist regime in 1989. As of now, the DVDs are available exclusively in the Czech language.



Institute's First English-language Publication Sheds Light on the 1968 Warsaw Pact Invasion of Czechoslovakia

Newly uncovered information, much of it made public only recently, has enabled the reassessment of the tumultuous turn of events during the second half of 1968.

The Warsaw Pact invasion of Czechoslovakia in 1968 resulted in several civilian deaths and injuries as well as considerable damage to property. The Communist regime subsequently suppressed any commemorative events or research on this subject. Consequently, the first proper attempts to quantify the damage caused by the invasion began only after 1989.

Victims of the Occupation is the English-language version of the book resulting from the relevant research project recently implemented by the Institute for the Study of Totalitarian Regimes. It focuses on the events of the invasion of 1968 and uncovers the circumstances behind the deaths of Czechoslovak civilians caused by Warsaw Pact forces between August 21 and December 31, 1968. Much of this information had never before been published. The text draws inspiration from as many accessible sources as possible. The authors worked with archives and period newspapers, as well as with the recollections of witnesses, especially those provided by friends and relatives of the victims.



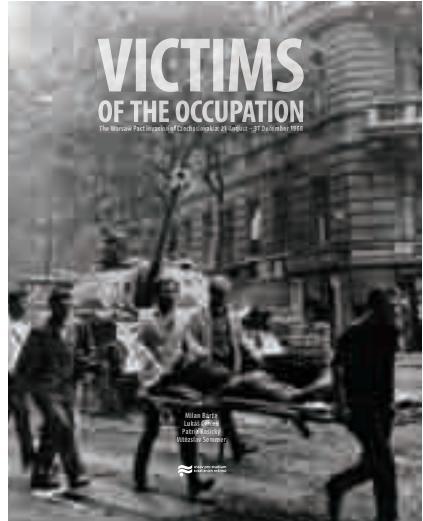
Victims of a runaway lorry (license plate AB-15-06) near Czechoslovak Radio. (Right to left): Milan Kadlec and Václav Sadílek with Jaroslav Kubeš wedged in between. Josef Reichl is lying in the background.

Photographer and source: Libor Hajský

The book consists of two parts. First, a lengthy introduction analyzes the political and military aspects of the Warsaw Pact invasion of Czechoslovakia and outlines the events that eventually led to the signing of a treaty permitting the presence of Soviet troops on Czechoslovak territory. This chapter subsequently outlines the crimes committed by the occupying soldiers as well as the efforts of the Czechoslovak authorities to prosecute the perpetrators and arrange compensation for the victims. The second part of the book focuses on specific cases involving the deaths of civilians, and describes the occupation of individual towns and regions where Czechoslovak citizens died as a result of the invasion.

The text is structured according to the regional division of Czechoslovakia during the relevant period. It provides details of some of the most notorious incidents of the Soviet-led invasion, which resulted in the deaths of innocent Czechoslovak civilians in Prague, Liberec, Prostějov and other locations. Short profiles of all the victims are included. In cases where the authors managed to obtain survivors' recollections, these profiles have been extended to include basic biographical details about those who died as well as information about their personal life and the impact their death had on the people they left behind. This includes much data not usually found in official archive materials.

In the course of their research the authors came across many widespread inaccuracies and mistakes which appeared in specialized journals and periodicals published in previous years. First and foremost, they reassessed the number of victims claimed by the 1968 invasion, result-



ing in a higher casualty count. Furthermore, the authors managed to obtain completely new facts about the deaths of certain Czechoslovak citizens, which enabled them to clear up some lingering doubts and mistakes after 40 years.

The book is also illustrated with an extensive selection of photographs from public archives and private collections, several of which have remained unpublished until now. This publication is not only intended as a useful resource for professional historians, but should also be of interest to ordinary readers who wish to learn more about the tumultuous events surrounding the end of the Prague Spring.

Victims of the Occupation, The Warsaw Pact Invasion of Czechoslovakia: 21 August - 31 December 1968 can be purchased from the Institute for the Study of Totalitarian Regimes' Ján Langoš Library (www.ustrcr.cz/cs/knihovna-jana-langose) or at selected bookstores in the Czech Republic. Internationally, it can be purchased online at www.kosmas.cz.



"Orwell in Photographs": Telling Images from the Secret Police Photo Archive



Suzette Gazagne (operation "Parisian") with her son, documented at the Horčíčkova bus stop in Prague's Jižní město district, February 20, 1984.

Source: Security Services Archive

One of the most interesting bodies of the Czechoslovak Communist political police – the State Security Service (Státní bezpečnost – StB) – was the Surveillance Directorate and its predecessors. Its founding nucleus, numbering 14 men, came into being on March 1, 1948, shortly after the Communist putsch. From small, specialized State Security units within the Ministry of the Interior, an independent and comparatively well staffed body – the Surveillance Directorate – developed, cooperating closely with other constituent parts of the political police. Until 1956, in addition to surveillance, this division had the authority to place people under arrest or carry out house searches.

The main pillars of the operative activity of the Surveillance Directorate, the surveillance sections, divided up their tasks, shadowing both

members of foreign diplomatic and military staffs and other employees of suspect agencies from the West and Third World, but also its own citizens, so-called "enemy individuals," especially persons from the ranks of the dissidence, the church, signatories of Charter 77 and members of other "enemy" organizations.

Before its ultimate dissolution in 1989, the Surveillance Directorate of the SNB operated in the strength of 795 State Security officers, capable of shadowing not only 523 Czechoslovak and other state officers (some even repeatedly), but also a whole range of stationery premises, including twelve embassies.

According to the directives in effect at the time, surveillance was a type of counterintelligence activity based on the gathering of information on people, items, subjects and places that were of interest to spe-

cific divisions of the political police. After the submission of a "Surveillance Plan," the operation was assigned to the corresponding surveillance section, whereupon the number of officers and necessary technical equipment was determined (transmitters, still cameras, film cameras, means of transport, etc.).

Before setting to work, the servicemen elaborated a detailed plan, which included the code name of the operation, personal information on the person under surveillance, compelling facts, a description of the place of residence, workplace and its environment, and where relevant, a description of other places where the person under surveillance might appear, as well as a proposal for organizing the surveillance. After the plan's approval, the surveillance group was put together, led by the chief of the operation.



Alena Hromádková (*operation "Ali"*) photographed emerging onto Vinohradská Street from the Flora metro station on January 5, 1984.

Source: Security Services Archive



Alena Hromádková and the "contact" RITA (left), identified as Tatána Holečková, captured on film during a meeting at a passage at Karlovo náměstí on February 10, 1984. Source: Security Services Archive

In the corresponding archival collection of the Security Services Archive, thousands if not tens of thousands of photographs and negatives taken in a host of operations remain as enclosures to the 7,693 preserved files. These photographs serve not only as mute witnesses to the levelled-out environment of totalitarian society and to the surveilled "subjects" – a violation of their individual rights – but also as a distinct testimony to their anonymous authors.

A unique selection of these photographs will be on public display for the first time this April in the building of the Permanent Representation of the Czech Republic to the European Union in Brussels, in an exhibition organized jointly by the Institute for the Study of Totalitarian Regimes, Security Services Archive and the Permanent Representation of the Czech Republic to the European Union in Brussels. While the exhibition "*Orwell in Photographs*" opens April 9 in Brussels, where it will be on display for the duration of the month, it has been de-

signed as a travelling exhibition, with the expectation that audiences around Europe as well as other continents will have the opportunity to view it over the course of the year.

In connection with this project, this spring the Institute for the Study of Totalitarian Regimes is issuing a book that features a more comprehensive selection of these photographs as well as introductory texts addressing the nature of their origin and related technical details. *Prague Through the Lens of the Secret Police* – a bi-lingual Czech-English publication with a collection of more than 200 pages of photographs taken by the State Security Service from 1969 until 1989 – is available at the Institute for the Study of Totalitarian Regimes' Ján Langoš Library (www.ustrcr.cz/cs/knihovna-jana-langose) or at select bookstores in the Czech Republic, and internationally at www.kosmas.cz.

This article is based on introductory exhibition texts prepared by authors Pavel Žáček and Anna Pavlíková.



Remembering Those Who Defied Totalitarian Terror

Upcoming international conference looks at tradition of anti-communist resistance and opposition in Czechoslovakia and Central Europe.

On the occasion of the Czech presidency of the EU Council, the Institute for the Study of Totalitarian Regimes in cooperation with the government of the Czech Republic is organizing a two-day international conference on the subject of active armed resistance and civic opposition to communist rule in Czechoslovakia and Central Europe. The conference takes place in Prague in April 2009 and will be officially launched by the Czech prime minister Mirek Topolánek. Martin Vadas's film *Land without Heroes, Land without Criminals* will be screened at the event, which will also be attended by people who lived through the communist era.

The conference will be conducted in English, Czech and Polish. Discussions will take place in three concurrent panels:

1) CZECH AND SLOVAK RESISTANCE TO THE COMMUNIST REGIME

This panel will emphasize the tradition of active resistance in the Czech lands after 1948 and highlight the role played by those directly involved in this activity. Topics covered will include the preparation of anti-communist plots aimed at forcibly overthrowing the socialist regime, the stockpiling of weapons with a view to preparing anti-government operations, the preparation of political programs that were meant to be implemented after the fall of the communist administration, the activities of foreign intelligence services in Czechoslovakia, and the crucial role played by cross-border agents or "couriers." The panel will also look at actions taken against Communist Party officials in Czechoslovakia and those who supported its policies. Other subjects covered by this part of the conference will include the publication and distribution of illegal, subversive material.

2) CZECH AND SLOVAK OPPOSITION TO THE COMMUNIST REGIME

The aim of this panel is to discuss and elucidate the numerous forms of civic opposition that manifested themselves during the relevant era which were meant to undermine the authority of the socialist administration and to weaken the position of the Communist Party in Czechoslovakia. This included the publication of pamphlets, samizdat literature, religious and Church-sponsored activities as well as public protests against the policies of the communist regime, etc.

3) CZECHOSLOVAK RESISTANCE ABROAD AND RESISTANCE IN INDIVIDUAL COUNTRIES

This panel will concentrate on the activities of Czechoslovak émigrés beyond the borders of the Czech-



Miloslav Choc (right, born on Jan. 19, 1925), a student expelled after February 1948, lived in an exile camp in Regensburg from March 26, 1948 to April 25, 1948. He returned to Czechoslovakia illegally with resistance and courier assignments. On May 27, 1948, he allegedly assassinated Augustin Schramm, an official of the Communist Party's Central Committee. Choc was sentenced to death on November 25, 1948 and executed on February 19, 1949. The photograph is from the assassination reconstruction staged by the StB.

Source: Security Services Archive

International Conference
**ODBOJ
ODPOR**
RESISTANCE AND OPPosition
AGAINST THE COMMUNIST REGIME
IN CZECHOSLOVAKIA
AND CENTRAL EUROPE
15th–16th April 2009

slovak Socialist Republic (e.g. the Council of Free Czechoslovakia, Radio Free Europe, the Voice of America, etc.). In addition to this, it will also look at operations carried out by Western intelligence services beyond Czechoslovakia's borders as well as the activities of Czechoslovak citizens who joined foreign armies with the intention of helping to overthrow the communist regime in their country. This conference section will also focus on other anti-communist resistance activities in the so-called "people's democracies" of the Eastern Bloc.

The discussions will revolve around the various types and forms of opposition and resistance to communism in Central Europe during the 1940s and 1950s. It is assumed that all those participating in the conference shall jointly prepare an introductory statement and closing summaries.

Resistance and Opposition against the Communist Regime in Czechoslovakia and Central Europe will be held in Prague, Czech Republic on April 15-16, 2009



1 Politických vězňů 20 (called Bredovská until 1946): Petschek Palace Headquarters of the Gestapo during WWII, where thousands of suspects were subjected to questioning and torture.

2 Bartolomějská 4: An address which became synonymous with Communist repression. As the Prague and regional headquarters of the State Security Service, the StB, it was often the first port of call for questioning of regime opponents. The complex of police buildings was also one of the centers of resistance at the start of the Prague uprising at the end of WWII.

3 Letná Plain: All that is now left of the towering Stalin Monument monument on Letná Plain that dominated Prague are the foundations and an underground complex. Unveiled on May 1, 1955, the 15-meter plinth and 15.5-meter figures were at the time the biggest tribute to Stalin in the world. It's creator, the sculptor Otakar Švec, committed suicide a few weeks before the ceremony and the work, nicknamed "the meat queue" by locals because of the series of figures lining up behind Stalin, was blown up with dynamite just over seven years later following the denunciation of Stalin's cult of personality.

4 Pankrác Prison: The existing prison complex was quickly put to use during the German occupation before and during WWII. At first the German administration was forced to send prisoners elsewhere for execution, but from April 1943, it set up an onsite execution complex including a guillotine. From that date until April 26, 1945, 1,087 people were executed, according to the prison. During the 1950s, the prison was the main site for the execution of political prisoners, including Milada Horáková, and top communists judged in show trials, such as party secretary Rudolf Slánský. A memorial has been erected at the subsequent execution site behind the hospital building.

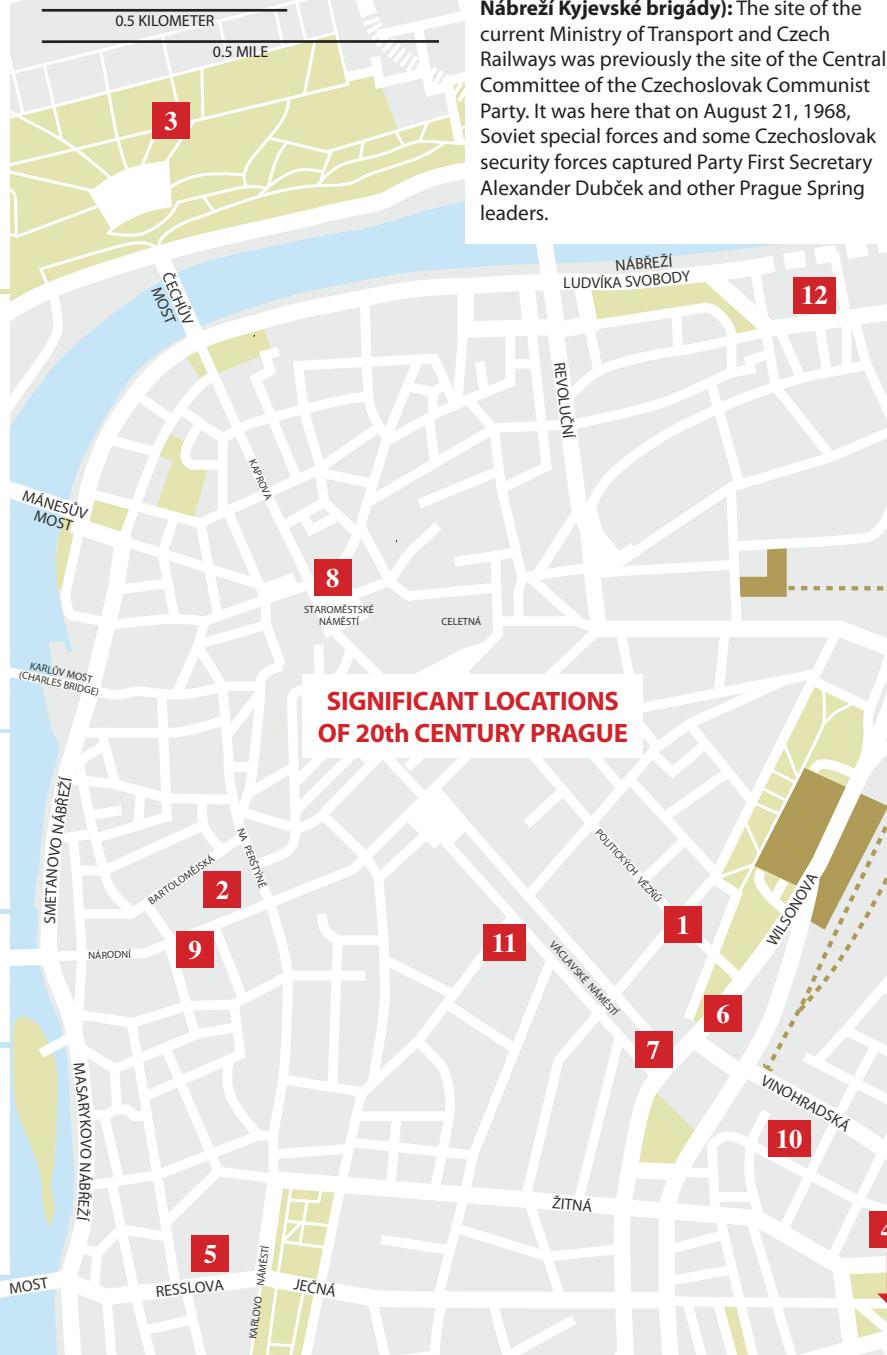
5 Resslova Street: Church of St. Cyril and Methodius. The site where members of the Czechoslovak parachutist unit which assassinated top Nazi Reinhard Heydrich were cornered and eventually committed suicide on June 17, 1942.

6 Vinohradská 1: Until recently, the headquarters of Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty, and formerly the site of the Czechoslovak Federal Assembly building.

7 Václavské náměstí: Site by the National Museum where student Jan Palach set fire to himself on January 1969 to protest the Warsaw Pact invasion of Czechoslovakia. Fellow student Jan Zajíc followed Palach's example just over a month later at the entrance of a building, number 35, about half way up the square.

8 Staroměstské náměstí: Communist leader Klement Gottwald made his speech from the square's Kinský Palace balcony at the start of the 1948 political crisis on February 21, announcing his goal of a Communist-led government. President Edvard Beneš' decision to accept the resignation of non-communist ministers and a new Communist dominated government four days later spelled the end of democracy and the start of more than 40 years of communist dictatorship.

9 Národní třída: The scene of the clashes between students and security forces on November 17, 1989, that sparked the "Velvet Revolution" and the rapid collapse of the Communist regime. A memorial can be found just before the junction with Mikulandská, the site where today candles are lit and wreaths laid on the anniversary, now a state holiday.



10 Vinohradská Street: Czech Radio building. The site which sparked the Prague Uprising at the end of WWII. Broadcasts of Czech music and commentary started on the morning of May 5, with a bloody struggle for the building erupting when German forces tried to restore control. Also the focal point for clashes following the Warsaw Pact invasion of Czechoslovakia in 1968.

11 Václavské náměstí 36: The Melantrich building, named after the publishing house which used to occupy it, and now partly occupied by Marks and Spencer, was the scene of dissident Václav Havel's balcony address to the mass of protesters in the square below on November 20, 1989 – one of the landmarks of the Velvet Revolution.

12 Nábřeží Ludvíka Svobody (formerly Nábřeží Kyjevské brigády): The site of the current Ministry of Transport and Czech Railways was previously the site of the Central Committee of the Czechoslovak Communist Party. It was here that on August 21, 1968, Soviet special forces and some Czechoslovak security forces captured Party First Secretary Alexander Dubček and other Prague Spring leaders.

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