
Professionalization and modernization of the prison system during the period of so-called normalization and the pitfalls of their application in practice

Klára Pinerová

In communist Czechoslovakia, “governance expertise” became an important component of the post-Stalinist elites’ policy. The Communist Party’s policy in the 1960s was significantly influenced by the idea that socialism with targeted support for science and technology would develop better and the economy would be more efficient. During the period of so-called normalization, the reforms of the Prague Spring were condemned, but expert knowledge was still highly valued. Science played a special role in the prison system, where the decreasing importance of the class concept of punishment led to the re-emergence of the demand for a solution to the issue of recidivism. The study points out that scientists from various disciplines came to work in the prison system during the 1960s, analysing statistical materials, carrying out new surveys and research, and proposing how to transform the prison environment and correctional means and organize post-penitentiary care to prevent recidivism. The aim of the present paper is to answer the questions of how the requirements for the application of science in the prison system were implemented and who supported the changes, to what extent these proposals were (not) implemented in individual prison facilities and how they were adopted by ordinary prison staff, as well as how the technocratic narrative was transformed during the 1970s and 1980s, and how these changes impacted on convicts.

Key words: prison system, normalization, technocratic narrative, Jiří Čepelák, Emil Vašíček, professionalization of warder education, Research Institute of Penology

The prison system in the Czech lands in the 1970s–1980s viewed by its witnesses

Michal Louč

The study presents the basic principles, methodology and the previous course of the oral-historical part of the interdisciplinary research project *Transformations of the Prison System in the Czech Lands in 1965–1992. Systemic and Individual Adaptations*. The author uses, in particular, the memoir books written by former prisoners and narrative interviews with witnesses from the ranks of both prisoners and prison staff. Several major approaches (master narratives) to the operation of the prison system (Marxist-Leninist, technocratic and humanistic), as well their main attributes and transformations in their influence, are identified. Prison is primarily viewed as an environment permeated by constant threat. The largest space is therefore devoted to the analysis of the different types of such threat to which both prisoners and prison

staff were exposed to different extents. The study thus forms the basis for follow-up research into adaptation strategies using the attachment theory.

Key words: Czechoslovakia, normalization, prison system, political prisoners, criminal prisoners, penology, forced labour, oral history

Correctional activities in the Czech prison system in the normalization era

Roman John

As early as the turn of the 1950s and 1960s, Communist regime officials realized that it would be necessary to supplement repression with elements aimed at correcting prisoners. Along with the weakening of the so-called class service of a sentence, efforts were made to introduce professional penitentiary aspects. Legislatively, this trend was expressed by the adoption of Act No. 59/1965 Coll., on the service of terms of imprisonment. The Soviet occupation of the Czechoslovak Socialist Republic in August 1968 did not mean a complete interruption of continuity with the reform movement of the previous decade. However, further development put greater emphasis on the repressive component of the punishment, maximizing the use of labour in the employment of convicts. Although correction by work and cultural-correctional activity were supposed to make the correction of offenders more effective, the reality was different. The study shows the boundaries that the prison system of that time could not cross. It is a shame of the pre-November regime that it imprisoned people for their beliefs and opinions. Prisoners of conscience had to submit to the correctional system in individual prison facilities. With few exceptions, their situation was worse than for the criminal population, as documented by the passage dealing with the employment of convicts.

Key words: correctional activity, cultural-correctional work, education of convicts, correction by work, employment of convicts, political prisoners (prisoners of conscience), correctional institution, Correctional Service Corps

A literary task to write something when one actually cannot write anything The censorship of political prisoners' correspondence in the period of so-called normalization

Petra Loučová

The present study focuses on one of the aspects of the normalization of prison life – the prison correspondence of political prisoners as the most common and the most widespread official (sometimes also unofficial) creative verbal expression behind bars

which is, however, highly regulated and censored. The author describes the complexity of the supervision of this type of communication, with an emphasis on the concurrence of various censorship interventions, outlining the basic typology of interventions and systemic limitations of correspondence in the normalization correctional institutions or, as the case may be, in remand prisons, their consequences and defensive mechanisms of the affected authors. In spite of both internal and external censorship interventions, the writing of prison letters remained a key creative and often even self-preserving mental manifestation of the prisoners. However, prison letters were important not only for the direct participants in such communication, but also for the wider cultural-opposition public at that time, and they were commonly disseminated in samizdat copies or read out together. Nowadays, with hindsight, many prison letters, which, with few exceptions, were not primarily conceived as literary or philosophical, can be perceived as distinct works of art representing the specific literary genre of prison epistolography, which in the broadest sense can be characterized as a *literary task to write something when one actually cannot write anything*.

Key words: communism, normalization, prison system, political prisoners, correspondence, censorship, samizdat

Amnesty International's activity in favour of prisoners of conscience in Czechoslovakia

Prokop Tomek

The study primarily focuses on the activity of the international human rights movement Amnesty International in favour of prisoners of conscience in Czechoslovakia from the 1960s to the end of the 1980s, but the text is also supplemented by examples of similar activities carried out by other non-governmental initiatives or, as the case may be, foreign political representations.

The pressure of non-governmental organizations, governments and the public in the world to release political prisoners in the Czechoslovak Socialist Republic and to improve their living conditions in prisons apparently had no influence on the political leadership of the state and the state administration. The actions were ignored on the outside, i.e. they were left unanswered. Nevertheless, specific cases can be found where Czechoslovakia responded to this pressure and criticism, resulting in the easing of the conditions of imprisonment or release.

Indirect influence from abroad was demonstrably very significant in the long-term perspective, leading in communist Czechoslovakia both to a change in some of the described cases and to a gradual, increasing carefulness in the treatment of political prisoners and approach to their criminal punishment.

Key words: Amnesty International (AI), Charter 77, Committee for the Defence of the Unjustly Prosecuted (VONS), political prisoners (prisoners of conscience), help, adoption, intervention, observer, correctional institution

Selected extraordinary events in the Příbram (Bytíz) Correctional Institution and at workplaces in uranium mines in 1961–1986

František Bártík

The study focuses on selected extraordinary events at the Příbram (Bytíz) Correctional Institution in the period in question – i.e. on the events that affected the operation of the prison or were so crucial that they could not be overlooked. Chronologically, it deals with the fall of two buildings in the camp in 1962 which changed the form of the prison, mentioning the case of Jan Mikoláš, the only prisoner shot dead in the camp area, more precisely, at the Bytíz workplace, and mapping the riot of the prisoners in August 1968, the largest riot in the history of the Czechoslovak prison system until 1989. Attention is paid to the case of shooting a civilian employee in 1971 and the suicide of a mentally unbalanced prisoner from 1979 when a member of the Correctional Service Corps was killed and another one was severely injured. The study also maps the attempted escapes from the Příbram (Bytíz) Correctional Institution and is supplemented by a table with an overview of all reported deaths of the prisoners in 1961–1986, both natural deaths and deaths due to suicide, occupational injury and mischance.

Key words: uranium ore, prison system, the dead, escapes, occupation of the Czechoslovak Socialist Republic in 1968, prison riot, extraordinary events, Příbram (Bytíz) Correctional Institution

Foreigners in correctional institutions in 1968–1989 (documents)

Klára Pinerová

In the second half of the 1960s, Czechoslovakia adopted legislation for the imprisonment of foreigners which was essentially in force until 1989. For the purposes of criminal proceedings, a foreigner was defined as a person of a nationality other than the Czechoslovak Socialist Republic or a person without a nationality, taking into account whether the person was allowed to reside permanently in the territory of the Czechoslovak Socialist Republic. Terms of imprisonment for convicted foreigners were served in accordance with the law in force and the rules of service of terms of imprisonment, but with certain variations from the service of terms of imprisonment by Czechoslovak citizens. The presented edition of documents includes the most important archival materials, providing an idea of the status of convicted foreigners in

Czechoslovak correctional institutions. They demonstrate the legal rules used to derive their rights and obligations, the problems faced by the prison administration, the conditions in which the convicts lived, how they adjusted the environment in which they were forced to live, how their cultural and ethnic differences were manifested, and the issues they discussed. The collected documents are divided into three parts, each representing a different set of archival records in terms of their purpose and the information provided. The first part contains the most important legal regulations determining how to deal with convicted foreigners and what rights they have. These are the orders issued by the Chief of the Correctional Service Corps Directorate. The second part includes documents providing information on the convicts' accommodation and their assignment in prison production. The last part contains documents of various kinds illustrating the convicts' inner life.

Key words: foreigners, prison system, normalization, Czechoslovakia, correctional institution, Pankrác Correctional Institution