

EDITORIAL

The 100th anniversary of the establishment of the Soviet Cheka (All-Russian Extraordinary Commission for Combating Counter-Revolution and Sabotage) in 2017 provided an opportunity to organize an international conference on the history of Soviet-type security services, political police, and intelligence services in Communist Party dictatorships. The conference was organized by the Institute for the Study of Totalitarian Regimes in Prague. It took place in the historic Wallenstein Palace, the seat of the Senate of the Czech Republic, on 2–3 November 2017. The upper chamber of the Czech parliament was also the event's patron.

One of numerous conferences held worldwide on the Bolshevik October Revolution and its legacy in 2017, the Prague conference focused on the repressive apparatus that arose out of the revolution and on the development of its organizational structures, as well as various phenomena connected with politically motivated oppression in countries under Communist Party rule.

The organizers appreciated that their call for papers garnered a wide response from prominent specialists in the field. Thanks to that, it was possible to design a conference programme covering the history of Soviet security as well as political police structures and their Eastern European offshoots. The participants presented on a variety of topics, ranging from papers of a general or comparative nature to analyses based on detailed explorations of archival materials.

The contributions presented at the conference gave a solid overview of the current state of research. In the past decade, historians have made extensive use of the opening of security archives in post-communist countries, and have produced source-based analyses of security services' organizational structures and repressive mechanisms. Some have examined individual stories of vigilance, the way the regimes waged struggles against real and alleged enemies, and the oppression of victims. There has also been scope for reassessing and considering up-to-date findings. However, most of the research was still bound to national contexts and national historiographical narratives.

The conference provided a space for exchanging these views and research results. Thus, we believe it contributed to further sharing and interconnecting nationally or regionally based narratives, and provided inspiration for future directions of research.

This volume of *Securitas Imperii* contains articles, which are extended versions of papers presented at the conference. Hence, they constitute a digest of a large range of topics discussed and debated in Prague in November 2017. We could not include all of them because of limited space. We decided to refrain from publishing Czech participants' studies and give priority to colleagues from abroad working on topics that have not yet appeared in this journal. Some participants preferred to issue their papers elsewhere, or their topics were already published at the time of the conference. Despite these constraints, we believe we have gathered a set of articles that suitably reflect the diversity of the conference program. The articles cover topics from the Soviet Union, both from the Moscow centre and at the level of republics (Estonia,

Moldavia, Lithuania, and Ukraine). There were also papers on Soviet bloc countries: Czechoslovakia, East Germany, Hungary, and Poland. Somewhat unusually, we also brought the case of Yugoslavia to attention, especially insofar as the period of 1945–1953 was concerned. One study focused on the Spanish Republic during the civil war, something that lies outside the framework commonly used for studying Soviet-type regimes and their security forces.

As an editor of this volume, I am very thankful to all my colleagues who participated in organizing the conference. Among others, I must mention first and foremost Jan Kalous, who initially came up with the idea of organizing such an event and contributed both to its propagation and to devising its programme.

For more information about the conference see:

https://www.ustrcr.cz/wp-content/uploads/2017/10/Cheka_program-1.pdf

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