Soudobé dějiny

Czech Journal of Contemporary History

XXIX 3

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Authors

Ivan Beliaev
is a sociologist, journalist at Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty and an independent researcher. In 2013–2014, he was a Václav Havel Journalism Fellow. He is the author of the first Russian-language biography of Václav Havel entitled *Vatslav Gavel: Zhizn v istorii* [Life in History] (Moskva 2020).

Michaela Budiman
is the head of Indonesian Studies at the Institute of Asian Studies of the Faculty of Arts at Charles University in Prague. She teaches Indonesian language, literature and the interpretation of modern Indonesian texts. She also teaches Indonesian at Palacký University in Olomouc. Her main research area is the social context of the funeral and wedding rituals of the Torajas, one of the many hundreds of ethnic groups in Indonesia. Budiman contributed substantially to the revival of Indonesian Studies at the Faculty of Arts, Charles University in 2011. She is the author of *Contemporary Funeral Rituals of Sa'dan Toraja: From Aluk Todolo to "New" Religions* (Prague 2013).

Marie Černá
is a researcher at the Institute of Contemporary History of the Czech Academy of Sciences in Prague. Her main research topic is the history of Czech society between 1945 and 1989, with an emphasis on the cadre policy of the communist system, the promotion of communist education and ideology and the social consequences of the presence of Soviet troops in Czechoslovakia between 1968 and 1991. She is the co-author of the collective monographs *Prověrky a jejich místo v komunistickém vládnutí: Československo 1948–1989* [Political Screenings and Their Place in Communist Rule: Czechoslovakia 1948–1989] (Praha 2012) and *Pojetí a prosazování komunistické výchovy v Československu 1948–1989* [The Concept and Promotion of Communist Education in Czechoslovakia 1948–1989] (Praha 2020). Within the "Czechoslovakia 38–89" project, Černá contributed to the development of educational computer simulations, presenting milestones of contemporary Czech and Czechoslovak history. Most recently, she has published a monograph entitled *Sovětská armáda a česká společnost 1968–1991* [The Soviet Army and Czech Society, 1968–1991] (Praha 2021).

Martin Franc
is a researcher at the Department for the History of the Academy of Sciences of the Masaryk Institute and Archives of the Czech Academy of Sciences in Prague. He is also a lecturer at the Faculty of Humanities, Charles University in Prague. His research interests include the cultural history of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, mainly the history of catering and consumerism, the social history of science and the history of lifestyle after 1945. He has published numerous studies and monographs, including *Řasy, nebo knedlíky? Postoje odborníků na výživu*

k inovacím a tradicím v české stravě v 50. a 60. letech 20. století [Algae or Dumplings? Attitudes of Nutritional Experts to Innovations and Traditions in Czech Eating Habits in the 1950s and 1960s] (Praha 2003). He co-authored a two-volume *Průvodce kulturním děním a životním stylem v českých zemích 1948–1967* [A Guide to the Cultural Life and Lifestyle in the Czech Lands, 1948–1967] (Praha 2011), and a monograph entitled *Volný čas v českých zemích 1957–1967* [Leisure Time in the Czech Lands, 1957–1967] (Praha 2013) with Jiří Knapík. Together with Věra Dvořáčková, he published the first volume of the history of the Czechoslovak Academy of Sciences under the title *Dějiny Československé akademie věd: 1952–1962* (Praha 2020). Most recently, Franc has been the main editor of the collective work *Habitus českých vědců 1918–1968: Příklad dvou generací* [The Habitus of Czech Scientists 1918–1968: The Example of Two Generations] (Praha 2021).

Jan Hálek
is a researcher at the Masaryk Institute and Archives of the Czech Academy of Sciences in Prague. His research interests include the history of science and research institutions, the history of the First Czechoslovak Republic and the political history of nineteenth-century Central Europe. He is the editor of *„Ve znamení bdělosti a ostražitosti": Zahraniční styky a emigrace pracovníků ČSAV v dobových dokumentech (1953–1971)* ["Under the Sign of Alertness and Watchfulness": Foreign Relations and the Emigration of the Workers of the Czechoslovak Academy of Science in the Contemporary Documents (1953–1971)] (Praha 2011). He has co-edited several publications on diplomacy in the First Czechoslovak Republic. Most recently, Hálek, together with Boris Mosković, has published two interconnected volumes dealing with anti-Austrian resistance *Ve službách Maffie? Český domácí protirakouský odboj (1914–1918) v zrcadle ego-dokumentů* [In the Service of Maffia? Czech Domestic Anti-Austrian Resistance (1914–1918) in View of Ego-documents] (Praha 2018) and *Fenomén Maffie: Český (domácí) protirakouský odboj v proměnách 20. století* [The Maffia Phenomenon: Czech (Domestic) Anti-Austrian Resistance in the Changing Twentieth Century] (Praha 2020).

Tjaša Konovšek
is a junior researcher at the Institute of Contemporary History (*Inštitut za novejšo zgodovino*) in Ljubljana, Slovenia. She is currently a doctoral candidate in the Humanities and Social Sciences at the Department of History, Faculty of Arts, University of Ljubljana. Her research interests include political history, conceptual history and politics of memory, geographically tied to Slovenia, the East-Central European region and the area of the former Yugoslavia from the Second World War to the present. She has published articles on nationalism in post-socialism and on the institutionalization of memory in post-Yugoslav Slovenia.

Denisa Nečasová
is an assistant professor at the Department of History at the Faculty of Arts, Masaryk University in Brno and she is currently also the Deputy Head of the Department. Her research focuses on contemporary history, cultural history, gender and women's movements in modern times. Among other works, she is the author of the books: *Buduj vlast – posílíš mír! Ženské hnutí v českých zemích 1945–1955* [Build the Homeland – Strengthen Peace! The Women's Movement in the Czech Lands, 1945–1955] (Brno 2011) and *Nový socialistický člověk:*

Československo 1948–1956 [The New Socialist Man: Czechoslovakia 1948–1956] (Brno 2018). She has co-edited two volumes together with Lukáš Fasora and Jiří Hanuš: *Člověk na Moravě ve druhé polovině 20. století* [Man in Moravia in the Second Half of the Twentieth Century] (Brno 2011) and *Svůdnost sociálního experimentu: Nový člověk 20. století* [The Seduction of Social Experiment: The New Man of the Twentieth Century] (Praha 2018). Most recently she has published *Obrazy nepřítele v Československu 1948–1956* [Images of the Enemy in Czechoslovakia 1948–1956] (Praha 2020).

Veronika Pehe
is a researcher at the Institute of Contemporary History of the Czech Academy of Sciences in Prague. Her research interests include the cultural memory and memory politics in Central and Eastern Europe and the cultural history of the post-socialist economic transformations. She has published on questions of nostalgia, retro, popular culture, oral history and the memory of the 1990s. Pehe is the author of *Velvet Retro: Postsocialist Nostalgia and the Politics of Heroism in Czech Popular Culture* (New York 2020).

Jan Pelikán
is a Professor at the Department of South Slavonic and Balkan Studies of the Faculty of Arts, Charles University in Prague. His main area of interest is the modern history of the Balkans, with a focus on the South Slavic countries. He has published, among other works, the monographs: *Jihoslovanská krize: Kořeny a souvislosti* [The South Slavic Crisis: Roots and Context] (Praha 1996), *Jugoslávie a východní blok 1953–1958* [Yugoslavia and the Eastern Bloc 1953–1958] (Praha 2001), *Jugoslávie a Pražské jaro* [Yugoslavia and the Prague Spring] (Praha 2008), and *Novými cestami: Kosovo v letech 1958–1969* [New Ways: Kosovo in the Years 1958–1969] (Praha 2014). The latter book has also been published in Serbian under the title *Novim putevima: Kosovo 1958–1969* (Beograd 2022). He is also the co-author of the collective works *Dějiny jihoslovanských zemí* [History of South Slavic Countries] (Praha 1998) and *Dějiny Srbska* [History of Serbia] (Praha 2005). His most recent publication, written together with Ondřej Vojtěchovský, is *V čase odkvétání: Československo a Jugoslávie v období pozdního socialismu 1969–1989* [Blooming Away: Czechoslovakia and Yugoslavia in the Period of Late Socialism, 1969–1989] (Praha 2021).

Václav Sixta
is a historian specialized in memory studies, public history and the history of pedagogy. He works at the Department of Education at the Institute for the Study of Totalitarian Regimes in Prague. His main area of interest is the pedagogy of contemporary history, cultures of memory with a focus on museums as institutions of memory. He also focuses on the theory and methodology of historical science, especially on the theory of historical biography. He co-authored the book entitled *Jak vystavujeme soudobé dějiny: Muzeum v diskusi* [How We Exhibit Contemporary History: Museum in Debate] (Praha 2020) with Jakub Jareš and Čeněk Pýcha and co-edited the publication *Metodika edukace soudobých dějin v muzeích* [Methodology of Contemporary History Education in Museums] (Praha 2021) with Tomáš Drobný. Sixta is also the co-author of several educational tools such as the digital application *Historylab.cz* and an inquiry-based textbook of contemporary history for lower secondary schools.

Rose Smith
is currently pursuing a joint doctoral programme at the Faculty of Social Sciences, Charles University in Prague and the Graduate School for the Humanities at the University of Groningen. Her doctoral project focuses on the representation of the communist past in Czech, Hungarian and Polish museums and how it builds three levels of identity: the city, the nation, and Europe. She holds an MA in Political Philosophy from Ural Federal University (*Uralskii federalnyi universitet*) in Ekaterinburg as well as an International Masters in Economy, State and Society (IMESS) jointly awarded by University College London and Charles University. Her Masters dissertation examined the Museum of Communism (*Muzeum komunismu*) in Prague.

Tomas Sniegon
is a Czech-Swedish historian and an associate professor in European studies at Lund University in Sweden. His research focuses on modern European history, particularly the history of Central and Eastern Europe during and after the Cold War, and the development and problems of Soviet communism and its aftermath. He has published studies and articles on the Holocaust in Czech and Slovak historical cultures, about the problems of the institutionalization of historical memory and on the memory of the Soviet Gulag in present-day Russia. He is the author of *Vanished History: The Holocaust in Czech and Slovak Historical Culture* (New York and Oxford 2014), which was also published in Czech under the title *Zmizelá historie: Holokaust v české a slovenské historické kultuře* (Praha 2017). He is currently preparing a book based on the critical analysis of his interviews with Vladimir Semichastnyi, the chairman of the KGB from 1961 to 1967, which he had conducted in Moscow in the 1990s.

Daniela Spenser
is a historian of Czech origin, settled in Mexico. She is a researcher at the Centro de Investigaciones y Estudios Superiores en Antropología Social in Mexico City and a leading scholar in the field of Cold War studies. Her research focuses on Soviet-Latin American relations and on Mexican leftist political movements. She is the author of *The Impossible Triangle: Mexico, Soviet Russia, and the United States in the 1920s* (Durham, NC 1999) and *Stumbling Its Way Through Mexico: The Early Years of Communist International* (Tuscaloosa, AL 2011; originally published in Spanish) and co-editor with Gilbert M. Joseph of *In From the Cold: Latin America's New Encounter With the Cold War* (Durham 2008). More recently, she has published a monograph about one of the foremost Mexican labour leaders of the twentieth century entitled *In Combat: The Life of Lombardo Toledano* (Leiden 2020). She is now working on a book of the prosopography of her family during the Second World War and the Cold War in Czechoslovakia.

Jakub Štofaník
is a Slovak historian and ethnologist. He works at the Department of Modern Political and Intellectual History of the Masaryk Institute and Archives of the Czech Academy of Sciences in Prague. His research focuses on social and cultural history of nineteenth- and twentieth-century Europe, church history and questions of religiosity. He is the author of a monograph entitled *Medzi krížom a kladivom: Recepcia sociálneho myslenia v katolíckej cirkvi v prvej polovici 20. storočia* [Between Cross and Hammer: Reception of Social Thought in the Catholic

Church in the First Half of the Twentieth Century] (Praha 2017) and the co-author with Martin Jemelka of *Víra a nevíra ve stínu továrních komínů: Náboženský život průmyslového dělnictva v českých zemích (1918–1938)* [Faith Emerging in the Shadow of Factory Chimneys: Religious Life of the Industrial Working Class in the Czech Lands, 1918–1938] (Praha 2020).

Miloslav Szabó
is a Slovak historian. He works at the Department of Germanic, Dutch and Scandinavian Studies of the Faculty of Arts, Comenius University in Bratislava. His research interests include the cultural and intellectual history of Central Europe in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, the history of racism, anti-Semitism and nationalism and their connection with Catholicism, as well as the history of the Holocaust. He is the author of several monographs, including *Od slov k činom: Slovenské národné hnutie a antisemitizmus (1875–1922)* [From Words to Action: The Slovak National Movement and Anti-Semitism, 1875–1922] (Bratislava 2014), published in German under the title *Von Worten zu Taten: Die slowakische Nationalbewegung und der Antisemitismus, 1875–1922* (Berlin 2014) and *Klérofašisti: Slovenskí kňazi a pokušenie radikálnej politiky (1935–1945)* [The Clero-Fascists: Slovak Priests and the Temptation of Radical Politics, 1935–1945] (Bratislava 2019). Together with Michal Frankl, he published *Budování státu bez antisemitismu: Násilí, diskurz loajality a vznik Československa* [Building a State without Anti-Semitism: Violence, the Discourse of Loyalty and the Creation of Czechoslovakia] (Praha 2015). His most recent publication is *Kráska a zvrhlík: Rasa a rod v literatúre 19. a 20. storočia* [The Beauty and the Pervert: Race and Gender in the Nineteenth and Twentieth-Century Literature] (Bratislava 2022).

Tomáš Zahradníček
is a researcher at the Institute of Contemporary History of the Czech Academy of Sciences in Prague. He focuses on Czech political and cultural history in the twentieth century and on international relations in the Central European region. He has published the monographs entitled *Jak vyhrát cizí válku: Češi, Poláci a Ukrajinci 1914–1918* [How to Win Someone Else's War: Czechs, Poles and Ukrainians, 1914–1918] (Praha 2000) and *Polské poučení z pražského jara: Tři studie z dějin politického myšlení (1968–1981)* [Polish Lessons from the Prague Spring: Three Essays on the History of Political Thought, 1968–1981] (Praha 2011). He is the co-author of a number of monographs, including *Rozděleni minulostí: Vytváření politických identit v České republice po roce 1989* [Divided by the Past: Political Identities in the Czech Republic after 1989] (Praha 2011), and with Adéla Gjuričová *Návrat parlamentu: Češi a Slováci ve Federálním shromáždění 1989–1992* [The Return of Parliament: Czechs and Slovaks in the Federal Assembly, 1989–1992] (Praha 2018) and *Dlouhý volební rok 1990 ve střední Evropě: Očekávání, koncepty, praxe* [The Long Election Year of 1990 in Central Europe: Expectations, Concepts, Practices] (Praha 2021). Most recently, Zahradníček published an edition of Jacek Kuroń's late essays *Naděje a rozčarování: Texty z let 1989–2004* [Hopes and Disenchantments: Texts from the Years 1989–2004] (Praha 2022).

Petr Zídek

is a historian, journalist and the editor-in-chief of the review *Paměť a dějiny* [Memory and History], published by the Institute for the Study of Totalitarian Regimes in Prague. His main areas of expertise are biographies of important twentieth-century personalities, international relations and Czechoslovak relations with the Global South. He is the author of the monograph *Československo a francouzská Afrika 1954–1965* [Czechoslovakia and French Africa 1954–1965] (Praha 2006) and co-author, both with Karel Sieber, of the books *Československo a subsaharská Afrika v letech 1948–1989* [Czechoslovakia and Sub-Saharan Africa 1948–1989] and *Československo a Blízký východ v letech 1948–1989* [Czechoslovakia and the Middle East 1948–1989] (Praha 2007 and 2009). Among many other works, he has published the biographies *Příběh herečky: Dělnická prokurátorka Ludmila Brožová a její svět* [The Story of an Actress: The Workers' Prosecutor Ludmila Brožová and Her World] (Praha 2010), *Utajená láska prezidenta Masaryka: Oldra Sedlmayerová (1884–1954)* [The Secret Love of President Masaryk: Oldra Sedlmayerová, 1884–1954] (Praha 2017) and the historical reports *Češi v srdci temnoty: Sedmadvacet historických reportáží o prvním čtvrtstoletí vlády komunistů* [Czechs in the Heart of Darkness: Twenty-Seven Historical Reports on the First Quarter Century of Communist Rule] (Praha 2013) and *Po boku: Šestatřicet manželek našich premiérů 1918–2018* [By Their Side: Thirty-Six Wives of Czech Prime Ministers 1918–2018] (Praha 2018).

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Note on Transliteration

For the transliteration of Russian into English, we used the ALA-Library of Congress transliteration scheme. Following established conventions, in the case of names and words that are well known and frequently used in English-speaking media and academic discourse, we departed from the ALA transliterations using, for example, Yeltsin rather than Eltsin, Yurchak rather than Iurchak, Leon Trotsky rather than Lev Trotskii, Felix Dzerzhinsky rather than Feliks Dzerzhinskii. All names in bibliographic references are cited according to the ALA scheme.

Articles and Essays

Hitler’s Priests in Slovakia?

On the Convergence of Catholicism and Fascism in Nazi “New Europe”

Miloslav Szabó

Department of German, Dutch and Scandinavian Studies,
Faculty of Philosophy, Comenius University, Bratislava

Catholicism and fascism. Research into the connections between these different phenomena, particularly in the first half of the twentieth century, has its own history. Immediately after the Second World War, Catholicism became for many Marxist contemporaries the most striking form of “clerical fascism” – a concept that served as a tool for ideologically motivated polemics, directed particularly against the Catholic hierarchy and collaborators in Central and Southeastern Europe.[1] Yet, the term was also used up to the 1970s by non-Marxist historians.[2] This changed during the 1980s, when despite numerous “points of agreement” between fascism and Catholicism, they were now supposed to have been fully

[1] On the Independent State of Croatia (1941–1945), see NOVAK, Viktor: *Magnum Crimen: Half a Century of Clericalism in Croatia. Dedicated to the Known and Unknown Victims of Clericalism*. Jagodina, Gambit 2011 [original edition: *Magnum crimen: Pola vijeka klerikalizma u Hrvatskoj.* Zagreb, Nakladni zavod Hrvatsk 1948]. On Austria between 1933 and 1938, see GULICK, Charles A.: *Austria from Habsburg to Hitler*, Vol. 1: *Labor’s Workshop of Democracy*. Berkeley, University of California Press 1948, pp. 5–6. Notwithstanding its ideological contamination in the postwar “people’s democracies”, the term “clerical fascism” or “clerico-fascism” originated in Italy. It was coined by the priest and politician Don Luigi Sturzo (1871–1959) and initially described the sympathies of some deputies of Sturzo’s democratic Italian People’s Party for early fascism. See POLLARD, John F.: Conservative Catholics and Italian Fascism: The Clerico-fascists. In: BLINKHORN, Martin (ed.): *Fascists and Conservatives: The Radical Right and the Establishment of Twentieth Century Europe.* London, Routledge 1990, pp. 31–49.

[2] JELINEK, Yeshayahu A.: *The Parish Republic: Hlinka’s Slovak People’s Party, 1939–1945.* Boulder (Co.), East European Quarterly 1976, p. 138. Jelinek later renounced the term “clerical fascism” because it “has never been adequately defined or analyzed, despite its frequent use in both West and East”. (JELINEK, Yeshayahu A.: On the Condition of Women in Wartime Slovakia and Croatia. In: FRUCHT, Richard (ed.): *Labyrinth of Nationalism, Complexities of Diplomacy: Essays in Honor of Charles and Barbara Jelavich.* Columbus, University of Missouri Press 1992, pp. 168–184, here pp. 207–208, fn. 1.)

incompatible due to the unbridgeable differences in terms of ideology, the relationship between state and church, and education policy. According to Richard J. Wolff and Jörg K. Hoensch, the more revolutionary the regime appeared, the less support it enjoyed from the Church.[3]

This view on the relationship between Catholicism and fascism prevailed in some aspects until very recently.[4] There are only a few recent studies which have taken a different approach to this issue. Derek Hastings investigated the vulnerability of a certain stratum of Bavarian reform Catholics to early National Socialism.[5] Similar patterns could be observed among the Italian "clerico-fascists", a group of Catholic politicians who expected assistance from Benito Mussolini in enforcing their common anti-left struggle and, in a broader sense, in their Catholic re-Christianization efforts.[6] The shared Bolshevik enemy ensured that the Pope himself, as well as his officials and diplomats, were exposed to the "fascist temptation" while differentiating between anti-clericals and allegedly pro-Catholic factions within Mussolini's and Hitler's parties respectively.[7] The initial enthusiasm of many interwar European Catholics for fascist movements and regimes may thus provide evidence for David Roberts's recent claim about the essential

[3] WOLFF, Richard J. – HOENSCH, Jörg K.: Introduction. In: IDEM: *Catholics, the State, and the European Radical Right, 1919–1945.* Boulder (Co.), Social Sciences Monographs 1987, pp. xi–xii.

[4] See MORO, Renato: Church, Catholics and Fascist Movements in Europe: An Attempt at a Comparative Analysis. In: NELIS, Jan – MORELLI, Anne – PRAET, Danni (eds.): *Catholicism and Fascism in Europe, 1918–1945.* Hildesheim, Olms 2015, pp. 97–100, here p. 99.

[5] HASTINGS, Derek: *Catholicism and the Roots of Nazism: Religious Identity and National Socialism.* Oxford, Oxford University Press 2010. Hastings reaffirms and extends Richard Steigmann-Gall's thesis on "Nazi conceptions of Christianity" which caused a controversy over the Christian identity of Nazi ideologues and politicians, particularly due to their claim of either still being Protestant "German Christians" or, and this was the core of the debate, allegedly never completely becoming un-Christian Nazi "neo-pagans". (See HEXHAM, Irving: Inventing "Paganists": A Close Reading of Richard Steigmann-Gall's The Holy Reich. In: *Journal of Contemporary History*, Vol. 42, No. 1 (2007), pp. 59–78.)

[6] See BARAGLI, Matteo: The Centro Nazionale Italiano: Profiles and Projects of Italian Clerico-Fascism (1924–1930). In: NELIS, J. – MORELLI, A. – PRAET, D.: *Catholicism and Fascism in Europe*, pp. 277–292.

[7] See CHAMEDES, Giuliana: *A Twentieth Century Crusade: The Vatican's Struggle to Remake Christian Europe.* Cambridge (Mass.), Harvard University Press 2019, p. 139. The term "fascist temptation" was coined independently by Giuliana Chamedes and me. (See SZABÓ, Miloslav: *Klérofašisti: Slovenskí kňazi a pokušenie radikálnej politiky (1935–1945).* Bratislava, Slovart 2019. This study is based in part on my book.)

"openness, uncertainty, and fluidity of the era" which, in Catholic circles, fed illusions that a status quo with the radical Right could have been attained.[8]

The first serious attempt to re-conceptualize "clerical fascism" was made by the British historian Roger Griffin. Based on Italian historian Emilio Gentile's distinction between politicized religion and the sacralization of politics, Griffin's definition restricts the usage of "clerical fascism" to situations in which agents of organized religions or churches were closely involved with secular and "revolutionary" fascist ideology or even strove for the "syntheses" or "hybridizations" of the two. In the former case, they succumbed to the temptation of a fascist "rebirth" while ignoring its secular and revolutionary substance because they believed that common enemies – Bolshevism, materialism, freemasonry and the Jews – guaranteed the best ideological balance. Griffin identified such "collusion" in the conditions of the wartime Slovak State and the Independent State of Croatia. A different situation arises when "collusion" makes room for "identification and synthesis". Here Griffin refers primarily to the so-called "German Christians" who tried to merge Nazi ideology with German Protestantism.[9] Ultimately, from his reconceptualization of the term "clerical fascism", Griffin arrives at conclusions that should also be adopted by other historians. Among which, the most significant for further research of "clerical fascism" seems to be the question of agency. According to Griffin, the term should not denote a regime as a whole, but rather its factions or individual actors and collaborators.[10]

Griffin's conceptualization of "clerical fascism" was recently revised by the Slovak historian Hana Kubátová and the Czech political scientist Michal Kubát.[11] In contrast to Griffin, Kubátová and Kubát argue that "clerical fascism" is an authentic and comprehensive concept, encompassing all levels of politics: ideology, actors and the regime. They criticize Griffin's concept because it allegedly narrows the issue to the level of agency, that is, to the clergymen. However, Kubátová and Kubát do not consider that the Catholic Church in particular simply did not merge with fascism anywhere, at any level of the concept of the political

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[8] ROBERTS, David D.: *Fascist Interactions: Proposals for a New Approach to Fascism and its Era, 1919–1945*. New York, Berghahn 2018.

[9] GRIFFIN, Roger: The "Holy Storm": "Clerical Fascism" through the Lens of Modernism. In: FELDMAN, Matthew – TURDA, Marius – GEORGESCU, Tudor (eds.): *Clerical Fascism in Interwar Europe*. London, Routledge 2008, pp. 1–16, here p. 8. On the convergence of religious and political notions of "rebirth" see POLLARD, John: "Clerical Fascism": Context, Overview and Conclusion. In: *Ibid.*, pp. 221–234, here pp. 222–223.

[10] GRIFFIN, R.: The "Holy Storm", p. 13.

[11] KUBÁTOVÁ, Hana – KUBÁT, Michal: The Priest and the State: Clerical Fascism in Slovakia and Theory. In: *Nations and Nationalism*, Vol. 27, No. 3 (2021), pp. 734–749.

system to which they refer.[12] As mentioned above, Griffin does not suggest the term "clerical fascism" to analyze the phenomena of the sacralization of politics, but rather the politicization of religion. We should not confuse the concept of "clerical fascism" with the concept of political religions.[13] This does not mean that there are no intrusions and interactions between the two areas; quite the contrary. To precisely understand these hybrid forms, according to Griffin, it is necessary and useful to focus on the level of actors.

Another problem with Kubátová and Kubát's reconceptualization is the somewhat vague understanding of fascism. They do not seem to be entirely convinced about the usefulness of Griffin's definition: the "fascist minimum" or synthesis of revolutionary "palingenesis" with ultra-nationalism.[14] Nevertheless, they do not refer to any other theory of fascism. Instead, they offer a rather undifferentiated self-definition. According to them, fascism "can exist in any undemocratic regime that exhibits (subscribes to) elements of generic fascist ideology or exhibits (subscribes to) the systematic elements of a particular Italian fascist regime, even if not directly 'fascist' in the sense of copying the Italian model".[15] Fascism (and "clerical fascism") can thus already be identified on the basis of supposedly typical elements such as "dictatorship", "strong corporativism" and a "leadership principle and a state-party that represents the state and speaks for the nation".[16] What is *fascist* about these characteristics that we do *not* find in the Catholic authoritarian regimes of the time? The authors acknowledge that "bridging Catholicism and fascism was not an easy task".[17] However, applying the term "thin ideology" in the "coming together of Christian (or religious) and fascist principles" cannot be a solution, because we still do not know what is essentially "fascist" (or "Christian") about it.[18]

Even in light of this reconceptualization, it is clear that a more dynamic method is needed that would allow us to capture the dynamics of *fascistization*. Using the example of the Slovak State like Kubátová and Kubát, I show in this article how clergymen turned into fascists. This does not mean that I ignore the Slovak State's ideology or the regime of the Hlinka's Slovak People's Party (*Hlinkova slovenská ľudová strana*, HSĽS), both of which were secular despite the reference to religion in the constitution and the high number of Catholic priests in the ranks

[12] Ibid., pp. 739–741.

[13] See GENTILE, Emilio: *Politics as Religion.* Princeton (NJ), Princeton University Press 2006.

[14] See GRIFFIN, Roger: *The Nature of Fascism.* London, Psychology Press 1993.

[15] KUBÁTOVÁ, H. – KUBÁT, M.: The Priest and the State, p. 741.

[16] Ibid.

[17] Ibid., p. 742.

[18] Ibid., p. 746.

of the HSĽS. Nor do I argue that the politicization of religion in order to sacralize politics must have come from the clergymen in every case. The Slovak historian Anton Hruboň has shown that attempts to instrumentalize Catholicism for a fascist political religion were first made by the Slovak Prime Minister and collaborator of Nazi Germany Vojtech Tuka (1880–1946), who, in the 1920s, tried to form the first fascist paramilitary organization, *Rodobrana*, as a quasi-religious order with its own liturgy, pilgrimages and sacraments.[19] The aim of this study is rather to analyze the fascistization of the Catholic clergy, which, despite the secular character of the wartime Slovak State regime, was an important political actor.

The recent historical debate on the relationship between Catholicism and fascism using the example of Jozef Tiso (1887–1947), the leading HSĽS politician and later Slovak president, can serve as a starting point for the investigation of this issue. The wartime Slovak State, also known as the "First" Slovak Republic, in reality a satellite of Nazi Germany, came into being after the dissolution of Czechoslovakia in 1939.[20] The regime of the Slovak State was from the outset associated with Catholicism, mostly because Jozef Tiso was himself a Catholic priest. After the Second World War and the establishment of communist rule, the term "clerical fascism" was often used when talking about the regime of the HSĽS.[21] However, in his comprehensive biography of Jozef Tiso, the American historian James Mace Ward rejects "clerical fascism" as a tool for explaining Tiso's ideology. Instead, Ward suggests a new term, "Christian-National Socialist", which expresses the paradox of Tiso's simultaneous commitment to Catholic conservatism and secular ultranationalist/fascist "progressivism".[22]

This article is not primarily concerned with ascertaining whether Jozef Tiso could extract himself from this dilemma. Following the British historian Aristotle Kallis's approach, I instead illuminate the growing "'fascistization' of a conservative-authoritarian-religious platform from within/above [...] rather than [...]

[19] HRUBOŇ, Anton: Pioneers of Clerical Fascism? Mythical Language of Revolutionary Political Catholicism in Slovakia and Visions of a "New Nation". In: *Konštantínove listy / Constantine's Letters*, Vol. 14, No. 1 (2021), pp. 131–145.

[20] The Slovak State was the official name from the dissolution of Czechoslovakia in March 1939 until the adoption of the Slovak Constitution in June 1939. It was then officially called the Slovak Republic.

[21] See SZABÓ, Miloslav: For God and Nation: Catholicism and the Far-Right in the Central European Context (1918–1945). In: *Historický časopis*, Vol. 66, No. 5 (2018), pp. 885–900.

[22] WARD, James Mace: *Priest, Politician, Collaborator: Jozef Tiso and the Making of Fascist Slovakia*. Ithaca (NY), Cornell University Press 2013, p. 289. No clear consensus exists even about whether the HSĽS regime in Slovakia was fascist or not. For an overview see SZABÓ, M.: For God and Nation.

the genesis of an independent fascist constituency in Slovakia”.[23] What gave momentum to this process was the ideological affinity in terms of Catholic social teachings misunderstood as “Slovak National Socialism” (*slovenský národný socializmus*) and the invocation of a shared “enemy”. An analysis of the fascistization of Catholic social doctrine reveals the dynamic moment that is lacking even in recent research into such hybrid forms of fascism. Although this fascistization did not ultimately result in “strong corporativism”, which Kubát and Kubátová claim in the Slovak case to have been a specific fascist feature,[24] it is more important than the oft vague appeals to Christianity to understand the Slovak variant of “clerical fascism”. In addition, following Roger Griffin’s approach, if we wish to verify the adequacy of the concept of “clerical fascism”, we must move away from the realm of pure concepts and ask who conveyed these concepts. Jozef Tiso was indeed not the only Slovak “clerico-fascist”.

A Matter of Agency: The “Clerico-Fascists”

In a later study, Roger Griffin applied his conclusions specifically to Catholicism, further stressing its ideological incompatibility with “revolutionary” fascism.[25] Surprisingly, he did not take into account newer works, which to a significant extent fulfilled his request to focus on individual “clerico-fascists” – especially Kevin Spicer’s *Hitler’s Priests*, which deals with a rather small group within the German Catholic clergy, who actively supported Hitler and, in some cases, even spread Nazi ideology without rescinding their Catholic identity.[26] Spicer’s approach was further developed by the German historian Thomas Forstner, who distinguishes between two types of “brown priests”. To a certain extent, they correspond to Griffin’s differentiation on the level of ideology and theology: on the one hand, there were attempts to achieve consensus and display loyalty to the state, while on the other there was active collaboration. The first group agreed with the important points of Nazi doctrine but did not identify with it as a whole. The motives for attempts at consensus and displays of loyalty were typically nationalism,

[23] KALLIS, Aristotle: *Genocide and Fascism: The Eliminationist Drive in Fascist Europe*. London, Routledge 2008, p. 245.

[24] KUBÁTOVÁ, H. – KUBÁT, M.: The Priest and the State, p. 741.

[25] GRIFFIN, Roger: An Unholy Alliance? The Convergence between Revealed Religion and Sacralized Politics in Inter-War Europe. In: NELIS, J. – MORELLI, A. – PRAET, D. (eds.): *Catholicism and Fascism*, pp. 49–66.

[26] SPICER, Kevin I.: *Hitler’s Priests: Catholic Clergy and National Socialism*. DeKalb, Northern Illinois University Press 2008.

issues of social justice, anti-communism and antisemitism. Leaders of the German Catholic Church tolerated such displays to a large extent and those priests thus had little interest in leaving the Church, unlike a very small group of active collaborators.[27]

Whereas Spicer and Forstner focused primarily on active Nazi collaborators within the German Catholic clergy, the considerably larger section of "clerical fellow-travelers" and "clerical opportunists" received much less attention.[28] In this context, the Slovak historian Samuel Trizuljak's reference to James Chappel's recent investigation of "paternal Catholic modernism" sheds more light on the motivations of such "clerical fellow-travelers".[29] Chappel's argument is based on the selective approach of German Catholics – among them several prominent clerics and theologians – to "totalitarianism".[30] While Bolshevism remained a specter, they perceived Nazism more benevolently. Chappel explained this through the manner in which German Catholic paternalists projected onto Nazism the idea of a secular "Western" state guaranteeing religious freedoms and rights, which allowed them to overlook the brutal trampling of the rights of minorities that culminated in the genocide of the Jews and the Roma. The American historian did not hesitate to label German Catholic paternalists as convinced National Socialists ("millions of Catholics learned to be Nazis").[31] Without referencing their studies, Chappel eventually comes to a similar conclusion as Spicer and Forstner. Distinguishing between a few fascist extremists and the large mass of the Catholic intelligentsia – and this also applies to the clergy – he exposes to varying degrees to the temptation of fascism: "Paternal Catholic modernism, as a model, cannot really help us to understand committed fascists or ultranationalists, who were rather marginal in the Church. It helps us to understand, though, the more mainstream view that there was at least no inherent conflict between Catholicism and the new style of dictatorial rule, and that some form of fascism should

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[27] FORSTNER, Thomas: Braune Priester: Katholische Geistliche im Spannungsfeld von Katholizismus und Nationalsozialismus. In: GAILUS, Manfred (ed.): *Täter und Komplizen in Theologie und Kirche 1933–1945.* Göttingen, Wallstein 2015, pp. 113–139.

[28] See EATWELL, Roger: Reflections on Fascism and Religion. In: *Totalitarian Movements and Political Religions*, Vol. 4, No. 3 (2003), pp. 145–166, here p. 146.

[29] TRIZULJAK, Samuel: Klérofašizmus, alebo prezentizmus? In: *Dějiny – teorie – kritika*, Vol. 17, No. 1 (2020), pp. 101–111.

[30] CHAPPEL, James: *Catholic Modern: The Challenge of Totalitarianism and the Remaking of the Church.* Cambridge (Mass.), Harvard University Press 2018.

[31] *Ibid.*, p. 93.

be welcomed, if cautiously, as an antidote to Communism and as a spiritually healthy form of modernity."[32]

The "paternal Catholic modernist's" inclination towards fascism is reflected in the "Christian-National Socialist" category as proposed by James Ward to characterize Jozef Tiso, which may be a suitable tool to analyze the hybridization of Catholic and fascist discourses in the context of the Slovak State.[33] Ward took Jozef Tiso's Christian Social roots seriously which were, under the impact of the "fascist effect" (as defined by Kallis), transformed into a sort of "nationalist socialism" in the sense that the Israeli historian Zeev Sternhell applied the term to French fascism.[34] However, Ward's proposed category needs to be refined to encompass the dynamics of fascistization.[35] It should therefore be complemented by the analysis of how "paternal Catholic modernists" turned into, or were at least heading into the direction of being, "clerico-fascists".

In what follows, I first outline the context of Slovak "clerico-fascism". Then, I investigate how Catholic social teachings were distorted to what Tiso and other Slovak "clerico-fascists" called "Slovak National Socialism".[36] Specifically, I examine the position of the Slovak "clerico-fascists" within the European New Right and, last but not least, in light of the "centrality of corporatism at that time", particularly whether they were offering their own "third way," an alternative to both liberal capitalism and the socialist planned economy.[37] Unlike David Roberts, who suggests that in Austria between 1933 and 1938 "a more deeply symbiotic or even synergistic relationship" existed between fascism and Catholicism,[38] in the Slovak case we encounter different constellations. What inspired the "Christian National Socialist" Jozef Tiso to go far beyond Catholic social teachings and corporatism toward the ultranationalist "rebirth" or the creation of a "New Man"?[39]

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[32] *Ibid.*, p. 67.

[33] WARD, J. M.: *Priest, Politician, Collaborator*, p. 213. Tiso already used this term to describe himself (see TISO, Jozef: *Prejavy a články*, Vol. 2: *1938–1944*. Miroslav Fabricius and Katarína Hradská (eds.). Bratislava, Academic Electronic Press 2007, p. 248).

[34] WARD, J. M.: *Priest, Politician, Collaborator*, s. 289. See STERNHELL, Zeev: *Neither Right nor Left: Fascist Ideology in France.* Princeton (NJ), Princeton University Press 1995.

[35] See KALLIS, Aristotle: The "Regime-Model" of Fascism: A Typology. In: *European History Quarterly,* Vol. 30, No. 1 (2000), pp. 77–104.

[36] See MÜNZ, Teodor: Social Thought in Religious Philosophy of Slovakia in the First Half of the Twentieth Century. In: *Human Affairs*, Vol. 1, No. 2 (1991), pp. 160–171, here p. 163.

[37] ROBERTS, D. D.: *Fascist Interactions*, p. 51.

[38] *Ibid.*, p. 104.

[39] John Pollard argues that the analytical use of the concept "clerical fascism" is indeed justified because both interwar fascists and Christians aimed at a collective "rebirth", whether in nationalist-racist – as in Griffin's theory of fascism – or in spiritual-social terms. Catholics

Because of the Nazi rejection of genuine corporatism, which was the real point of reference for Tiso, the answers will have to be found within the Nazi semantics of "work". This category appears to be central to my understanding of the specifically Slovak form of "clerical fascism" because it oscillated and mediated between the modernized social doctrine of the Church and the racist ideas of the national community (*Volksgemeinschaft*).[40]

Who Were the Slovak "Clerico-Fascists"?

Surprisingly, the results of systematic historical research into the agency of "clerical fascism" are hardly available for areas outside of the German-speaking world.[41] This is striking not least of all regarding Slovakia, where a relatively high percentage of Catholic priests could already be found among the ranks of the HSĽS during the interwar period.[42] Its founder and leader was the Catholic priest Andrej Hlinka (1864–1938), whom the party was named after.[43] The HSĽS was a successor of the prewar Slovak People's Party (*Slovenská ľudová strana*, SĽS), which in 1905 seceded from the Catholic People's Party (*Katolikus néppárt*) which was founded at the end of the nineteenth century in the Kingdom of Hungary as a response to the liberal legislature of the Hungarian government. Its Slovak representatives and supporters displayed a multiclass identity in which loyalty towards

in particular had hoped they would achieve such a rebirth with the help of fascist and far-right movements and regimes. (POLLARD, J. F.: "Clerical Fascism", pp. 222–223.)

[40] Most recently this issue is also explored in LENČÉŠOVÁ, Michaela: The Concept of "Nation" and "National Community" in the Thinking of Štefan Polakovič: A Case of the Nazi Idea of Volksgemeinschaft Spread within Slovak National Socialism. In: *Forum Historiae*, Vol. 16, No. 1 (2022), pp. 69–87.

[41] This is curious not least of all with regard to the Independent State of Croatia, where several Catholic clerics joined the fascist Ustashas and even participated in their atrocities. In her recent study on the convergence of religion and politics within the Independent State of Croatia, Irina Ognyanova still refuses to use the term "clerical fascism", without taking Griffin's reconceptualization into account. (OGNYANOVA, Irina: Between the Racial State and the Christian Rampart: Ustasha Ideology, Catholic Values, and National Purification. In: YEOMANS, Rory (ed.): *The Utopia of Terror: Life and Death in Wartime Croatia*. Rochester (NY), University of Rochester Press 2015, pp. 165–187. For a different approach, see BIONDICH, Mark: From *Antemurale Christianitatis* to *Antemurale Humanitatis*: Fascisticizing Catholicism in Interwar Croatia. In: NELIS, J. – MORELLI, A. – PRAET, D. (eds.): *Catholicism and Fascism in Europe*, pp. 357–366.)

[42] See FELAK, James Ramon: *"At the Price of the Republic": Hlinka's Slovak People's Party, 1929–1938*. Pittsburgh (PA), Pittsburgh University Press 1994.

[43] See recently HOLEC, Roman: *Andrej Hlinka: Otec národa?* Bratislava, Marenčin PT 2019.

the Catholic Church was mixed with Hungarian (not Magyar) patriotism and an awareness of ethnic and linguistic belonging to the Slovaks.[44] After the collapse of Austria-Hungary and the formation of Czechoslovakia, in which Slovaks were officially a part of the Czechoslovak nation, the Slovak clergy only gradually lost its loyalty to the Holy Crown of Hungary – despite early cases in which the HSĽS severed all links with some Hungarian irredentists.[45] Starting out as a mostly religiously motivated opposition to the secular political culture of the Czechoslovak elites, the HSĽS became a religious ethnic party requesting political autonomy for the Slovak people. Especially in the second half of the 1930s, more radical steps were being called for in its ranks, with authoritarian regimes such as that in Italy or in neighbouring Poland serving as models, later followed by a turn towards Nazi Germany.[46] Accompanied by an ideological radicalization through the creeds of anti-communism and antisemitism, this trend culminated in the proclamation of Slovak autonomy in the autumn of 1938 following the annexation of the Sudetenland as a result of the Munich Agreement.[47] On March 14, 1939, the Slovak State was formed, a satellite of Nazi Germany from the very beginning – conforming to it in foreign as well as to a significant extent in domestic policies.

In the ranks of the HSĽS, now the state party, there was still a large number of Catholic priests. The episcopate welcomed the new regime at first, expecting its lost positions in the education system to be reinstated and, through the Catholic Action inaugurated by Pius XI, also anticipating to be granted a decisive influence on the regulation of society and the oversight of culture.[48] At the same time, they were worried by the activities of politically active priests, whose responsibility inevitably extended to the institution as a whole. This was the case not only for bishop Ján Vojtaššák (1877–1965), who held a seat on the State Council (*Štátna rada*) – a sort of second chamber of parliament – where he failed to clearly condemn the persecution and deportation of Slovak Jews, but also for

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[44] See LORMAN, Thomas: *The Making of the Slovak People's Party: Religion, Nationalism and the Culture War in Early 20th Century Europe*. London, Bloomsbury 2019.

[45] See IDEM: For God and which Nation? The Ideology of František Jehlička, Priest, Politician, and Pariah of the Slovak National Movement. In: *The Slavonic and East European Review*, Vol. 96, No. 3 (2018), pp. 507–540.

[46] See WITT, Sabine: *Nationalistische Intellektuelle in der Slowakei 1918–1945: Kulturelle Praxis zwischen Sakralisierung und Säkularisierung.* Berlin, De Gruyter 2015, pp. 127–129.

[47] See WARD, James Mace: The 1938 First Vienna Award and the Holocaust in Slovakia. In: *Holocaust and Genocide Studies*, Vol. 29, No. 1 (2015), pp. 76–108.

[48] See SLEPČAN, Peter – LETZ, Róbert: *Krížom k svetlu: Život a dielo biskupa Michala Buzalku.* Trnava, Dobrá kniha 2011, pp. 111–151.

a high number of priest deputies.[49] Their numbers were gradually reduced, but many of them continued to hold high positions within the HSĽS structure.[50]

Representatives of the Catholic Church endorsed the Slovak nationalism on which the HSĽS ideology was built. Most of the clerical intellectuals belonged to its conservative wing, which emphasized an autonomous and non-chauvinistic Catholic Slovak nationalism.[51] However, politically active priests had become increasingly radicalized since the declaration of autonomy. This tendency intensified in the summer of 1940, when Adolf Hitler started putting pressure on leading Slovak politicians on account of their excessive autonomy, particularly in the realm of foreign policy. During negotiations in Salzburg between Hitler and his Foreign Minister Joachim von Ribbentrop on the one side, and President Tiso, Prime Minister Vojtech Tuka, and the commander of the paramilitary Hlinka Guard (*Hlinkova garda*), Alexander Mach, on the other, the Nazis supported the so-called radical wing of the HSĽS.[52] However, President Tiso retained his position. It is possible that Hitler was banking on a power struggle similar to that between the state and party authorities in Germany, where a stronger actor could assert himself. If so, his calculation largely worked: Tiso's so-called moderate wing became increasingly radicalized in this struggle and, in the end, he did indeed succeed in winning over the radicals. James Ward called this tactic "driving out one nail with another": "In countering the 'new course', Tiso strove to posit an alternative while building bridges to his [radical] opponents."[53] The "Slovak National Socialism" declared by Tuka became the common programme, although Tiso simultaneously coined the term "People's Slovakia" (*ľudové Slovensko*). What he

[49] See HLAVINKA, Ján – KAMENEC, Ivan: *The Burden of the Past: Catholic Bishop Ján Vojtaššák and the Regime in Slovakia, 1938–1945.* Bratislava, Dokumentačné stredisko holokaustu 2014. Of all members of the Slovak parliament, about one-fifth were priests.

[50] See KAŠŠOVIC, Stanislav: *Politická činnosť katolíckych kňazov – poslancov Slovenského snemu 1939–1945.* Nitra, Gorazd 2011, p. 25. In 1940 "priests led twenty-seven county branches of the party out of fifty-eight, and two district organizations out of six. The clergy provided the mayor of the capital, Bratislava, as well as mayors of other localities." (JELINEK, Yeshayahu A.: Clergy and Fascism: The Hlinka Party in Slovakia and the Croatian Ustasha Movement. In: LARSEN, Stein Ugelvik – HAGTWET, Bernt – MYKLEBUST, Jan Peter (eds.): *Who Were the Fascists? Social Roots of European Fascism*. Bergen – Oslo – Tromsø, Universitetsforlagen 1980, pp. 323–376, here p. 368.

[51] See MÜNZ, Teodor: Nacionálna otázka u teológov za Slovenského štátu. In: *Filozofia*, Vol. 47, No. 1 (1992), pp. 21–29.

[52] See LIPTÁK, Ľubomír: Príprava a priebeh salzburských rokovaní roku 1940 medzi predstaviteľmi Nemecka a Slovenského štátu. In: *Historický časopis,* Vol. 13, No. 3 (1965), pp. 329–365.

[53] WARD, J. M.: *Priest, Politician, Collaborator*, p. 213.

specifically had in mind was an ethnically clean Slovakia, which he also concretized by using the German term *völkisch*.[54]

After Nazi Germany's intervention in 1940 in the internal political structure of the Slovak State in order to support the pro-German course, the notion of "Slovak National Socialism" took root also among the clergy, though with an emphasis on social politics based on the Nazi model and usually without explicit racism – although not without antisemitism – as befitting Hitler's own motto, "Nazism is not for export".[55] Therefore, in what sense and to what extent can we speak of "Hitler's priests" in Slovakia with regard to the religiously coloured nationalism of the majority of Slovak clergymen? Alongside the general euphoria caused by the propaganda showing Hitler and German Nazism as guarantors of Slovak statehood and national "survival", we need to take into account personal motivations and troubles as well as political ambitions. Moreover, anti-communism and antisemitism, which lured many "clerico-fascists" into adopting the language of National Socialism, were significant integrating factors. Added to this was the aversion to clericalism on the part of the Nazi allies, represented in Slovakia not least by the advisor to the Hlinka Guard, Viktor Nageler, who came to Slovakia in the aftermath of the Salzburg negotiations in the summer of 1940. All these factors, alongside pressure from church leaders, could result in either the moderation or radicalization of individual clerics. The declaration of "Slovak National Socialism" in 1940 therefore had the effect of either strengthening or weakening their loyalty case by case. On the ideological level, this meant a gradual detachment from or, on the contrary, an even closer adherence to the Nazi model, including racism and eugenics.

The clerics discussed below were by no means the only "clerico-fascists" among the Catholic clergy, although for most of them loyalty to the church seems to have outweighed the tendency toward radicalization. The research thus far does not permit us to make any definitive judgments about the number of "clerico-fascists" in Slovakia, but most of those who were functionaries of the HSĽS probably

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[54] TISO, J.: *Prejavy a články*, Vol. 2, p. 247.

[55] See FERENČÍK, Ján: Sme za slovenský národný socializmus. In: *Slovák* (27. 10. 1940), no page number; SALATŇAY, Michal: Sociálna orientácia Slovenska. In: *Ibid.* (10. 10. 1940), no page number. On "Slovak National Socialism" see PEKÁR, Martin: Štátna ideológia a jej vplyv na charakter režimu. In: FIAMOVÁ, Martina – SCHVARC, Michal – HLAVINKA, Ján (eds.): *Slovenský štát 1939–1945: Predstavy a realita.* Bratislava, Slovenská akadémia ved 2014, pp. 137–152; HRUBOŇ, Anton: Slovenský národný socializmus v koncepciách Štefana Polakoviča a Stanislava Mečiara: Dva návrhy posalzburského smerovania prvej Slovenskej republiky. In: HRUBOŇ, Anton – LEPIŠ, Juraj – TOKÁROVÁ, Zuzana (eds.): *Slovensko v rokoch neslobody 1938–1989*, Vol. 2: *Osobnosti známe – neznáme. Zborník z vedeckej konferencie, Banská Bystrica 22.–23. mája 2012.* Bratislava, Ústav pamäti národa 2014, pp. 20–34.

became radicalized to some extent.[56] Therefore, the present study is intended to stimulate further research.

From Catholic Estates to the *Völkisch* Community of "Work": The "Clerical Fascist" Ideology of Jozef Tiso

Although paying lip service to Catholic social teachings, from 1940 onwards Jozef Tiso promoted its fascistization. In 1939, in an interview with the German Catholic journal *Schönere Zukunft*, Tiso announced that "the Slovak State [would] be built up on the basis of the papal encyclical 'Quadragesimo Anno'".[57] This meant the organization of Slovak society into professional bodies that would bring together employers and employees. The implementation of this idea was met with incomprehension at the higher levels of government and in the Chambers of Commerce.[58] Ultimately, a constitutional reform in accordance with Catholic corporatism as proposed in the encyclical or, more precisely, in the Austrian and Portuguese constitutions, did not succeed in Slovakia, for the most part due to the aversion of Nazi Germany.[59] The proclamation of "Slovak National Socialism" in the summer of 1940 prompted Tiso's move toward ultra-nationalism and

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[56] This was the case with senior HSĽS officials Ján Ferjenčík and Andrej Marsina. See HRUBOŇ, Anton (ed.): *Msgr. ThDr. Ján Ferenčík (1888–1950): Život, verejné pôsobenie, kontroverzie. Zborník z vedeckého seminára, Ružomberok 6. decembra 2011.* Bratislava, Ústav pamäti národa 2012; MURÁRIKOVÁ, Zdena: Andrej Marsina, rímskokatolícky kňaz a politik: Jeho pôsobenie v politickej sfére v rokoch 1939–1945. In: HRUBOŇ, A. – LEPIŠ, J. – TOKÁROVÁ, Z. (eds.): *Slovensko* v *rokoch neslobody 1938–1989*, Vol. 2, pp. 200–216.

[57] *Archiv bezpečnostních složek* (hereafter *ABS*), Prague, fond (collection, hereafter coll.) Sbírka mikrofilmů [Collection of Microfilms], signatura (signature, hereafter sign.) 144-6-96-237, National Archives Microcopy, No. T 175: Records of the Reichleader of the SS and Chief of the German Police [*Reichsführer der SS und Chef der deutschen Polizei*], Washington 1958, excerpt from an interview with Jozef Tiso. *Quadragesimo Anno* was an encyclical of Pope Pius XI on the reconstruction of social order issued on 15 May 1931. The encyclical was the basis for corporate reforms in several countries, notably in Austria and in Portugal. (See [Pope Pius XI:] Quadragesimo Anno. In: *Encyclicals* [online]. The Holy See, Libreria Editrice Vaticana. [Accessed 2022-07-25.] Available at: https://www.vatican.va/content/pius-xi/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_p-xi_enc_19310515_quadragesimo-anno.html.

[58] See ZAVACKÁ, Katarína: Stavovstvo v teórii a praxi Slovenského štátu (1939–1945). In: *Právněhistorické studie,* Vol. 42, No. 1 (2012), pp. 68–81; BAKA, Igor: *Politický systém a režim Slovenskej republiky v rokoch 1939–1940.* Bratislava, Vojenský historický ústav 2010, pp. 185–192.

[59] See HALLON, Ľudovít – SCHVARC, Michal: Ideas, Reality and the International Context of the Social State in the Slovak Republic of 1939–1945. In: *Historický časopis*, Vol. 63, No. 5 (2015), pp. 915–919.

potentially even toward racism in the sense of the German term *völkisch*, which he used frequently.[60]

Surprisingly, Tiso did not deliver a public speech at the anniversary celebration of the *Quadragesimo Anno* in Bratislava in early 1941. He instead took the ban of the Christian trade unions later that year as an opportunity to provide clarity about his own views on corporatism. Tiso now distinguished between a "wrong" international corporatism and the allegedly only true corporatism, which he equated with National Socialism.[61] And not only that, but he also characterized this distortion as the implementation of the *Qudragesimo Anno*. Tiso still emphasized natural law and individual freedom and criticized leftist collectivism, yet at the same time, he praised the *völkisch* principle, that is "folklorism, tribalism, and – if you will – also racialism [*ľudovosť, kmeňovosť a – keď chceme – aj rasovosť*]".[62]

In 1942, the regime of the Slovak State attained the pinnacle of its power: the "Jewish question" seemed to have been "solved" through the deportation of two thirds of Slovak Jews to the Nazi concentration and death camps, while a special act of parliament established the HSĽS as the state party and Tiso as its "Leader" (*Vodca*).[63] Last but not least, the establishment of the so-called Slovak Working Community (*Slovenská pracujúca pospolitosť*) compensated for the non-existent constitutional reform. This organization, in its structure vaguely reminiscent of corporatist professional groups, was completely subordinated to the HSĽS with its compulsory membership.[64] The new "Leader" Tiso claimed the credit for himself. Indeed, since 1939 he had already defined the Slovak nation as "a collective of working men" and as "a Slovak working community".[65] Only three years later, however, he wanted the HSĽS, with the assistance of the Slovak Working Community, to exercise totalitarian control over every Slovak.[66] Consequently,

[60] See NIŽŇANSKÝ, Eduard: Die Vorstellungen Jozef Tisos über Religion, Volk und Staat und ihre Folgen für seine Politik während des Zweiten Weltkriegs. In: KAISEROVÁ, Kristina – NIŽŇANSKÝ, Eduard – SCHULZE WESSEL, Martin (eds.): *Religion und Nation: Tschechen, Deutsche und Slowaken im 20. Jahrhundert.* Essen, Klartext 2015, pp. 39–82, here p. 55. Tiso had attempted to merge his nationalist view with Catholic concept of Natural Law from at least 1939 (see TISO, J: *Prejavy a články*, Vol. 2, pp. 112, 122, 158, 264).

[61] TISO, J.: *Prejavy a články*, Vol. 2, p. 388.

[62] *Ibid.*, pp. 386–387.

[63] See WARD, J. M.: *Priest, Politician, Collaborator*, p. 235.

[64] See HALLON, Ľ. – SCHVARC, M.: Ideas, Reality and the International Context, p. 922.

[65] TISO, J.: *Prejavy a články*, Vol. 2, p. 183.

[66] *Ibid.*, p. 564.

The President of the Slovak State, Jozef Tiso (1887–1947) speaking at a rally in Banská Bystrica in 1939.

Author unknown / © Ministry of the Interior of the Slovak Republic, Slovak National Archives, Fund Slovak Press Office, photo 01065

Tiso admitted that neither Catholic corporatism nor a copy of German rule was emerging in Slovakia but rather "a combination of both systems".[67]

Along with his departure from corporatism, Tiso stressed the role of "work" in forming the Slovak national community.[68] From this moment on, there was not much left of Christian solidarism and compassion: "In both Germany and Italy, a new kind of organization of their respective national communities is emerging. This new line curses capitalism by accentuating the value of work; it will stop emphasizing equality and freedom, a lethal weapon in the hands of the small and the weak; instead it will elevate work and duty to the community."[69] From 1942 onwards, a veritable cult of work developed in Slovakia, with President Tiso among its most active promoters. As in Nazi Germany, the cult of work was intended to perform two specific tasks: it had to integrate productive fellow Slovaks into one collective, while it was also to discipline, exploit, or even exclude the unproductive or simply "alien" others, especially Jews, Sinti and Roma from the national community.[70]

The fascistization of Catholic corporatism in Tiso's ideology took place within a broader semantic framework. First, it was accompanied by a shift toward statism. Prior to the establishment of quasi-independent Slovakia in 1939, Tiso, in accordance with Catholic teachings, used to put the people/nation (*národ*) ahead of the state.[71] Within a short period following the establishment of new Slovakia, however, Tiso distorted the Catholic state theory to claim not a "totality of the state" but rather a "totalitarian state order" (*totalitné zriadenie štátu*) on behalf of the people/nation.[72] Accordingly, Tiso described his state as a "People's/Racial Slovakia" (*ľudové Slovensko*; *die völkische Slowakei*), a part of fascist "New Europe".[73]

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[67] *Ibid.*, p. 558.

[68] In accordance with another prominent Catholic priest and HSĽS ideologist, Štefan Polakovič, from whom, however, Tiso originally differed in his understanding of the nation. (See LENČÉŠOVÁ, M.: The Concept of "Nation" and "National Community" in the Thinking of Štefan Polakovič, pp. 79–85.) In this respect, Tiso seems to have been an inspiration for Polakovič who promoted his cult since 1939.

[69] TISO, J.: *Prejavy a články*, Vol. 2, p. 498.

[70] See BUGGELN, Marc – WILDT, Michael: *Arbeit im Nationalsozialismus.* München, De Gruyter 2014.

[71] TISO, J.: *Prejavy a články*, Vol. 2, pp. 29, 47. See also IDEM: The Ideology of the Slovak People's Party. In: MISHKOVA, Diana – TURDA, Marius – TRENCSÉNYI, Balázs (eds.): *Anti-Modernism: Radical Revisions of Collective Identity*. Budapest, Central European University Press 2014, pp. 100–108.

[72] TISO, J.: *Prejavy a články*, Vol. 2, p. 220.

[73] *Ibid.*, p. 247.

With the gradually increasing racialization of Slovak nationalism, the Slovak State became an object of adoration and worship. Tiso and other Slovak "clerico-fascists" approved a soft version of eugenics as early as February 1939.[74] According to Tiso, the Slovak nation had to "stand the test in a biological sense" and to this end he called for the accumulation of its "biological capital".[75] Slovaks counted among the "racially precious" nations because they had an "assimilation power" – probably the alleged capacity to "Slovakize" non-Slovak minorities living in the country – comparable with the Germans.[76]

The "new Slovak man" was to be based on "biology, a leading science in the contemporary world".[77] He who believed in authority and family was to be "purified" from individualism and liberalism.[78] The ideology of the "new Slovak man" was the ultimate culmination of Tiso's fascistization: The "new Slovak man" united in himself both *völkisch* ultra-nationalism and the Naziesque semantics of "work". His "reeducation", or more accurately "rebirth", was the ultimate goal: "The first biological condition for a better life in Slovakia is more work. We will therefore soon pass a law on the obligation to work. A natural consequence of it will be another law on the demand for work. We will be happy if this rebirth [*prerod*] of Slovakia comes true as soon as possible."[79]

Occasionally, Tiso tried to achieve a genuine "clerico-fascist" synthesis. This was the case in the summer of 1940 with his commitment to "Slovak National Socialism". Referring to John 3:1-21 ("You Must Be Born Again"), Tiso demanded from his audience a "rebirth in the spirit of the new Slovakia": "Is it possible to combine the programme of Christ with the programme of National Socialism? For the old it is not possible. Those who want to understand must be born again. Of water and the Spirit. [...] The water of the National Socialist unification will wash away the old internationalists, Judeo-Bolshevists and Marxists. As the *Führer* Adolf Hitler put it at the outbreak of the war: this war is a social, not an imperialist one. It is a struggle against plutocracies and Marxism. This war is waged on behalf of such principles, it means the doom of all capitalism and all Bolshevism."[80]

Tiso praised Hitler for having "saved" the Slovak people time and again. He adhered to the German term *völkisch* and thus, at least indirectly, also to Hitler's

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74 *Ibid.*, p. 81. See DR. K. K. [Karol Körper]: Zdravie. In*: Slovenská Pravda* (7. 3. 1939), no page numbers.

75 TISO, J.: *Prejavy a články*, Vol. 2, p. 209.

76 *Ibid.*, p. 303.

77 *Ibid.*, p. 226.

78 *Ibid.*, pp. 129, 187.

79 *Ibid.*, p. 226.

80 *Ibid.*, p. 267.

racist worldview. In comparison with other "National Socialist sects", however, Tiso justified Hitler as a lesser evil.[81] Tiso – as did his Slovak-German fellow priest and politician Josef Steinhübel – thereby pursued a strategy which during the 1930s was also applied by the Austrian "brown bishop" Alois Hudal (1885–1963), who appeared to have distinguished between the "conservative Catholic" Adolf Hitler and the anti-Christian Nazi "leftists" such as Alfred Rosenberg.[82] Vatican officials and diplomats had already adopted this strategy in the early 1930s due to their anti-Bolshevist turn.[83]

A striking facet of Jozef Tiso's fascistization of the Christian Social outlook relates to antisemitism. James Ward has persuasively shown that Tiso launched attacks against Jews only in "revolutionary" times of uncertainty in the aftermath of the First World War and on the eve of the Second World War. Besides "opportunism", Ward identified social, anti-modern and nationalist motives behind Tiso's antisemitism: "Jews" were blamed for promoting capitalism, liberalism and/or socialism and were accused of exploiting the "Slovak people".[84] However, what should be regarded as truly new and fascist about Tiso's antisemitism during the period of "Slovak National Socialism" is the link between the quasi-theological justification of exclusionary antisemitism and the semantics of national "work".

As the Vatican and the Slovak episcopate had criticized the racist assumptions of anti-Jewish legislation in Slovakia and the deportations of the Slovak Jews, Tiso defended himself by merging ultra-nationalism with moral theology, not unlike those German and Austrian clerics who preached self-love and rejected Jews as their "neighbors".[85] In his infamous speech from August 1942 on the occasion of the dedication of a new Catholic church in the small Slovak town of Holíč,[86] Tiso distorted Slovak antisemitism as "Christian" in an attempt to justify it as an expression of a "healthy" and somehow "sacred" national self-interest.

Simultaneously, Tiso was eager to create the impression that he was mounting a campaign against capitalism. This is why he emphasized an opposition between

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[81] *Ibid.*, p. 324.

[82] See SZABÓ, Miloslav: "Klerikale Nationalsozialisten" und "Klerikalfaschisten" an der Peripherie NS-Deutschlands: Der Fall Slowakei. In: BLASCHKE, Olaf – GROßBÖLTING, Thomas (eds.): *Was glaubten die Deutschen zwischen 1933 und 1945? Religion und Politik im Nationalsozialismus.* Frankfurt am Main, Campus 2020, pp. 283–309.

[83] CHAMEDES, G.: *A Twentieth Century Crusade*, p. 139.

[84] WARD, J. M.: *Priest, Politician, Collaborator,* p. 63.

[85] See CONNELLY, John: *From Enemy to Brother: The Revolution in Catholic Teaching on the Jews, 1933–1965.* Cambridge (Mass.), Harvard University Press 2012, pp. 38–39.

[86] See WARD, J. M.: *Priest, Politician, Collaborator,* pp. 8, 234.

"unproductive" capitalism and "productive" national work. What counted was "not international, de-personalized capital, embodied by the worship of gold, but a collective of individuals who work with joy for the benefit of their people/ nation and state".[87] Tiso encoded this genuine National Socialist opposition into the antisemitic contrast of "enslaving Jewish gold" versus "releasing work", which inevitably ennobled the fascist "New Man".[88]

A Broken Trajectory? Karol Körper's, Ladislav Hanus's, and Viliam Ries's Fluctuation between Fascism, Anti-Modernism and Nazism

As indicated above, Jozef Tiso was by no means the only Catholic priest active in radical politics in the wartime Slovak State, albeit without question he was the most prominent one. At the same time, Tiso also acted as the main ideologue of the HSĽS regime, who dared to justify theoretically the fascistization of Catholic social teachings. Other politicized Slovak clerics, including seemingly genuine "Nazi priests", were in this respect rather vague, even though they were no less radical. Generally, they all favoured the alleged social aspects of Nazism over its inherent racism. However, the situation differed with regard to another crucial factor: the mobilizing potential of the anti-Bolshevist "crusade". Along with the issue of "Slovak National Socialism" the shared Bolshevist enemy reflected the dynamic nature of the "clerical fascist" agency. The examples of three lesser-known Slovak Catholic priests illustrates their fluctuation between related, but in many respects still distinct concepts of "moderate" Italian-style Fascism, "paternal Catholic modernism" and Nazism.

As early as the 1920s, Catholic priests took an active part in building the first Slovak fascist movement. By 1926, Benito Mussolini had secured sufficient power in Italy and his fascist ideas began to land on fertile soil in Czechoslovakia as well. In Slovakia, the most explicit propagators of the Italian model of fascism were primarily the supporters of *Rodobrana*, a paramilitary organization established in 1923 as the security troops of the HSĽS. Its devout founder, the lawyer and later Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Slovak State Vojtech Tuka, adorned with Christian symbolism and martyrdom rituals.[89] Black

[87] TISO, J.: *Prejavy a články*, Vol. 2, p. 183.

[88] *Ibid.*, p. 357.

[89] On Tuka see LORMAN, T.: *The Making of the Slovak People's Party*, pp. 188–192. Among other things, Tuka founded the "Society of Worshipers of the Holy Blood of Christ" (*Združenie ctiteľov Svätej krvi Kristovej*), which was supposed to worship a relic held in the monastery in

uniforms, military discipline, the Slovak double cross and attacks against alleged enemies of Christian Slovakia, primarily Czechs and Jews, as well as the "revolutionary", anti-socialist and anti-communist activism of *Rodobrana*, present a clear shift towards fascism in contrast to the conservatism of the HSĽS. Several clerics, former members of *Rodobrana*, grew into prominent "clerico-fascists" during the Slovak State. Among them, the priest and politician Karol Körper (1894–1969) exemplifies the ambitions and failures of these hybrid religious-political roles.[90]

Like Tiso, Körper was socialized in the old Kingdom of Hungary but quickly adapted to the new Czechoslovak reality. He became one of the organizers of the officially apolitical Catholic Action, which was to strengthen the position of the Church among laypeople, often blending with political radicalism for young activists. A model for such political activism in this period was clearly Italian fascism, which Körper proclaimed to be "a global principle", a victorious revolt against liberal democracy.[91] *Rodobrana*'s combination of political activism also enthralled Körper.[92]

Körper's activism entered a new, decisive phase in the second half of the 1930s when he was active as the leading commentator for the HSĽS newspapers. He wrote extensive editorials in which he mainly dealt with the Bolshevik threat, which he kept portraying as the work of the "Jews".[93] Similarly to other politically radicalized Catholics of his time, Körper adopted racist vocabulary in his aversion to Jews.[94] In May 1938, he addressed the Slovak public with his "solution" to the "Jewish question". In his programme, Körper recommended limiting the

Hronský Beňadik, the place where members of *Rodobrana* took their vows. (See HRUBOŇ, A.: Pioneers of Clerical Fascism?, pp. 139–142.)

[90] On Körper's antisemitism see SZABÓ, Miloslav: Catholic Racism and anti-Jewish Discourse in Interwar Austria and Slovakia: The Cases of Anton Orel and Karol Körper. In: *Patterns of Prejudice*, Vol. 54, No. 3 (2020), pp. 258–286.

[91] KÖRPER, Karol: Fašizmus – svetovou zásadou. In: *Kultúra*, Vol. 1 (1926), p. 195.

[92] IDEM: Sociálna úloha Rodobrany. In: *Rodobrana*, Vol. 1 (1926), p. 2.

[93] Karol Körper wrote between 1936 and 1939 dozens of editorials concerning the "Judeo-Bolshevism". See SZABÓ, M.: Catholic Racism and Anti-Jewish Discourse, pp. 272–282.

[94] Paradoxically, he did so not by referring to anti-Christian Nazi Germany, but to the United States of America. Körper actually saw racial segregation only in the USA in the autumn of 1937, when together with Jozef Tiso and other delegates of the largest Slovak Catholic organization, the St. Vojtech (Adalbert) Society, he took part in a tour of the USA attempting to renew ties with Slovak emigrants who clearly had no issues with this dark side of American democracy.

Karol Körper (1894–1969) on the left of the tribune during a 1939 rally of the Hlinka Transport Guard in Bratislava. In the background, the double-cross symbol of the Slovak State is displayed, above which stands the Hlinka Guards’ salute “Na stráž!” [On Guard!].

Author unknown / © The Archive of the Prison and Judicial Guard Corps in Leopoldov

permission for Jews to live within the territory of Slovakia as well as their property and occupational rights.[95]

Along with antisemitism, Körper also subscribed to the "expectations of the leader" that were common throughout Europe then.[96] In relation to Nazism, Körper was torn at first: on the one hand, he welcomed anti-communism and antisemitism as a fundamental part of the National Socialist "worldview", yet on the other he dismissed the "new religion of race and blood" as "brown Bolshevism", in line with the papal encyclicals.[97] However, Körper became more acquiescent immediately following the proclamation of Slovak autonomy in the autumn of 1938. He welcomed the gravitation of Slovak Germans to Nazism, since at this point it was, in his opinion, a healthy principle based on the unity of a people and their leader. Körper, who as late as 1937 had criticized Nazism, succumbed within only a few months to the glimmer of German power: "Here, in our free Slovakia, the swastika is just as much a symbol of national revival and new life as the Slovak double cross."[98]

After the proclamation of the Slovak State, he paid tribute to the *Führer* as a guarantor of Slovak statehood.[99] Körper celebrated the fascist leaders Mussolini and Hitler in several editorials.[100] In this regard, parallels were frequently made between the victory of the leader principle and the cult of Christ the King, introduced by Pius XI in 1925 as a counterweight to secular rulers and secularism. Körper saw Christ the King as a symbol of both Slovak nationalism and its martial leaders, primarily President Jozef Tiso.[101]

Many priests were joining the Hlinka Guard, which was to perform tasks that later fell to the Slovak army, as early as the autumn of 1938. Following the cue of Tiso's government, the "main spiritual administration" (*hlavná duchovná správa*) of the Hlinka Guard was established – a sort of military vicarage tasked with

95 KÖRPER, Karol: Ako by sa dala riešiť národne a hospodársky židovská otázka? In: *Slovenská liga*, Vol. 15 (1938), p. 115.

96 See HAYNES, Rebecca (ed.): *In the Shadow of Hitler: Personalities of the Right in Central and Eastern Europe.* London, Tauris 2011.

97 DR. K. K. [Karol Körper]: Protijed. In: *Slovenská pravda* (5. 3. 1937), no page number.

98 DR. K. K. [IDEM]: Naši Nemci. In: *Ibid.* (30. 12. 1938), no page number.

99 DR. K. K. [IDEM]: Koniec. In: *Ibid.* (18. 3. 1939), no page number.

100 DR. K. K. [IDEM]: Adolf Hitler. In: *Ibid.* (20. 4. 1939), no page number.

101 DR. K. K. [IDEM]: Brezany. In: *Ibid.* (25. 8. 1939), no page number. The conjunction of the priestly and political offices did not seem to pose an issue for Körper. On the contrary, the principles of unquestioned authority and obedience, which was typical for both the Catholic Church hierarchy and contemporary fascism, resulted here in a successful synthesis. (DR. K. K. [IDEM]: Vodcovstvo. In: *Ibid.* (6. 9. 1939), no page number; see also DR. K. K. [IDEM]: Vodca. In: *Ibid.* (7. 10. 1939), no page number.)

the spiritual care of the paramilitary unit – which Karol Körper chaired. The Church leadership supported and safeguarded these attempts. The main task of the Hlinka Guard's spiritual administration – in which Protestants also had their representatives – was supposed to be the "moral-religious upbringing" of officers and the rank-and-file.[102] Körper continued to mix religion and politics and considered the Hlinka Guard to be a tool of the Catholic Action.[103] In his position as head spiritual administrator of the Hlinka Guard, Körper even held regular speeches on the radio. Mixing religion with radical politics reached its apex here and we can confidently denote Körper's activities in the Hlinka Guard in 1939 and 1940 as one of the peaks of Slovak "clerical fascism".[104]

In Körper's eyes, love and forgiveness were not the only principles of Christianity. The Archangel Michael did not hesitate to raise a weapon and punish its enemies. In the Apocalypse of John, it is Michael who defeats Satan in the form of a dragon and casts him into Hell. It is not surprising, then, that the Archangel Michael became a symbol of *ecclesia militans*, the militant Church, and a patron saint of soldiers. Similarly to the Orthodox Romanian fascists who converged in the Legions of Archangel Michael, in Körper's case this was a variation on the heroic "Aryan Christ" as propagated by radical German Protestants.[105] Naturally, as a loyal Catholic priest Karol Körper could not follow this creed specifically, but he did display publicly and fearlessly his awe for secular German heroism.[106]

Out of gratitude to the Nazis for the establishment of the Slovak State, numerous clerics in its initial years nurtured the illusion that it would be possible to come to an agreement with the totalitarian state and its Nazi protector in line with the Italian model. They became aware of the difficulty of this plan only after the Salzburg negotiations between Hitler and Slovak representatives in the summer of 1940, when it was clear that the Nazis did not intend to tolerate "theocracy" in Slovakia. Instead, they strengthened the position of

[102] KÖRPER, Karol: Kňazi do služieb Hlinkovej gardy. In: *Slovák* (5. 3. 1939), no page number.

[103] This fact attracted the attention of Nazi intelligence bodies in Vienna, who observed this development with resentment as they saw an ideological ally in the Hlinka Guard. (*Bundesarchiv*, Berlin, coll. Deutsche Polizeidienststellen in der Slowakei, R 70-Slowakei, file 112.)

[104] In particular, the politicization of the Catholic Action corresponds to John Pollard's dynamic understanding of "clerical fascism" (see fn. 9).

[105] See HESCHEL, Susannah: *The Aryan Jesus: Christian Theologians and Bible in Nazi Germany.* Princeton (NJ), Princeton University Press 2010.

[106] KÖRPER, Karol: Vojna je súdom Božím. In: *Slovák* (16. 7. 1940), no page number. Körper's bishop Karol Kmeťko took offence at his radicalism as early as 1938. (See the review: HOLEC, Roman: Szabó, Miloslav: Klérofašisti. Slovenskí kňazi a pokušenie radikálnej politiky (1935–1945). In: *Judaica et Holocaustica*, Vol. 10, No. 2 (2019), pp. 85–89.) For later years, we do not possess any similar record.

the fascist wing of Vojtech Tuka and the commander of the Hlinka Guard Alexander Mach (1902–1980). From the outset, the Church in Slovakia and its politicizing representatives became a thorn in the side of their Nazi ally, or more accurately of the Nazi intelligence services, even though it only had a limited impact on clergy positions not least because of the popularity and political influence of President Tiso. On the other hand, the Church started to defend itself against the influence of radical representatives of the state through the restored Catholic Action.[107]

The spiritual administrator of the Hlinka Guard, Karol Körper, became a victim of power transfers and even his odes to Hitler as an instrument of the Divine could not help him. The new Nazi advisor *SS-Sturmbannführer* Viktor Nageler decided to form a racial elite group from the Hlinka Guard – a sort of vanguard to Germanization of suitable material, the racial roots of which were thought to be buried under Slavic “silt”.[108]

Although Körper, sought to stress his heroic and anti-Jewish Christianity, Nageler and other Nazis still viewed him as an unreliable and corrupt priest unwilling to part with the Church.[109] After an accusation of corruption by the periodical *Gardista*, Körper resigned from his office as spiritual administrator of the Hlinka Guard. He continued, however, to praise the “leader” and one-party state in public speeches and even kept appealing to the Slovak population to bring sacrifices, glorifying Hitler and the Wehrmacht as guarantors of Slovak national existence and seeing the war as a form of spiritual “purification”.[110]

The era of “Slovak National Socialism” lasted until 1942, when Tiso was finally able to stabilize his power at the expense of Tuka and Mach. Throughout the entire year of 1941, it seemed that Hitler would become the master over the continent. Similarly to the war propaganda in several Nazi satellites and the military priests of the Wehrmacht, Tiso and Körper praised the war against the Soviet Union as a new “crusade”.[111] At the same time, Catholic efforts to support the Christian family model and its biological and socio-economic reproduction – which,

[107] See SLEPČAN, P. – LETZ, R.: *Krížom k svetlu*.

[108] *Bundesarchiv*, Berlin, coll. Persönlicher Stab Reichsführer-SS, NS [Nationalsozialismus] 19, file 3843, Deutsche Gesandtschaft, Der Berater für die Hlinka-Garde bei der slowakischen Regierung SS-Obersturmbannführer Nageler, Bericht September 1942, Preßburg, 12. 10. 1942.

[109] Körper himself was suspected to be of “Jewish origin”.

[110] ZRÍNSKY, Dr. Karol [Karol Körper]: Víťazstvo ducha v misiách. In: *Slovák* (19. 10. 1941), p. 1.

[111] See FAULKNER ROSSI, Lauren: *Wehrmacht Priests: Catholicism and the Nazi War of Annihilation*. Cambridge (Mass.), Harvard University Press 2015, pp. 185–191; ZRÍNSKY, K.: Víťazstvo ducha v misiách; TISO, J.: *Prejavy a články*, Vol. 2, p. 371. Tiso compared the “infection of Bolshevism” with a “festering boil” which German and Slovak soldiers were going to “cut out” (*ibid.*, p. 400).

according to the Vatican, were threatened mainly by Soviet Russia and its fifth columns in Europe, the Communist Parties – were met by the HSĽS regime. In March 1941, one of the milestones of "paternalist Catholic modernization" was reached: the Slovak Parliament adopted the Fetus Protection Act, banning abortions and contraception.[112]

In this situation, the Slovak episcopate decided to clarify the relationship between Catholicism and Nazism once and for all. The bishops commissioned the theologian Ladislav Hanus (1907–1994) to deal with this task. Hanus was to give a lecture about "Religion in New Europe" at a conference organized by the Hlinka Guard in November 1941.[113] Hanus, who had studied theology in Innsbruck was widely regarded as an expert in the field of German literature, philosophy and art. Consequently, he expected German culture to spearhead the spiritual renewal of the Christian West. After his return from Austria in the late 1930s, however, Hanus became a committed Slovak nationalist. He was acknowledged as an orator and as such during 1940 and 1941 he even endeavored to distinguish himself as an ideologue of "Slovak National Socialism".

Despite being fundamentally shaped by German theology, Hanus embodies the contradictions of East Central Europe with its different historical experiences. In the years of building the so-called Slovak National Socialism, he preached in one breath the integral humanism of the anti-fascist Jacques Maritain – an anti-totalitarian philosopher whom James Chappel places among the second type of "Fraternal Catholic modernism"[114] – and discipline in the name of a "racial/people's state" partly and consciously based on the Nazi model of the *Volksstaat*. In Hanus's case, therefore, it is more appropriate to speak of anti-modernism. The latter was characterized in East Central Europe by an increased acceleration and syncretic character of political thought. Attitudes such as antimodern anti-totalitarianism were not unique here, but a second, "dark" wave of national revivalism, characterized by exclusive, quasi-biological fantasies of national growth and health at the expense of national enemies, was also typical.[115]

[112] See SZABÓ, Miloslav: *Potraty: Dejiny slovenských kultúrnych vojen od Hlinku po Kuffu*. Bratislava, N Press 2020.

[113] On Ladislav Hanus see SZABÓ, Miloslav: Kritická diskusia, alebo apológia? In: *Dějiny – teorie – kritika*, Vol. 15, No. 1 (2020), pp. 112–136; IDEM: *Klérofašisti*, pp. 84–97.

[114] See CHAPPEL, J.: *Catholic Modern,* pp. 108–143.

[115] See ANTOHI, Sorin – TRENCSÉNYI, Balázs: Introduction: Approaching Anti-modernism. In: MISHKOVA, D. – TURDA, M. – TRENCSÉNYI, B. (eds.): *Antimodernism*, pp. 1–43, here p. 11.

Although an admirer of Maritain, and despite his relative reticence concerning antisemitism,[116] Hanus pleaded for a paternalist Slovak version of Hitler's *Volksstaat*.[117] Under the influence of another theologian, Romano Guardini, who appreciated qualities such as aura, charisma and the pathos of youth requiring submission under spiritual authority, Hanus had even earlier become acquainted with the atmosphere of the German "conservative revolution".[118] All this was mirrored by his view of a re-Christianization within the framework of Hitler's New Order which was to follow the declining liberal era and its alleged fatal spawn – Bolshevism.

If the First World War marked the end of the decadent modern age, Hanus viewed the current one as the culmination of a conservative revolution marked by Catholicism and National Socialism. Hanus placed the historical significance of the two phenomena on almost the same level – at least in the sense that "National Socialism" was to pave the way for Catholicism.[119]

In his lecture given at the conference of the Hlinka Guard in November 1941, Hanus stated more precisely what Hitler and National Socialism, from a Catholic point of view, were expected to do and allow. After the invasion of the Soviet Union, a genuine "revolution" had gained momentum, which Hanus – although there is no evidence that he really spoke on behalf of the Slovak Catholic hierarchy and President Tiso, as the Nazi rapporteur claimed,[120] but it appears likely – saw as a new impetus for the question of what the "religious face of the new Europe" would look like. According to Hanus, the New Europe under the leadership of the fascists had definitively buried its predecessor, the democratic "so-called

[116] From the period of the Slovak State, we do not have any manifestations of Hanus's antisemitism, but during his studies in Innsbruck he also propagated typically Catholic antisemitic theses about the domination of modern culture by the materialistic Jews and their allegedly disruptive influence on the religious and national community. (HANUS, Ladislav: Erich Maria Remarque: Na Západe nič nového. In: *Rozvoj*, Vol. 7, No. 5 (1930), p. 99.)

[117] See TRENCSÉNYI, Balázs – KOPEČEK, Michal – GABRIJELČIČ, Luka Lisjak – FALINA, Maria – BAÁR, Mónika – JANOWSKI, Maciej: *A History of Modern Political Thought in East Central Europe*, Vol. 2: *Negotiating Modernity in the "Short Twentieth Century" and Beyond*, Part 1: *1918–1968*. Oxford, Oxford University Press 2018, p. 188.

[118] See WEISS, Otto: *Der Modernismus in Deutschland: Ein Beitrag zur Theologiegeschichte.* Regensburg, Pustet 1995, p. 539.

[119] HANUS, Ladislav: Nové požiadavky katolíckeho života: Ide o pluralizmus. In: *Kultúra,* Vol. 13 (1941), p. 62.

[120] *ABS*, coll. Sbírka mikrofilmů [Collection of Microfilms], sign. 144-6, file 99, National Archives Microcopy, No T 175: Records of the Reichleader of the SS and Chief of the German Police [Reichsführer der SS und Chef der deutschen Polizei], Washington 1958, Sonderbericht über Tagung der Kulturreferenten der Hlinka-Garde in Trentschin-Teplitz: Mit Übersetzung der Reden von Tisa [sic], Tuka und Hanus als Anlage.

Versailles Europe", the embodiment of Masaryk's "World Revolution", which allegedly violated natural law in both the social and national senses by enforcing capitalism and communism, and thus respectively by suppressing national rights.

What, then, was the attitude of National Socialism towards Christianity? Hanus called upon his audience to believe the reassurances of President Tiso, after a visit to Hitler's headquarters in October 1941, "that the Führer is for the application of natural law, or 'divine order' in the New Europe".[121] Hanus's conclusions about natural law can certainly be read as an indirect critique of Nazi, or rather totalitarian injustice. Hanus clearly seemed to express uncertainty about the "true" nature of Nazism, but then relativized his doubts by celebrating Nazi "achievements". This ambiguous style and syntax are characteristic of the whole text. "Criticism" on the basis of natural law is constantly balanced, meaning weakened, by "confidence" in the building of "National Socialism," which was also justified by natural law.[122]

This would manifest itself in the text as soon as Hanus moves from theological arguments to ideological ones, which happens repeatedly. Significantly, the diction changes when Hanus stops talking about the right to life and turns to the "right to private property". It is clear here that his critique of totalitarianism – as with other "paternalists" – was in fact directed against Bolshevism, while National Socialism was in this context presented as a guarantor of natural law. Hitler's victory in the war against Bolshevism was therefore, according to Hanus, a basic precondition on which everything else rested: "The German army and the allied troops of Europe as a whole became an instrument of Providence. We are delighted about this fact most of all."[123]

Even so, the successor of Christ's work was the Church, which Hanus connected – like the German "paternalists"[124] – to Europe and to the "West". He immediately used these symbols to attack the Soviet Union, "a state that has really programmatically renounced Christianity. This not only disconnected it from Europe, but created an isolated inferno from the rest of the world."[125] According to Hanus, communist nihilism was also a memento of National

[121] HANUS, Ladislav: Náboženská tvár novej Európy. In: MEČIAR, Stanislav (ed.): *Až sa táto vojna skončí... Prednášky* z *kurzu kultúrnych referentov HG v Trenčianskych Tepliciach* v *dňoch 7., 8. a 9. novembra 1941.* Turčiansky Sv. Martin, Hlavné veliteľstvo Hlinkovej gardy 1941, p. 75.

[122] The Slovak expression for natural law is *prirodzené právo*. Significantly, the reporter translated it into German as *natürliches Recht*, not as *Naturrecht*, which connoted positively with Nazi legal scholars. It is possible that Hanus alluded to these nuances intentionally.

[123] Ibid., p. 82.

[124] See CHAPPEL, J.: *Catholic Modern*, pp. 92–105.

[125] HANUS, L.: Náboženská tvár novej Europy, p. 85.

Socialism: "The whole work of the New Europe will depend on the attitude towards Christianity."[126] At this point, Hanus took Hitler and Tiso at their words: "He who proclaims the Christian programme assumes his full responsibility and the judgment of this view. There is an absolute evil that allows no compromise and demands martyrdom rather than a departure from the principle. Only relative evil can be justified by the circumstance of 'minus malum' [a minor evil]."[127]

Referencing Christian "openness to the world" and in anticipation of the victory of National Socialism, and despite of all his criticisms of racism, Hanus eventually offered Hitler "help" in the name of Catholicism. He spoke directly to Hitler, who he said had the "wisdom of a statesman that tells him not to circumvent this compelling cooperation".[128] This was a moment when Hanus was already confident enough in his position to express hope in Hitler's "conversion": "There is no doubt about the sincerity of his will, which has been capable of so many gigantic performances, of so many heroic sacrifices. Behind it, of course, is a great moral force and a sense of responsibility before God. Old Europe is falling apart day by day, so we are waiting for a better and fairer Europe. According to the Führer, for organic order to be realized, it is to be built on natural law, it is to be in the service of God's order."[129]

Ladislav Hanus's Catholic anti-modernism was largely influenced by his German teachers and confidants and was the reason for his temporary ingratiation with Nazism. Soon, however, it was time for him to wake up and make place for genuine "clerico-fascists".

To a certain extent, Körper's and Hanus's positions were taken over by another Catholic priest, Viliam Ries (1906–1989). Just like Hanus, Ries studied theology in Innsbruck and initially did not engage in politics. He wrote poems under the pseudonym Ivan Javor and published them in HSĽS journals and Catholic cultural periodicals.[130] This changed during the second half of the 1930s, when he became a member of the city council in Banská Štiavnica for the HSĽS and an editor of its weekly journal, *Štiavničan* [Štiavnica Citizen]. Ries's activities illustrate how "Slovak National Socialism" was imbued with radicalism. From 1939 onwards, articles frequently appeared in *Štiavničan* criticizing government social policies and demanding social justice, especially for local miners. As a priest and commander of the Hlinka Guard in his parish of Svätý Anton, Ries invoked the ire of the authorities with his social radicalism, which resulted in his transfer

[126] Ibid., p. 86.

[127] Ibid.

[128] Ibid., p. 87.

[129] Ibid.

[130] On Viliam Ries, see SZABÓ, M.: *Klérofašisti*, pp. 101–147.

Viliam Ries (1906–1989), undated
Author unknown / © Literary Archive of the Slovak National Library in Martin, sign. SR 30/1

to an outlying rectory. He was eventually suspended from his priesthood at the beginning of 1942 and subsequently moved to Bratislava.

In Bratislava, Ries became the editor of a new magazine, *Náš boj* [Our Struggle], which was supposed to be a platform for expressing the radical opinions of Slovak supporters of Nazism. Viktor Nageler, who was sent to Slovakia as an advisor to the Hlinka Guard after the Salzburg negotiations in the summer of 1940 and subsequently ousted Karol Körper from his position, considered the magazine as a weapon in strengthening the "Nordic race". Nageler regarded the Hlinka guardsmen as descendants of Germans from the times before the arrival of the Slavs. An awareness of their racial identity was therefore to be strengthened by courses and by *Náš boj*, since all other Slovak media were subject to "pan-Slavic, clerical and Jewish-liberal" influences. This was an opportunity for the "healthy"

elements in the Hlinka Guard, to whom the journal *Náš boj*, led by Ries, was supposed to provide spiritual guidance.[131]

Although the founders of *Náš boj* proclaimed their intention to fight against clericalism, they were in fact quite reserved in this regard – and since they were Slovak nationalists, they did not adopt the anti-Slavic agenda of the Nazis. Instead, this most radical political journal was dominated by propaganda on the coexistence of fascist and nationalist regimes in the "New Europe" under the reign of Berlin. In addition, National Socialism was to once again discover its social roots when Nazi Germany presented itself as a model of achieving social reconciliation between workers and their former exploiters, who were supposedly united by a common national (racial) interest. The primary ideological connection between German and Slovak National Socialists lay, however, in radical antisemitism, which – as rendered by *Náš boj* – did not fall behind the German model in almost any aspect, with the exception of the anti-Slavic dimension. All aforementioned instances were brought together by the contributions and publications of Ries, who was a secret agent on the payroll of the Nazi intelligence services responsible for monitoring Slovak clericalism.[132] As a former priest and poet, he did not hesitate to misuse Christian holy days for antisemitic and war propaganda.[133]

Ries represents the extreme pole of the spectrum of Slovak "clerico-fascists" insofar as he moved from a Catholic social doctrine to racist eugenics.[134] In a series of articles on the founder of genetics, Gregor Mendel – not forgetting to point out that Mendel was a Catholic priest by profession – Ries emphasized the function of genetics not only for the individual but especially for the collective health of the nation and the race.[135] He inferred that bad traits were inherited through race mixing, which he diagnosed as the cause of racial decay, "Asiatic" Russia as a deterrent example.[136] He considered the contradiction between Europe's West and East to be no longer spiritual and civilizational in nature, as did Hanus, but as

[131] *Bundesarchiv*, Berlin, coll. Persönlicher Stab Reichsführer-SS, NS [Nationalsozialismus] 19, file 3843, pp. 5–9.

[132] *Ibid.*, coll. Deutsche Polizeidienststellen in der Slowakei, R70-Slowakei, files 269 and 354.

[133] JAVOR, Ivan [Viliam Ries]: Požehnané Narodenie. In: *Náš boj*, Vol. 1 (1942/43), p. 158; IDEM: List Ježiškovi. In: *Ibid.*, Vol. 2 (1943/44), p. 111; IDEM: Rozhovor s Bohom: Vianoce 1944. In: *Ibid.*, Vol. 3 (1944/45), p. 101.

[134] On eugenics in the wartime Slovak state see HRUBOŇ, Anton: Creating the Paradigm of "New Nation": Eugenic Thinking and the Culture of Racial-Hygiene in the Slovak State. In: *Fascism*, Vol. 10, No. 2 (2021), pp. 275–297.

[135] Ibid., p. 293.

[136] RIES-JAVOR, Viliam: K psychologii východného priestoru. In: *Náš boj*, Vol. 1 (1942/43), pp. 316–318.

a constellation of irreconcilable racial struggles, where Christianity no longer had any function but the mediated one of victim invocation and secular martyrdom.

Conclusions

The ideas and activities of Jozef Tiso, Karol Körper, Ladislav Hanus and Viliam Ries correspond to the typology of "clerical fascists" and "brown" priests as suggested by Thomas Forstner and Roger Griffin, respectively. In comparison to the German-speaking "Hitler's priests", however, the Slovak context shows significant idiosyncrasies. Tendencies towards Nazi ideology were limited, even though politicized Slovak clerics occasionally used racist semantics. Their glorification of Hitler and Nazism resulted from the specific Slovak circumstances, in which political Catholicism and its "culture wars" against liberalism and modernity became an ideological base for secular nationalism. Still, both the transformation of Catholic social teachings and campaigns against Bolshevism show that fascistization had a faster and more extensive impact on Slovak Catholic nationalists than has been assumed even recently.[137]

Especially the spiritual guide of the Hlinka Guard, Karol Körper, and the Catholic anti-modernist, Ladislav Hanus, naively expected anti-Church Nazism to guarantee Catholic conservatism, although it soon became evident that the Italian model could not rule in Slovakia due to the Nazi aversion to it. However, Körper and Tiso were able to rejoice over the attack against the Soviet Union in 1941 as a new "crusade". Despite the condemnation of Nazi racism and "paganism", Hanus, possibly on behalf of the episcopate, also could not help but confuse re-Christianization efforts with Hitler's war of annihilation. Of course, Catholic anti-modernism should not be mistaken for "clerical fascism", yet its representatives were far from being prepared for the "fascist temptation".

The attempts to achieve a "synthesis" of Catholicism and Nazism reveal the specific aspects of the historical context of the Nazi New Order as well. In the shadow of the Third Reich, both political Catholicism and Slovak nationalism were partially to be fascistized. Ideologically, this tendency is illustrated by Körper's heroization of Christianity, and even more strikingly by Tiso's Nazification of Catholic social teachings. Tiso eventually distorted its characteristics and turned them into their opposites: the reduction of the role of the state to totalitarian statism; of humanity – if only towards their own co-religionists – to particular

[137] Most recently, Thomas Lorman has acknowledged only the efforts of radicals within the ranks of the HSĽS who had tried to "place it on a path of fascism even though [they] never reached that destination". (LORMAN, T.: *The Making of the Slovak People's Party*, p. 188.)

ultra-nationalism and racism; and of solidarism to a disciplining and exclusion on behalf of *völkisch* "work". In light of the alleged centrality of corporatism for the fascist era in current research, it is surprising that Tiso's ideological transformation remains to a large extent unexplored.[138]

Christian Social heritage and anti-Bolshevism were relevant to the radicalization of other Slovak "clerico-fascists," too. Ries in particular seemed to consider Nazism as a continuation or a derivative of social Catholicism and the Judeo-Bolshevik myth. Ries's fascistization, however, occurred suddenly, without ideological ambitions comparable to Tiso's, and in a much more radical manner than was the case with Körper. It is worth pondering, however, to what extent this was intended to weaken the suspicions of clericalism that were constantly fed by the Nazi authorities. Correspondingly, the fascistization of Tiso, Körper and Ries had different consequences.

The lives and fates of Körper and Ries crossed after the Second World War, as they were both sentenced for high treason and imprisoned in the same jail. Furthermore, they were again connected by religion, since Viliam Ries repented his sins and the new bishop annulled his excommunication and allowed him to serve the masses.[139] However, mutual mindsets, in particular a tendency to martyrdom, seem more important than overlapping biographies. Their downsides include the ignorance of the misery of the real victims, to which these "clerico-fascists" contributed with their propaganda and political activities. These tendencies were deepened due to the execution of Tiso for high treason and for war crimes and even more so due to the persecution of the Churches – including Hanus – by the communist regime established in Czechoslovakia after 1948. Communist campaigns against "clerico-fascism" thus discredited an important aspect of Slovak history with their ideological parochialism and biases.

This article was written with the support of the Slovak Research and Development Agency under the Contract No. APVV-19-0358 (History of the Hlinka's Slovak People's Party in Domestic and European Dimensions, 1905–1945).

[138] The Slovak State has not been the subject of neither of the recent collaborative volumes on corporatism and fascism (authoritarianism). See COSTA PINTO, Antonio – FICHTELSTEIN, Federico (eds.): *Authoritarianism and Corporatism in Europe and Latin America: Crossing Borders*. London, Routledge 2019; COSTA PINTO, Antonio (ed.): *Corporatism and Fascism*. London, Routledge 2017.

[139] See KÖRPER ZRÍNSKY, Karol: *Môj život*. Bratislava, Lúč 1991, p. 220.

Abstract:

*This paper deals with the fascistization of Catholic clergy on the eastern periphery of the Nazi "New Europe", specifically within the Slovak State (1939–1945), a Nazi satellite in East Central Europe. In reference to recent historiographical debates, "clerico-fascism" serves here as a tool for an analysis of the ideology of the most prominent Slovak "clerico-fascist", the president and Catholic priest Jozef Tiso (1887–1947). Specifically, it examines the transformation of social Catholicism into an instrument of fascist discipline. In addition, the article examines the fascistization of three other Slovak clerics: Karol Körper (1894–1969), Ladislav Hanus (1907–1994) and Viliam Ries (1906–1989). Focusing on individual agencies of both moderate and radical "clerico-fascists" on the basis of the regime of Hlinka's Slovak People's Party (*Hlinkova slovenská ľudová strana*) during the Second World War, the article seeks an explanation for political and religious radicalization in East Central Europe during the first half of the twentieth century.*

Keywords:

Slovakia; Slovak State (1939–1945); Czechoslovakia; Catholicism; Catholic clergy; fascism; "clerico-fascism"; Hlinka's Slovak People's Party; Second World War; political radicalization; Jozef Tiso; Karol Körper; Ladislav Hanus; Viliam Ries

DOI: 10.51134/sod.2022.020

The Eternal Legacy of the Great Patriotic War?

The Political Instrumentalization of the Soviet Victory over Fascism and Its Utilization in Czechoslovakia after 1968 and in the Czech Republic Today

Marie Černá

Institute of Contemporary History of the Czech Academy of Sciences, Prague

In 2020, on the occasion of the 77th anniversary of the liberation of Donbas from German fascists, the song "Donbas Is Behind Us" was heard for the first time. It received great acclaim on the official, i.e. regime-affiliated, Russian scene, won the Russian song festival on the 75th anniversary of Victory Day (*Den Pobedy*), and began to be described by (pro-)Russian propagandists as the unofficial anthem of Donbas. In a song full of ambiguous metaphors and historical allusions, it is not entirely clear what era it is actually about. It speaks of a beast awakening in darkness, a leap year, a land that has not betrayed the memory of its forefathers, of Russian strength regained, of a Donbas backed by Russia and God, etc, etc. When speaking of the song, its composer, Mikhail Khokhlov, its lyricist, Vladimir Skobtsov, and its two young performers, Natalia Kachura and Margarita Lisovina from the Anatolii Solovianenko Donetsk State Academic Opera and Ballet Theatre (*Donetskii gosudarstvennyi akademicheskii teatr opery i baleta imeni A. B. Solovianenko*), made reference to current Russian-Ukrainian relations and emphasized the song's popularity among Russian "militias" and other Donbas residents. They claimed it was helping to raise hopes for a new "liberation", in this case from the Ukrainian "fascists". A video of the song shot in 2021 pushed the historical comparison even further. It mixes images of the Second World War and the present and culminates in a scene in which a modern Russian militiaman and resident of Donbas shakes hands with a Red Army soldier of 1944.[1]

[1] The video clip of *Donbass za nami* is available on YouTube. It premiered on 11 May 2021: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zMj5qD0sJ6Q. [Accessed 2022-10-21.]

Songs, War Mythology, and the Politically Shaped Memory

Though "Donbas Is Behind Us" may not have achieved the desired effect in Eastern Ukraine, in many ways it reflected trends that prevail in the official memory of the Second World War or the Great Patriotic War in modern Russia. These include the blurring of various spatiotemporal boundaries and contexts,[2] such as that separating reality and fiction, the grim reality of war versus its glamorized retelling,[3] and, above all, the return to the myth of the Great Patriotic War (*Velikaia Otechestvennaia voina*), with its central themes of heroism, collective sacrifice, unity and triumphant victory. While many authors claim this narrative was forged most intensively during Brezhnev's reign, in fact, as the British historian Catherine Merridale shows in her book *Ivan's War*, the propagandist image and myth of the Soviet war began to crystallize before Germany had even invaded the Soviet Union. By myth, Merridale means a purposefully created and maintained image of a victorious campaign of selfless, unprecedented Soviet heroism, unity of effort, an image purged of all internal contradictions, devoid of the terror, error, chaos, unnecessary losses, hopelessness, desertion, alcoholism, filth and the influence of the security forces, not to mention the political settlements of Stalin's regime and the war crimes committed by the Red Army.[4]

And thus, in modern Russia the opposite trend can be observed in relation to the Second World War from that which featured in Eastern and Central Europe after the fall of communism and the Soviet empire, when a major political break also

[2] Similar practices, in which an equivalence is drawn between a German Nazi or fascist and an alleged Ukrainian (neo-)Nazi, appear in other music videos and are a common feature of the multimedia spectacles organized around celebrations of Victory Day at the headquarters of the Night Wolves in Crimea (for more on the Night Wolves, see below).

[3] The Ukrainian political scientist Tatiana Zhurzhenko systematically examines the manifestations and consequences of this phenomenon within the context of the Russian-Ukrainian conflict: ZHURZHENKO, Tatiana: Russia's Never-Ending War Against "Fascism": Memory Politics in the Russian-Ukrainian Conflict. In: *Eurozine* [online], 08. 05. 2015. [Accessed 2022-10-21.] Available at: https://www.eurozine.com/russias-never-ending-war-against-fascism/?pdf=; EADEM: In the Shadow of Victory: The Memory of WWII in the Russian-Ukrainian Conflict. In: *Ibid*. [online], 07. 05. 2020. [Accessed 2022-10-21.] Available at: https://www.academia.edu/45520789/In_the_shadow_of_victory_The_memory_of_WWII_in_the_Russian_Ukrainian_conflict.

[4] MERRIDALE, Catherine: *Ivan's War: Life and Death in the Red Army, 1939–1945*. London – New York, Faber & Faber – Metropolitan Books 2005. This is not, of course, an exclusively Soviet or Russian phenomenon. For more on the mythification of modern wars, especially the First World War, see MOSSE, George L.: *Fallen Soldiers? Reshaping the Memory of the World Wars*. New York – Oxford, Oxford University Press 1990. There is a discussion to be had on how the myth of war is established in a particular society, how it is deployed politically, and how much space it leaves for alternative memories.

necessitated a reassessment of the past on many levels. This, however, was preceded by a relatively stormy process involving the diversification, reconstruction, rediscovery and clash of historical memories.[5] Instead of the memory "games" and "wars" between different groups that ensued from the decentralization and pluralization of power,[6] in Russia, in contrast, a single dominant narrative of the Great Patriotic War is once again reasserting its status as the central event of the national history in the twentieth century. This is undoubtedly related to efforts being made to fill the ideological void left by the collapse of the Soviet regime, to conceal the often negative experiences of post-communist development, and to create the foundations for a positive collective identity of a highly diverse Russian society – in the words of Raymond Aron, "to restore the moral unity" of the country.[7] Notwithstanding the fact that this was not war-torn Germany, severely damaged by the First World War, but a Russia undermined by political, social and economic developments. Yet, in both cases the parameters of this "restoration" – by sheer coincidence also cultivating the myth of war – had disastrous consequences.

If the Great Patriotic War was to become, as indeed it did under Leonid Ilich Brezhnev, a source of collective pride, unity and celebrated virtues, the highly complex, internally contradictory, and potentially divisive central theme of victory over fascism had to be recast into a simple, universally acceptable and intelligible narrative, a kind of foundational myth. The idea was that by returning to it repeatedly, the Russian nation would consolidate its self-glorification,[8] rather than interrogating its self-esteem and greatness by relativizing its memory and the virtues being recollected. Equally important to the constructivist approach as the symbolic codes of collective identity are the symbolic codes of difference relating to the delineation of mutual boundaries.[9] From this perspective, the mass

[5] See, for example, BROSSAT, Alain – COMBE, Sonia – POTEL, Jean-Yves – SZUREK, Jean-Richard (eds.): *À l'Est, la mémoire retrouvée*. Paris, La Découverte 1990.

[6] See, for example, MINK, Georges – NEUMAYER, Laure (eds.): *History, Memory and Politics in Central and Eastern Europe: Memory Games.* New York, Palgrave Macmillan 2013; BERNHARD, Michael – KUBIK, Jan (eds.): *Twenty Years After Communism: The Politics of Memory and Commemoration.* Oxford, Oxford University Press 2014.

[7] ARON, Raymond: *Demokracie a totalitarismus*. Brno, Atlantis 1993, p. 165. (Czech translation of the French original: *Démocratie et totalitarisme*. Paris, Gallimard 1965.)

[8] According to Ernest Gellner, societies in the nationalist period worship themselves quite openly, whereas in the Durkheimian conception of religious ritual this takes place covertly. See GELLNER, Arnošt: *Národy a nacionalismus.* Praha, Hříbal 1993, p. 67. (Czech translation of the English original: *Nations and Nationalism*. Ithaca (NY), Cornell University Press 1983.)

[9] See EISENSTADT, Shmuel Noah – GIESEN, Bernhard: Konstrukce kolektivní identity. In: HROCH, Miroslav (ed.): *Pohledy na národ a nacionalismus*. Praha, Sociologické nakladatelství 2003, pp. 361–386. (Czech translation of the English original: The Construction of Collective

identification with the victorious campaign against the fascists finds its reflection in the Russian imaginary of the foreign world as either threatening or inferior. There is much to suggest that memories of the Great Patriotic War, undoubtedly still vivid, have been assigned a nation- and identity-shaping role in contemporary Russia. This shifts us from considerations of the collective memory to considerations of nationalism, in which it is common for historical memory to engage in the service of the nation and for the criterion of truth to comprise not so much fact-based objectivity but the purported national interest. However, what is relevant in the case of Russia is that the direct mobilization of individuals through shared symbols and rituals in the name of patriotism has intersected with the state interest, or to be more precise, with the interest of Putin's political regime. The result is that a certain version of the past acquires the status of official, incontrovertible truth, promoted and controlled by the state.

It is clear that President Vladimir Vladimirovich Putin has once again turned the victory over fascism not only into a source of collective pride and the fulcrum of national identity, but also into an important pillar of domestic and international politics,[10] and thus an object of power practices. Memories of the Second World War are once again the object of authoritarian interference, control, restriction and manipulation. A quasi-religious narrative has enclosed these memories within a sacred aura, and any rational efforts to revise the myth are denounced as representing a heretical distortion of the truth – the truth in this case being determined by state interests. This approach is reinforced by means of laws against the desecration of war memorials, disrespect being shown to the memory of war veterans, and the rehabilitation of fascism, while criminal sanctions can be imposed on those who would question the state's promotion of the legacy of the Great Patriotic War. This policy is applied and manifest on many levels through the mobilization of traditional and modern instruments. The war with the Third Reich, or rather a certain image of it stripped of all traumatic details, has become ubiquitous again by means of commemorative events and

Identity. In: *European Journal of Sociology / Archives Européennes de Sociologie / Europäisches Archiv für Soziologie*, Vol. 36, No. 1 (1995), pp. 72–102.)

[10] Cf. MALINOVA, Olga: Political Uses of the Great Patriotic War in Post-Soviet Russia from Yeltsin to Putin. In: FEDOR, Julie – KANGASPURO, Markku – LASSILA, Jussi – ZHURZHENKO, Tatiana: *War and Memory in Russia, Ukraine, and Belarus*. London, Palgrave Macmillan 2017, pp. 43–70; FEDOR, Julie – LEWIS, Simon – ZHURZHENKO, Tatiana: Introduction: War and Memory in Russia, Ukraine, and Belarus. In: *Ibid.*, pp. 1–40; HOFFMAN, David L.: Introduction: The Politics of Commemoration in the Soviet Union and Contemporary Russia. In: IDEM (ed.): *The Memory of the Second World War in Soviet and Post-Soviet Russia*. London – New York, Routledge 2022, pp. 1–14.

programmes, ceremonies, awareness-raising and educational projects, museums, the state-controlled media, show business, and, most recently, social media.[11]

The purpose of this mobilization appears to be the preservation of a living link with the past even after the last survivors have passed away. In the words of the German cultural scholar Aleida Assmann, the aim is to create a selective "inhabited memory" that bridges the gap between past and present.[12] The patriotic education of Russian children, like that of Soviet children (and the children of the former Soviet satellites), is based above all on socialization in the spirit of the myth of the Great Patriotic War.[13] The return to myth means that contextualized information and facts are jettisoned in favour of images and emotions that are free to cross the boundaries of time and space (as in the song "Donbas Is Behind Us" referred to above). Traditional heroes, such as Panfilov's 28 or Timur's Boys, return to the scene,[14] because the great tidings they bring are

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[11] Television programmes combine Second World War-themed programmes with elements of reality TV, as, for instance, when people search for their fallen ancestors, the bodies of whom have never been found, with the help of television crews. See also OUSHAKINE, Serguei Alex [USHAKIN, Sergei Aleks]: Remembering in Public: On the Affective Management of History. In: *Ab Imperio* [online], Vol. 1 (2013), pp. 269–302. [Accessed 2022-10-21.] Available at: https://scholar.princeton.edu/sites/default/files/oushakine/files/075-remembering_in_public_on_the_affective_management_of_history.pdf. Since 2019, a special television station called Victory (*Pobeda*), dedicated entirely to the Great Patriotic War, has broadcast non-stop in Russia. Modern social media allows images to be multiplied and merged into the entertainment industry.

[12] ASSMANNOVÁ, Aleida: *Prostory vzpomínání: Podoby proměny kulturní paměti*. Praha, Univerzita Karlova – Nakladatelství Karolinum 2018, p. 150. (Czech translation of the German original: ASSMANN, Aleida: *Erinnerungsräume: Formen und Wandlungen des kulturellen Gedächtnisses*. München, C. H. Beck 1999.)

[13] Regarding the parallels between Soviet and contemporary Russian patriotic education in schools, see, for example, the following two texts, each dealing with a different, albeit similar, period: KONKKA, Olga: Teaching and Remembering the Great Patriotic War in Soviet Schools. In: HOFFMAN, D. L. (ed.): *The Memory of the Second World War in Soviet and Post-Soviet Russia*, pp. 86–106; EFIMOV, Artiom: Uchebnik istorii [A History Textbook]. In: *Signal Meduzy: Archiv* [online]. (*Signal*, No. 50: Kak Kreml vruchnuiu upravliaiet proshlym [How the Kremlin Manages the Past]), 11. 07. 2022. [Accessed 2022-10-21.] Available at: https://us10.campaign-archive.com/?u=ff4a009ba1f59d865f0301f85&id=5ad10d7874. *Signal* is a podcast of the Russian-English independent online news channel *Meduza.io*, which operates abroad having closed down operations in its homeland.

[14] Panfilov's 28 was a platoon of twenty-eight Soviet guardsmen, named after their commander, General Ivan Vasilevich Panfilov, which allegedly held back the advance on Moscow of German troops in November 1941 at the cost of their own lives, destroying eighteen enemy tanks in the process. Two films have been made in the USSR and Russia based on the story, though some question its credibility. Timur's boys is a reference to Arkadii Gaidar's iconic 1940 children's novel *Timur i ego komanda* [Timur and His Gang], which was made into a film in the

more important than mere historical reality.[15] As the French sociologist Maurice Halbwachs pointed out, historiographic objectivity does not particularly serve the interests of a specific collective.[16] Within the Czech context, where the ideologically inflated stories of Soviet wartime heroism on which entire generations (including my own) were raised were revised after 1989 as representing a relic of crude communist propaganda, this may seem hard to understand. The mythologization of wartime imagery, mixing memory and desire, physical and temporal facts with fiction, took on new dimensions with Russia's annexation of Crimea, its intervention in Southeast Ukraine, and, most recently, with the current full-scale war against Ukraine, with such strategies intended to bolster Russian aggression and frame it as a continuation of the ancient struggle against fascism.[17]

As Aleida Assmann argues, though affect is an integral part of memory and acts as a stabilizer, it is ambivalent in nature – it can be associated with both authenticity and duplicity.[18] And so amongst the many ways of making the (Great Patriotic) War visible, song writing stands out as the emotional medium *par excellence*. The anthropologist Sergei Ushakin speaks of the "affective management of emotions", whereby participants in various memory activities are overwhelmed by emotions, while rational and cognitive processes are neglected.[19] However, even

same year. In it, a group of pioneers led by Timur performs good deeds in the Soviet hinterland during the Great Patriotic War and face off against a rival group of young desperadoes. The book was published in countless editions and became required school reading in both the USSR and communist Czechoslovakia.

[15] In this context, reference is generally made to the work of the former Russian Minister of Culture Vladimir Rostislavovich Medinskii and his activities in various cultural, historical and memory institutions. He is seen as a kind of personification of the state's patriotic approach to cultural and memorial policy, in which the main criterion of truthfulness and accuracy becomes the state's interest. (See, for example, NORRIS, Stephen M.: The War Film and Memory Politics in Putin's Russia. In: HOFFMAN, D. L. (ed.): *The Memory of the Second World War in Soviet and Post-Soviet Russia*, pp. 299–316.)

[16] HALBWACHS, Maurice: *Kolektivní paměť*. Praha, Sociologické nakladatelství 2009, p. 130. (Czech translation of the French original: *La mémoire collective*. Paris, Presses universitaires de France 1950.)

[17] Sergei Toimentsev, an expert in the historical politics of modern Russia, even retrospectively interprets the long-standing commemoration of the Great Patriotic War as preparation for a new war and the maintenance of a fighting spirit in Russian society (TOIMENTSEV, Sergei: Oficiální paměť jako časovaná bomba. In: *Dějiny a současnost*, Vol. 44, No. 6 (2022), pp. 12–13).

[18] ASSMANNOVÁ, A.: *Prostory vzpomínání*, p. 22.

[19] In addition to songs and TV shows, Ushakin also examines the historical reconstructions so popular in contemporary Russia. According to him, these are not about reproducing and learning about certain events, but above all reliving and transmitting values and emotions,

in the case of war songs, which are commonly deployed politically in modern Russia for patriotic poignancy and to support Putin himself, there has been an intertwining of the vividly personal and collective memory and the political project.[20] The fact is that a revival of Soviet and modern war songs has been taking place since as far back as the mid-1990s. The boom in cover versions of old Soviet war songs and the production of new ones can be seen as representing both a response to and mutual reinforcement of audience demand, economic interest and political strategy. This has created a diverse scene in which military-themed songs are served up in all sorts of ways: bombastic concerts of Songs of Victory or Victory Day Songs (9 May), often still accompanied by captivating documentary images from the war and, as the years go by, more and more unremitting commentaries, video clips, TV and YouTube channels, and selections of songs from old war movies. At the same time, old songs are recycled, sometimes with added military content that they did not originally possess, and new songs premiered. Traditional and modern war songs provide a musical accompaniment to the journeys and events of the Night Wolves Motorcycle Club and the marches of the Immortal Regiment, both of which I discuss below.

Let us not forget that Soviet war songs are being played during the current campaign in Ukraine. Indeed, the regime's celebration in the Luzhniki Stadium, Moscow, in March 2022 to mark the anniversary of Crimea's "reunification" with Russia turned into a political musical with blurred temporal boundaries. The symbols, decorations and references made by the speakers, who included Putin, brought together the myth of the Great Patriotic War, the 2014 annexation of Crimea, and the ongoing "special military operation" in Ukraine with war songs by pop stars from Putin's *entourage*.[21] It was no longer clear or even important as

which can lead to the intermingling of different temporal and contextual levels. He also notes the creation of affective bonds through various objects, using the specific example of the Ribbon of Saint George and the modern tradition of its utilization in which it becomes, inter alia, a link between generations, both wartime and contemporary. (OUSHAKINE, S. A.: Remembering in Public [online].)

[20] A popular theme of social media is "Putin's tears", an image of the president being moved to tears at a Songs of Victory concert. The impressions of a foreigner moved by one of the Soviet or Russian wartimes or pseudo-wartime songs is then shared in similar fashion. The Second World War clips shared on social media bring to mind Milan Kundera's "tears shed over tears".

[21] Putin rounded off his speeches on the topic of Russia's invincibility with traditional fantasies of bravery and comradeship in combat. Russian soldiers in Ukraine, he said, are fighting "side by side", helping each other and willing to protect the other's body from bullets as though they were brothers. (See [Anonymous:] Prazdnichnyi kontsert v Luzhnikakh [Celebration Concert in Luzhniki]. In: *YouTube* [online], 19. 03. 2022, channel user Sergei Polikov. [Accessed 2022-10-21.] Available at: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LkCOkos2IUA.)

to whether these were old Soviet war songs or new Russian war songs or what particular war was actually being sung about.[22] The event included a rendition of "Donbas Is Behind Us" and one of its singers.

And so, the video clip in which a modern-day Russian militiaman from Donbas shakes hands with a soldier from the Soviet Red Army is neither a hallucinatory trip nor a piece of crazy performance art, but a well thought out piece of propaganda and a typical example of Putin's politics of memory. For the Czech viewer it is remarkable in at least another two respects. Firstly, Czechoslovakia experienced a similar cognitive dissonance brought about by the symbolic intermingling of historical figures after the military invasion by Warsaw Pact troops in August 1968. Secondly, one version of the song "Donbas Is Behind Us" on YouTube has Czech subtitles.[23] There is thus a demonstrable interest in exporting the myth of the Great Patriotic War and its political upgrades, and there are resources and agents already actively involved in this project. Without wanting to draw far-reaching parallels or comparisons between widely differing contexts, I think it is instructive given the perverse political use and abuse of the Great Patriotic War myth to look back upon similar practices in our not too distant past,[24] and to examine the channels through which the revived myth is being smuggled into Czech society, which up till now has accepted that subjecting said myth to critical review is a natural and necessary part of the process of distancing itself from the communist regime. In short, in this text I shall examine how the myth of the Great Patriotic War was manifest in the promotion of Brezhnev's doctrine of limited sovereignty, and how it is being advanced in today's pluralist democracy as one of the vehicles for the dissemination of the "Russian world".

"They Came in Time"

When the Soviet Army, along with other Warsaw Pact troops, invaded Czechoslovakia in August 1968, it heavily relied for its legitimacy on the legacy of the Red Army as liberator from German fascist domination. The Soviet narrative claimed

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[22] In the same way, the boundaries between culture or art and politics were blurred, especially since the performing artists also currently hold or have held various positions in the Russian presidential administration or actively supported Putin during the presidential elections.

[23] See "Donbass je za námi a s námi Bůh". In: *YouTube* [online], updated 11. 10. 2022, channel user Radmila Zemanová-Kopecká. [Accessed 2022-10-21.] Available at: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0qaAXiQVhsg.

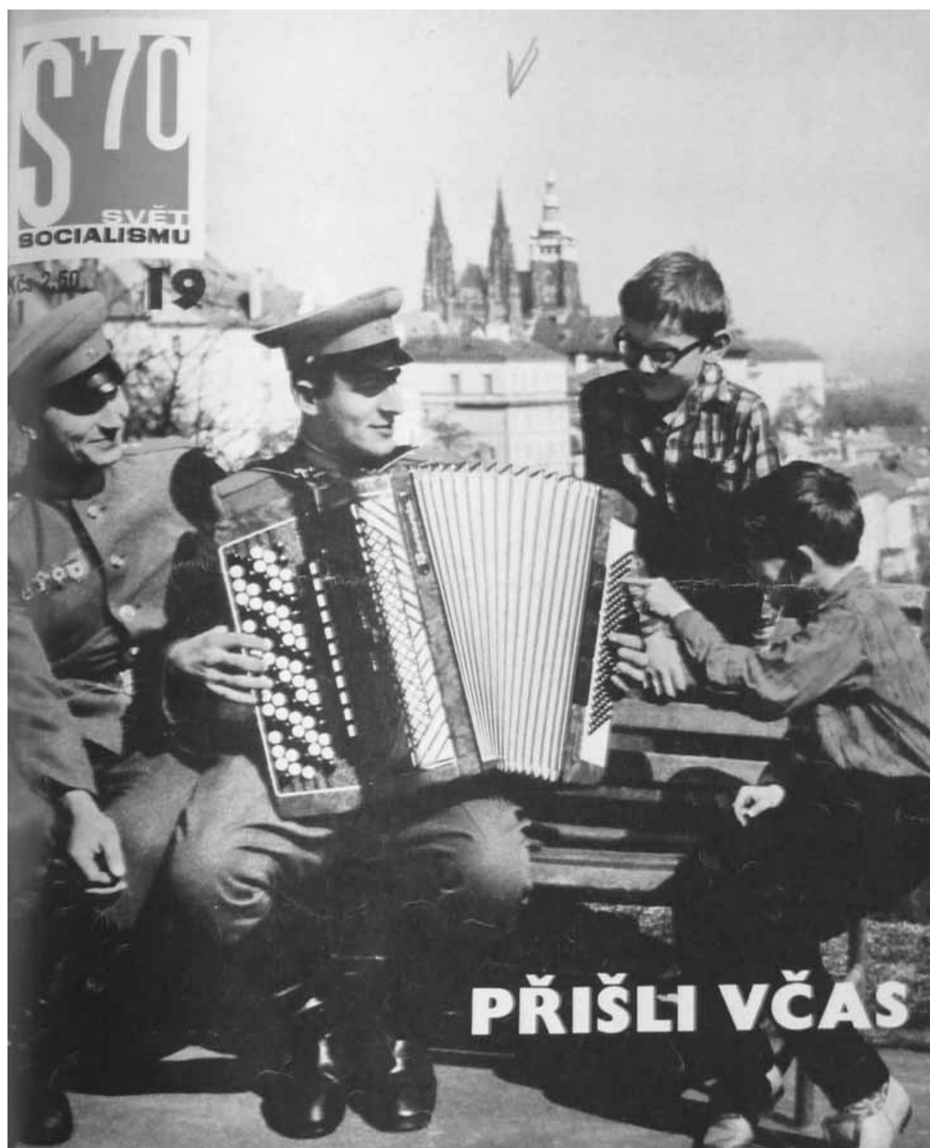
[24] In the context of Russian-Ukrainian relations, Tatiana Zhurzhenko speaks directly of "weaponization through memory" of the Great Patriotic War by Russia (ZHURZHENKO, T.: In the Shadow of Victory [online]).

the invasion was essential in order to quash alleged counter-revolutionary tendencies and drew on even older historical associations dating back to the early days of the building of the first communist state.[25] However, Soviet officers enforced acceptance of these ideas by recalling and appropriating the unquestioned merits of the Red Army. Said merits had little or no chance of being subjected to a realistic assessment in communist Czechoslovakia after the war. Love and admiration for the Soviet Union, and for the Soviet liberators doubly so, was one of the main pillars of the regime's ideological socialization of its citizenry, a process from which young children were not spared. As well as "explaining" the situation as it unfolded in 1968, Soviet *politruks*, i.e. political commissars or officers responsible for ideological education and organization, gave lectures on the liberation of 1945, Czechoslovak-Soviet military operations, and on the friendship that arose and was sealed with blood during the joint campaign against fascism. They presented themselves as the successors and "sons" of the liberators, and, in order to ratchet up the volume of their claims, they enlisted the services of veterans and others who had actually fought during the war. At the same time, they were forever reminding Czechoslovakia of the obligations linked with this friendship forged in the white-hot flame of combat, which would naturally be passed on to the descendants of the liberators. In the instructions they received regarding political education and propaganda, the Soviet political commissars were advised to establish friendly relations with the population and Czechoslovak soldiers by appealing to shared memories of the war. They were to show films and disseminate materials on liberation and the victorious hand-to-hand struggle against fascism and organize excursions to the "sites of battles that took place during the Second World War".[26]

Moreover, Soviet propaganda also took advantage of the fact that vivid images of liberation, often associated with the enthusiastic welcome given to the Red Army, still resonated in society and were later canonized in poems, photographs and documents. The deliberate conflation of historical levels and contexts, from which was to arise the figure of the eternal Soviet saviour and selfless friend, appears to have culminated on the occasion of the 25th anniversary of the liberation in 1970. In an issue of *Svět socialismu* [The World of Socialism], the magazine of the Union of Czechoslovak-Soviet Friendship (*Svaz československo-sovětského*

[25] In addition to claims of "counter-revolution", with its allusions to the events of 1956 in Hungary, the Soviets regularly used the phrase "white terror", which was allegedly directed against local comrades and supporters of Soviet policy.

[26] The framing of the Soviet Army through references to the Red Army is a topic I address in my book *Sovětská armáda a česká společnost 1968–1991* (Praha, Karolinum – Ústav pro soudobé dějiny AV ČR 2021, pp. 107–114).



The front page of the 8 May 1970 issue of the magazine *Svět socialismu* [The World of Socialism] with the emblematic title "They Came in Time", referring to the liberation of Czechoslovakia by Soviet troops on its 25th anniversary and, at the same time, to the Soviet Army's "fraternal assistance" against the alleged counter-revolution in August 1968.

přátelství, SČSP), devoted to the end of the war and the Soviet liberators, featured a colour photograph on its front page of two modern-day Soviet soldiers with smiles on their faces, holding an accordion and engaged in convivial conversation with two small boys. The scene is framed by Prague Castle and accompanied by the caption "They Came in Time". The editors thus succeeded in illustrating visually the verse with which the national poet Vítězslav Nezval became one of many to praise the soldiers of the Red Army in the immediate aftermath of the war: "They came in time, as legendary troops from ancient chronicles. They won! Now they sit huddled around accordions."[27] The image of the timeless Soviet soldier who selflessly came to the aid of the Czechoslovak people was hammered home in the media during the period of normalization with stories from "everyday life" and variations on the theme of "hard times will always reveal true friends". Soviet soldiers became the personification of traditional virtues such as courage, selflessness, guilelessness, self-sacrifice, good-heartedness and so on. With their simple scenarios and flattened archetypes, these stories were reminiscent of traditional folktales, though also of the popular war epic *Vasilii Tiorkin* by Aleksandr Trifonovich Tvardovskii.[28]

Music and singing were an important tool for strengthening the emotional bond with Soviet heroes. In the initial phase of the occupation, the political wing of the Soviet Army was keen to arrange social meetings with different groups of the Czechoslovak population (including pre-school children). These gatherings would always combine the ideological (lectures and stories) with the emotional (music, song, dance and entertainment). The propaganda offensive included performances of music and dance by military ensembles and garrison bands, which featured, among other genres, a wide repertoire of wartime songs carefully attuned to the occasion and the audience. Following the example of the Alexandrov Ensemble (*Ansambl Aleksandrova*), the Central Group of Forces[29] formed its own song and dance group at its headquarters in Milovice, Central Bohemia, in early 1969. It choreographed historical scenes from wartime Czechoslovakia, such as the Carpatho-Dukla Operation (a military campaign to liberate

[27] NEZVAL, Vítězslav: Přišli včas. In: *Rudé právo* (17. 5. 1945), p. 1. The poem was later reprinted several times in collections of the author's work and other anthologies.

[28] See TVARDOVSKII, Aleksandr: *Voják Ťorkin.* Praha, Svět sovětů 1951. (Czech translation of the Russian original: *Vasilii Tiorkin.* Moskva, Voiennoie izdatelstvo Voiennogo ministerstva Soiuza SSR 1946.)

[29] The Central Group of Forces (*Tsentralnaia gruppa voisk*) was a formation of the Soviet Armed Forces used to incorporate Soviet troops in Central Europe on two occasions: in Austria and Hungary from 1945 to 1955 and troops stationed in Czechoslovakia after the Prague Spring of 1968.

Czechoslovakia during the Second World War), the Prague Uprising, and the liberation of Prague by the Red Army.

One aspect of political "normalization" in Czechoslovakia after 1968, during which the rigid conditions of the communist regime that had prevailed prior to the Prague Spring reform period were restored, involved acceptance of the Soviet version of said reforms and the Warsaw Pact invasion of the country in August 1968, and with it the "temporary" deployment of the Soviet army. In September 1969, the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia (*Ústřední výbor Komunistické strany Československa*, ÚV KSČ) officially declared that the invasion by Warsaw Pact troops represented international assistance in the fight against the threat of counter-revolution. This stance was confirmed a little later by a canonical political pamphlet entitled *Poučení* z *krizového vývoje*[30] and the Fourteenth Communist Party Congress in 1971. Though dark mutterings of the threat of counter-revolution and August's "fraternal assistance" acquired the status of officially sanctioned doctrine, the cult of August as an important communist milestone failed to take off. From around 1973 onwards, the Soviet Army's contribution to saving the country from a supposed counter-revolutionary coup ceased to be mentioned in the same breath as the invasion of 21 August, and references to it gradually died out altogether. More precisely, the opportunity to refer to said contribution remained, but was used haphazardly and sporadically. The normalization regime decided that discretion was the best form of valour as regards the circumstances of the Soviet Army's entry into Czechoslovakia, thus obscuring the origins of its presence from younger generations. By contrast, the cult of the Great Patriotic War and the fight against fascism shoulder-to-shoulder with the Soviet Army, which appropriated and continued to cultivate the legacy of the Red Army as liberator, intensified after 1968 in Czechoslovakia and persisted until the end of 1989.[31]

The main symbol of the revitalization of the cult of the Red Army was the magnificent Dukla Battle Memorial (*Památník bitvy na Dukle*), sometimes called the Memorial of Class Brotherhood (*Památník třídního bratrství*) or of Combat Brotherhood (*Památník bojového bratrství*), which the high command of the Central Group of Forces had built in 1971 in its grounds in Milovice-Mladá not far from Prague, even though both a monument and museum already existed at the

[30] The complete title is *Poučení z krizového vývoje ve straně a společnosti po XIII. sjezdu KSČ* [Lessons to be Learned from the Crisis Developments in the Party and Society after the Thirteenth Congress of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia]. Praha, Státní pedagogické nakladatelství 1972.

[31] See ČERNÁ, Marie: Memory of Warsaw Pact Intervention in the Post-August History 1968–1989: Manipulation, Oblivion, and Conservation. In: *Review of International American Studies*, Vol. 12, No. 2 (2019), pp. 141–158.

site of the joint Czechoslovak-Soviet wartime operation in Slovakia. The main attraction of the Milovice memorial was a twenty-two-metre-wide and seven-metre-high diorama of the Dukla battlefield featuring light and sound effects. The Union of Czechoslovak-Soviet Friendship was responsible for organizing tours for worker, educational and other collectives, and in January 1977 they welcomed their quarter-millionth visitor. The significance of this iconic space was underlined by numerous accompanying events and ceremonies, such as the swearing of pioneer oaths, gatherings of friendly military units, and the honouring of socialist labour brigades. The transfer of the memorial site (including soil from the battleground itself) to Milovice created a spatial link between the honour paid to the Red Army liberators (including the emotional experience of the battles depicted in the diorama) and the Central Group of Forces. It was to this that crowds flocked to pay their respects and express their gratitude to the war heroes.[32] It goes without saying that the significance of the operation itself was not to be thrown in doubt by any consideration of its strategic purpose or command tactics, and the propaganda effect was not to be undermined by any infelicitous reflections upon unnecessary casualties.

The myth of the Great Patriotic War enjoyed a new lease of life under the auspices of the Soviet Army in Czechoslovakia, which upgraded its inviolability and in the process helped burnish its own positive image. Just as, following the events of August 1968, images of the Red Army as liberator and of friendship "sprinkled with blood" had concealed the reality of a hostile military invasion, so, during the subsequent period of normalization, the very same images were to provide an acceptable veneer to the unseemly conduct of the Soviet garrisons stationed in Czechoslovakia. The services provided by the normalization regime to the "temporarily resident" Soviet Army in Czechoslovakia[33] included the curation of its good name. Despite the very real problems caused by the presence of the Soviet garrisons and the havoc wreaked to their surroundings,[34] as well as the increasing number of complaints from local residents and authorities,

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[32] See EADEM: *Sovětská armáda a česká společnost 1968–1991*, pp. 215–221.

[33] These included extensive assistance in the financing and construction of residential buildings and storage space, the virtually unconditional fulfilment of Soviet demands regarding the provision of more and more buildings and land, the toleration of illegal practices by Soviet garrisons (arbitrary confiscation, illicit construction activities, etc.) and the subsequent legalization thereof, the clearing up of ecological and other damage at state expense, the provision of counter-intelligence protection of military facilities, and the provision of goods and services under unfavourable economic conditions. (See *ibid.*)

[34] This included the contamination of soil, surface and groundwater with oil and chemicals, the destruction of forests, which were often illegally sequestered for military training, the rash, unrestricted movement of heavy combat materiel, excessive noise from aeroplanes and

a media *omertà* consisting of strictly censored, manipulated or outright false information was enforced around the Soviet Army in Czechoslovakia right up until the end of 1989. This manipulation included the image of the "sons" and even "grandsons" of the liberators, who, it was claimed, were defending peace on the western border of the socialist world. The task of the normalization regime was to stand guard over and further cultivate both this manipulation and the cult of the Great Patriotic War and Soviet wartime heroism, a task it continued to perform right up to its dying breath.

The "Russian World" in the Czech Republic

Following the Velvet Revolution of 1989, the Soviet Army stationed in Czechoslovakia, along with the whole of the cult of the Great Patriotic War, lost the support of the regime. Soviet troops were soon withdrawn from Czechoslovakia, and the system of ideological education and communist indoctrination fell apart. School children no longer had to learn Russian, compete as to who knew more about life in the Soviet Union, recite Soviet and Russian poems, attend screenings of Soviet war films, read stories about Soviet superheroes, sing Soviet songs, and stand around dressed in pioneer costumes shivering by the side of war memorials. Many topics that had up till then been taboo were opened up for discussion in the academic and wider environment, including the Second World War, which finally began to be more about history and less about ideology. The current reconstruction of the Soviet myth of the Great Patriotic War that we see going on in Putin's Russia is encountering an incomparably more hostile reception in the Czech Republic than it did in socialist Czechoslovakia. Nevertheless, attempts are being made to insinuate it into our democratic system. This is taking place with the aid of more general procedures, means and actor networks mobilized to spread the "Russian world", i.e. what many would call hybrid warfare.

With the concept of the "Russian world" (*russkii mir*), I return to my introductory remarks regarding the construction of Russian identity and the political deployment of the memory of the Great Patriotic War, albeit this time from a somewhat broader perspective. The original philosophical and messianic conception of the 1990s sought a place for Russia and its culture on the world stage under a transformed geopolitical situation after the loss of the country's status as one of the Great Powers. Reflections on Russian identity and Russianness emphasized the Russian language as a common discursive denominator, Russian

helicopters, illicit commerce, and increased levels of crime in the vicinity of Soviet garrisons and military training areas. (See *ibid.*)

culture, Orthodoxy and a collective historical memory. As several authors have pointed out, it was only under Putin that theory found its way into real-world political and geopolitical considerations. The "Russian world" became something of a political marketing brand, operating within and without Russian society. What this meant in practice was that philosophical considerations became intertwined with the technology of power, and this served to blur the contours of the concept. Within the framework of the "Russian world", the country's language and culture – both high and low – are promoted, the Russian Orthodox Church is supported, state and economic interests are pursued, and Russian influence is leveraged abroad. However, Crimea can be occupied and war waged with Ukraine also in the name of the "Russian world".[35]

I look at how certain practices of the Russian world, and, more specifically, the myth of the Great Patriotic War, are manifest in the Czech Republic through a wide range of media. These range from old-fashioned daily newspapers, via Russian-language compatriot outlets, social media such as YouTube, individual websites such as that of the Coordinating Council of Russian Compatriots (*Koordinační rada ruských krajanů*, KRRK), to the social networks formed around Russian compatriot associations or pro-Russian platforms and their offshoots. Individual media differ in respect of logic and rationality. They pursue different goals and set themselves different missions. They have different authorization criteria, place different demands on professionalism and accountability, objectivity and impartiality, and appeal to different audiences. Though the Russian-language expatriate press, such as the weekly *Prazhskii Ekspress* [The Prague Express], through the mouth of its editor-in-chief nominally respects accepted journalistic principles, it can by no means be considered an impartial medium offering objective information to its readership. Both the choice and treatment of subject matter – especially since the beginning of the Ukrainian-Russian conflict in 2014 – reflect the interests of the Russian state far more than they meet high journalistic benchmarks. Pro-Russian social platforms such as the Facebook group "Hej, občané!" ["Hey, Citizens!"] and the private Raptor-TV station linked to it, with their prioritization of alternative truth over what they call the mendacity of the public media and the establishment as a whole, evade accusations of manipulation by appealing to "experts" and objectivity. In addition to

[35] Cf. LARUELLE, Marlène: The "Russian World": Russia's Soft Power and Geopolitical Imagination. In: *Research Gate* [online]. Center on Global Interest Papers, May 2015. [Accessed 2022-10-22.] Available at: https://www.researchgate.net/publication/344222398_The_%27Russian_World%27_Russia%27s_Soft_Power_and_Geopolitical_Imagination_Center_for_Global_Interests_Papers_May; TISHKOV, Valerii: The Russian World: Changing Meanings and Strategies. Carnegie Endowment for International Peace. In: *Carnegie Papers* [online], No. 95, August 2008. [Accessed 2022-10-22.] Available at: https://carnegieendowment.org/files/the_russian_world.pdf.

An abandoned symbol of Czechoslovak-Soviet "comradeship" – the Dukla Battle Memorial created in 1971, located in Milovice, Central Bohemia. The photograph was taken in the early 1990s.

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disseminating what is often subversive information, truths and opinions, these media perform a mobilizing role: they call for action, most often demonstrations, marches, commemorations or participation at lectures and discussion forums. They also provide links to similar platforms. Bitter experience has proven conclusively that the democratization and decentralization of social media, now with the potential to spread an unprecedented range of subjectivities and showcase a diversity of marginalized voices in the public square, can also be used to promote completely centralized interests and goals.[36] In the case of pro-Russian platforms, this ambivalence is also reflected in the way they oscillate between Czech and Russian audiences. It is obvious that part of their content is taken up

[36] See, for example, POMERANTSEV, Peter: *This Is Not Propaganda: Adventures in the War Against Reality.* London, Faber & Faber 2020.

by official Russian media and presented in a calculated fashion to their own public. Despite the problematic, misleading handling of reality, both Russian compatriot and pro-Russian media in the Czech Republic report on certain events, and sometimes initiate or participate in them themselves, something that would otherwise remain below the radar of the public media. However, the flipside of ease of accessibility is the potential instability and transience of internet media and its openness to retroactive interference in its content, which makes this valuable source of up-to-date information highly unreliable over the long term. With these reservations in mind, I shall attempt to combine the widest range of materials available online and supplement them with traditional print media.

Compatriots

An important role in the dissemination of the "Russian world", which includes the legacy of the Great Patriotic War, is played by Russian expatriate communities in the Czech Republic: more specifically, those that are connected to Russian embassies and state structures through their organizations and associations. In practice, this reflects the importance granted in the conceptualization of the "Russian world" to the Russian diaspora as an extension of that world and as a potential source of Russianness or as a transnational world community replacing Russia's geopolitical losses after the end of the Cold War. Whatever the case, the idea that expatriate communities abroad might be shaped in some way and used to promote Russian culture and language, as well as to exert political influence in their respective countries, has long been accepted and actuated by Putin's government.[37]

International expatriate structures began to emerge at the beginning of the millennium, and the first World Congress of Russian Compatriots Living Abroad (*Vsemirnyi kongress sootechestvennikov*) was held in 2001. The Russian state began to focus more intensively on this sphere around the time of the Orange Revolution in Ukraine, aware that it was losing political leverage amongst its close neighbours. Around the mid-2000s, we can observe a mobilization process that the Russian state referred to as the "consolidation of the diaspora", the aim being to preserve "Russian identity" and strengthen ties with the country of origin through the promotion of Russian language, culture, traditions and

[37] In this context, the role played by Russian compatriots in destabilizing the political scene in the country's neighbours and advancing Russian interests in its traditional sphere of interests is highlighted. (See, for example, LUTSEVYCH, Orysia: *Agents of the Russian World: Proxy Groups in the Contested Neighbourhood*. London, Chatham House 2016.)

customs. An important unifying element of this foreign outpost of the "Russian world" was to be, as it was in Russia itself, a curated memory of the Great Patriotic War. The emphasis placed on the promotion of the Russian language – 2007 was declared the Year of the Russian Language – was firmly linked to the expansion of Russian-language news services and thus to the dissemination of the Russian symbolic world.

In the somewhat unclear definition of who can be understood as a "compatriot", more specifically a "Russian" compatriot, the maintenance of ties with the Russian state and its organizations is an important identifier. The international structure of Russian compatriot associations and their coordination, from the national via the regional all the way to the global level, which is overseen by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs through the good offices of the Federal Agency for the Commonwealth of Independent States, Compatriots Living Abroad, and International Humanitarian Cooperation (*Rossotrudnichestvo*), the Moscow Compatriot House (*Moskovskii dom sootechestvennika*) and the Government Commission on Compatriots Living Abroad (*Pravitelstvennaia komissiia po delam sootechestvennikov*). Plans were hatched at this level for state policy measures relating to the Russian diaspora, including the coordination of commemorative activities. In other words, from the perspective of the Russian state, a Russian compatriot is someone who maintains relations with the Russian Embassy and participates in projects coordinated, and sometimes financed,[38] by the Russian state through a structure of selected compatriot organizations, platforms, and specific individuals.[39] This, therefore, is the political definition of compatriotism I adhere to in my text.[40]

A hierarchical system of coordinating councils began to emerge in 2006 under the leadership of the World Coordinating Council of Russian Compatriots,

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[38] In 2007, the Russian World Fund (*Fond Russkii mir*) was established to support the activities of Russian compatriot associations, offering a range of state and private funding.

[39] See, for example, [Anonymous:] Sootechestvenniki v Konstitutsii: Kak eto bylo [Compatriots in the Constitution: How It Was]. In: *Fond podderzhki i zashchity prav sootechestvennikov, prozhivaiushchikh za rubezhom* [Foundation for the Support and Protection of the Rights of Compatriots Living Abroad] [online], 15. 07. 2021. [Accessed 2022-10-22.] Available at: https://pravfond.ru/press-tsentr/stati/sootechestvenniki-v-konstitutsii-kak-eto-bylo/.

[40] The representation of the Russian community in the Czech Republic, which numbers around thirty-five thousand members, has long been divided in its relationship to Putin's Russia and its compatriot institutions. In this text I am not interested in the Russian community as such, but rather in the implementation of the interests of the Russian state through narrowly defined compatriot subjects. Just as not all Russians in the Czech Republic are compatriots, so not all those who act through compatriot structures are Russian or come from the countries of the former Soviet Union. We also find people who present themselves as Czechs in relation to Czech society.

or WCCRC (*Vsemirnyi koordinatsionnyi sovet rossiiskikh sootechestvennikov*). Global congresses of Russian compatriots were held regularly with the participation of top representatives of the Russian state, as well as regional (e.g. European) and national conferences. Thematically oriented meetings were held in parallel with the compatriot press, compatriot youth, etc. The Russian Federation's interest in compatriots living abroad was reflected in its Constitution, which in 2020 had a section added offering support and protection of their cultural identity. In this respect the Russian diaspora is seen to play a dual role: expanding Russia's spiritual space and acting as a platform on which the Russian state "can rely".

The Coordinating Council of Russian Compatriots in the Czech Republic (*Koordinatsionnyi sovet rossiiskikh sootechestvennikov v Chekhii*) was established in 2008. Since then, there has been considerable staff turnover and the associations the council represents have often changed, too. The council is currently in liquidation, and apart from maintaining a website, it displays no other signs of life. The local "Russian world" of compatriot associations is backed up by Russian-language media, newspapers and websites, such as the weeklies *Prazhskii Ekspress* [The Prague Express] and *Prazhskii telegraf* [The Prague Telegraph]. In 2010, the state-controlled *Russia Today* began broadcasting in the Czech Republic.[41] These entities were loosely linked by individuals, such as businesspeople willing to finance certain "patriotic" activities and journalists.[42] What is important is a certain coalescence around particular strategic themes, mutual support, promotion, and the complementarity of individuals and their links to the Russian Embassy. The boundaries of the diaspora thus mobilized are not sharp and overlap with mainstream society by means of persons with often unclear or mixed national (Czech and Russian) identities or through family ties. There is an intermingling of primarily cultural, folkloristic and philological interests[43] with more explicit political themes, linking associations whose origins reach back to the 1990s with modern special-interest projects emerging only with the

[41] Following the Russian invasion of Ukraine in February 2022, *Russia Today* was banned from broadcasting in the European Union.

[42] In 2018, members of the Coordinating Council of Russian Compatriots in the Czech Republic included the Angel advertising agency, the writer, translator and journalist Andrei Fozikosh, and the opera singer Takhira Menazhdinova. (See *Koordinatsionnyi sovet rossiiskikh sootechestvennikov v Chekhii* [online]. [Accessed 2022-10-22.] Available at: http://ksros.eu/o-nas/.)

[43] Long-standing members of the Coordinating Council include the Russian Cultural Awareness Society in Morava, the Ostrava Russian House, the International Cultural Institute Klíč, the Association of Russian Speaking Students and Their Supporters – Artek, and the Slavic Folk Ensemble Legia. (See *ibid.*)

mobilization of the Russian compatriot world or after the annexation of Crimea.[44] In practice, this reflects the conceptual vagueness of the very idea of a "Russian world", in which an interest in cultural or folk traditions is intertwined with the geopolitical interests of the Russian state, and educational, social and awareness-raising activities with the exercise of political influence. The important thing is that, despite possible personnel changes and internal contradictions, this is not an environment characterized by lively discussion and ideological differences, but rather a project whose main purpose is the smooth reproduction and implementation of Russian state-sanctioned ideas. The successes achieved by such initiatives are signs more of their close connection to the Russian Federation rather than any grassroots enthusiasm and interests.

As I have noted, one of Russia's interests is in mobilizing the compatriot community around the official memory of the Great Patriotic War and the victory over fascism, and the reproduction and protection of these themes. Linked to this is the fight against what is termed the "revisionism" or "distortion" of history. When, in April 2012, plans for Victory Day celebrations were discussed at the Russian Embassy in Prague, the author of an article in the Russian-language *Prazhskii Ekspress* welcomed these developments, writing: "here, far from our native culture and language, much more effort is required to preserve the memory of the heroic past".[45] These efforts focused primarily on the more or less traditional ceremonies and activities associated with the May anniversary of the end of the war, plus newer traditions such as the distribution of the Ribbon of Saint George. In another article, the same author recommended that his readers wear the ribbon during the celebrations themselves.[46] As a symbol of cross-generational relations, the Ribbon of Saint George (*Georgievskaia lentochka*)[47] also

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[44] This is so in the case of the Leningrad Blockade Memorial Association in the Czech Republic, the AFGANVET Association and the Czech-Russian Friendship Society (see *ibid.*). The Institute of Slavic Strategic Studies (*Institut slovanských strategických studií*, ISSTRAS), founded in 2013, became known even within mainstream society for its pro-Russian, anti-Ukrainian and anti-Western positions and activism, and quickly attracted the attention of security analysts and journalists. Its chairwoman, Radmila Zemanová-Kopecká, was also vice-chairwoman of the entire Coordinating Council of Russian Compatriots in the Czech Republic and editor of the Russian-language newspaper *Prazhskii Ekspress*. Nevertheless, she appears as a Czech in her dealings with Czech society. Incidentally, it is she who provided the subtitles to some versions of the song "Donbas Is Behind Us".

[45] GERBEIEV, Konstantin: 67 let nashei istoricheskoi pamiati [67 Years of Our Historic Memory]. In: *Prazhskii Ekspress*, Vol. 14, No. 17 (26. 04. 2012).

[46] IDEM: Prazdnik, kotoryi vsegda s nami [A Celebration that is Always with Us]. In: *Ibid.*, No. 18 (03. 05. 2012).

[47] The modern use of the orange ribbon with three black stripes has brought together different layers of tradition and meaning into a strange symbolic conglomerate. On the one hand,

lent its name to a veterans' event in 2011. As in Russia, the interest of compatriots turned to the heroes of the victorious war campaign, both the living and the dead. Survivors were tracked down, their medals published and interviews with them reprinted by the Russian-language media, though these contained nothing more than confirmation of the traditional narrative of Soviet heroism. Whenever possible, associations and schools organized meetings with veterans, and kindergarten children painted pictures for them. Respect for war veterans was expressed in the form of official thanks and awards from the highest Russian circles, often directly from the president, via the Russian Embassy. The bond with the homeland was reinforced by trips to Russia, also organized by the Russian Embassy.[48] Belonging to the "Russian world" and community of compatriots was further promoted through various social programmes, which provided material assistance and access to Russian-language information sources. The social projects included collections organized by compatriot associations and media allowing veterans to enjoy free subscriptions to Russian newspapers. As time passed and the last surviving participants and witnesses of the war dwindled, the interest of the "Russian world" turned more and more to the dead.

"Mobilization of the Dead"

A trend that Julie Fedor has described as the "mobilization of the dead"[49] in connection with marches of what is called the Immortal Regiment can also be seen in the newly cultivated interest of the Russian state in the fallen citizens of the Soviet Union, their remains, graves, monuments and memorials. The state programmes and structures established in 2008 by the Ministry of Defence and

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it references Russian imperial and, later, Soviet orders of military glory honouring outstanding wartime heroism, which Yeltsin revived and Putin has put back into practice. On the other hand, since 2005, the orange and black ribbon has become a widely disseminated, society-wide symbol of national pride that relates primarily to victory in the Great Patriotic War. However, in conjunction with many other modern rituals, it has become intertwined with a performative identification with the Russian state and its policy of aggression.

[48] Most common are the honorary visits of international delegations hosted by various state and local authorities on the occasion of Victory Day. In 2012, two representatives from the Czech Republic visited the May Day celebrations in St. Petersburg as part of the "Compatriots Blockaders" programme. (See [Anonymous:] Dva blokadnika iz Chekhii posetili gorod v Den Pobedy [Two Czech Blockade Survivors Visit the City on Victory Day]. In: *Ibid.*, No. 20 (17. 05. 2012).

[49] FEDOR, Julie: Memory, Kinship, and the Mobilization of the Dead: The Russian State and the "Immortal Regiment" Movement. In: FEDOR, J. – KANGASPURO, M. – LASSILA, J. – ZHURZHENKO, T. (eds.): *War and Memory in Russia, Ukraine, and Belarus*, pp. 307–345.

tasked with looking after burial grounds and the memory of the fallen have spread abroad by means of Russian embassies.[50] In the Czech Republic, too, a Council for the Affairs of Military Memory (*Sovet po voenno-memorialnoi rabote*) has begun operations under the aegis of the Russian Embassy in Prague.

Since around 2010, the "mobilization of the dead" in the minds of local Russian compatriots has focused on burial grounds, graves and monuments traditionally associated with Victory Day ceremonies. Again, embassy-organized activities went hand in hand with personal compatriot initiatives, in which individual levels, including the media, enhanced and supported each other. The compatriot press published articles that illustrated the systematic interest that the Russian state and its representative bodies took in Soviet and Russian war graves. This interest was legitimized by the creation of the post of representative of the Ministry of Defence at the Russian Embassy. On the other hand, the press published personal accounts in which the Victory Day celebrations were naturally associated with visits to the burial sites of fallen Soviet soldiers, and the upkeep of the graves themselves presented as an intimate, spontaneously cultivated tradition. The work brigades (*subotniki*) promoted by the Russian press, in which members of the Russian compatriot community cleaned the graves of Soviet soldiers and, as though incidentally, spread news of commemorative events connected with Victory Day or the liberation of this or that place by the Red Army to other parts of the Czech Republic, could thus appear to be a spontaneous, bottom-up initiative. This despite the fact that the ceremonies were often attended by officials from Russia or the Russian Embassy.

The significance of Soviet war burial sites, graves and monuments as traditional commemorative sites, official ceremonies, and communitarian, family or personal rituals, has been revived, as in Russia, by an increased interest in those who were actually lain to rest in them. In a sense, the "search movement" has arrived in the Czech Republic. Associations of volunteers spread across Russia to search for and identify the remains of fallen, often missing, Soviet soldiers who have not been given a proper burial. Initially, this was a grassroots initiative with a relatively long tradition stretching back to Soviet times and driven primarily by a desire to repay the debt to the millions of "nameless" victims of the insane war machinery who, for all the propaganda, pomp and ceremony surrounding veterans, and the respect nominally paid to them, had faded from memory. However, it was gradually appropriated by the Russian state, which proceeded to invest it with new content. In 2006, Putin signed a degree on the commemoration

[50] See ZHURZHENKO, Tatiana: The Soviet War Memorial in Vienna: Geopolitics and the New Russian Diaspora in Post-Cold War Europe. In: FINNEY, Patrick (ed.): *Remembering the Second World War.* London, Routledge 2017, pp. 89–114.

of fallen Soviet soldiers, under which the power to search for and identify their remains was in the hands of the Russian Ministry of Defence. The same decree also regulated the activities of civic associations.[51] In 2013, a state-sponsored civic organization, called the Search Movement of the Russian Federation (*Poiskovoe dvizhenie Rossiiskoi Federatsii*), was created, which brought together existing groups of searchers, received regular financial support and became involved in other patriotic programmes. In the end, as sociologists Natalia Goncharova and Iskender Iasaveev show, even these forgotten souls were co-opted into the traditional myth of Soviet heroism and patriotism in order to amplify the greatness of the Soviet victory over fascism. Instead of focusing on the personal tragedies involved, Putin again preferred to hammer home a collective triumph that could be used to foster national pride and intimidate the outside world. Along with a rebranding of victims as glorious defenders of the homeland, he heaped praise upon the "searchers", calling them "true patriots".[52] The ceremonies accompanying the official burial of discovered remains are often used by Russian dignitaries to warn against the "distortion" and "falsification" of history, and to make ambiguous allusions to the alleged rise of contemporary fascism or to inveigh against the hostile West.

In the Czech Republic, too, the Russian state's intention, stemming from a need to keep the heroic past visible and to maintain a generational bond, this time round by personalizing long-dead soldiers, could be linked to the natural desire of the survivors to learn of the final resting place of their loved ones or to a simple thirst for knowledge on the part of researchers. The domain within which this personal and political interest in the remains of Soviet soldiers can be explored is, of course, incomparably smaller in the Czech Republic, though not inconsiderable. For all the long-cultivated official reverence for Soviet graves and monuments, for more than sixty years after the war a large number of the alleged 50,000 registered remains were still unidentified. Here, too, space was created for contact with generations of family members and for statesmanlike

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[51] Ukaz prezidenta RF ot 22. 1. 2006 N. 37: Voprosy uvekovecheniia pamiati pogibvshikh pri zashchite otechestva [Decree of the President of the Russian Federation of 22. 1. 2006, No. 37 on Issues of Perpetuating the Memory of Those Who Died Defending the Fatherland]. In: I*nternet Archive WaybackMachine* [online]. [Accessed 2022-10-23.] Available at: http://web.archive.org/web/20140323194124/http://www.rsva-ural.ru/library/mbook.php?id=741.

[52] For more on the history, shifts in meaning and political deployment of the "search movement", see GONCHAROVA, Natalia V. – IASAVEEV, Iskender G.: Konstruirovanie smyslov poiskovoi raboty v Rossii: Leitmotivy vlastei i uchastnikov ekspeditsii. In: *Mir Rossii* [online], No. 1 (2020), pp. 153–170. [Accessed 2022-10-22.] Available at: https://mirros.hse.ru/article/view/10477/12007. For more on the subject of the war dead and the creation of a cult, military graves and ceremonies within a broader context, see MOSSE, G. L.: *Fallen Soldiers*.

speeches during the burial ceremonies of newly discovered remains or the presentation of renovated burial sites and monuments, often accompanied by the names or even the photographs of hitherto unknown soldiers. Russian Embassy and Consulate officials exploited these opportunities to the full, as well as urging all-round care for the dead. In 2014, the compatriots' efforts to express their support for various commemorative activities related to the Great Patriotic War culminated in the creation of the Prague Civic Council (*Prazhskii grazhdanskii sovet*), which, in addition to promoting Russian language and culture, undertook to sponsor social projects focusing on war veterans, the repair and maintenance of burial grounds and graves, as well as research activities in this sphere, such as the planned cataloguing of all significant memorial sites in the Czech Republic associated with the liberation of the country by the Red Army.[53]

This community of shared interest in veterans and dead Soviet soldiers could, of course, welcome into its midst the right kind of Czechs, such as those who tended Soviet graves in their own place of residence. In 1999, a Czech military history club was formed in Brno specializing in the Red Army. Like other such clubs, it concentrated on the reconstructions of Second World War battles in southern Moravia. In 2006, it merged with what was then the newly created Russian Cultural Awareness Society in Moravia (*Ruský kulturně osvětový spolek na Moravě*), through the good offices of which it came under the auspices of the Coordinating Council of Russian Compatriots in the Czech Republic. The Russian-language media began to report on enthusiasts from the Red Army Club who selflessly devoted their free time to the search for and identification of fallen Soviet soldiers, using Ministry of Defence databases, local chronicles and archives, and communicating with both Russian and Czech institutions and with Russian citizens, whose loved ones they succeeded in identifying.[54] At the same time, club members gradually became a firm part of the "Russian world", a fact confirmed by the regular awards and honourable mentions they received both at the Russian Consulate in Brno and in Moscow. In 2012, one of the club members, Soňa Holečková, received the recently created Russian National Award for Outstanding Achievements in Charitable Work (*Za blagodelanie*) from President Putin

[53] See SITNIKOVA, Elena: Dobrota spasiot mir: Memorandum podpisali v Den zashchity detei [Kindness Saves the World: Memorandum Signed on Child Protection Day]. In: *Prazhskii Ekspress*, Vol. 16, No. 25 (19. 6. 2014); Otvetstvennyi sekretar Olga Nezovibatko: Priglashaiem volonterov! [Responsible Secretary Olga Nezovibatko: Inviting Volunteers!] In: *Ibid*.

[54] See, for example, GOLECHKOVA, Sonia: „Ne dolzhno byt bezymiannykh mogil..." ["There Should Be No Unnamed Graves..."] In: *Portal novostei „Chekhiia segodnia"* [online], 18. 07. 2011. [Accessed 2022-10-22.] Available at: https://czechtoday.eu/den-pobedy/2011/l-r-97/.

himself.[55] Among other things, involvement in the "Russian world" of the compatriots expanded the club's activities to include participation in various commemorative and memorial events, for which club members – dressed in the uniforms of the Red Army – provided a suitable backdrop.[56] In this case, too, the current trend for increasing the visibility of the Red Army's noble deeds by means of historical reconstructions and more frequent occasions on which to parade around in Soviet war uniforms is clear.[57]

In the concept of the "Russian world", the compatriot community represents hope, potential and a cross-border amplification of Russian values and identity. However, it also risks becoming alienated from its own civilizational roots and therefore needs looking after carefully. This is doubly true of the children of the

[55] EADEM: Ia chuvstvuiu tot samyi russkii dukh [I Can Feel That Russian Spirit]. In: *Ibid.* [online], 15. 09. 2012. [Accessed 2022-10-22.] Available at: https://czechtoday.eu/den-pobedy/2012/sonya-golechkova-ya-chuvstvuyu-tot-samyj-russkij-duh/. The Russian Consulate in Brno provided the association with more than merely symbolic support. Among other things, it contributed to its publications, which were subsequently awarded further prizes within the Russian compatriot world, and to its equipment. Probably also thanks to its close contacts with Russian embassies, the association had the status of foreign event organizer and was regularly invited to battle re-enactments in Eastern European countries, including Russia. And so, in 2020, during a recruitment event, it was able to offer potential applicants free membership, the opportunity to explore Eastern European countries "for a song", and the chance to learn Russian. (See the Facebook page of the Red Army Club in Brno: https://www.facebook.com/krapalava.)

[56] For more on the utilization of historical reconstructions as propaganda and the involvement of the formerly historical reconstruction Red Army clubs in the current military operation in eastern Ukraine, see ZHURZHENKO, T.: Russia's Never-Ending War Against "Fascism" [online]. It would not be appropriate to ascribe such intentions to the Czech association. Nevertheless, both by creating a contemporary backdrop for the political manifestos of official Russian positions, and by more or less actively supporting them and drawing on Russian resources, its activities are increasingly moving away from the innocent game of presenting historical events. This is all the more so as it attempts to socialize the next generation into the "Russian world". In 2020, the Red Army Club in Brno created a Military History Youth Club, where fourteen-year-olds were introduced to wartime walkie-talkies and given first-aid courses, took trips retracing the footsteps of Red Army battles, marched in full combat gear, slept in military bunkers, wore Soviet military uniforms, learned to speak Russian, to shoot guns, acquired sword skills, learned how to disassemble, clean and reassemble a gun, set up military camp and decamp, cook *shashlik*, brew tea in a *samovar*, etc. (See the Facebook page of the Red Army in Brno: https://www.facebook.com/krapalava.)

[57] This "dressing-up game" can of course have various levels. In the most extreme cases, in the blurred boundaries and contexts that is by no means infrequent in the "Russian world", such quasi-soldiers become not only experts, but *de facto* Red Army soldiers themselves, conveying to the audience not only information, but also the experiences of "eyewitnesses" to the events being recreated.

compatriots. The task of retaining the children of the Russian diaspora within the sphere of the “Russian world” is to be performed by means of their involvement in memory projects. Providing them with the proper patriotic education, ensuring contact with veterans and participation at ceremonies, and awakening an interest in Soviet soldiers killed on Czech and Slovak territory has best been achieved through traditional educational institutions, namely, Russian-language nurseries and schools. These build on the wealth of experience enjoyed by the Soviet education system in inculcating the “correct” image of the Great Patriotic War and Soviet/Russian heroism from early childhood. For pupils attending Russian schools, embassy-led memory work included reciprocal visits with veterans, recitation and art competitions featuring the theme of war, singing military songs, showing war films, and the creation of halls of fame showcasing the Russian martial arts, all of which are tried-and-tested methods of ideologically socializing children. Students in the upper grades of the school at the Russian Embassy in Prague-Bubeneč were also involved in tending Soviet military graves and in research into the fate of the fallen and their identification.[58] Like their Czech counterparts, they were subsequently honoured for these activities and invited to the Russian Embassy.

However, support for the “Russian world” abroad is not restricted to the creation of expatriate networks. It also functions within broader Czech society. Many cultural, linguistic and commemorative activities reach out to the Czech public and seek to involve Czech schools in children’s competitions and other projects via compliant Russian-language teachers.[59] The latter are paid special attention within the “Russian world”. As the Ukrainian scholar Tatiana Zhurzhenko points out, as in the immediate aftermath of the war, Soviet war graves and memorials abroad play an important geopolitical role from Russia’s perspective (which took over their administration after the collapse of the Soviet Union).[60] Just as they clearly marked a sphere of influence during the Soviet era, these days they serve as tangible, incontrovertible evidence of the scale and magnitude of the Soviet anti-fascist campaign, which Russia has commandeered for itself and upon which it has based its own domestic and foreign policy. It is for this reason that any attempt to interrogate the past by intervening in Soviet monuments provokes

[58] See, for example, GERBEIEV, K.: 67 let nashei istoricheskoi pamiati.

[59] For instance, in the summer of 2014, the Russian Civil Council, tasked with financing compatriot projects, presented a cheque to the cultural and linguistic organization *Klíč* [The Key], so that it could organize a trip for school children from the town of Králíky in the east of the Czech Republic to the Pushkin Festival in Prague. (See SITNIKOVA, E.: Dobrota spasiot mir.)

[60] ZHURZHENKO, T.: The Soviet War Memorial in Vienna, pp. 86–114.

a counter-offensive from Russian officials, which then results in a series of coordinated retaliatory measures.[61]

The military attaché in charge of remembrance ceremonies at the Russian Embassy also oversaw how the Czech state, local authorities and citizenry related to these matters. He attempted to solicit an interest in Soviet and Russian fallen soldiers, sought funding for repair work to cemeteries, graves and memorials, and, where necessary, procured money from other sources. He was prepared to intervene directly in cases he deemed unsatisfactory in respect of Russian interests. In 2010, the Russian side closely monitored attacks on the symbols of the hammer, sickle and star, which ever since the Velvet Revolution have commonly been associated with the totalitarian communist regime, on the Memorial to the Red Army's Victory over Fascism in Brno. When local councillors finally decided to remove the first two symbols and leave only the star, the Russian Embassy called this a "falsification of history" and the Russian-language newspaper *Prazhskii Ekspress* was quick to allude to the fate of Tallinn's "Bronze Soldier", the relocation of which had so inflamed tensions between Russia and Estonia a few years earlier.[62] Colonel-General Dmitrii Nikolaevich Bulgakov, a Russian Defence Ministry official who carried out an inspection of Soviet war memorials in the Czech Republic lasting several days, was heard saying that he disagreed fundamentally with any alterations: "History cannot be rewritten – it is what it is." He rounded off his argument with a personal appeal: "As someone whose grandfathers both died in the war, I am categorically against any changes."[63] In a 2011 interview with the Russian-language news server *Portal novostei „Chekhiia segodnia"* [Czechia Today], Anatolii Tomnikov, first secretary at the Russian Embassy in Prague in charge of Soviet memorials and graves, remarked that he carried a map with him at all times, with which he could prove to any doubters that the

[61] The events surrounding the removal of the statue of the Soviet Red Army Soldier (the "Bronze Soldier") from the centre of Tallinn in 2007 are considered a major milestone of the "monument wars", including the paralyzing cyber-attacks against the Estonian state and other forms of harassment associated with Russian mobilization of the compatriot community. (For more details, see Bronze Soldier in Tallinn. In: *Wikipedia, the Free Encyclopedia* [online], updated on 22. 10. 2022. [Accessed 2022-10-22.] Available at: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bronze_Soldier_of_Tallinn.)

[62] [Anonymous:] Bronzovyi soldat po-cheshski: Rossiia zashchishchaiet serp i molot na pamiatnike sovetskim soldatom v Brno [The Czech Bronze Soldier: Russia Defense the Hammer and Sickle on the Memorial of the Soviet Soldier in Brno]. In: *Prazhskii Ekspress*, Vol. 12, No. 4 (28. 01. 2010).

[63] [Anonymous:] Istoriiu perepisyvat nelzia! [History Cannot Be Rewritten!]. In: *Portal novostei „Chekhiia segodnia"* [online], 29. 09. 2010. [Accessed 2022-10-22.] Available at: https://czechtoday.eu/den-pobedy/2010/l-r-28/.

vast majority of the territory of the former Czechoslovakia was liberated by the Soviet Army, which suffered incomparably higher losses than the Americans.[64]

Czech Friends

The 2014 political coup in Ukraine, the subsequent annexation of Crimea by Russia, the interventions in the east and southeast of the country that led to a protracted military conflict between the new government of Ukraine and pro-Russian separatists – all of this had a huge impact on the world of Russian compatriots in the Czech Republic. The work that had gone on until then with the legacy or myth of the Great Patriotic War also underwent qualitative changes. The overwhelmingly critical response that Russia's actions in Ukraine elicited in the Czech media, the chattering classes and society at large, provoked a counter-offensive amongst representatives of the "Russian world".[65] Forces, networks, actors and practices were mobilized in an effort to neutralize, unsettle, interrogate and confuse the criticism by highlighting the merits, past and present, of the Soviet Union and Russia. Just as the Soviets swept the military aggression that followed the events of 1968 under the carpet by systematically referencing the liberation of Czechoslovakia by the Red Army, so, following its attack on Ukraine, the Russians increasingly drew on the Great Patriotic War. Just as Soviet officials once countered all criticism by accusing their opponents of anti-Sovietism, so the term "Russophobia" began to be deployed strategically. Again, this was a weapon with which all criticism of Russia was reflected back on the critics themselves, resulting in accusations of dishonest intentions, bad faith, prejudice, stereotypical thinking, and manipulation by sinister higher forces. This would include, for example, two conferences on contemporary "myths about Russia" held in the

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[64] Anatolii Tomnikov: Otnoshenie k pogibshim soldatam u prostykh chekhov ochen khoroshee [Anatolii Tomnikov: The Attitude Towards the Dead Soldiers Is Very Good Among Ordinary Czechs]. In: *Ibid.* [online], 07. 11. 2011. [Accessed 2022-10-22.] Available at: https://czechtoday.eu/den-pobedy/2011/anatolij-tomnikov-otnoshenie-k-pogibshim-soldatam-u-prostyh-chehov-ochen-horoshee/.

[65] According to some analysts, a sense of grievance and a feeling that the world is constantly picking on Russia has long been one of the constitutive elements of Putin's foreign policy. The Russia state systematically cultivates ideas of a "Russophobic" West. For example, the French historian Françoise Thom refers to the political training given by the pro-Putin youth movement *Nashi* (Ours), founded by the politician and ideologist Vladislav Iurevich Surkov, whose members were taught that Europe regards Russians to be the enemy and that in this respect Russians can be seen as "the Jews of the twenty-first century". See THOM, Françoise: *Jak chápat putinismus.* Praha, Pulchra 2021, p. 99. (Czech translation of the French original: *Comprendre le poutinisme*. Paris, Desclée De Brouwer 2018.)

Czech Parliament in 2014 and 2016,[66] and a conference that took place in 2017 entitled "Russophobia – the Anti-Semitism of the Twenty-First Century?"[67] In the same vein, accusations of the "distortion" or "falsification" of history, activated in parallel with the perpetuation of the myth of the Great Patriotic War, resound ever more strongly in compatriot circles. One part of the World Congress of Compatriots in Moscow in 2015, which was attended by three representatives from the Czech Republic, was devoted to the struggle against the "distortion of history".[68] Like the Soviets before it, the Russian side needed the memory of the Great Patriotic War in the form of traditional Soviet myth untarnished by additional revisions that, in its eyes, diminish its authority and therefore its potential as political capital.

However, unlike Czechoslovakia after 1968, the modern Czech state was reluctant to act as guarantor of this myth. The struggle was therefore waged both along the lines of an information war regarding events in Ukraine, and a war of memory that could sometimes appear somewhat bizarre to the non-aligned observer.[69] The Russian compatriot community focused more on influencing Czech

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[66] The conference was organized by the Institute of Slavic Strategic Studies in cooperation with the Russian newspaper *Prazhskii Ekspress* under the auspices of the Communist Party of Bohemia and Moravia (*Komunistická strana Čech a Moravy*, KSČM) and the Freedom and Direct Democracy Party (*Strana svobody a přímé demokracie*, SPD). Contributions focused on all sorts of allegedly unfair and negative stereotypes being used against Russia and the harmful role of the media in creating a misleading distorted image. See [Anonymous:] O mifakh, Rossii i Chekhii: Unikalnaia konferentsia proshla v parlamente [On Myths, Russia and the Czech Republic: A Unique Conference Was Held in Parliament]. In: *Prazhskii Ekspress*, Vol. 16, No. 10 (06. 03. 2014).

[67] The title of the conference, which became a test of the applicability of Surkov's ideological concept in the Czech Republic, provoked considerable controversy. When several of the participants refused to attend because of the flagrant manipulation of supposed parallels, the Russian side and its supporters took this as further proof of its undemocratic and discriminatory approach. The organizers sought refuge in a quote by the first president of Czechoslovakia, Tomáš Garrigue Masaryk, who said that "democracy is discussion". See [Anonymous:] V Prage govorili o russofobii: Provokatsionnaia tema vyzvala i interes, i skandal [Prague Talks About Russophobia: A Provocative Topic Has Caused Both Interest and Scandal]. In: *Ibid.,* Vol. 19, No. 23 (09. 11. 2017).

[68] See *Vsemirnyi kongress* [online], 05. 11. 2015. [Accessed 2022-12-12.] Available at: https://vk-srs.com/vsemirnyy-kongress/kongress/v-vsemirnyy-kongress/. In addition to President Putin, speakers at the Congress included Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov, Culture Minister Vladimir Medinskii, and Patriarch Kirill of the Russian Orthodox Church. Among other things, the compatriots were praised for the support they gave Russia in respect of the "reunification" of Crimea.

[69] See, for example, the question that *Prazhskii Ekspress* raised in several of its articles as to whether the end of the war should not be celebrated once again in the Czech Republic

mainstream society, while its media became highly politicized. It made a point of covering the Russian take on the hot topics of the day, such as the political situation in Ukraine after the Maidan Uprising, the annexation of Crimea or the Russian-Ukrainian conflict in Donbas, in addition to promoting Russian Orthodoxy and decrying the supposed spread of Russophobia and what it called anti-Russian hysteria.[70]

The commemoration of the cult of Victory increased in intensity while becoming a platform for contemporary denunciations, criticism and threats.[71] The promotion and aggressive defence of the myth of the Great Patriotic War and the deployment of disinformation regarding events taking place in Ukraine entered what was in many respects a symbiotic relationship. This in turn meant that the respect shown to Soviet soldiers by the shrieking defenders of the Russian cause took on something of a vulgar hue. The new trend was to seek out and engage more strongly with allied Czech actors, who would advocate for and spread Russian state interests amongst the wider Czech population. At a meeting of the Coordinating Council of Russian Compatriots in the Czech Republic in May 2014,

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on 9 May. Developments since the early 1990s, when both the date of the celebrations was changed from the original 9 May to the 8 May, and the official designation of the holiday, was deemed to be unacceptable revisionism. See NESTEROVÁ, Marina: Ten Pobedy: Chekhiia otmetila svoio osvobozhdenie [Shadow of Victory: Czechia Celebrated Its Liberation]. In: *Prazhskii Ekspress*, Vol. 16, No. 10 (15. 05. 2014).

70 In 2015, at the World Congress of the Russian Compatriot Press, *Prazhskii Ekspress* was given an honorary mention by the Russian government for its contribution to the development of the Russian language and culture and the consolidation of the Russian community. The award was received by its editor-in-chief Irina Shults from the Russian Prime Minister Dmitry Anatolevich Medvedev. See [Anonymous:] Nezavisimost v pochote: Gazeta Prazhskii Ekspress udostoilas Pochotnoi gramoty pravitelstva RF [Independence in Honour: The Prague Express Was Awarded a Certificate of Honour by the Russian Government]. In: *Ibid.*, Vol. 17, No. 25 (18. 06. 2015).

71 There are many examples, of which I will cite the following: in February 2015, on the occasion of the Defender of the Fatherland Day (formerly the Soviet Army Day), Czech compatriot and affiliated organizations in Moravia held a wreath-laying ceremony at the Red Army Monument in Brno. The Russian compatriot press treated the event as a joint initiative of Czech and Russian women, who honoured Russian men with red carnations and expressed their wish that they "would not have to go to war again". The Russian Consul General Andrei Evgenevich Sharashkin recalled how the day is celebrated in Russia, saying that without "victory over fascism in 1945, there would be no Czech Republic or Slavic nations today". He stressed that young people must be encouraged to reject "neo-fascism and neo-Nazism". See [Anonymous:] Kak moravane otmetili 23 fevralia: Neskolko klubov sobralis na vstrechu s konsulom, a zhenshchiny vozlozhili tsvety [How Moravians Celebrated 23 February: A Number of Clubs Gathered for a Meeting with the Consul, and Women Laid Flowers.] In: *Ibid.*, Vol. 17, No. 9 (26. 02. 2015).

at which a new leadership was elected, Jiří Vyvadil, former politician and founder of the Friends of Russia in the Czech Republic Facebook group, was one of the speakers. He declared that the group's main task was to protest against the attitude of the Czech media, which portrayed Russia as the guilty party in respect to the crisis in Ukraine.[72]

These motley "friends of Russia" provided similar services to Russian politics as Russian state-sponsored, "non-governmental" organizations. This was clear, for instance, in the case of the statue of Marshal Ivan Stepanovich Konev in Prague, the removal of which in 2020 was accompanied by a targeted campaign that was closely monitored, to say the least, by the Russian Embassy. The hyperbolic comments and melodramatic gestures of the activists involved, the attempt to argue that whoever removes a statue of a military leader who fought fascism is themselves a fascist, the aggressive verbal attacks on the officials responsible, and the publication of their phone numbers and calls for their harassment are all reminiscent of the bullying experienced by people at the hands of the state-controlled *Nashi* youth movement in Russia. These actions also created the backdrop for open threats by Russian officials themselves.[73]

Of course, one can only speculate about the degree to which particular individuals were linked to the Russian state: this is a question more for the security services or investigative journalism. The fluid and evasive pro-Russian sphere included newly formed associations and platforms whose names referenced Putin directly or alluded to "friendship" with Russia, or that concealed their intentions by appeals to a vague, all-encompassing Slavism. It included political figures from the left and right nationalist ends of the spectrum, as well as sundry "independent" media involved in bringing together and consolidating various anti-systemic, subversive, ultra-conservative, anti-European tendencies and critics of global capitalism, the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) and European integration. The Russians wooed allies from traditional social organizations still wallowing in nostalgia for communism, such as the Czech Borderland Club (*Klub českého pohraničí*), the Union of Anti-Fascist Fighters (*Svaz protifašistických bojovníků*), and the Left-Wing Women's Clubs (*Levicové kluby*

[72] NEZOVIBATKO, Olga – SHULTS, Irina: Byt sootechestvennikom: Chto proiskhodit v ofitsialnoi diaspore? [Life as a Compatriot: What Is Going On in the Official Diaspora?] In: *Ibid.,* Vol. 16, No. 18 (01. 05. 2014). See the profile of Friends of Russia in the Czech Republic (*Přátelé Ruska v České republice*) on their official Facebook page available at: https://cs-cz.facebook.com/groups/pratele.ruska.v.cr/. [Accessed 2022-12-12.]

[73] Regarding the controversy surrounding the removal of the Statue of Ivan Konev, see Pomník maršála Koněva v Praze. In: *Wikipedia: Otevřená encyklopedie* [online], updated on 15. 08. 2022. [Accessed 2022-10-22.] Available at: https://cs.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pomn%C3%ADk_mar%C5%A1%C3%A1la_Kon%C4%9Bva_v_Praze.

žen). Overall, this pro-Russian environment displays the characteristics of what the French expert in Russian affairs Françoise Thom calls a "modern Comintern", which, within the context of Russia's civilizational war against the West, makes creative use of anything and everything that undermines the basic pillars of Western identity.[74]

Carefully chosen "experts" also gave voice to Russian political interests, and their questionable expertise was given space in Russian-language media, pro-Russian platforms and at special conferences and roundtables, where they spoke out against "Russophobia", the alleged distortion and falsification of history, and the current situation in Ukraine. Their practice was to refer to what they call the rise of fascism in Ukraine, lay the blame on Western forces for the Maidan Uprising in Kyiv, point to crimes allegedly committed against the Russian population of Ukraine, and stress the legality and legitimacy of the annexation of Crimea by Russia. These were often controversial figures operating on the fringes or beyond the boundaries of humanities and social science disciplines such as history or political science, or fourth-estate columnists passing themselves off as specialists.[75]

Regardless of the ulterior motives driving this support, which may of course be many and varied, as well as the degree to which it is conscious and calculated, the "Czech friends" adopted the Russian political agenda, its themes and obsessions, thus creating the impression that these were voices sounding from below, the voices of ordinary Czech folk. Pro-Russian activists thus positioned themselves as spokespersons for vibrant currents of opinion that, without them and their platforms, would never have enjoyed public expression in the allegedly Russophobic media and political environment. They framed themselves as giving voice to an alternative political viewpoint systematically suppressed by the media and did not shy away from comparing themselves to "dissidents" operating within an unfavourable, even threatening environment. They of course included a defence of the legacy of the Great Patriotic War, which in their retelling

[74] THOM, F.: *Jak chápat putinismus*, pp. 209–219. For reflections upon the pro-Russian scene in the Czech Republic, see also SMOLEŇOVÁ, Ivana – CHRZOVÁ, Barbora (eds.): *United We Stand, Divided We Fall: The Kremlin's Leverage in the Visegrad Countries*. Prague, Prague Security Studies Institute 2017.

[75] These "experts" included Oskar Krejčí, a former collaborator with the communist State Security (*Státní bezpečnost*, StB) and special advisor to the last communist prime minister Ladislav Adamec. See his commentary on Ukraine: KREJČÍ, Oskar: Ukrainskii vopros: V schvatke na Ukraine vinovaty ES, SShA i SMI [Ukrainian Issue: The EU, the US and the Media Are to Blame for the Scandal in Ukraine]. In: *Prazhskii Ekspress*, Vol. 16, No. 5 (30. 01. 2014); IDEM: Neschastnaia Ukraina: Edinstvennoe reshenie – federalizatsiia strany [Unhappy Ukraine: The Only Solution is to Federalize the Country]. In: *Ibid.*, Vol. 16, No. 10 (06. 03. 2014). It is by no means unusual to find former employees of or collaborators with the communist StB active within pro-Russian networks.

became almost a manifestation of said dissidence. The pro-Russian activists took it upon themselves to stand guard over and cultivate respect for the living and the dead participants in the anti-fascist coalition, by means of which they interpolated themselves into the Russian struggle against the “falsification of history”.

Just as important as the experts who disseminated alternative Russian truths from the position of their supposed erudition were the “ordinary people” who gave voice to such truths in the public square. For example, in April 2014, *Prazhskii Ekspress* wrote an article about Zdeněk Kratochvíl, just a “regular guy”, who had taken exception to the “Russophobia” allegedly being fostered by the Czech media and certain state officials, and who had been prompted by events in Ukraine to organize a rally in support of Russia in the centre of Prague. Kratochvíl also deplored the fact that Victory Day was no longer being celebrated so enthusiastically and invited all “people of goodwill” to the square in front of Prague Castle on 8 May,[76] in order to commemorate the Soviet soldiers killed during the Second World War. His aim was to make public the fact that Russia had friends in the Czech Republic who “refused to believe every lie” spread by the media.[77] Over the months and years that followed, this “regular guy” organized several other street rallies and pro-Russian demonstrations and roundtables and gave interviews to sympathetic media outlets in which he brought together all of the themes mentioned above.[78] He also appeared on Russian state television several times. In doing so, he cast himself as a “modern dissident” who could no longer remain silent in the face of what he called lies and injustice.[79] Since 2016,

[76] This is not a traditional site for ceremonies commemorating the Second World War. However, for several years, on the anniversary of the end of the war, Russian and Czech children’s ensembles regularly performed here and included traditional Soviet war songs in their repertoires. The event was organized by a Russian compatriot association with the financial support of Russian and Czech firms, including Rosatom, a Russian state corporation headquartered in Moscow, which was interested in constructing a nuclear power plant in the Czech Republic. Moreover, in one of the courtyards of Prague Castle stands a statue of St George that visitors to the event, who were given the Ribbon of Saint George, had the opportunity to view. Kratochvíl’s activities can be viewed as an attempt to create another “memory site” devoted to the Soviet victory in Czech public space.

[77] ZEMANOVA-KOPETSKAIA, Radmila: Den Osvobozhdeniia i Den Pobedy [Liberation Day and Victory Day] In: *Ibid.,* Vol. 16, No. 18 (01. 05. 2014).

[78] For example, on the anniversary of the invasion of the Soviet Union by Nazi Germany, Kratochvíl organized an “anti-war” demonstration in support of Russia and Putin (EADEM: 22 iiunia rovno v 4 chasa: Chekhi organizovali miting protiv voiny [June 22 at 4 p. m. Sharp: The Czechs Organized a Rally against the War]. In: *Ibid.*, No. 26 (26. 06. 2014).

[79] See the interview with Zdeněk Kratochvíl on the programme “Prague Café” broadcast by the online television station Praha TV. In: *Praha TV* [online], 11. 12. 2017. [Accessed 2022-10 22.] Available at: https://prahatv.eu/porady/prazska-kavarna/prazska-kavarna-11-12-2017-20-33.

Kratochvíl has helped Russian compatriot organizations in Prague and other towns and cities to organize Immortal Regiment Marches.

The Transmission of Modern Traditions – the Night Wolves

The emphasis on the Soviet contribution to the fight against Nazism, accelerated by the conflict in Ukraine, was manifest in several ways in the intersecting world of Russian compatriots and Czech pro-Soviet activists. In addition to a performative obeisance to the Victory Day public holiday, which was accompanied by the convening of supporters on social media with below-the-line comments, there was a Russian-style interest in Czech war memorials to veterans and significant events in both Soviet and Czechoslovak history dating back to the Second World War. Moreover, this interconnected network was instrumental in transferring a range of modern commemorative practices to the Czech Republic.

One of the most visible of these practices involves the oldest Russian motorcycle club in existence, the Night Wolves (*Nochnye volki*), founded in 1989 in what was still the Soviet Union. The club promotes a muscular patriotism linked to the legacy of the Great Patriotic War.[80] In 2015, the club's plan to travel to Berlin along the "Victory Road" (*Doroga Pobedy*), while taking in Czech sites commemorating liberation by the Red Army, provoked widespread confusion and criticism. Critics pointed to the involvement of the Night Wolves in Ukraine and to the fact that their leader, Aleksandr Sergeevich Zaldastanov, is on a list of Russians subject to international sanctions. Individual groups of Night Wolves who managed to cross the border were welcomed by the All-Cossacks' Union of the Czech Lands and Slovakia (*Vsekozachii soiuz cheshskikh zemlei i Slovakii*),[81] the Czech motorcycle club Red Eyed Crüe,[82] and several Czech politicians. Everyone

[80] See the official Night Wolves website at: https://nightwolves.ru/nw/. [Accessed 2022-12-12.]

[81] *Prazhskii Ekspress* carried an interview with the ataman of the All-Cossacks' Union, Mikhail Dziuba, regarding preparations for the event. On the one hand, Dziuba denied that the event was being politicized and said that people had same rights as any other to attend as long as they did not break the law. On the other, he quoted Zaldastanov's words regarding Polish opponents of the parade, to the effect that they were probably the descendants of people who had "worked as policemen and guards in European ghettoes". He also let slip that such actions were necessary because history must not be forgotten. See SHULTS, Irina: Volkov boiatsia? Chto zhdiot rossiiskikh baikerov v Chekhii? [Afraid of Wolves? What Awaits Russian Bikers in Czechia?] In: *Prazhskii Ekspress,* Vol. 17, No. 16 (16. 04. 2015.)

[82] The Czech motorcycle club Red Eyed Crüe has enjoyed "fraternal links" with the Russian Night Wolves since 2004, when it was founded with the latter's support. In 2014, an agreement on exclusive cooperation was signed between the two clubs, and what had hitherto been basically

concerned vehemently denied there was anything politically controversial about the journey being taken by the Night Wolves, while at the same time polishing its political credentials with references to the alleged rise of fascist tendencies in Ukraine and elsewhere in Europe. The Night Wolves, like the Soviet soldiers in Czechoslovakia a few decades earlier, were publicly referred to as the direct descendants of the heroes who had liberated Europe.

Over the next few years, come May the Czech countryside was traversed by a multinational motorcycle convoy comprising the Night Wolves and their European allies, all with red flags on their machines. Rugged men in leather jackets knelt down and laid wreaths at war memorials to the accompaniment of Soviet songs. At the main destination of their Czech pilgrimage, Prague's Olšany Cemetery with its mounds of fallen Soviet soldiers, they were regularly confronted by an equally large group of protestors. This modern custom, a disconcerting amalgam of reverence, machismo and attacks by supporters of the Night Wolves on their opponents, was quite possibly dismissed by mainstream society as a fairly harmless foreign eccentricity. Nevertheless, the Night Wolves created a firm footing for the event and expanded its reach thanks to local support. The next time their motorcade drove through the Czech Republic, more and more commemorative sites located all around the country were added to its programme, and it was received by the Russian Embassy in Prague.

The influence of the Night Wolves was given a further boost by the internationalization of the club itself. Beginning in 2016, chapters began to spring up in a number of different countries, and in 2018, a Czech chapter was officially registered.[83] The international cooperation of various national chapters with the Russian Night Wolves was reinforced through invitations to Russia. Visitors were invited to look behind the scenes of the organization of the "Victory Road", to take a ride along its Russian section, and to participate in other events, above all international meetings and biker shows in Sevastopol, where the Night Wolves

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a private matter moved up a notch to become the highly public "Victory Road", along which the Night Wolves travelled through the Czech Republic in 2015. The link to events in Ukraine was not only reflected in the timing of this initiative, but also in the speeches that accompanied it given by Czechs: condemnation of Maidan, recognition of Putin, references to the alleged rise of fascism in Ukraine, approval of the annexation of Crimea, etc. (See [Anonymous:] Proti tomu, co jsem já viděl ve Lvově, byl Hitler demokrat: Český motorkář, který si potřásl rukou s Putinem, promlouvá. In: *Parlamentní listy* [online], 31. 08. 2015. [Accessed 2022-12-12.] Available at: https://www.parlamentnilisty.cz/archiv/Proti-tomu-co-jsem-ja-videl-ve-Lvove-byl-i-Hitler-demokrat-Cesky-motorkar-ktery-si-potrasl-rukou-s-Putinem-promlouva-397242.) See the Facebook page of the Red Eyed Crüe – Czech, available at: https://cs-cz.facebook.com/red.eyed.crue/. [Accessed 2022-12-12.]

[83] The Czech association Noční vlci Europe M[otorbike]C[lub] was officially registered in April 2018, when Radek Markovič became its chairman.

A member of the Night Wolves motorcycle club on the streets of Prague on 8 May 2019. The inscription on the club's T-shirt reads: "Gde my, tam Rossiia" [Russia Is Where We Are]
The author's own archive © D. Kolenovská

rented a large plot of land on highly favourable terms after the annexation of Crimea. These bombastic patriotic shows, said to have been created by Aleksandr Zaldastanov himself,[84] attracted not only hordes of fans, but also the attention of journalists and critical commentators.[85] During instructional trips to Russia and the occupied Crimea, foreigners were introduced to the broader mission of motorcycling under the banner of the Night Wolves. As Marek Radkovič,

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[84] In addition to being on the international sanctions list, Aleksandr Zaldastanov is also the recipient of several Russian state commendations and decorations for his support for international cooperation, the liberation of Crimea and Sevastopol, the fight against terrorism, and for his active contribution to the patriotic education of young people and the commemoration of the fallen defenders of the homeland.

[85] A characteristic feature of visionary performances working with elements of Soviet war history and the Ukrainian present is the blurring of the temporal and spatial levels, the past merging seamlessly into the present, thus mythologizing and perpetuating the "struggle against fascism". See, for example, the recording of a performance from 2014: Baik-shou [Bike Show] 2014 Sevastopol. In: *YouTube* [online], 09. 08. 2014, channel user Radek Hotový. [Accessed 2022-10-22.] Available at: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NPnb97ybtiU. What is more, several observers claim the Russian army is recruiting soldiers in the area.

vice-president of the Czech chapter of Night Wolves Europe and someone who, in his own words, had always wanted to have his own motorbike club, put it at an international gathering in Sevastopol in August 2019: “Young people today know bugger all. In schools they are not taught [about the Second World War] and what horrors took place. We try to remind them of these things and make sure that nobody is distorting history.” Peter Marček, a former deputy of the Slovak Parliament, in turn shed light on the “deeper political meaning” of the show and why it was being held in Crimea. He took issue with the term “annexation” and claimed that there had been no violence, but only a supremely democratic act and the free expression of the will of the population of the peninsula. The Czech and Slovak Night Wolves then paid joint tribute to fallen Soviet soldiers at one of the Crimean memorials.[86]

When, in 2020, the coronavirus pandemic prevented the Russian Night Wolves from travelling to Central Europe, local chapters stepped up to the plate. In the words of Marek Radkovič, the Czech wolves visited “around sixty to eighty monuments” in early May. He announced this on the pro-Russian private channel Raptor-TV, which also carried reports from the locations visited. Radkovič said that it had been “a wonderful learning experience” and urged that we remember not only the fallen Soviet soldiers, but also local citizens “who experienced the horrors of war for themselves”, adding that their stories “should be heard more often in the media”. He asked everyone not to forget “that terrible time”.[87] In contrast, in 2021, with the pandemic still raging, European Night Wolves set off in the opposite direction along the “Victory Road” to join the parade in Moscow’s Red Square (*Krasnaia ploshchad*) on 9 May. In a report broadcast on Russian state television, which referred to the operation as “The Road Home”, Czech and Slovak representatives confided in broken Russian that they considered it their solemn duty to pay tribute to all those who had lost their lives during the war and to the whole of Russia. The same year, the Night Wolves carried portraits of Czech heroes of the anti-fascist struggle and resistance on their motorcycles,[88]

[86] See [Anonymous:] Sevastopol – Motoklub Noční vlci slaví 30 let. In: *Regionalnitelevize.cz* [online], 26. 08. 2019. [Accessed 2022-10-22.] Available at: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=A0nk5KVJkUs&t=5s.

[87] See [Anonymous:] Noční vlci MC Evropa: Rozhovor s prezidentem českého oddělení Noční vlci MC Evropa Markem Radkovičem. In: *Raptor-TV.cz* [online], 08. 05. 2020. [Accessed 2022-10-22.] Available at: https://m.facebook.com/RaptorTV.cz/photos/a.2021734174765522/2695456647393268/?type=3.

[88] BERGER, Vojtěch: Češi a Slováci jedou v koloně Nočních vlků poklonit se do Moskvy, na Rudé náměstí. In: *HlídacíPes.org* [online], 08. 05. 2021. [Accessed 2022-10-22.] Available at: https://hlidacipes.org/cesi-a-slovaci-v-kolone-nocnich-vlku-na-ceste-domu-do-moskvy-navzdory-covidu-i-vrbeticim/.

thus linking arms with another modern Russian tradition, which has also managed to spread abroad over the past few years.

The Immortal Regiment

The March of the Immortal Regiment (*Bessmertnyi polk*), in which Russians take to the streets on Victory Day carrying a picture of a relative who is a veteran of the Second World War, was initiated in 2012 by a group of local journalists in Tomsk, in central Russia, as a counterpoint to the pomp and ceremony of official celebrations and military parades. The organizers' main goal was to call attention to the more intimate nature of the tragedy of war and to honour its human sacrifices through family stories: the obverse of the military triumphalism and abstract heroism lauded by the state. To this end, they created a set of simple principles for the rapidly growing movement: it was to operate on a voluntary basis, eschew political affiliation, and involve people carrying nothing but portraits of their relatives on Victory Day. The movement's emblem was a flying crane within a five-pointed star, which then became the logo of a web platform offering profiles of war veterans.[89]

However, this event, with its huge emotional potential and growing support among ordinary people, was gradually appropriated by the Russian state. A parallel organization was created known as the Immortal Regiment of Russia (*Bessmertnyi polk Rossiia*), with its own structure and local branches, website, logo, and, most importantly, its own approach to the cause.[90] In 2015, President Putin was already seen marching across Red Square in Moscow carrying a photograph of his father at the head of a parade numbering many thousands of people. The official media waxed lyrical about national unity, community, a family (with Putin at its head) linked by blood ties to its fallen ancestors. The blood of the fallen became the spiritual cement binding the national community, the erosion of which Putin had been bemoaning.[91] Instead of cherished family bonds and the suffering of the individual, once again it became the invincibility of the Russian nation and its victory over fascism that was trumpeted forth. Moreover, given political events taking place, this triumphalism acquired an added

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[89] See the web platforms *Bessmertnyi polk* [The Immortal Regiment] [online]. [Accessed 2022-10-22.] Available at: https://bessmertnyj-polk.ru; and *Moi polk* [My Regiment] [online]. [Accessed 2022-10-22.] Available at: https://www.moypolk.ru.

[90] See the web platform *Bessmertnyi polk Rossiia* [The Immortal Regiment of Russia] [online]. [Accessed 2022-10-22.] Available at: https://polkrf.ru.

[91] See FEDOR, J.: Memory, Kinship, and the Mobilization of the Dead.

dimension and the fallen Soviet ancestors and defenders of the motherland became part of what was called the "universal anti-fascist mission". The participants on the March of the Immortal Regiment could now be framed as a community re-joining its ancestors and the (universal) campaign against fascism. Accompanying activities gradually sprang up. The Immortal Regiment of Russia became a brand encompassing a variety of state-sponsored projects designed to spread the traditional myth of the Great Patriotic War, encourage a patriotic education, and participate in the struggle against the "distortion" of history and what was deemed to be modern fascism.[92] In February 2022, the movement lent its support to the "special military operation" in Ukraine, citing both the official state explanation (the "genocide" of the local Russian population, the uncontrollable rise of nationalist sentiment, the arming of the country by the West, etc.) and the lessons of the past, according to which Russia was, and still is, said to be facing down the forces of fascism on its own.[93]

In the spring of 2022, a combination of étatisme, politicization, and the wilful misrepresentation of the original meaning and intention behind the Immortal Regiment[94] led its founders in Tomsk to distance themselves publicly from the movement's activities.[95] In the meantime, however, the Russian authorities had managed to install and spread this new tradition not only within its borders, but

[92] Portraits of fallen "defenders" from Donbas, allegedly fighting Ukrainian "fascists", began to appear in parades of the Immortal Regiment of Russia in the separatist territories of Ukraine and Russia. See, for example, BALDOVIN, Maria: Russia: Il Reggimento immortale: La memoria collettiva a servizio della propaganda? In: *East Journal* [online], 12. 05. 2017. [Accessed 2022-10-22.] Available at: https://www.eastjournal.net/archives/83750.

[93] [Anonymous:] Obrashchenie sopredsedatelei tsentralnogo shtaba OOD „Bessmertnyi polk Rossii" [Address by the Co-Chairmen of the Central Headquarters of the "Immortal Regiment of Russia" Public Movement] In: *Bessmertnyi polk* [Immortal Regiment] [online], 24. 02. 2022. [Accessed 2022-10-22.] Available at: https://polk.press/news/bessmertnyj-polk/obrashenie-sopredsedatelej-central-nogo-shtaba-ood-bessmertnyj-polk-rossii.

[94] See, for example, [Anonymous:] „Bessmertnyi polk" popal v okruzhenie: Andrei Kozenko – o tom, kak ONF prisvoil sebe obshchestvennuiu initsiativu tomichei [The "Immortal Regiment" Has Been Encircled: Andrei Kozenko on How the ONF Has Appropriated the Public Initiative of Tomsk Residents]. In: *Meduza* [online], 30. 04. 2015. Available at: https://meduza.io/feature/2015/04/30/bessmertnyy-polk-popal-v-okruzhenie; CHIRIN, Vladislav: „Bessmertnyi polk" nachinalsia kak narodnaia aktsia, no teper na eio organizatsiiu vliiaiut chinovniki: Chto seichas proiskhodit s shestviem i kak ono izmenilos v Peterburge [The "Immortal Regiment" Began as a People's Action, But Now Officials Are Influencing Its Organization: What Is Happening to the March Now and How Has It Changed in St. Petersburg]. In: *Bumaga* [online], 08. 05. 2019. [Accessed 2022-10-22.] Available at: https://paperpaper.ru/bessmertnyj-polk-nachinalsya-kak-nar.

[95] See the declaration on the website of the original movement of 22 April 2022: [Anonymous:] Bessmertnyi polk: Printsipov ne meniaem [Immortal Regiment: We Don't Change Principles].

The logo of the original civic movement, the Immortal Regiment (left) and the emblem of the nationalized movement the Immortal Regiment of Russia (right) under the patronage of the Kremlin. The silhouette of a flying crane inside a red five-pointed star was replaced by the figure of St George (the patron saint of Russia) slaying a dragon.

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beyond, something it achieved through the agency of *Rossotrudnichestvo*, Russian compatriot organizations, and local pro-Russian activists. The organizational structure of the movement, controlled by the state, was replicated at an international level, though in other countries, too, the Immortal Regiment continued to profile itself as a civic initiative. The national coordinators met regularly at international conferences. In November 2021, an international forum called "Memory of the Victors" took place in Belgrade, attended by a hundred representatives from forty countries "near and far". The event was sponsored by *Rossotrudnichestvo* and the Russian State Duma, which ensured a disciplined approach, even though the organizers chose to refer to the movement's "bottom-up" origins. This international initiative is tasked with defending "historical truth" against "revisionism" or "falsification", the word "truth" here referring to the Soviet myth of the Great Patriotic War.[96]

In: *Bessmertnyi polk* [online], 22. 04. 2022. [Accessed 2022-10-22.] Available at: https://www.moypolk.ru/news/bessmertnyy-polk-principov-ne-menyaem.

[96] [Anonymous:] Mezhdunarodnye koordinatory Bessmertnogo polka sobralis na forum v Belgrade [International Coordinators of the Immortal Regiment Gather for a Forum in Belgrade]. In: *Bessmertnyi polk*

In the Czech Republic, the organization of these marches began soon after they had been appropriated by the Russian state. In 2015, the Russian Civic Association for a European Multicultural Society (*Obshchestvennoe obedinenie za evropeiskoe multikulturnoe obshchestvo*) had already signed up to organize the 2016 March of the Immortal Regiment in Prague. On that occasion, its chair, Olga Kondrashina, expressed her wish that not only members of the Russian-speaking community, but also Czech citizens "who honour the memory of their heroic ancestors", should lend their support. The Russian-language weekly *Prazhskii telegraf* invited readers to send in stories and photographs of any of their relatives who had been veterans of the Second World War, which it then published in a special supplement.[97]

As far back as 2016, the Czech Republic had joined several dozen other countries in which parades of the Immortal Regiment were organized as part of celebrations of the end of the Second World War, acting as one more pebble in the colourful mosaic of respect for the Soviet conquerors of fascism. The message carried from both within and without Russian society was by now quite clear: celebrations of the Soviet liberators had become a global phenomenon, a graphic incarnation of Putin's quasi-Messianic vision of Soviet soldiers who had shed their blood so that present and future generations might live in peace. This also vibrated in harmony with the increasingly promoted slogan claiming that Soviet soldiers had saved "the entire world" from fascism.[98] In Prague, a small parade singing Soviet songs, including "Den Pobedy", passed by Prague Castle. One of the organizers described the main goal: to honour the memory of the "generation that triumphed over fascism".[99] The event organized by the Association of Russian Compatriots was held with the help of pro-Russian activists and their social

[online], 03. 11. 2021. [Accessed 2022-10-22.] Available at: https://polk.press/ru/news/bessmertnyj-polk/mezhdunarodnye-koordinatory-bessmertnogo-polka-sobralis-na-forum-v-belgrade.

[97] [Anonymous:] Bessmertnyi polk v Chekhii [Immortal Regiment in the Czech Republic] [online]. In: *Prazhskii telegraf* [online], 23. 07. 2015. [Accessed 2022-12-13.] Available at: https://czechtoday.eu/den-pobedy/2015/bessmertnyj-polk-v-chehii/.

[98] One of the projects of the Immortal Regiment of Russia announced in 2021 is called "A Soviet Soldier Saved the World" (*Mir spas sovetskii soldat*). Short propaganda clips recall the crucial role of the Red Army in the liberation of one or other country and the post-war aid provided by the Soviet Union. A variety of data and figures are utilized though scant regard is paid to their accuracy. In the clip about Czechoslovakia, for example, it is claimed that the Red Army played a part in the liberation of the entire territory. See [Anonymous:] Novyi interaktivnyi proekt „Mir spas sovetskii soldat" [A New Interactive Project "A Soviet Soldier Saved the World"]. In: *Polk.press* [online], 22. 06. 2021. [Accessed 2022-10-22.] Available at: https://polk.press/articles/mir-spas-sovetskij-soldat.

[99] [Anonymous:] „Bessmertnyi polk" v Prage: Prezident Chekhii pozdravil uchastnikov aktsii s Pobedoi [The "Immortal Regiment" in Prague: Czech President Congratulates Participants on Victory Day]. In: *Portal novostei „Chekhiia segodnia"* [online], 09. 05. 2016. [Accessed

networks. The association's Facebook page "Hej, občané!", advertised the event as follows: "Our participation will make it abundantly clear that we reject the rewriting of history we are witnessing at present."[100] Russian state television informed its viewers that the Prague marchers were greeted by none other than the President of the Republic, Miloš Zeman.[101]

Although various compatriot platforms would often use the symbol of the original movement from Tomsk in their references to events featuring the Immortal Regiment, it was obvious that they had no intention of respecting its stated principles and that they based their activities more on structures linked to the Russian state. In July 2016, a meeting of the organizers of the Immortal Regiment in the Czech Republic and Russia was held at the Russian Centre for Science and Culture in Prague (*Rossiiskii tsentr nauki i kultury v Prage / Ruské středisko vědy a kultury v Praze*), at which mutual cooperation and the fight against "fascism" and "Nazism" were discussed, and an emphasis placed on the importance of a historical awareness of the Second World War. An agreement on cooperation was signed by a representative of the Immortal Regiment in the Czech Republic and Nikolai Zemtsov, one of its top officials in Russia.[102] Since 2017, the parades and marches have spread to other towns and cities (Brno, Ostrava, Teplice and Karlovy Vary). The organizers, numbers involved and the exact course of the event differ depending on location. However, every march has involved representatives of the Russian compatriot community and affiliated Czech associations and individuals, the aim being to draw attention to the merits of the Red Army and Russia's subsequent role in combating what it claims is contemporary fascism.[103] The composition

2022-10-22.] Available at: https://czechtoday.eu/den-pobedy/2016/q-q-65. Taken from the weekly *Prazhskii telegraf.*

[100] [Anonymous:] Hej občané! z. s., za silnou a suverénní ČR: Nesmrtelný pluk poprvé v Praze. In: *Facebook* [online], 14. 04. 2016. [Accessed 2022-10-22.] Available at: https://www.facebook.com/hejobcane/videos/vb.658601594226187/983997631686580. The website features an untitled video of the Immortal Regiment marching in Moscow's Red Square in the presence of President Putin.

[101] [Anonymous:] „Bessmertnyi polk" v Prage: Prezident Chekhii pozdravil uchastnikov aktsii s Pobedoi [The "Immortal Regiment" in Prague: Czech President Congratulates Participants on Victory Day]. In: *Portal novostei „Chekhiia segodnia"* [online], 09. 05. 2016. [Accessed 2022-10-22.] Available at: https://czechtoday.eu/den-pobedy/2016/q-q-65/. Taken from the weekly *Prazhskii telegraf.*

[102] [Anonymous:] Podgotovka k aktsii „Bessmertnyi polk 2017" nachalas [Preparations for the 2017 "Immortal Regiment" Campaign Have Begun]. In: *Ibid.* [online], 27. 07. 2016. [Accessed 2022-10-22.] Available at: https://czechtoday.eu/den-pobedy/2016/l-2017r/. Taken from the weekly *Prazhskii telegraf.*

[103] In Ostrava, for example, twelve people gathered at the Red Army Memorial in the city gardens in May 2016 on the anniversary of the end of the war on the initiative of the Russian House in Ostrava and the local branch of the Czech-Russian Society. The number of

of the participants at the marches themselves, which include both Russian speaking members from the local area and further afield, as well as Czech citizens either with Russian roots or relatives, is also based on these interconnected networks. Photographs show several veterans of Soviet origin who may or may not be related to someone participating in the march, Soviet and Czech participants in war operations within the territory of Czechoslovakia, or simply well-known figures of the Czech anti-fascist resistance.

The shift in emphasis from intimate recollections of the suffering of a specific family member to the heroization of a generation of victors over fascism has made it easier for those Czechs with an interest in such matters to choose sides. Given that historical circumstances mean that many of them have no relatives who participated in fighting during the Second World War, they resort to a kind of situational bricolage. One of the Czech participants in the 2017 Ostrava march brought a sign with her with the name of her classmate's father from what used to be Leningrad, who had participated in the liberation of the region. Others resorted to well-known heroes of the communist resistance (such as journalists Julius Fučík or Jožka Jabůrková). A portrait of Joseph Vissarionovich Stalin was also to be seen in the parade.[104] The wishes of the original founders of the movement to commemorate the war by means of their own fallen relatives, and to accompany them spiritually to the celebration, was turned on its head. Uppermost in the minds of the organizers was the desire to make a political point: only then did they give a thought as to whom they might chaperone.[105]

associations and participants involved gradually rose from single figures to the low hundreds. Since 2017, the Ostrava Immortal Regiment has regularly marched through the city. In Karlovy Vary, a spa town with a significant Russian minority, over the past few years events involving the Immortal Regiment have seen several hundred people gather with more red carnations and balloons in the colours of the Russian Federation than portraits of war victims, walking through the streets singing Soviet military songs and chanting "Hurrah!" and "Russia, Russia". This has provoked criticism from some Czechs, who point out that the city had not in fact been liberated by the Soviets. (See, for example, DOLANSKÁ, Jitka: Rusové si pochodem Nesmrtelného pluku připomněli své hrdiny, Češi protestovali. In: *iDNES.cz* [online], 08. 05. 2019. [Accessed 2022-10-22.] Available at: https://www.idnes.cz/karlovy-vary/zpravy/karlovy-vary-nesmrtelny-pluk-rusove-cesi-protesty.A190508_183224_vary-zpravy_lesa.)

[104] See [Anonymous:] Bessmertnyi polk v Ostrave: Den pobedy v Chekhii 2017 [The Immortal Regiment in Ostrava: Victory Day in the Czech Republic 2017]. In: *Koordinatsionnyi sovet rossiiskikh sootechestvennikov v Chekhii* [Coordinating Council of Russian Compatriots in the Czech Republic] [online], 09. 05. 2017. [Accessed 2022-10-22.] Available at: http://ksros.eu/bessmertnyiy-polk-v-ostrove-den-pobedyi-v-chehii-nesmrtelny-pluk-2017-ostrava/.

[105] This of course does not exclude the possibility that people who wanted to honour their own relatives in this way may have taken part in the procession.

The significance of the march was underlined by its various accompanying programmes, which further played on collective emotions. In 2019, children's ensembles performed on an improvised stage in the historic centre of Prague, while traditional Soviet songs such as *Vstavai strana ogromnaia!* [Arise, Great Country!] and *Den Pobedy* [Victory Day] were performed as part of a concert entitled *Pust vsegda budet mir!* [May There Always Be Peace!]. The link back to heroic ancestors was underscored by the activities on offer, with participants able symbolically to send letters to them at the front, look them up in databases using computers available on site for this purpose, or take to the stage and share their story with the rest. President Miloš Zeman wrote a letter welcoming the participants and Andrei Konchakov, director of the Russian Centre for Science and Culture, turned up at the event in person.[106]

As in Russia, the March of the Immoral Regiment was adapted to the new political environment in the Czech Republic as well. It was common for the Ribbon of Saint George to be distributed during the march, and the event became an opportunity to denounce the alleged distortion of history, to extol the merits of the Soviet Union and Russia, and to highlight the current threat of "fascism" in Ukraine. In addition to speeches, the organizers in Ostrava drew up written declarations for the city's inhabitants, which, given a certain frostiness on the part of the City Council, could only be published on platforms sympathetic to the cause. In 2017, they drew attention to the fact that freedom had arrived in Czechoslovakia from the East and warned against efforts to distort what they called this "historical truth". They also offered their take on present events, "when the brown plague of fascism is once again rearing its head, whose bloody claws are even now being experienced first-hand by our Slavic brothers in eastern Ukraine. […] Once again, contemporary Russia is being threatened and NATO troops stationed along its borders."[107]

The Immortal Regiment became an international platform by means of which events organized and promoted in Russia could be transmitted to the world. In 2020, for example, this involved a social media competition in which children and adolescents recited poems about the war. Following the example of Russia, the international structure of the Immortal Regiment was not restricted to the organization of the march, but gradually oversaw a range of commemorative projects

[106] [Anonymous:] „Bessmertnyi polk" – v pamiat o pokolenii geroev [The "Immortal Regiment" – In Memory of a Generation of Heroes]. In: *Portal novostei „Chekhiia segodnia"* [online], 16. 05. 2019. [Accessed 2022-10-22.] Available at: https://czechtoday.eu/den-pobedy/2019/l-r-323/. Taken from the weekly magazine *Prazhskii telegraf*, Vol. 11, No. 19 (2019).

[107] The statement was published, for example, on the website of the Coordinating Council of Russian Compatriots in the Czech Republic. See [Anonymous:] Bessmertnyi polk v Ostrave [online]. Available at: http://ksros.eu/bessmertnyiy-polk-v-ostrove-den-pobedyi-v-chehii-nesmrtelny-pluk-2017-ostrava/.

and activities, including the "search movement" and the upkeep of graves. In this way, the memory of the Great Patriotic War acquired an important coordinator at an international level. The aim now is to funnel disparate elements in a single direction and shape a historical consciousness through both commemorative events and educational projects.

In the Czech Republic, for instance, a series of documentary films entitled *Cena vítězství* [The Price of Victory] was shot under the auspices of the Immortal Regiment. Three of these documentaries – on the liberation of Czechoslovakia from the German occupiers, villages razed to the ground by the Nazis, and the concentration camps – were screened at a primary school in Ostrava in collaboration with Russian compatriot organizations as part of Russian language classes being taught by the chairwoman of the Russian House compatriot organization in Ostrava. The films feature commentaries by "experts and eyewitnesses", though the role of expert in the film on the liberation of Czechoslovakia is played by relatives and acquaintances of participants in the military campaign, such as Tatiana Eriomenko, daughter of General Andrei Ivanovich Eriomenko, and Miroslav Klusák, great-grandson of Czechoslovak General (and later President) Ludvík Svoboda, who read extracts from the latter's memoirs.[108]

In terms of the strategic objective to spread the "Russian world", this is a remarkable attempt to break into the educational process and distort its standards by substituting emotions for facts. It fits into a broader trend involving the "expertization" of the descendants of famous participants in the Great Patriotic War. On one hand, these speak through the mouths of their famous relatives as if to convey the emotions of "eyewitness" experiences. On the other, they "objectify" their narratives with hand-picked facts. In a similar way, for example, in May 2021, the daughters of the three Soviet leaders who liberated Czechoslovakia – Natalia Koneva, Natalia Malinovskaia and Tatiana Eriomenko – took to social media with their Victory Day message. As they see it, the Immortal Regiment is "a riposte to all of our enemies in Russia and abroad" that confronts their scepticism by reviving the memory of magnificent deeds.[109] As we well know, the symbolic

[108] [Anonymous:] V Chekhii sniali narodnyi film „Tsena Pobedy" [The Czech Republic Produced a National Film "The Price of Victory"]. In: *Portal novostei „Chekhiia segodnia"* [online], 08. 07. 2020. [Accessed 2022-10-22.] Available at: https://czechtoday.eu/video/2020/v-chehii-snyali-narodnyj-film-czena-pobedy/.

[109] A video containing this message was placed on YouTube with Czech subtitles. See: Docheri marshalov pozdravliaiut s Dniom Pobedy / Dcery maršálů blahopřejí ke Dni vítězství [Daughters of Marshals Congratulate on Victory Day]. In: *YouTube* [online], 08. 05. 2021, channel user Nesmrtelný pluk Česko/Bessmertnyi polk Chekhiia [Immortal Regiment Czechia]. [Accessed 2022-10-22.] Available at: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AofkQ5aKsmA.

mobilization of the Immortal Regiments of the mythical Red Army was by no means the end of the matter.

In conclusion… War

Let us return to the song that began this article. In March 2022, following the Russian invasion of Ukraine, the singers Natalia Kachura and Margarita Lisovina gave a concert in a military hospital. This was for the "defenders of the Republic", as the headlines put it. The video posted on YouTube captures the end of the event: two young women in the prime of life, one of them pregnant, singing the song "Donbas Is Behind Us".[110] The long-cultivated fantasy of the mythical struggle against fascism has become a real-world tragedy. The defenders of the Russian interpretation of events resort to a shameless manipulation of the facts, disinformation, conspiracy theories, and to the realm of mythologized abstraction. All of these approaches make it possible to bypass the disturbing details of the war and avoid the emotions so lavishly squandered elsewhere. In the comments below the video, orchestrated into a shared enthusiasm, we learn that Margarita has now given birth to a baby, a "future defender of Donbas", while the real "defenders" are left out of the picture. This, too, belongs to what is known as "emotion management". Controlling who and what people are offended and moved by has always been an integral part of any political struggle, and things are unlikely to change in this respect.

One of the first restrictions that came into force after the military occupation of Czechoslovakia in 1968 was a ban on expressing anger about the occupation and on using the word "occupation" at all. Rage was to be replaced by admiration and gratitude for the Red Army. The period of normalization saw the political establishment accept this manipulation and elevate it to the level of state doctrine. The Soviets demanded both its acceptance and its internalization by means of a range of formalized expressions of loyalty. When the communist regime finally fell and people were able to give vent to feelings that had long been suppressed, Soviet officers were highly indignant when someone dared to label them as occupiers. At present, the Russian state and its local fan club tell us not to weep over Ukrainian civilians, but over fallen Soviet soldiers, Russian children in Donbas, or the Serbian victims of bombing by NATO. All of this once again

[110] M. Lisovina i N. Kachura: „Donbas za nami". Kontsert v gospitale [Concert in a Hospital]. In: *YouTube* [online], 29. 03. 2022, channel user Mikhail Khokhlov, kompozitor [composer]. [Accessed 2022-10-22.] Available at: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YWCdzT2Rbe0.

boils down to the mythologized story of the Soviet/Russian guardian of the fortress against the (fascist) threat from – where else? – the West.

Putin's government uses the "sanctity" of the legacy of the Great Patriotic War and the lives of those who died fighting fascism as a shield. It has appropriated and turned this "holy legacy" into a geopolitical tool for the assertion of its own influence and is at present committing war crimes in its name. Following the events of August 1968, the cultivation of the myth of the Great Patriotic War was monopolized and weaponized by the Czechoslovak state. However, under the conditions pertaining at present in the Czech Republic, this task has been taken over (more or less intentionally) by a minority pro-Russian claque. This group is turning a decent respect for Soviet soldiers into cheap political trash, all the while relativizing Russian war crimes. It is clear that after February 2022, any friendship with Russia – hitherto manifest, inter alia, by an ostentatious nurturing and worshipping of the myth of the Great Patriotic War – will be severely tested. As with previous important milestones in Russian politics (internal and external), there will once again be evolution and a restructuring of the Russian compatriot world and its local allies. Russia's open aggression against Ukraine was a blow whose longer-term consequences for the development of what is admittedly a minority subversive current – albeit one, as I have tried to show, which is establishing more and more of a foothold for itself – have yet to become clear. (There is also the question of the fate that awaits the politically abused legacy of the Second World War in Russia itself.) Behind the silent waiting and tacit withdrawal from the scene on the part of many hitherto active actors, a realignment of forces seems the most likely prospect for the time being. This is true of both Russian compatriots and activists. This was evident in the most recent celebrations of the end of the Second World War in early May 2022. There were no high-profile trips taken by European, let alone Russian, Night Wolves across the country, nor was the modern "tradition" of marches of the Immortal Regiment, interrupted by the coronavirus epidemic, renewed. The groups that gathered to honour fallen Soviet soldiers were thin on the ground. However, the participants themselves, their reckless approach to chronology and their regular references to the "distortion" of history show that an interest in local support through the cultivation of the legacy, or rather the myth, of the Great Patriotic War, has not waned, nor has the willingness of some to welcome it with open arms.

Translated by Phil Jones

Abstract

Theoretically grounded in memory studies, this article reconstructs how the official Soviet-Russian myth of the Great Patriotic War has been politically instrumentalized

*and abused to promote and legitimize the Kremlin's power intentions. It examines the forms, mechanisms and actors of this systematically applied politics of history and memory. First in the context of the Soviet intervention in Czechoslovakia in August 1968 and the justification of the subsequent Soviet Army's stay in the country, then in the context of the propaganda activities of (pro-)Russian activists in the Czech Republic and the current Russian aggression against Ukraine. By the myth of the Great Patriotic War, the author understands the purposefully created, maintained and idealized image of the victorious campaign of the Red Army between 1941 and 1945, the selfless and unprecedented Soviet heroism that saved European nations from German fascism. This sacralized narrative, which suppresses other historical narratives, is monopolized in contemporary Russian state policy as an important tool to shape the historical memory of Russian society and to unite it against new and presumably hostile threats. The author demonstrates the strategy in which during the normalization of the 1970s and 1980s the soldiers of the Soviet army, who allegedly provided "fraternal assistance" in the suppression of the counter-revolution in Czechoslovakia in August 1968, were presented as the successors and "sons" of the heroic liberators of 1945 and shows how they themselves used and participated in this cult in their "comradeship" with Czech society. After the collapse of the communist regime, this official narrative lost its weight, but the "Russian world" (*russkii mir*) as a conglomerate of ideas linking segments of Russian culture, Orthodoxy, nationalism and shared historical memory has penetrated the Czech Republic, serving as a "marketing brand" to spread Russia's geopolitical influence during Putin's rule. Through the Russian-language press, web platforms and social media, the author maps the actors and forms of the "Russian world" in the Czech Republic, whose background consists of part of the local Russian minority and local pro-Russian associations or initiatives. She pays particular attention to the nationalist motorcycle club* Night Wolves *(*Nochnye volki*) and the originally civic, but gradually becoming a state movement Immortal Regiment (*Bessmertnyi polk*), which revive and promote the myth of the Great Patriotic War in line with the Kremlin's intentions and which establish their branches beyond the borders of Russia, including the Czech Republic.*

Keywords:

Great Patriotic War; Second World War; Russia; Soviet Union; Czech Republic; Czechoslovakia; historical memory; politics of history; propaganda; Soviet Army; war in Ukraine; "Russian world"; Russian compatriot communities; fascism; Night Wolves; Immortal Regiment; commemorations; Vladimir Putin

DOI: 10.51134/sod.2022.037

The Iron or Rustproof Felix?

Felix Dzerzhinsky as a Symbol of Revolutionary Fanaticism, Trivialization of Injustice and Dubious Democracy in Soviet and Post-Soviet Era Russia

Tomas Sniegon

Centre for Languages and Literature, the Joint Faculties for Humanities and Theology, Lund University, Sweden

The following text describes the development of the cult surrounding Felix Edmundovich Dzerzhinsky, a revolutionary and founder of the political police in the Soviet Union, as well as the changes in the cult's meaning during the different phases of the history of the Soviet Union and post-Soviet Russia. Dzerzhinsky stood at the head of Soviet state security in the first two periods of its existence immediately after the USSR became the first state where the "dictatorship of the proletariat" and state terror under the rule of one political party started to be applied. In that period, Dzerzhinsky's organization bore the names of VChK ("the Cheka"), GPU and OGPU.[1]

Dzerzhinsky therefore made a substantial contribution first to the constitution of the Soviet communist system in the era of Vladimir Ilich Lenin, and later, after Lenin's death in 1924, also to the transfer of this power into the hands of Joseph Vissarionovich Stalin. Lenin was undoubtedly the main architect of the regime of the "dictatorship of the proletariat". Nevertheless, it was thanks to Felix Dzerzhinsky at the head of the most important repressive apparatus that Soviet state terror acquired a very specific institutionalized form. Dzerzhinsky, also

[1] VChK is the abbreviation of the All-Russian Extraordinary Commission for Fighting Counter-Revolution and Sabotage under the Council of People's Commissars of the RSFSR (*Vserossiiskaia chrezvychainaia komissiia po borbe s kontrrevoliutsiei i sabotazhem pri Sovete narodnykh komissarov RSFSR*), which existed from 1917 to 1922. Its successor organization between 1922 and 1923 was the State Political Directorate under the Council of Peoples Commissars of the USSR (*Gosudarstvennoe politicheskoe upravlenie pri Sovete narodnykh komissarov SSSR*), abbreviated as GPU. This organization transformed into the Joint State Political Directorate under the Council of People's Commissars of the USSR (*Obedinionnoe gosudarstvennoe politicheskoe upravlenie pri Sovete narodnykh komissarov SSSR*), which operated with the abbreviation OGPU from 1923 to 1934.

known as “Iron Felix”, was born on 11 September 1877 as Feliks Dzierżyński at the family estate of Dzerzhinovo in today’s Belarus (then in the territory of the Russian Empire) into an impoverished Polish aristocratic family. From his youth, he participated in the illegal revolutionary activities of the Lithuanian, or rather Polish-Lithuanian, Social Democratic Party (*Socjaldemokracja Królestwa Polskiego i Litwy*, SDKPiL). He took part in the Warsaw uprising and was imprisoned several times (spending a total of 11 years in prison). After the February revolution in 1917, he joined Lenin’s Bolsheviks, soon rising to the top. Apart from the leadership of the political police and state security in the period of 1917–1926, he was also the People’s Commissary (Minister) for Internal Affairs and Transport between 1923 and 1924, the chairman of the Supreme Council of the National Economy of the USSR (*Vysshii sovet narodnogo khoziaistva SSSR*) between 1924 and 1926, and the chairman of the state Commission for the Improvement of the Life of Children (*Komissiia po uluchsheniiu zhizni detei*) between 1921 and 1926. Furthermore, in the period 1924–1926, he was a candidate for membership of the Politburo of the Central Committee of the All-Union Communist Party (Bolsheviks) (*Vsesoiuznaia kommunisticheskaia partiia (bolshevikov)*, VKS[b]), its supreme body. He died on 20 July 1926 of a heart attack at the relatively young age of 47, before the terror unleashed by Stalin in the USSR reached its most destructive phase.[2]

The image of Dzerzhinsky as a basis for mythologizing the Soviet political police became very useful in all stages of the development of the Soviet system. The most important for the development of the cult was the period after the Twentieth Congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (*Kommunisticheskaia partiia Sovetskogo Soiuza,* KPSS) in 1956 until the death of the head of the Committee for State Security (*Komitet gosudarstvennoi bezopasnosti*, KGB) and later the general secretary of the Central Committee of the KPSS, Yuri Vladimirovich Andropov, in 1983. However, despite numerous revelations concerning the crimes of communism, the glorification of Dzerzhinsky and the trivialization of the terror he unleashed did not disappear completely even later – neither during the

[2] Dzerzhinsky’s life was captured in several biographies. However, these were mostly propaganda pieces and have very little scholarly value. See, for example: KOROLKOV, Iurii Mikhailovich: *Feliks znachit schastlivyi: Povest o Felikse Dzerzhinskom* [Felix Means Happy: The Tale of Felix Dzerzhinsky]. Moskva, Politizdat 1974, or TISHKOV, Arsenii Vasilevich: *Dzerzhinskii.* Moskva, Molodaia gvardiia 1974. In an attempt to complement the purely propagandistic view of Dzerzhinsky, a collection of documents on Dzerzhinsky’s career and post-revolutionary life was published in Russia in 2007. See: PLEKHANOV, Andrei Aleksandrovich – PLEKHANOV, Aleksandr Mikhailovich (eds.): *F. E. Dzerzhinskii: Predsedatel VChk--OGPU, 1917–1926* [F. E. Dzerzhinsky: Chairman of the VChk-OGPU, 1917–1926]. Moskva, Materik 2007.

time of *perestroika* in the era of Mikhail Sergeevich Gorbachev (1985–1991) nor later, after the disintegration of the USSR, or under the rule of the first president of the Russian Federation, Boris Nikolaevich Yeltsin, and his successor, Vladimir Vladimirovich Putin. To this day, the members of the state security in Russia call themselves "Chekists", in reference to the VChK/Cheka.

Although the myth of the Cheka's founder remained very similar or virtually unchanged in all these periods, its functions gradually changed. This did not relate only to the fact that Dzerzhinsky held positions in the Soviet security leadership as well as other (for example, economic) roles. The interpretation of the meaning of Dzerzhinsky's legacy was determined mainly by the changing views of the role and activity of the internal political police in the Soviet Union, and later of the role of centralized state power and the work of VChK's successor organizations in post-Soviet Russia. Given that the myth of Dzerzhinsky *de facto* survived without any interruptions and substantial change in all the periods since Dzerzhinsky's death, I argue that the cult of this man became more applicable and in the long term more useful for state power in the Kremlin than the cults of other leaders of the Soviet era, including those of Lenin and Stalin.

Dzerzhinsky's Cult between Stalinism and the Early Cold War

The image of Felix Dzerzhinsky as the founder of the Cheka and an incorruptible, uncompromising, but also humane defender of the revolution began to be built by the Soviet communist propaganda machine almost immediately after Dzerzhinsky's death. In the same year, the square in front of the headquarters of the Soviet state security in Moscow was renamed after Dzerzhinsky, as was one of the neighbouring streets, the former Great Lubianka (*Bolshaia Lubianka*). The poet Vladimir Vladimirovich Maiakovsky glorified Dzerzhinsky in his poems twice in 1927: firstly, in the poem *Khorosho!* [Good!], dedicated to the tenth anniversary of the Revolution, and secondly, in the poem *Soldaty Dzerzhinskogo* [Dzerzhinsky's Soldiers] on the tenth anniversary of VChK's founding.

In 1929, the town of Rastiapino in the Nizhegorod province, less than 400 kilometres east of Moscow, was renamed Dzerzhinsk. Two more towns with the same name were added in the Belorussian and Ukrainian Soviet Republics in the 1930s. The Belorussian Dzerzhinsk (Dzyarzhynsk) replaced the original Koidanava on the map in 1932, and the Ukrainian town of Toretsk received its new name in 1938. In contrast to the first two places, which still bear the name of Dzerzhinsky, the Ukrainian Dzerzhinsk regained its original name in 2016.

In relation to the claim of the humane character of the future communist system, emphasis was placed on Dzerzhinsky's activities for the care of children who had lost their parents during the post-revolutionary civil war. However, no

reference was made to the fact that, to a great extent, this war was caused by the Bolshevik party's unfulfilled promises of 1917 and the subsequent "Red Terror", also headed by Dzerzhinsky. Dzerzhinsky's name was given, for example, to children's camps, and to books and films for young readers and viewers.[3] One of the camps for children, which also contributed to the development of the post-revolutionary economy, later produced cameras that were Soviet copies of the German Leica. They were given the name FED in the USSR, after the initials of Felix Edmundovich Dzerzhinsky. These camps for children were also praised by one of the founders of Soviet pedagogy, Anton Semionovich Makarenko, in his work *Pedagogicheskaia poema* [Pedagogical Poem] (1935).

However, it is also known that the development of Dzerzhinsky's cult was not equally intensive in subsequent decades. In the 1930s and 1940s, it remained admissible only to the extent that it did not compete with the cult of the highest leader, Joseph Stalin. Most of Dzerzhinsky's former collaborators were even executed during the "Great Terror" of 1937–1938.[4] Regardless of this, the year 1938 saw a first plan to make a feature film about Dzerzhinsky's life. As I discuss later, however, the film was only made under different conditions just before Stalin's death. In 1940, a competition was held for a monument to Felix Dzerzhinsky in Moscow. The participants of the competition included, for example, Vera Ignatevna Mukhina, the creator of a well-known constructivist monument of 1937 with the title *Rabochii i kolkhoznitsa* [Worker and Kolkhoz Woman], which is still standing at the Exhibition of Achievements of National Economy (*Vystavka dostizhenii narodnogo khoziaistva*) complex in Moscow. The competition was won by another sculptor, Sarra Dmitrievna Lebedeva, but the project was not implemented in the end.[5] In the immediate aftermath of the Second World War, Dzerzhinsky's portrait was allegedly removed from the KGB officers' club, together with his post-mortem mask and tunic.[6] Nonetheless, a bust was placed on his tomb behind Lenin's Mausoleum on Red Square, although this tribute was not paid exclusively to Dzerzhinsky, but also to three other communist leaders.[7]

3 FEDOR, Julie: *Russia and the Cult of State Security: The Checkist Tradition, from Lenin to Putin*. London – New York, Routledge 2011, pp. 13–16; PLEKHANOV, A. A. – PLEKHANOV, A. M. (eds.): *F. E. Dzerzhinskii,* p. 6.

4 PLEKHANOV, A. A. – PLEKHANOV, A. M.. (eds.): *F. E. Dzerzhinskii,* p. 6.

5 SHARIFULIN, Valerii: Chto izvestno o diskusii vokrug pamiatnika na Lubianskoi ploshchadi [What is Known about the Lubianka Square Monument Discussion]. In: *TASS* [online], 19. 02. 2021. [Accessed 2022-10-24.] Available at: https://tass.ru/info/10746003.

6 ANDREW, Christopher – GORDIEVSKY, Oleg: *KGB: The Inside Story*. London, Hodder & Stoughton 1990, pp. 23 and 279.

7 These were Mikhail Vasilevich Frunze, Mikhail Ivanovich Kalinin and Iakov Mikhailovich Sverdlov (see GILL, Graeme: *Symbols and Legitimacy in Soviet Politics*. Cambridge, Cambridge

A new stage in the development of Dzerzhinsky's cult began with the birth of the Cold War in the last years of Stalin's life. The heroic myth of the Cheka and its founder started to be actively used for the creation of the political police in the service of new communist dictatorships in the countries of "the socialist camp". For the new communist regimes, the Cheka was to become an example of the struggle against counter-revolution. For example, on the initiative of Klement Gottwald, the first Czechoslovak communist president, a school where intelligence officers were trained was named after Dzerzhinsky.[8] As the Ministry of National Security of Czechoslovakia later explained, Dzerzhinsky proved to be an untiring fighter against counter-revolution in an allegedly critical period for the young Soviet state. The work of the post-revolutionary Cheka was therefore identical to the tasks faced by the Ministry – namely, to enforce the "victory" of the new system by all possible means, despite not having the support of the majority of the population. The new name of the school was also meant to emphasize the close links between the Czechoslovak secret services and its Soviet model.

Similar reasons led to the renaming of one of the squares in the centre of Warsaw in the summer of 1951. Its original name of Bank Square (*Plac Bankowy*) was changed to Felix Dzerzhinsky Square (*Plac Feliksa Dzerżińskiego*) and Dzerzhinsky's monument was also erected on the square, where it remained until 1989. It was the first "revolutionary" monument built in the Polish capital after the Second World War, that is, after the USSR liberated Poland from German Nazism to subsequently subject it to Soviet power ambitions. These ambitions mainly lay in legitimizing the legacy of the anti-Polish Soviet-German pact of 1939 and in exporting the Stalinist political system to Poland. Dzerzhinsky here not only symbolized devotion to revolution, but through his ethnic origin also personified alleged ties between the Polish and Soviet nations.[9] Interestingly, Dzerzhinsky's brother Władysław, a neurologist and military doctor, in contrast, clearly identified with Poland and was not even a communist. As a member of the Polish Home Army (*Armia Krajowa*), which was connected to the Polish government-in-exile in London, he was killed by the Germans in 1942.[10]

University Press 2011, p. 160).

[8] BLAŽEK, Petr: „Chladnou hlavu, planoucí srdce a čisté ruce“: Rozkaz ministrů vnitra k 100. výročí narození zakladatele sovětské tajné služby Felixe Edmundoviče Dzeržinského. In: *Sborník Archivu bezpečnostních složek*, No. 5. Praha, Odbor Archiv bezpečnostních složek Ministerstva vnitra ČR 2007, pp. 255–270.

[9] Dzerzhinsky came from a Polish Catholic family, but given that Poland as a state did not exist between 1795 and 1918 and that its territory was divided between the neighbouring powers, Dzerzhinsky's birthplace near Minsk formed part of the Russian Empire.

[10] JADCZYK, Karol: W cieniu „krwawego Feliksa“ [In the Shadow of "Bloody Felix"]. In: *Polska zbrojna: Historia,* Vol. 23, No. 3 (2022), pp. 130–134.

Felix Dzerzhinsky (1877–1926)
on a stamp issued by the Polish Post
on the centenary of his birth
Graphic design © Witold Surowiecki

Ironically, the Soviet delegation present at the unveiling of the monument, which was dedicated to "the fraternity of both nations", included the former USSR Minister of Foreign Affairs, Vyacheslav Mikhailovich Molotov. The very person who, after the signing of the Soviet-German pact of 1939 and its secret protocol defining the spheres of influence in Central Europe between these two dictatorships, became a symbol of not fraternity, but betrayal and aggression for the majority of Poles. Apart from Molotov, the ceremony was also attended by the then most famous Soviet marshal, Georgy Konstantinovich Zhukov. Dzerzhinsky, Molotov and Zhukov together in the centre of Warsaw therefore symbolized the ideological, political and military dominance of the Soviet Union and the communist system of the Soviet type, which was relevant in this period. The cult of Dzerzhinsky and the Cheka was therefore carried over from the context of the post-revolutionary era in the Soviet Union to the context of the early Cold War in Central Europe.

In the field of literature and art, this cult was promoted by, for example, the books of G. M. Liubarov and Iurii Pavlovich German.[11] A special case was the film I previously mentioned about Dzerzhinsky, directed by Mikhail

[11] LIUBAROV, G. M.: *Feliks Edmundovich Dzerzhinskii.* Moskva, Pravda 1950; GERMAN, Iurii Pavlovich: *Rasskazy o Felikse Dzerzhinskom* [Stories about Felix Dzerzhinsky]. Moskva – Leningrad, Gosudarstvennoe izdatelstvo detskoi literatury Ministerstva prosveshcheniia RSFSR 1947. (Czech editions followed soon after: LJUBAROV, G. M.: *F. E. Dzeržinský.* Praha, Naše vojsko 1951; GERMAN, Jurij: *Revolucionář: Povídky o Felixi Edmundoviči Dzeržinském.* Praha, Mladá fronta 1950.)

Konstantinovich Kalatozov – who later also directed famous films such as *Letiat zhuravli* [The Cranes are Flying] and *Krasnaia palatka* [The Red Tent] – the shooting of which was finished towards the end of Stalin's life in 1952. However, it was eventually screened under the title *Vikhri vrazhdebnye* [Hostile Whirlwinds] only several years later, in 1957, when the process of de-Stalinization had already begun in the Soviet Union. Whereas in the 1952 version, the Soviet heroes featured in the film together with Dzerzhinsky included Stalin, five years later, when the film was shown to Soviet viewers, the former "big leader" and the "leader of nations" had been removed from the story.[12]

The Inner Consolidation of the KGB

The period between 1954 and 1962 saw another massive expansion of Dzerzhinsky's cult. This began with the transformation of the former Soviet Ministry of State Security (*Ministerstvo gosudarstvennoi bezopasnosti*, MGB) into the Committee for State Security under the Council of Ministers of the USSR. The birth of this institution in 1954, one year after Stalin's death, was intended to reduce the former "omnipotent" status of the political police (instead of a ministry, it became a council) and increase the Communist Party's control over it. The year 1962 was marked by an attempt at the second wave of de-Stalinization after the Twenty-Second Congress of the Soviet Communist Party. In late 1961, during the Congress, Stalin's body was finally moved from the mausoleum, where it had until then been exhibited side-by-side with Lenin, and taken to a tomb near the Kremlin wall.

In this period, the cult of Dzerzhinsky and the Cheka no longer served for the development of an identity for the special services in the countries of "the socialist camp", but to form a "new" image of the Soviet political police itself, an image that would tie the "new" KGB not with terror, but with the "people". Until 1962, this new course applied mainly to the top political decisions, but it *de facto* started to be propagated "among the people" only in the subsequent period.

The general tone of this new trend was already set at the meeting of the Presidium of the KPSS Central Committee on 8 February 1954, where the decision was made to appoint Ivan Aleksandrovich Serov as chairman of the newly created Council for State Security. In his speech to the future first chairman of the KGB,

[12] For more information see CHERNIAVSKAIA, Iuliia: *Feliks Dzerzhinskii v sovetskoi politike pamiati* [Felix Dzerzhinsky in Soviet Politics of Memory]. Sankt-Peterburg, Evropeiskii universitet v Sankt-Peterburge 2017. Masters dissertation. I would like to thank Iuliia Cherniavskaia for providing me with her text.

the then new chairman of the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR (parliament), Marshal Kliment Efremovich Voroshilov, emphasized that the "special services" should follow the example of Dzerzhinsky, that is, capture enemies and build a new organization.[13] On 7 June 1954, after the official foundation of the Council for State Security, the new Soviet leader, Nikita Sergeevich Khrushchev, gave a long speech to the participants of the All-Union Conference of KGB officers, in which he outlined the qualities and moral character of a real Chekist of a non-Stalinist type. The qualities described by Khrushchev corresponded exactly to the qualities that the Soviet propaganda machine attributed to Felix Dzerzhinsky. By contrast, Khrushchev criticized practically all Dzerzhinsky's successors at the head of the Soviet security services. Even though he only named Lavrentiy Pavlovich Beria, Viktor Semionovich Abakumov, Genrikh Grigorevich Iagoda and Nikolai Ivanovich Ezhov in his speech, he also added that the party had already started to notice problems with the leadership of the security services in the immediate aftermath of Dzerzhinsky's death. This implied that not even Viacheslav Rudolfovich Menzhinskii's work between 1926 and 1934 was considered satisfactory by Khrushchev.[14] In his direct references to Dzerzhinsky, Khrushchev appreciated the role of the "sharp sword of the Cheka" in dealing with enemies, as well as Dzerzhinsky's alleged capacity to acknowledge his mistakes and release those who had been unjustly arrested. According to Khrushchev, if any such arrests occurred during Dzerzhinsky's era, they were made only with Dzerzhinsky's good intentions.

In this context, I should also note one ironical statement ascribed to Dzerzhinsky, his allegedly most famous quotation. According to this, a Chekist should have primarily a "cold head, fiery heart and clean hands". However, since the exact source of this famous quotation is unknown, it is disputable whether Dzerzhinsky ever said anything like this. It was probably first quoted in Nikolai Zubov's brief biography of Dzerzhinsky published in 1941.[15]

In 1956, Khrushchev delivered his milestone "secret speech" at the Twentieth Congress of the Soviet Communist Party, which contained previously unheard of criticism of Stalinism as well as of Stalin personally. In the same year,

[13] See FURSENKO, Aleksandr Aleksandrovich (ed.): *Prezidium TsK KPSS 1954–1964: Chiornovye protokolnye zapisi zasedanii. Stenogrammy, postanovleniia* [Presidium of the KPSS Central Committee 1954–1964: Draft Minutes of Meetings. Transcripts, Resolutions], Vol. 1. Moskva, Rosspen 2006, p. 37.

[14] KHRUSHCHEV, Nikita Sergeevich: *Dva tsveta vremeni: Dokumenty iz lichnogo fonda N. S. Khrushcheva* [Two Colours of Time: Documents from N. S. Khrushchev's Personal Collection], Vol. 1. Moskva, Mezhdunarodnyi fond „Demokratiia" 2009, pp. 507–525, here p. 510.

[15] ZUBOV, Nikolai I.: *Feliks Edmundovich Dzerzhinskii: Kratkaia biografiia* [Felix Edmundovich Dzerzhinsky: A Brief Biography]. Moskva, Gospolitizdat 1941.

the campaign against Stalin's cult of personality was complemented by the publication of a new biography of the Cheka founder entitled *Stranitsy iz zhizni F. E. Dzerzhinskogo* [Pages from the Life of F. E. Dzerzhinsky] from the pen of the writer Pavel Georgievich Sofinov.[16]

In December 1957, on the occasion of the 40th anniversary of the founding of the Soviet political police, KGB chairman Ivan Serov published an article in the prominent *Pravda* [The Truth], the official newspaper of the Soviet Communist Party. In this, he commended Dzerzhinsky as "one of the best sons of the party", a hero "whose image will live on in the hearts of the Soviet people forever". The positive continuity between "Dzerzhinsky's" Cheka and "Serov's" KGB was supported by claims that from the first day of the Cheka's work, the state security bodies "acted as an armed division of the working class and the Communist Party, as a unit standing in the front line of the struggle against the enemies of the Soviet state". The article justified the crimes of the Stalinist system as a combination of Stalin's cult of personality, abuse of power by certain individuals and pressure from abroad by evil imperialists attempting to undermine the existence of the Soviet Union.[17]

The first stage of building the post-Stalinist cult of Dzerzhinsky culminated in December 1958 with the erection of Dzerzhinsky's monument directly in front of the KGB headquarters in Moscow. The unveiling of the construction, 5.7 metres tall and weighing 11 tons, was timed to coincide with the 41st anniversary of the Cheka's founding. The ceremony was personally attended by Khrushchev, as well as by his subsequent successor Leonid Ilich Brezhnev, together with Dzerzhinsky's widow Sofia and son Jan.[18]

In that period, the square on which the statue was placed as well as the nearby metro station had already been named after Dzerzhinsky. From that moment, all KGB leaders inevitably looked down upon the back of "Iron Felix" from their offices on the third floor. Moreover, under the leadership of Vladimir Efimovich Semichastnyi (1961–1967), the office of the KGB chairman was decorated with Dzerzhinsky's bust, created, like the monument, by the sculptor

16 SOFINOV, Pavel Georgievich: *Stranitsy iz zhizni F. E. Dzerzhinskogo.* Moskva, Gosudarstvennoe izdatelstvo politicheskoi literatury 1956.

17 SEROV, Ivan: Sorok let na strazhe bezopasnosti Sovetskogo gosudarstva [Forty Years of Safeguarding the Security of the Soviet State]. In: *Pravda* (21. 12. 1957), p. 6.

18 SHARIFULIN, V.: Chto izvestno o diskusii vokrug pamiatnika na Lubianskoi ploshchadi [online].

Evgenii Viktorovich Vuchetich. According to Semichastnyi's recollections in the 1990s, the bust remained in the office even after the disintegration of the Soviet Union in 1991.[19]

Dzerzhinsky's monument not only stood next to the KGB headquarters, but also next to the Children's World (*Detskii mir*) department store, which became the biggest department store for children's goods in the Soviet Union after its opening in 1957. In the period of de-Stalinization, this proximity gave the Lubianka, which during Stalinism was also one of the most feared prisons in the Soviet capital and the entire country, a certain "human face". The vicinity of the Children's World and the Lubianka again symbolically highlighted the myth of Dzerzhinsky's love for children. In the summer of 1962, that is, in the last phase of the consolidation of the Soviet state security system, a Higher School of the KGB, also named after Felix Dzerzhinsky, was founded (*Vysshaia shkola KGB im. F. E. Dzerzhinskogo*).

An Attempt to "Charm" Soviet Society

The conclusions of the Twenty-Second Congress of the Soviet Communist Party in 1961 laid the foundations for the subsequent period, according to which the state security services were declared to be the "bodies of the all-people's socialist state". A new programme of the Soviet Communist Party was also adopted at the Congress.

At this highest communist forum, Khrushchev, intoxicated by the Soviet success in sending the first human, Iurii Alekseevich Gagarin, into space only half a year earlier, compared his country to the third stage of a Soviet spaceship. The party programme then stated that the Soviet Union would finish the construction of the communist system in the following twenty years. After the stages of the "dictatorship of the proletariat" and the "all-people's democracy" according to Marxist theory, the Soviet system was to move to another stage of development, because "after the exploiting classes had been eliminated, the function of suppressing their resistance disappeared". Having brought about a complete and final victory of socialism – the first stage of communism – and the transition of society to the full-scale construction of communism, the "dictatorship of the proletariat" would fulfil its historical mission and ceased to be indispensable in the USSR from the point of view of the tasks of internal development,

[19] 30 let spustia: Interviu s V. E. Semichastnym [Thirty Years Later: Interview with V. E. Semichastnyi]. In: Z*hurnal rossiiskikh spetssluzhb*, No. 3–4 (1997), pp. 9–13.

the document stated.[20] In this respect, the emphasis on propaganda (mainly in the area of literature, theatre and film) shifted towards promoting the idea of unity between the Committee for State Security and the "Soviet people".

The former symbolic designation of the KGB as "the shield and sword" of the Soviet system was to be, at least officially, toned down to being "the eyes and ears" of Soviet communism. In other words, the state security did no longer exist just "for the people", but it was to be based on the people – and hence on their "trust" and reports – in preventing "anti-Soviet activity". As early as the late 1950s, this change was called prophylaxis or prevention (*profilaktika*).[21] In his article published on 20 December 1962, on the 45th anniversary of the founding of the VChK, the then KGB chairman, Vladimir Semichastnyi, illustrated this with Dzerzhinsky's quote that "only the trust of workers and peasants gave the VChK the power to fulfil the task assigned to it by revolution: to defeat the internal counter-revolution and uncover all conspiracies of deposed landowners, capitalists and their henchmen".[22]

In order to promote the "all people" character, the Soviet police services, whose basic repressive nature changed only little, needed to present their "positive" image to the broader Soviet public. In the summer of 1963, Semichastnyi therefore approved a detailed plan aimed at influencing the media, literature and theatre.[23] The plan envisaged the creation of very specific artistic works that would convey the required message and indicated which members of the KGB should influence the process and how this should be done. It included older as well as very topical themes: for example, Vadim Mikhailovich Kozhevnikov's novel about the activity of a Cheka communist who for a long time fulfilled an extremely important task for his home country abroad. The novel *Shchit i mech* [Shield and Sword] was based on the story of an intelligence officer, Rudolf Abel, who in 1962 was exchanged on the "Bridge of Spies" in Potsdam for the American pilot Gary Powers, who had been shot down during a reconnaissance flight over the Soviet Union in 1960.[24] The dramatist Anatolii Andreevich Barianov was to write a play

[20] *XXII sezd Kommunisticheskoi partii Sovetskogo Soiuza* [The Twenty-Second Congress of the Soviet Communist Party], Vol. 1–3. Moskva, Gospolitizdat 1962.

[21] See, for example, SNIEGON, Tomas: Getting Ready to Fight the Dissidents: New Evidence about the KGB and the "Enemies of the People" During the Late Khrushchev Era. In: *Journal of Cold War Studies* (Accepted/In press as to December 2022).

[22] SEMICHASTNYI, V. E.: Byt dostoinym vysokogo doveriia partii i naroda [To Be Worthy of the High Trust of the Party and the People]. In: *Pravda* (20. 12. 1962), p. 3.

[23] *Hoover Institution Library & Archives*, Stanford (CA), collection Lithuanian KGB, K-1, copy 10, reel 110, file 323.

[24] KOZHEVNIKOV, Vadim Mikhailovich: *Shchit i mech: Roman.* Moskva, Sovetskii pisatel 1965.

based on the story of the officer of the Main Intelligence Directorate (*Glavnoe razvedyvatelnoe upravlenie*, GRU), Oleg Vladimirovich Penkovskii, who worked simultaneously for the Soviet military intelligence and for American and British intelligence. Penkovskii, who had provided the Americans with, among other things, the plans of the Soviet launching sites in Cuba during the Cuban Missile Crisis, was later sentenced as a traitor to the USSR and executed in the spring of 1963. The list also included twelve films, among them *Vystrel v tumane* [A Shot in the Fog] of 1963, directed by Aleksandr Ivanovich Seryi and Anatolii Alekseevich Bobrovskii, about the KGB's struggle against scientific and technical enemy espionage, and *Ekho chiornogo lesa* [Echoes of Black Forest], based on the novel by Vladimir Pavlovich Beliaev and Illarion Vasilevich Podolianin, about the struggle against Western spies among Ukrainian nationalists.[25] Apart from the theme of the Cold War, a key role was assigned to the demonstration of heroism by Chekists during the Great Patriotic War, as well as after the Bolshevik revolution under the leadership of Felix Dzerzhinsky. Not all the plans mentioned in this document were eventually implemented.

The participation of the Committee for State Security in the process of organizing propaganda was not limited merely to bureaucratic control. The KGB consultants participated in all the preparatory work. Even though, their participation had a certain positive effect (the KGB officers revealed some unknown details about the stories on which the films were based), at the same time, however, these "experts" exercised strict control to ensure that the employees of the state security services should be presented exclusively in a positive light as intelligent and well-educated people.[26] The negative aspects of the work of Chekists and their successors were still strictly taboo. This contributed to the preservation and reinforcement of the myth, as built from the centre, of the "honest and just" state security services that serve the people and are closely connected to them.

In the newer themes, references to Dzerzhinsky's model were indirect, but in the glorification of the entire post-revolutionary period, still very clear. This was the case of, for example, Boris Volchek's film *Sotrudnik ChK* [Cheka Employee] of 1963. The most famous output of this campaign, building up an image of the heroic and loyally patriotic political police "with a human face", was a popular TV series in the 1970s, *Semnadtsat mgnovenii vesny* [Seventeen Moments of Spring], directed by Tatiana Mikhailovna Lioznova. It was based on the novel by Iulian Semionovich Semionov and featured famous Soviet actors, such as Viacheslav Tikhonov and Oleg Tabakov. The plot of the series, inspired by stories

[25] BELIAEV, Vladimir Pavlovich – PODOLIANIN, Illarion Vasilevich: *Ekho chiornogo lesa*. Moskva, Politizdat 1963.

[26] See FEDOR, J.: *Russia and the Cult of State Security*, pp. 112–115.

of real Soviet spies, took place late in the Second World War. The entire twelve-part series was also successfully distributed to other countries of the then Soviet bloc. Thanks to his popularity, the main protagonist, Otto von Stierlitz, became a Soviet version of the British agent James Bond, otherwise known as 007, who had made his literary appearance nearly twenty years before the publication of Semionov's books and had shot to fame in Western cinemas in the 1960s. However, unlike Stierlitz, James Bond was mainly a fictitious literary character.[27] Stierlitz, who attempted to provide a more realistic picture of the world of the secret services, therefore resembled more closely another British literary spy of the 1960s, George Smiley, the fictional character of writer John le Carré.[28]

The Fall of Communism, the Disintegration of the USSR and Vacillation

With *perestroika* under the leadership of Mikhail Gorbachev, the end of the Cold War, the collapse of the communist system and the subsequent disintegration of the Soviet Union, the meaning attributed to the "symbol of Dzerzhinsky" also underwent a new period of change. For the very first time, it was possible to openly criticize Dzerzhinsky as a historical figure. In 1990, this became evident, for example, with the publication of Sergei Petrovich Melgunov's book *Krasnyi terror v Rossii (1918–1923)* [The Red Terror in Russia].[29] The book, written several decades earlier, was the most famous work by a witness, historian and opponent of the Bolshevik revolution, who was initially sentenced to death in 1919 but who managed to leave Russia after the sentence was changed. His book was published in 1924 (in both German and Russian) and then reprinted several times, but, until the end of the Cold War, it was only available in Western countries.[30]

After Dzerzhinsky had formerly served as a symbol of revolution, of the Stalinist Sovietization of the East European secret services as well as of the "popularization" and "patriotization" of the Soviet political police, the attitude towards him and to his "legacy" started to become an important indicator of the Kremlin

[27] Bond's "literary father", Ian Fleming, created Bond's character in 1952 and the first film adaptation was *Dr No*, released in 1962.

[28] John le Carré shot to fame with the book *The Spy Who Came in from the Cold*, published in 1963 and made into a film in 1965.

[29] MELGUNOV, Sergei Petrovich: *Krasnyi terror v Rossii (1918–1923).* Moskva, PUICO 1990.

[30] IDEM: *Der rote Terror in Russland, 1918–1923*. Berlin, O. Diakow 1924; IDEM: *Krasnyi terror v Rossii, 1918–1923.* Berlin, Vataga 1924.

Moscow's Lubianka – the dreaded headquarters of the Soviet political police. In the empty space in front of the building, a statue of its founder Felix Dzerzhinsky stood from December 1958 to August 1991.

The author's own archive © Tomas Sniegon

leaders' sincerity in their attempts to democratize the late Soviet and later Russian political system.

The place with which this process is most closely linked is the former Dzerzhinsky Square in Moscow, which had borne Dzerzhinsky's name since his death in 1926. However, in 1990, its original name, Lubianka Square, was restored. The neighbouring street – formerly Dzerzhinsky Street – also changed its name, becoming *Bolshaia Lubianka* again. In the same year, the "Solovetskii kamen" [Solovetsky Stone], symbolizing the suffering of the victims of the Soviet communist system, especially of its most cruel, Stalinist period, was placed next to the KGB headquarters, which dominates the square. The Stone was erected on 30 October 1990, a day proclaimed as the Remembrance Day for the Victims of Political Repression. For this purpose, the stone was brought especially from the Solovetsky Islands, where one of the first concentration camps of the Soviet period was established during Dzerzhinsky's era. In close proximity to Dzerzhinsky's statue and the KGB headquarters, the stone was therefore a reminder

of a completely different face of “Dzerzhinsky’s heirs” than the Children’s World department store on the opposite side of the same square.

Less than a year later, on 22 August 1991, Dzerzhinsky’s statue was removed from Lubianka Square. This happened immediately after the failed attempt to remove Gorbachev from the post of party and state leader, which involved the KGB leadership headed by Vladimir Aleksandrovich Kriuchkov siding with the conservative opponents of Gorbachev’s reforms. Scenes of a crowd cheering as a crane took Dzerzhinsky’s statue down from its pedestal so that “Iron Felix” would stop dominating the city centre gained at that time a similar symbolic value as the scenes of Germans tearing down the concrete Berlin wall in their divided metropolis less than two years earlier.

The removal of the monument was allegedly to prevent any attempts of attacks by angry Muscovites against the headquarters of the “putschist” Committee for State Security.[31] The official instruction to dismantle the monument was signed by the then mayor of Moscow, Gavriil Kharitonovich Popov. The Moscow’s authorities were also to examine if it was appropriate to leave other monuments in place, commemorative plaques and objects that had been placed in the Soviet capital or named in honour of state and party officials of the USSR and other countries.[32] This process was also supported by the last KGB chairman, Vadim Viktorovich Bakatin, who replaced the arrested Kriuchkov in the Lubianka one week after the removal of Dzerzhinsky’s monument. As Bakatin later wrote in his memoirs, during his short leadership of the KGB (from late August to early December of 1991) he attempted to eliminate both the special position of the political police in Soviet society and its related “ideology of Chekism”.[33]

Nevertheless, Dzerzhinsky’s spirit did not remain out of favour with the Soviet leaders for long. The first president of the post-Soviet Russian Federation, Boris Nikolaevich Yeltsin, had no desire to be considered a supporter of the KGB or the communist dictatorship. Yet, after another big power clash – the struggle for power between the president and the parliament, which in October 1993 culminated in the army firing at the parliament on the president’s command – he understood that in order to strengthen his power as president he also needed the state security services. Yeltsin’s strategy was to preserve the secret police in a form that did not threaten his position, which meant that no substantial

[31] For more information see COLTON, Timothy J.: *Moscow: Governing the Socialist Metropolis*. Cambridge (Mass.), Harvard University Press 1995, pp. 654–657.

[32] ZUBOV, Andrei (ed.): *Istoriia Rossii: XX vek* [History of Russia: The Twentieth Century], Vol. 2. *1939–2007.* Moskva, Astrel 2009.

[33] BAKATIN, Vadim: *Izbavlenie ot KGB* [Getting Rid of the KGB]. Moskva, Novosti 1992.

vetting or personnel changes took place.[34] However, Yeltsin's manoeuvring with respect to the position of the KGB in the "new" Russia occurred even before that. In 1991, the newly established state security that replaced the KGB was divided into a larger number of sections than the KGB had, but the line of succession with the KGB was preserved. Yeltsin's post-Soviet regime did not make any attempt to establish a completely new, democratically controllable service that would open up its archives, identify its past victims and reveal the network of informers from the period of dictatorship.[35]

In 1995, Yeltsin even renewed the tradition of the "Chekists' holiday" on 20 December, that is, on the day when the Cheka was founded under the leadership of Felix Dzerzhinsky 78 years earlier. The holiday, known as "Chekist Day", officially the Day of the Members of the State Security of the Russian Federation (*Den sotrudnika organov gosudarstvennoi bezopasnosti Rossiiskoi Federatsii*), thus emphasized not so much the differences between the Soviet KGB and the Russian post-Soviet "special services", but rather their historical continuity. The Russian president reinforced this impression by rejecting attacks on Russian "Chekists" as going too far and by calling the members of secret services "genuine patriots" who did "hard and often heroic" work.[36]

Putin's Period and the Disputes over Whether Dzerzhinsky's Statue Should Be Returned to its Original Position in front of the Lubianka

With the arrival of Vladimir Putin in the post of president of the Russian Federation in 2000, Russia had a leader whose career was the most closely linked to the world of "Chekism", symbolized by the "legacy of Felix Dzerzhinsky". Putin was not the first highest representative of the state with roots in the Soviet state security. This role had first been filled by Yury Andropov, the KGB chairman in 1967–1982 and the General Secretary of the Central Committee of the KPSS between 1982 and 1984. However, Andropov did not enter the Lubianka as a career "Chekist", but as a member of the Communist Party apparatus appointed to the

[34] Cf. LEZINA, Evgenia: Dismantling the State Security Apparatus: Transformations of the Soviet State Security Bodies in Post-Soviet Russia. In: KOZÁK, Jiří – MARÁKOVÁ, Natálie – OPLÍŠTILOVÁ, Michaela – ŽÁČEK, Pavel (eds.): *Memory of Nations: Democratic Transition Guide. The Russian Experience.* Prague, CEVRO Institute 2019, pp. 7–16.

[35] ZUBOV, A. (ed.): *Istoriia Rossii*, Vol. 2, p. 372.

[36] For more information on this process, see FEDOR, J.: *Russia and the Cult of State Security*, pp. 124–129.

post by Brezhnev, whereas Putin (under Andropov's leadership) started his career in the KGB and worked there for a full sixteen years (1975–1991). Before his arrival in the highest posts, he had never been active as a politician. During Boris Yeltsin's second presidency, in 1998–1999, he first led one of the KGB's successor organizations, the Russian Federal Security Service (*Federalnaia sluzhba bezopasnosti,* FSB), to be afterwards promoted by Yeltsin firstly to the post of head of the government and later to the post of president.

Debates on the possibility of returning Dzerzhinsky's statue to its place in front of the Lubianka building have been taking place practically during the entire period of Putin's rule. It was considered, for example, in 2002, by the then mayor of Moscow, Iurii Mikhailovich Luzhkov, who took over the leadership of Moscow City Hall after Gavriil Popov ten years earlier. In the beginning, Luzhkov supported the Yeltsin liberals,[37] but shortly after his controversial proposal, he joined the new United Russia (*Edinaia Rossiia*) party, which was founded in 2001 and supported President Putin. Even though the Moscow mayor gave reassurances that his proposal did not mean a "return to the past" and based it on the "artistic value" of the monument, the opposition that his proposal met with finally made the return of the monument impossible.[38] Regardless, Luzhkov reiterated his support for the memorial's return in 2011.[39]

The fact that the new popularity of Dzerzhinsky's symbol was not only the result of the viewpoint of one individual but the result of a change in the political climate was also demonstrated by the elections for the State Duma (*Gosudarstvennaia duma*) in 2003, when the United Russia party stood for election with a poster depicting a map of Russia made up of portraits of important figures. Attention was drawn mainly to Stalin and Dzerzhinsky in combination with the slogan "a United Russia is a Strong Russia". In the same year, the celebrations of the 85th anniversary of the Cheka's founding also had a new ceremonial character.[40]

In 2017, when the Russian Federation celebrated the centenary of the October Revolution, there was another attempt to return Dzerzhinsky's monument to its

37 [Anonymous:] Iurii Luzhkov predlagaet vernut Dzerzhinskogo na Lubianku [Iurii Luzhkov Proposes to Return Dzerzhinsky to Lubianka]. In: *Lenta.ru* [online], 13. 09. 2002. [Accessed 2022-10-24.] Available at: https://lenta.ru/news/2002/09/13/felix/.

38 For more information on Luzhkov's position in this period, see SATTER, David: *It Was a Long Time Ago, and It Never Happened Anyway: Russia and the Communist Past.* New Haven – London, Yale University Press 2012, pp. 11–14.

39 [Anonymous:] Luzhkov vyskazyvaetsia za vozvrashchenie pamiatnika Dzerzhinskomu na Lubianku [Luzhkov Speaks Out in Favour of Returning Dzerzhinsky's Monument to Lubianka]. In: *Interfax.ru* [online], 07. 12. 2011. [Accessed 2022-12-14.] Available at: https://realty.interfax.ru/ru/news/articles/35960/.

40 ZUBOV, A. (ed.): *Istoriia Rossii*, Vol. 2, p. 430.

original place in the centre of Moscow. This time it was supported by the leader of the Communist Party of the Russian Federation (*Kommunisticheskaia partiia Rossiiskoi federatsii*, successor of the KPSS), Gennadiy Andreevich Zyuganov. In his letter to President Putin, Zyuganov emphasized that Dzerzhinsky stood at the birth of the system of state security which, from the VChK to the FSB, represented one of the most important elements of Russian statehood. Zyuganov claimed that Dzerzhinsky was also one of the most successful economic leaders in Russian history, someone who had laid the foundations of the Russian economy. Returning the monument to its original place would therefore help to "set the moral and ethical reference points of Russian society".[41] Finally, however, this proposal, which was also raised by the communists in parliament, was not approved. This was at the end of Putin's third presidential period and only shortly before another election campaign.

Putin personally did not make any public statement regarding the proposal to return Dzerzhinsky's statue to its position in front of the Lubianka. This, however, also meant that he never clearly rejected this idea. Although he publicly criticized Lenin, his attitude to Dzerzhinsky was quite different. In 2014, for example, he decided that one of the divisions of the Ministry of Interior's army should be named after Felix Dzerzhinsky, a name it bore during the Soviet period.[42] And a year earlier, he commented on other discussions regarding the removal and possible return of Dzerzhinsky's monument and said the following: "This is not about symbols. This is about treating every period of our history with respect. When Dzerzhinsky's monument was being pulled down, even a person with such democratic beliefs – and he was a genuine democrat – as the former mayor of Saint Petersburg, Anatolii Aleksandrovich Sobchak, said: 'Revolution yes, but why destroy monuments?'"[43]

Nevertheless, this issue polarized Russian society. According to surveys carried out by the independent Levada Centre in 2015, 51 percent of Muscovites supported

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[41] [Anonymous:] Ziuganov predlozhil Putinu vernut pamiatnik Dzerzhinskomu na Lubianku [Zyuganov Suggested that Putin Return the Dzerzhinsky Monument to Lubianka]. In: *Nakanune.ru* [online], 04. 12. 2017. [Accessed 2022-10-24.] Available at: https://www.nakanune.ru/news/2017/12/04/22491464.

[42] [Anonymous:] Divizii vnutrennikh voisk MVD vernuli imia Feliksa Dzerzhinskogo [The Internal Troops Division of the Ministry of Internal Affairs Gets Back the Name of Felix Dzerzhinsky]. In: *TASS* [online], 22. 09. 2014. [Accessed 2022-10-24.] Available at: https://tass.ru/politika/1459094.

[43] [Anonymous:] „A pamiatniki – to zachem lomat?": Chto skazal Putin, kogda na Lubianke „sodrali" Dzerzhinskogo ["Why Break Monuments?": What Putin Said When Dzerzhinsky Was "Torn Down" at Lubianka]. In: *Nakanune.ru* [online], 25. 02. 2021. [Accessed 2022-10-24.] Available at: https://www.nakanune.ru/news/2021/02/25/22595866.

the return of the monument to its position in front of the Lubianka. On the national scale, the situation was similar (49 percent). About 25 percent of the survey respondents were opposed or strongly opposed.[44]

In 2017, Russian State TV dedicated one of the episodes of the series *Zabytye vozhdi* [Forgotten Leaders] to Felix Dzerzhinsky. The series relativized a number of crimes of communism and also profiled several leaders of the political police. Dzerzhinsky was called a "legend of the state security bodies" and an "extraordinary personality". The series was created with the support of the Ministry of Culture and the Russian Military Historical Society (*Rossiiskoe voenno-istoricheskoe obshchestvo,* RVIO), which was led by the then Minister of Culture and a close Putin collaborator, Vladimir Rostislavovich Medinskii. The Society was created by a decree issued by Putin in December 2012 "to consolidate the power of the state and society in learning about the military and historical past of Russia, to support the study of Russian military history and to work against any attempts of its misinterpretation". Its aims are "to ensure popularization of the successes of military history, to increase the prestige of military service and to inculcate patriotism" in Russian society.[45] The evaluation of the past under the control of the Ministry of Culture and RVIO can therefore be understood as the official position of the current Russian leadership on individual historical issues.

The latest heated discussions on the fate of the Dzerzhinsky monument took place in Russia in early 2021 on the initiative of several nationalistically oriented activists. Mikhail Efimovich Shvydkoi, a Special Envoy of the President of the Russian Federation for International Culture since 2008 and former Minister of Culture under Putin (2000–2004) also joined the discussion. Shvydkoi proposed that a monument on Lubianka Square should be to someone whose personality "will be comprehensible and unifying for the entire society". Surprisingly, however, it was another former leader of the "Chekists" – Iurii Andropov – that Shvydkoi preferred to see on the pedestal in front of the Lubianka, instead of Dzerzhinsky.[46]

The fact that it was mainly President Putin who had sympathies for Andropov was already known. For example, at the beginning of Putin's political career,

[44] [Anonymous:] Bolshinstvo moskvichei podderzhali vozvrashchenie Dzerzhinskogo na Lubianku [Majority of Muscovites Support Dzerzhinsky's Return to Lubianka]. In: *RBK TV* [online], 24. 07. 2015. [Accessed 2022-11-01.] Available at: https://www.rbc.ru/society/24/07/2015/55b101f59a79479a1784fed2.

[45] Ukaz [Decree] No. 1710. In: *Rossiiskoe voenno-istoricheskoe obshchestvo* [online]. [Accessed 2022-10-24.] Available at: https://rvio.histrf.ru/official/decree-no-1710.

[46] [Anonymous:] Spetspredstavitel Putina vmeshalsia v diskussiiu o pamiatnike Dzerzhinskomu [Putin's Special Envoy Intervened in the Debate on the Dzerzhinsky Monument]. In: *Lenta.ru* [online], 16. 02. 2021. [Accessed 2022-10-24.] Available at: https://lenta.ru/news/2021/02/16/pmyatnik/.

The monument to Felix Dzerzhinsky designed by Evgenii Vuchetich in 1958. It was removed from Lubianka Square on 23 August 1991. Along with other communist era monuments, it found its new location in Moscow's Muzeon Park a year later.
The author's own archive © T. Sniegon

a plaque commemorating Andropov was returned to the façade of the Lubianka, from which it had been removed, like Dzerzhinsky's statue, in 1991. The ceremony to unveil the commemorative plaque, which took place in December 1999, was personally attended by Putin, back then in the post of prime minister. Andropov is the only former head of the Chekists commemorated on the walls of the KGB headquarters. In 2003, Putin decided that a monument to Iurii Andropov should be erected in Moscow.[47] It was to be unveiled a year later, on the occasion of the 90th anniversary of Andropov's birth and the 20th anniversary of his death.[48]

[47] [Anonymous:] Putin rasporiadilsia postavit v Moskve pamiatnik Iuriiu Andropovu [Putin Ordered to Erect a Monument to Iurii Andropov in Moscow]. In: *Ibid.* [online], 06. 10. 2003. [Accessed 2022-10-24.] Available at: https://lenta.ru/news/2003/10/06/monument/.

[48] [Anonymous:] Vekhi vremeni: V Moskve poiavitsia pamiatnik Iuriiu Andropovu [Milestones of Time: A Monument to Iurii Andropov Will Appear in Moscow]. In: *Pravda.ru* [online], 06. 10. 2003. [Accessed 2022-10-24.] Available at: https://www.pravda.ru/news/politics/14924-jurii_andropov_pjamjatnik_zheleznyi_fediks_vchk_dzerzhinskii/.

However, the majority of Moscow residents were against such a move.[49] In the end, the monument, three metres tall, was erected in the metropolis of Karelia, Petrozavodsk, where Andropov had held the post of first secretary of the Komsomol regional organization before the Second World War.[50]

However, in the subsequent voting in Moscow, Dzerzhinsky did not compete with Andropov, but with the thirteenth-century Prince Alexander Nevsky, who was considered a Russian national hero and was canonized by the Russian Orthodox Church in the sixteenth century. According to the mayor of Moscow, Sergei Semionovich Sobianin, a small majority of Muscovites gave their support to Alexander Nevsky.[51]

Neither of the two candidates symbolizing the "firm hand" of the state security and "order" through a dictatorship has therefore succeeded so far. However, due to fears for the potential "polarization of society", the issue of possible changes in respect to the new dominant figure on Lubianka Square has not yet been resolved.[52]

Nevertheless, the "monument activity" outside Moscow indicates that the tendency for returning a symbol related to Dzerzhinsky enjoys the backing of the country's leadership. Whereas formerly only those Dzerzhinsky monuments that had been built earlier remained in Russian towns, after the Russian annexation of Crimea in 2014, there were attempts to build new monuments. For example, on the occasion of the 144th anniversary of Dzerzhinsky's birth, a restored bust of Dzerzhinsky was unveiled with the participation of the Federal Security Service in the centre of Simferopol in Crimea in 2021.[53] According to pro-government

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[49] [Anonymous:] Pamiatnik Andropovu: Narod protiv prezidenta [Monument to Andropov: People versus President]. In: *Utro.ru* [online], 06. 10. 2003. [Accessed 2022-12-14.] Available at: https://utro.ru/articles/2003/10/06/238383.shtml.

[50] See LAURINAVIČIUS, Marius: 20 let Putina: Krovavyi prizrak Andropova brodit po Rossii, Chast 3 [20 Years of Putin: Andropov's Bloody Ghost Stalks Russia, Part 3]. In: *Inform Napalm* [online], 04. 08. 2020. [Accessed 2022-10-24.] Available at: https://informnapalm.org/49035-20-let-putina-krovavyj-prizrak-andropova/.

[51] [Anonymous:] Sobianin obiavil, chto pamiatnika na Lubianke ne budet: Ni Dzerzhinskomu, ni Nevskomu [Sobianin Announced that There Will Be No Monument at Lubianka: Neither to Dzerzhinsky nor to Nevsky]. In: *BBC News Russian* [online], 26. 02. 2021. [Accessed 2022-11-01.] Available at: https://www.bbc.com/russian/news-56217535.

[52] BELIAEVA, Anastasiia – IVANOV, Maksim: Protivostoianie mezhdu storonnikami Nevskogo i Dzerzhinskogo ne doshlo do logicheskogo kontsa [The Confrontation Between Supporters of Nevsky and Dzerzhinsky Did Not Come to a Logical End]. In: *Vedomosti* [online], 28. 02. 2021. [Accessed 2022-10-24.] Available at: https://www.vedomosti.ru/politics/articles/2021/02/28/859577-nevskogo-dzerzhinskogo.

[53] [Anonymous:] V Simferopole ustanovili pamiatnik Dzerzhinskomu: V RPTs nedovolny [A Monument to Dzerzhinsky Was Erected in Simferopol: The Russian Orthodox Church is Not Happy]. In: *Radio Svoboda* [online], 12. 09. 2021. [Accessed 2022-10-24.] Available at:

Russian sources, the bust of Dzerzhinsky also appeared in Krasnodar, on the initiative of the "collective of school number 32 together with the veterans of the security services".[54] Since 2017, this school has also borne Dzerzhinsky's name.

At Times Iron, for now Rustproof

On the eve of the centenary of the Cheka's founding, the director of the Federal Security Service (FSB), Aleksandr Vasilevich Bortnikov, gave an unusually extensive interview to the *Rossiiskaia Gazeta* [Russian Journal] newspaper. The very first question focused on why the FSB of 2017 linked its birth and historical continuity to the Cheka and not to the period before 1917. After all, intelligence and counter-intelligence services had existed in tsarist Russia long before the revolution.

Bortnikov justified the links between the Cheka and the FSB by saying that only after 1917 was a "comprehensive service with a unified leadership" created in Russia. According to Bortnikov, the pre-revolutionary secret services had therefore not been able to control and protect Russia in an equally effective and comprehensive manner. Subsequently, Bortnikov omitted any references in the interview to those cases when the "effectiveness" of such a "comprehensive" service brought about immensely tragic consequences for Soviet society. He also ignored those cases when even the highest Soviet leadership wished to restrict the centralized dominant role of "bodies" and bring them under the party and state control in order to limit the negative impact of their activities.[55]

Despite no direct reference being made to Felix Dzerzhinsky, he again came to the fore as a man who provided "control, and comprehensive and effective protection" for Russia, and not as a man whose radicalism and cruelty brought about enormous harm to Russia.

Thanks to its manifold uses in the Soviet Union and subsequently in the Russian Federation, the symbol of "Iron" Felix Dzerzhinsky seems to be more stable in the long term and more capable of being successful, both in the period of revolutionary ardour and ruthless mass terror, as well as later during the Second

https://www.svoboda.org/a/v-simferopole-ustanovili-pamyatnik-dzerzhinskomu-v-rpts-nedovoljny/31456496.html.

[54] [Anonymous:] V Krasnodare otkryli biust Feliksa Dzerzhinskogo [A Bust of Felix Dzerzhinsky Was Unveiled in Krasnodar]. In: *Rodina* [online], 12. 09. 2021. [Accessed 2022-10-24.] Available at: https://rg.ru/2021/09/12/reg-ufo/v-krasnodare-otkryli-biust.html.

[55] Aleksandr Bortnikov: FSB Rossii svobodna ot politicheskogo vliianiia [Aleksandr Bortnikov: Russia's FSB Is Free from Political Influence]. In: *Rossiiskaia Gazeta* [online], 19. 12. 2017. [Accessed 2022-10-24.] Available at: https://rg.ru/2017/12/19/aleksandr-bortnikov-fsb-rossii-svobodna-ot-politicheskogo-vliianiia.html.

World War and the Cold War, in the face of criticism of Stalinism and of de-Stalinization, of the new criticism of Stalinism, and finally even in times of failed attempts to establish a plural democracy and increasing nationalism.

In this sense, the attempts to convert Dzerzhinsky into a myth have proved to be more successful than any similar attempts in the cases of other former revolutionaries and Soviet leaders, including the founder of Soviet communism, Vladimir Lenin, the founder of the Soviet Red Army, Leon Davidovich Trotsky, and finally also the biggest figure and tyrant of Russian history, Joseph Stalin.

The cult of "Lenin's party" as a driving force of progress disappeared with the collapse of the system and the disintegration of the Soviet Union in 1991, and Lenin, as a symbol of revolutionary and not evolutionary development, was no longer considered useful for post-Soviet Russia.

In the case of the cult of the army, the situation is different. However, the glory of the Soviet or Russian military force and its great victory is not associated with the year 1917, but only with the year 1945. If the "army continuity" with today's Russia started before 1917, its highly controversial founder, Trotsky, would have to be celebrated as well. Moreover, this would also mean the need to commemorate highly problematic military actions that took place before 1945, including aggressions carried out under the Soviet-German pact of 1939 against Poland, Finland, the Baltic countries and part of Romania, after which Soviet foreign policy – in contrast to national policy – has never been reformed in any substantial way. Taking 1945 as the moment of birth allows a focus solely on moments when the Soviet Union defeated Nazi Germany, gained control over large parts of Europe and consequently became one of the superpowers. And this is a temptation that very few Russian politicians have been able to resist.

Stalin's cult was, then, necessarily excluded or, at least, greatly suppressed whenever a debate began about the necessity of the democratization and humanization of the political system. To date, however, Felix Dzerzhinsky's cult has survived even such periods. With brief interruptions and minor variations, it still survives nearly a century after the death of its protagonist.

References to his cruelty are usually balanced with a positive emotional aspect related to Dzerzhinsky's alleged love for children and compassion for their suffering. Any criticism of his revolutionary radicalism and fanaticism is relativized by pointing to his patriotic efforts to establish a stable system of government which ruthlessly settled accounts with the enemy and headed towards a "final good" – even though, as a result, this meant eliminating many of those who did not fit into this ideal world. Moreover, in contrast to Stalin, Dzerzhinsky has never, neither during the Soviet nor during the post-Soviet era, been accused of the "cult of personality" or any attempts to misuse power for his own benefit or

at the expense of others. On the contrary, he has always been presented as an ascetic devotee to the cause.

As this development indicates, the Dzerzhinsky myth has the capacity to survive whenever Russian leaders find it necessary to legitimize a system of centralized power that is difficult to control or even one that is uncontrollable.

Translated by Blanka Medková

Abstract

The article discusses the cult associated with the personality of Felix Edmundovich Dzerzhinsky (1877–1926), a revolutionary and the founder of the political police in the Soviet Union, and the changing meanings of this cult in various stages of the history of the Soviet Union and post-Soviet Russia. Thanks to Dzerzhinsky, as the head of the most significant repressive component, Soviet state terror acquired a very specific institutionalized form. The image of Dzerzhinsky as the basis for the mythologizing of the Soviet political police became very useful in all stages of the development of the Soviet system, most significantly for the development of the cult being the period after the Twentieth Congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union in 1956. Even later, despite many revelations of the crimes of communism, the glorification of Felix Dzerzhinsky and the trivialization of the terror he introduced has not completely disappeared. The myth about the founder of the "Cheka" remained very similar or even identical in its main features in all these periods, but its functions varied in time. State security officials in Russia still call themselves "Chekists" in reference to Dzerzhinsky's VChK/Cheka. The author therefore concludes that his cult has become more useful for state power in the Kremlin in the long run than the cults of other Soviet-era leaders, including Vladimir Lenin and Joseph Stalin.

Keywords:

Felix Dzerzhinsky; Soviet Union; Russia; security services; Cheka; communism; post-communism; politics of history; historical memory; historical monuments; commemorations

DOI: 10.51134/sod.2022.036

Interpreting the Creation of Czechoslovakia between 1948 and 1989

Shifts and Changes in the Politics of History and Memory

Jan Hálek – Jakub Štofaník

Masaryk Institute and Archives of the Czech Academy of Sciences, Prague

The creation of Czechoslovakia as the key moment in the history of the country was assessed and reinterpreted by all political regimes in power throughout the twentieth century. Bearing in mind that it was a singular founding act, it was impossible to ignore it. The event had to be captured in the professional historiographical output, as well as in the public space and in the process of shaping collective historical memory. The interpretation of this historic event, formulated by its direct and indirect participants, had an inherent potential for conflict, which increased further as a result of the changing ideological approaches and society's persisting collective memory. The interpretation of the history of the creation of Czechoslovakia also played a role in the effort to legitimize power, which reflected the ideological and political direction of the country.

This article focuses on the building of a historical narrative and the construction of the memory of the creation of Czechoslovakia in the second half of the twentieth century. It will thus connect the period of the communist coup d'état in 1948, the transformation of the system in the 1950s and 1960s with the period of normalization[1] and the Velvet Revolution (*sametová revoluce*) of 1989. The historical narrative pertaining to the creation of the republic will be analysed in the period defined by the establishment of the communist system at the one end and its collapse at the other. This relatively long timeframe allows us to demonstrate the patterns of interpretation of the analysed event, the role of historians as the expert community, and the significance of institutional networks. We pay special attention to the position of historians who were confronted with the political instrumentalization of history, to their sources of inspiration, and

[1] Normalization (*normalizace*) is a term commonly given to the period that followed the Warsaw Pact invasion of Czechoslovakia in August 1968. It stopped the reform process that started during the period of the Prague Spring.

to creating the image of history as a political argument. We will also touch upon the differences and similarities in evaluating these events in the Czech and Slovak contexts. We examine the general public's response to the changes in the interpretation and the commemoration of the establishment of the Czechoslovak Republic (*Českolovenská republika*, ČSR) in the public space. The question of the historical thinking of Czech and Slovak dissents and exiles remains outside our primary focus. This topic would need a separate study.

Constructing the Historical Narrative of the Creation of Czechoslovakia after 1948

The course of events in February 1948 was in many respects similar to that of 28 October 1918 when the Czechoslovak Republic was officially proclaimed. However, contrary to the creation of an independent republic (which in order to function took over most of the legislation, administration, officials, university professors, and other people inextricably linked to the functioning of the dissolved Habsburg Monarchy), the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia's (*Komunistická strana Československa*, KSČ) coming into power was a clear turning point, which significantly affected all areas of the lives of Czechoslovak citizens. The changes also affected Czech and Slovak historians and as a result largely influenced the description of the process of the creation of Czechoslovakia. While common in the interwar period, under the new circumstances it was no longer possible to publicly declare the coexistence of different interpretive frameworks of the events leading up to 28 October 1918. The previous "official" interpreters of this historic event, Jaroslav Werstadt (1888–1970), Josef Borovička (1885–1971), Jan Opočenský (1885–1961) and Milada Paulová (1891–1970) were obliged to step down from the positions they had earned in the interwar period. All these prominent historians represented the official positions of interwar Czechoslovak politics. Werstadt was the director of the Archive of National Liberation (*Archiv národního osvobození*), which collected material on the Czech anti-Austrian resistance. Together with Borovička, they were among the main contributors and editors of the journal *Naše revoluce* [Our Revolution]. Opočenský worked in the Archives of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and was the author of several publications devoted to the disintegration of the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy and the emergence of its successor states. Paulová focused mainly on the domestic anti-Austrian resistance and closely cooperated with Přemysl Šámal, Chancellor under both President Tomáš Garrigue Masaryk and later President Edvard Beneš.

The changes also affected the institutions devoted to historical research. In addition to the traditional network of universities, which from then on were

supposed to focus mainly on teaching,[2] the University of Political and Economic Sciences (*Vysoká škola politických a hospodářských věd*, VŠPHV) was founded in October 1949. The university was managed by the cultural and propagandist department of the Central Committee of the KSČ (*Ústřední výbor Komunistické strany Československa*, ÚV KSČ) and its aim was to educate a new type of socialist intelligentsia, which was to be closely connected to the people and to prepare new "propagandists" and employees for the state administration. The teaching collective consisted mainly of young, Marxist teachers and assistants.[3] Under these conditions, history shifted from the position of a relatively autonomous scholarly discipline "to an area completely dependent on politics and its requirements, which were to a large extent Soviet".[4] After February 1948, the new official Marxist historiography supporting the state's communist ideology worked towards thoroughly discrediting the contending "bourgeois" historiography.

Shortly before the celebration of the 30th anniversary of the creation of Czechoslovakia, the cultural-political critical weekly *Tvorba* [Creation], published by the ÚV KSČ, printed a long article by the Minister of Information Václav Kopecký (1897–1961), with a self-explanatory title "The Truth about the Creation of the Republic".[5] In its opening, the author outlined the new direction for research on this vital moment in Czechoslovak history for the upcoming years: "Now it is we who are starting to write the history of our republic, from the point of view of our class truth, from the point of view of the truth of the working class." Kopecký also rejected the interwar "official historiography and the biased bourgeois propaganda", because according to that interpretation of recent history, "the Czech and Slovak nations in 1918 were liberated by the Western powers who had defeated Germany and Austria-Hungary, while T. G. Masaryk, E. Beneš and also M. R. Štefánik were given historical personal credit as liberators with connections to the Western powers, and especially to the mythically described

2 SOMMER, Vítězslav: *Angažované dějepisectví: Stranická historiografie mezi stalinismem a reformním komunismem (1950–1970).* Praha, Nakladatelství Lidové noviny – Filozofická fakulta Univerzity Karlovy 2011, p. 59.

3 DEVÁTÁ, Markéta – OLŠÁKOVÁ, Doubravka: Vysoká škola politických a hospodářských věd (1949–1953): Počátky marxistického vysokého školství. In: DEVÁTÁ, Markéta (ed.): *Vědní koncepce KSČ a její institucionalizace po roce 1948*. Praha, Ústav pro soudobé dějiny AV ČR, v.v.i., 2010, pp. 159–212; DEVÁTÁ, Markéta: Vysoká škola politických a hospodářských věd jako nástroj indoktrinace marxisticko-leninského vědeckého světového názoru. In: JIROUŠEK, Bohumil et al.: *Proměny diskursu české marxistické historiografie: Kapitoly z historiografie 20. století.* České Budějovice, Filozofická fakulta Jihočeské univerzity 2008, pp. 193–218.

4 Quoted in: JIROUŠEK, Bohumil: *Historik Jaroslav Charvát v systému vědy a moci*. Praha, ARSCI 2011, p. 127.

5 KOPECKÝ, Václav: Pravda o vzniku republiky. In: *Tvorba*, Vol. 17, No. 40 (1948), pp. 784–785.

supporter of the Czechoslovak independence, the American president Wilson". The minister then presented as an irrefutable historical truth the claim that the decisive factor in the liberation was the "powerful influence of the Great October Socialist Revolution in Russia in 1917".[6]

The influence of the October Revolution on the creation of Czechoslovakia gradually became a historical dogma, explicitly accepted also by historiography. Historians invoked it not only in their public speeches, but also in their academic publications. On the occasion of the anniversary of 28 October 1951, the Slovak historian Ján Tibenský (1923–2012) quite clearly and convincingly commented on the events of 1918 on Czechoslovak Radio. Referring to President Klement Gottwald, he noted that the view of 28 October was now different from what the First Republic bourgeoisie wanted it to be, who represented independence as their own work while leaving out the contribution of the working class. He presented the creation of Czechoslovakia as the result of a national democratic revolution by the Czech and Slovak people, who were inspired to execute their right for self-determination by the Russian October Revolution. Tibenský also rejected the importance of foreign resistance and the Legion:[7] "For some years now we have remembered the creation of the Czechoslovak Republic in the spirit of 'No 28 October 1918 without 7 November 1917, no Czechoslovak Republic without the October Revolution'. [...] But this truth was deliberately kept a secret by the bourgeoisie in the interest of maintaining its power."[8]

We should emphasize that the arguments about the causality between the October Revolution and the creation of Czechoslovakia were raised much earlier than February 1948. We encounter them openly used within the Czech and Slovak milieu as early as the interwar period. These arguments can be found in the

[6] All quotes ibid., p. 784. On Kopecký see: ŠVADLENA, Ladislav: Václav Kopecký jako ministr ideolog v letech 1948–53. In: JIROUŠEK, B. et al.: *Proměny diskursu české marxistické historiografie*, pp. 171–178; PÁVOVÁ, Jana: *Demagog ve službách strany: Portrét komunistického politika a ideologa Václava Kopeckého*. Praha, Ústav pro studium totalitních režimů 2008. The words of Kopecký are reminiscent of a resolution by the Central Committee of the All-Union Communist Party (Bolsheviks) in the Soviet Union on 14 November 1931 declaring "the end of arbitrariness and chaos" in the writing of history (see KOLÁŘ, Pavel: *Soudruzi a jejich svět: Sociálně myšlenková tvářnost komunismu*. Praha, Ústav pro studium totalitních režimů – Nakladatelství Lidové noviny 2019, p. 44; the book is a revised version of the author's publication *Der Poststalinismus: Ideologie und Utopie einer Epoche*. Köln/R., Böhlau 2016).

[7] The Czechoslovak Legion were volunteer armed forces composed of mainly Czechs and Slovaks fighting on the side of the Entente powers during the First World War.

[8] *Archív Slovenskej akadémie vied* [Archives of the Slovak Academy of Sciences], Bratislava (hereafter *A SAV*), fond [collection] (hereafter coll.) Ján Tibenský, karton [box] 15, J. Tibenský: 28. október v zrkadle pravdy, 1951; *ibid.*, box 8, J. Tibenský: Nové pohľady na 28. október; *ibid.*, J. Tibenský: Úvaha o 28. októbri: Matičné čítanie, Vol. 4, 1949, pp. 102–104.

articles published in the journals *Sociální demokrat* [Social Democrat], *Pravda chudoby* [The Truth about Poverty] and *Proletárka* [The Proletarian Woman].[9] Similar opinions were present in the writings of young communist intellectuals associated with the Slovak cultural journal *DAV* that, from 1924 to 1937, connected together the communist political line, internationalism, and the avant-garde aesthetic. Interwar communist journalism devoted much attention to the creation of Czechoslovakia and at first assessed it very positively. Referring to Hungary, it saw the event as a path for Slovakia to escape "the one-thousand-year oppression, the one-thousand-year physical and mental enslavement".[10] However, the national liberation was at the same time just one of the conditions of economic and social growth.[11] October 1918 was seen as an unfinished revolution. Since the 1920s, when interpreting the creation of Czechoslovakia communist journalists had referred to the Russian revolution of 1917, to the military protests in the cities of Rimavská Sobota, Trenčín, Rumburk, Kragujevac, in the Bay of Kotor (*Boka Kotorska*) and so on or, for example, to the gathering of workers on 1 May 1918 in Liptovský Mikuláš.

Thus, Marxist historians in the 1950s were in some respect able to build their interpretations upon the existing opinions formulated by their predecessors: journalists and writers. The public was informed that the path leading to the creation of Czechoslovakia until then had been incorrectly and falsely interpreted.[12] The change in the pattern of interpretation of Czechoslovak history was also reflected in the teaching of history in schools.[13] The main weight of the effort to promote the new historiographical narrative rested on the shoulders of the youngest generation of historians, who were characterized by hard work and a willingness to elaborate ideological theorems into long texts, which looked like well-founded

[9] Articles from *Sociální demokrat* quoted in: KŘÍŽEK, Jurij – ŘÍHA, Oldřich: *Bez Velké říjnové socialistické revoluce by nebylo Československa: Boj české a slovenské dělnické třídy za svobodu v letech 1917–1920*. Praha, Rovnost 1951, p. 72; articles from *Pravda chudoby* and *Proletárka* quoted in: KAMENEC, Ivan: *Spoločnosť, politika, historiografia: Pokrivené (?) zrkadlo dejín slovenskej spoločnosti v dvadsiatom storočí*. Bratislava, Historický ústav SAV 2009, p. 149.

[10] *Pravda chudoby* (15. 9. 1920), quoted in: KAMENEC, I.: *Spoločnosť, politika, historiografia,* p. 149.

[11] *Ibid*.

[12] UDALCOV, Ivan Ivanovič et al.: *Velká říjnová socialistická revoluce a naše národní svoboda*. Brno, Rovnost 1950, pp. 9–11 (this book is a collection of speeches from a scholarly conference held by the Socialist Academy in Prague on 4 November 1949).

[13] See: Usnesení předsednictva Ústředního výboru Komunistické strany Československa o učebnicích pro národní a střední školy [Resolution of the Presidium of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia on Textbooks for National and Secondary Schools]. In: *Pedagogika*, Vol. 1, No. 5–6 (1951), pp. 257–267.

historical research.[14] Apart from those who, motivated by their enthusiasm to contribute to the construction of the new political order, processed their own tragic experience of the post-Munich period in this way, there were undoubtedly others who were motivated primarily by their personal benefit.[15] Young historians willingly became political when, aware of the emphasis put on their political activity, they took their impulses from the ideological world of the early socialist dictatorship and wanted to personally contribute to the building of socialism.[16]

The direction and the style of the work, however, was at first set by the old party veterans. In September 1952, the director of the Institute of History of the KSČ (*Ústav dějin KSČ*), Jindřich Veselý (1906–1964), spoke at the Institute and Reading Room of Marxism-Leninism (*Poradna a studovna marxismu-leninismu*) in Prague. He had been a member of the party since before the Second World War and since 1945, when he had returned from a concentration camp, he had worked as Deputy Minister of the Interior. In 1948–1950, he was the chief officer of the State Security (*Státní bezpečnost*, StB). According to Veselý, the events of 28 October 1918, when the Austro-Hungarian military and civil offices handed their authority over to the representatives of the Czechoslovak National Committee (*Národní výbor československý*), happened "without the participation and work of Masaryk, Beneš and Wilson. It was the work of local resistance, the work of the revolutionary masses of the working people, who, either in uniforms, on the military front, or in the rear, at factories or in the fields, stopped serving Austrian imperialism and put all their effort, permeated by the revolutionary ideas of the Bolshevik Revolution, into the destruction and subversion of the Austrian state and the creation of a new, free and independent Czechoslovak state."[17]

Jindřich Veselý claimed that the Great October Socialist Revolution, which "shook the foundations of Austria-Hungary", played a key role in the establishment of an independent Czechoslovak state. He blamed Tomáš Garrigue Masaryk and Edvard Beneš for their contribution to the anti-Soviet activity of the

[14] The Czech historian Bohumil Jiroušek aptly describes this generation as "the generation of communist youth" (see JIROUŠEK, B.: *Historik Jaroslav Charvát v systému vědy a moci*, pp. 28–30).

[15] Such elements are present, for example, in the life of Jan Macek (1922–1991). In the years between 1952 and 1970, he was the director of the Institute of History of the Czechoslovak Academy of Sciences (and also a member of the National Assembly of the Czechoslovak Socialist Republic in 1964–1968). See: IDEM: *Josef Macek: Mezi historií a politikou*. Praha, Výzkumné centrum pro dějiny vědy 2004, pp. 32–39.

[16] SOMMER, V.: *Angažované dějepisectví*, pp. 49–56, 99.

[17] VESELÝ, Jindřich: *Poznámky k buržoasní legendě o vzniku Československa: Přednáška přednesená v Poradně a studovně marxismu-leninismu v Praze v září 1952*. Praha, Svoboda 1952, pp. 12–14.

Czechoslovak Legion, when the "honour of the Czech and Slovak workers was saved by the existence, besides the counterrevolutionary legion, of many units of Czech and Slovak Red Army soldiers, of whom more than 10,000 fought next to the Russian revolutionary proletariat". This was supposed to demonstrate that Czech workers and peasants were ready to fight for the cause of the working class.[18]

In Slovakia, the pattern of interpretation connecting the October Revolution to the establishment of Czechoslovakia was fully supported by Miloš Gosiorovský (1920–1978), who in the 1950s speedily progressed in his career and took the highest positions in the academic hierarchy despite his lack of an appropriate education.[19] The extreme speed with which he made it to the top of Slovak historiography confirmed the effort of the communist leadership to quickly replace the older generation of historians, an effort that was complicated by the unpreparedness of the new employees. Another characteristic feature of Slovak Marxist historiography was that it was clearly lagging behind Czech historiography, and for a long period of time merely copied the latter. Gosiorovský presented the relationship between and dependence of the October Revolution and the creation of Czechoslovakia in his 1956 book *Dejiny slovenského robotníckeho hnutia: 1848–1918* [The History of the Slovak Workers' Movement: 1848–1918]. He examined the appearance of the first details about the November 1917 events in Austro-Hungarian newspapers. According to his interpretation, a mass workers' movement, which adopted the idea of a fight for the national liberation of Slovaks and for peace, was a consequence of the October Revolution.[20] The strikes, demonstrations, worker and military protests of 1918 in Gosiorovský's interpretation were a direct result of these historical events.

The statements about the October Revolution's contribution to the historical events leading to the creation of Czechoslovakia inevitably led to a much more complicated question, related to the assessment of the Slovak Soviet Republic (*Slovenská republika rád*). The First Republic texts dealt with this subject only in the context of the incorporation of the Slovak territory into Czechoslovakia and in terms of determining the new country's government and borders. The historiographical texts produced in Slovakia during the Second World War avoided this topic altogether, not wanting to draw attention to Slovaks' inability

[18] *Ibid.*, pp. 17–22.

[19] *Archív Univerzity Komenského* [Archives of the Comenius University], Bratislava (hereafter *A UK*), coll. Personálne oddelenie [Personnel Department] RUK/51, Osobní spis [personal file] Gosiorovský Miloš. Gosiorovský later became a university professor, and after 1960 he was also a corresponding member of the Czechoslovak Academy of Sciences and the Slovak Academy of Sciences.

[20] GOSIOROVSKÝ, Miloš: *Dejiny slovenského robotníckeho hnutia: 1848–1918*. Bratislava, Štátne vydavateľstvo politickej literatúry 1956, pp. 270–273.

to get rid of the Hungarian Red army and administration by their own means and to take authority into their own hands.[21] However, the Slovak Soviet Republic, proclaimed on 16 June 1919 in Prešov in East Slovakia, began to generate much interest in the 1950s.[22] Historians talked about its short existence as the fulfilment of the Slovak people's right to self-determination, the culmination of the Slovak class struggle, and the Republic's continuing influence on the construction of the workers' movement in Czechoslovakia. The interest in the Slovak Soviet Republic was primarily motivated by its ideological proximity to the Communist Party. It was also the result of an effort to spread the attention devoted to the events of October 1918 over a much longer period of time and to offer the interpretation of the Czechoslovak Revolution from a perspective which also included other events.

Although this strategy risked offering an unclear assessment of the short existence of the Slovak Soviet Republic, it was not possible to point this out until the more relaxed 1960s.[23] The military historian Jaroslav Šolc (1920–1985) noted the Republic's detachment from the Slovak working class, the pro-Hungarian orientation of its representatives, its unclear language and nationality policy, and its overall weakness resulting in its short-lived existence.[24] But this critical approach was not very common among scholars. In 1961, a museum in Prešov was named after the Slovak Soviet Republic. Its agenda included the systematic collection of archive materials and memories of the participants of the events.[25] In 1969, a section of the permanent exhibition devoted to this period was opened.

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[21] ĎURIŠIN, Martin: Slovenská republika rád v slovenskej historiografii. In: *Dejiny – internetový časopis Inštitútu histórie FF PU v Prešove* [online], Vol. 4, No. 1 (2009), pp. 48–68, here p. 49. [Accessed 2022-11-08.] Available at: https://www.ilonas.net/valal/pdf/Durisin2009_SRR.pdf.

[22] DZVONÍK, Michal: *Ohlas VOSR na Slovensku (1918–1919)*. Bratislava, ŠVPL 1957; IDEM: Významný pokus o diktatúru proletariátu na území ČSR: 40. výročie Slovenskej republiky rád. In: *Nová mysl*, Vol. 13, No. 5 (1959), pp. 627–640; GOSIOROVSKÝ, Miloš: O sovietoch na Slovensku. In: *Ibid.*, Vol. 3, No. 3 (1949), pp. 276–284; HOLOTÍK, Ľudovít: O Slovenskej republike rád. In: *Historický časopis*, Vol. 7, No. 2 (1959), pp. 173–202; KRÁL, Václav: *Intervenční válka československé buržoasie proti maďarské sovětské republice v roce 1919*. Praha, Nakladatelství ČSAV 1954; VIETOR, Martin: K tridsiatemu piatemu výročiu SRR. In: *Historický časopis*, Vol. 2, No. 2 (1954), pp. 161–190; IDEM: *Slovenská sovietska republika v roku 1919*. Bratislava, ŠVPL 1955.

[23] The atmosphere started to change slowly after Nikita Khrushchev's speech given at the Twentieth Congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union in February 1956 denouncing Stalin's cult of personality. This political development also found its way to the works of Czechoslovak historians.

[24] ŠOLC, Jaroslav: *Slovensko rozdelené 1919*. Bratislava, Obzor 1969, p. 99.

[25] See: *Dvadsať rokov múzea Slovenskej republiky rád v Prešove*. Košice, Múzeum Slovenskej republiky rád v Prešove vo Východoslovenskom vydavateľstve 1967.

Other temporary exhibitions were prepared on the occasion of the anniversaries in 1979 and 1989.[26]

In the 1950s a strong ideological campaign against the three historical figures still associated with the creation of Czechoslovakia – Tomáš Garrigue Masaryk, Edvard Beneš, and Milan Rastislav Štefánik – was started. While the attitude towards the first Czechoslovak president Masaryk in 1950, on the centenary of his birth, was still positive,[27] this changed significantly in the following years. Another representative of the generation of young Marxist historians, Václav Král (1926–1983), joined the fight against the bourgeois legends with his monograph *O Masarykově a Benešově kontrarevoluční politice* [On Masaryk and Beneš's Counterrevolutionary Politics].[28] Shortly after, other historians who adopted the main party ideology followed.[29] A call to deal with the bourgeois legends about the creation of Czechoslovakia also resonated in Slovakia. Here, the main point of interest became the "demythization" of Milan Rastislav Štefánik, the Slovak politician, diplomat, aviator, astronomer and one of the leading figures of the Czechoslovak National Council (*Československá národní rada*) during the First World War. Ľudovít Holotík (1923–1985), originally from Sereď in Western Slovakia, the young director of the Institute of History, who was given the post at 28, was entrusted with fighting this fight.[30]

[26] KAČMARÍKOVÁ, Viera: Fenomén Slovenská republika rád a dokumentovanie politických dejín v múzeu. In: *Nové obzory*, Vol. 34: *Východné Slovensko v rokoch štátoprávnych a politických zmien (1918–1968–1993)*. Prešov, Krajské múzeum v Prešove 2018, pp. 176–198.

[27] *A SAV*, coll. Slovenská akadémia vied a umenia [Slovak Academy of Sciences and Arts], box 3, Oslavy pri príležitosti narodenín T. G. Masaryka [Celebrations on the occasion of T. G. Masaryk's birthday], 17. 2. 1950.

[28] KRÁL, Václav: *O Masarykově a Benešově kontrarevoluční politice*. Praha, Státní nakladatelství politické literatury 1953. See also IDEM: Masaryk, Beneš a osvobozenecká legionářská legenda. In: *Historie a vojenství,* Vol. 1–2, No. 1 (1952), pp. 116–138; IDEM: Plány amerických imperialistů na světovládu a Masarykův první odboj. In: *Ibid.*, Vol. 1–2, No. 2 (1953), pp. 122–142; IDEM: Masaryk ve službách amerického imperialismu. In: *Ibid.*, Vol. 1–2, No. 3 (1953), pp. 107–127.

[29] VÁVRA, Vlastimil: Z Masarykovy kontrarevoluční činnosti v Rusku. In: *Historie a vojenství*, Vol. 3, No. 1 (1954), pp. 84–114; IDEM: Americký imperialismus v pozadí čs. intervence na Sibiři. In: *Ibid.*, Vol. 3, No. 4 (1954), pp. 38–66; IDEM: *Klamná cesta: Příprava a vznik protisovětského vystoupení čs. legií*. Praha, Naše vojsko 1958; KŘÍŽEK, Jaroslav: *Čeští a slovenští rudoarmějci v sovětském Rusku: 1917–1920*. Praha, Orbis 1955; PACHTA, Jan – NEČÁSEK, František – RAISOVÁ, Eva (eds.): *Dokumenty o protilidové a protinárodní politice T. G. Masaryka*. Praha, Orbis 1953.

[30] HÁLEK, Jan: Historiografie ve vleku politiky dějin: Případ štefánikovské legendy Ľudovíta Holotíka. In: *Historický časopis*, Vol. 70, No. 1 (2022), pp. 115–142.

Changing the Historical Narrative: Reasons, Actors, and Roles

The narrative and interpretation of the creation of Czechoslovakia was constructed predominantly by politicians, journalists, writers, and historians. Historians used their position as experts with knowledge of the sources, with which they could be able to interpret this event within a required context. However, in the late 1950s they had to manoeuvre very carefully between the various changing ideological viewpoints and the propagandist agenda.

The period of the 1960s is usually associated with the process of liberalization. The historiographical interpretation of 1918 and the creation of Czechoslovakia show us that the process was neither unambiguous nor quick. The book *Zahraniční odboj 1914–1918 bez legend* [The Foreign Resistance 1914–1918 without Legends] by Karel Pichlík (1928–2001)[31] is often considered to be the culmination of the historiographical production of that period on the subject. An examination of the author and his life will help us to illustrate the complexity and equivocality of the path leading to the change in the historiographical narrative of 28 October 1918 that was presented in 1968, on its 50th anniversary.

Pichlík's life was not different from those of his aforementioned colleagues from the "communist youth generation". He declared his willingness to support the government's ideology and to cooperate with its representatives in 1951 when he and his fellow student Karel Bartošek (1930–2004) wrote a text with the aim of discrediting the participation of the United States Army in the liberation of Western Bohemia. They also accused the US of economic imperialism. Their text was then published as a forty-page pamphlet by the Svoboda publishing house[32] and was read in instalments on Czechoslovak Radio before the evening news.[33]

In the following years, Karel Pichlík climbed the career ladder and wrote more texts in line with the political climate and language of the early 1950s.[34] Pichlík renounced these texts in around 1956.[35] This was his response to the changing

31 PICHLÍK, Karel: *Zahraniční odboj 1914–1918 bez legend*. Praha, Svoboda 1968.

32 BARTOŠEK, Karel – PICHLÍK, Karel: *Hanebná role Američanů v západních Čechách v r. 1945*. Praha, Svoboda 1951. See also: DOLEŽAL, Jiří: [a review] Karel Bartošek a Karel Pichlík, Hanebná role amerických okupantů v záp. Čechách v roce 1945. In: *Československý časopis historický*, Vol. 1, No. 1 (1953), pp. 104–106.

33 PETRÁŇ, Josef: *Filozofové dělají revoluci: Filozofická fakulta Univerzity Karlovy během komunistického experimentu (1948–1968–1989)*. Praha, Karolinum 2015, p. 189.

34 PICHLÍK, Karel: *Bojovali proti válce: Revoluční boj českých vojáků a námořníků v rakousko-uherské armádě za imperialistické světové války 1914–1918*. Praha, Mír 1953, p. 8.

35 BRYNDA, Herbert: Odešel Karel Bartošek – „Pavel Kohout historické vědy". In: Radio Prague International [online], 01. 08. 2004. [Accessed 2022-11-09.] Available at: https://cesky.radio.cz/odesel-karel-bartosek-pavel-kohout-historicke-vedy-8089150.

political and social environment connected with de-Stalinization in Czechoslovakia. He still talked about "the crudest distortion" of the period of the creation of the ČSR by bourgeois historians, but he replaced the references to Stalin's writings to those of Vladimir Ilich Lenin. Pichlík's work in the period after 1956 can thus be summed up by the words of the historian Pavel Kolář, who wrote that "it was crucial for the career of young ideologist historians to break free of the language of Stalin's dogmatism and quickly adopt the new post-Stalin vocabulary".[36]

On the occasion of the 40th anniversary of the creation of Czechoslovakia, Pichlík presented the readers of *Rudé právo* [Red Law] daily with his own perspective on this event. He introduced his description with the statement that "during the whole period of the existence of the pre-Munich republic, the Czechoslovak bourgeoisie made people believe that in 1918 they had achieved independence thanks to the 'magnanimity' of the Western powers. The Munich Agreement, however, clearly showed the essence of Western imperialists' attitude towards the national freedom of Czechs and Slovaks. The basis for their decisions and actions were their own imperialist and anti-Soviet interests." Pichlík viewed the First World War as a clash of "German imperialists" on the one side and "English colonizers, French monopolists, and Russian tsarism" on the other. He presented the creation of Czechoslovakia in October 1918 as "a result of the revolutionary fight of the Czech and Slovak people, which reached a mass scale in response to the revolutionary events in Russia. However, due to a complicated course of events during the war, the Czech and Slovak bourgeoisie managed, mainly thanks to the opportunistic politics of the Social Democracy leadership, to seize political hegemony in the national liberation movement and the new state."[37]

Five years later, in 1963, Pichlík's view on the same event was now very different and reflected the changes which Czech and Slovak society had experienced in that period. Writing in *Rudé právo*, he first explained the political and military situation of the great powers and its development in 1914–1918 and devoted the rest of his article to tackling distortions in the interpretation of the creation of Czechoslovakia over 45 years. "The old 'legend' about the creation of ČSR," he wrote, "was based upon data which showed that Masaryk's plan to establish an independent state, drawn up in 1915, had been realized, that all political parties had gradually joined this plan, and that the Western powers eventually, in the spring of 1918, accepted the idea of the establishment of independent states in the place of the Habsburg Monarchy." Pichlík rejected this explanation, arguing that it "totally ignored the fact that the changes in the policies of the Western powers during the First World War were primarily a result of their own imperialist

[36] KOLÁŘ, P.: *Soudruzi a jejich svět*, p. 51.

[37] PICHLÍK, Karel: Západ a naše samostatnost. In: *Rudé právo* (25. 10. 1958), p. 5.

interests in post-war Central Europe”. But, most importantly, this interpretation “neglected the fundamental realities of the development of the national liberation movement of our people”. Pichlík, however, also rejected the existing Marxist interpretation: “The elementary error of the old nationalist legend was adopted also by its criticism in the 1950s, which limited itself to just denying the political representatives’ contribution to the creation of the Czechoslovak Republic. This approach gave rise to the famous ‘criticism’ of Czech bourgeois politicians and the Western powers, who were, according to it, ‘against the disintegration of Austria’. The interpretation of the creation of the ČSR was left with just anonymous people, who fought for the independent state and were ‘robbed’ of the results of their fight.”[38]

But the conclusion of the article shows that Pichlík clearly interpreted the establishment of Czechoslovakia by taking into consideration the events after 1948 and saw it as a moment which “opened the way to building socialism and permanent independence and freedom for our homeland”.[39]

We can only speculate about the reasons behind Pichlík’s gradual change of opinion. Considering his writings from the 1950s, which very clearly and willingly responded to the prevalent political and social atmosphere, we cannot exclude pure opportunism and the effort to adapt to the times.[40] The historian Jan Galandauer (1936) offers an alternative theory. In his opinion, the remarkable change in Pichlík’s work started after his meeting with the senior Czech researcher, Jaroslav Werstadt.[41] Jaroslava Hoffmannová (1942), Werstadt’s most recent biographer, does not hesitate to call Pichlík’s change of opinion “a turning point in his worldview”, placing the beginnings of the two men’s mutual friendship in the early 1960s,[42] a period when the whole of society was undergoing a change of opinion and when Pichlík also shifted in the public presentation of his personal views.

[38] IDEM: 28. říjen v našich dějinách. In: *Ibid.* (26. 10. 1963), p. 2.

[39] Ibid.

[40] In this respect, Pichlík’s development is similar to that of Josef Macek, director of the Institute of History of the Czechoslovak Academy of Sciences between 1952 and 1970 (see JIROUŠEK, B.: *Josef Macek*, pp. 32–74).

[41] GALANDAUER, Jan: Karel Pichlík (2. 3. 1928 – 16. 4. 2001). In: *Historie a vojenství*, Vol. 50, No. 2 (2001), pp. 471–476, here p. 472.

[42] See the postcards Pichlík wrote to Werstadt in the period 1965–1968. (*Masarykův ústav a Archiv AV ČR* [Masaryk Institute and Archives of the Czech Academy of Sciences], Praha (hereafter *MÚA AV ČR*), coll. Jaroslav Werstadt, box 12, inventory no. 575, Karel Pichlík to Jaroslav Werstadt, 18. 7. 1965, 5. 6. 1966, 21. 12. 1967, 25. 10. and 16. 12. 1968.)

Karel Pichlík wrote his most important works in the 1960s. He built upon his previous activities and achieved significant recognition at home and abroad.[43] His participation in the international symposium commemorating the 50th anniversary of the dissolution of the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy commemorated in 1968 in Vienna is considered to be the peak of his career.[44] Pichlík's contacts with historians from Western Europe undoubtedly caused the Czechoslovak secret police to take an interest in his person and from November 1966 he was repeatedly monitored.[45] The Prague Spring in 1968 was the most successful period of Pichlík's academic career but also its end.

This period is inherently associated with the aforementioned book *Zahraniční odboj 1914–1918 bez legend*. In its preface, dated September 1967, Pichlík pointed out the existence of the Czechoslovak liberation legend and its different interpretations in the previous fifty years. He also emphasized that in the book he wanted to "proceed without legends" and focus rather on the description of facts and explanation of the reasons, course, and results of the events related to the

[43] See e.g. PICHLÍK, Karel: Vzpoura vojáků pěšího pluku č. 71 v Kragujevci v červnu 1918. In: *Historie a vojenství*, Vol. 4, No. 4 (1955), pp. 444–472; IDEM: *Vzpoura 71. pluku v červnu 1918*. Praha, Naše vojsko 1956; IDEM: Přechod pražského 28. pěšího pluku do ruského zajetí 3. dubna 1915. In: *Historie a vojenství*, Vol. 8, No. 1 (1959), pp. 44–86; IDEM: *Čeští vojáci proti válce (1914–1915)*. Praha, Naše vojsko – Svaz protifašistických bojovníků 1961; IDEM: K otázce navrátilců z ruského zajetí. In: *Historie a vojenství*, Vol. 11, No. 1 (1962), pp. 90–124; IDEM: Lednová generální stávka v roce 1918 a rakousko-uherská armáda. In: *Ibid.*, Vol. 11, No. 6 (1962), pp. 817–838; IDEM: Das Ende der österreichisch-ungarischen Armee. In: *Österreichische Osthefte*, Vol. 5, No. 5 (1963), pp. 351–369; IDEM: Vzpoury navrátilců z ruského zajetí na Slovensku v květnu a červnu 1918. In: *Historický časopis*, Vol. 11, No. 4 (1963), pp. 580–598; IDEM: *Vzpoury navrátilců z ruského zajetí na jaře 1918*. Praha, Nakladatelství ČSAV 1964; IDEM: Probune Jugoslavena u Austro-Ugarskoj vojsci u proleće 1918. godine [Revolts of the Yugoslavs in the Austro-Hungarian Army in the Spring 1918]. In: *Vojnoistorijski glasnik* [Military Historical Bulletin], Vol. 15, No. 6 (1964), pp. 69–107; IDEM: První světová válka a „česká otázka". In: *Historie a vojenství*, Vol. 13, No. 3 (1964), pp. 477–495; IDEM: První projekt samostatného Československa z podzimu 1914. In: *Ibid.*, Vol. 15, No. 3 (1966), pp. 356–407; PICHLÍK, Karel – VÁVRA, Vlastimil – KŘÍŽEK, Jaroslav: *Červenobílá a rudá: Vojáci ve válce a revoluci 1914–1918*. Praha, Naše vojsko 1967; PICHLÍK, Karel: Sabotáž válečných půjček a česká politika 1914–1915. In: *Československý časopis historický*, Vol. 15, No. 4 (1967), pp. 561–576; IDEM: Die Entstehung der Tschechoslowakei. In: *Vierteljahrshefte für Zeitgeschichte*, Vol. 17, No. 2 (1969), pp. 160–180.

[44] IDEM: Der militärische Zusammenbruch der Mittelmächte im Jahre 1918. In: PLASCHKA, Richard Georg – MACK, Karlheinz (eds.): *Die Auflösung des Habsburgerreiches: Zusammenbruch und Neuorientierung im Donauraum*. München – Wien, Oldenbourg – Verlag für Geschichte und Politik 1970, pp. 249–265.

[45] MÄRZ, Jan: *Osudy českého historika minulého století – Karel Pichlík* [online]. Plzeň, Pedagogická fakulta Západočeské univerzity v Plzni 2016, p. 19. Bachelors dissertation. [Accessed 2022-11-06.] Available at: https://dspace5.zcu.cz/bitstream/11025/24535/1/BP%20-%20Jan%20Marz.pdf.

"political fight of Czechs and Slovaks abroad, which was a significant, but not the only, element of the Czechoslovak movement during the First World War". He described as "extreme and biased opinions" the interpretation of the establishment of independent Czechoslovakia communicated in the interwar period and its ideologically motivated variation preferred by the official Czechoslovak historiography especially in the early 1950s.[46] In Pichlík's declaration of his intention to avoid both extremes, which he classified as legends, we can recognize the declared effort of post-1956 Czechoslovak historiography to make its work more scholarly. Pichlík undoubtedly wanted to express his independent approach to the subject in the motto of the book, which was a part of a definition from a dictionary of foreign words: "Legend – a story from the life of a saint; made-up, fictional myth; widespread but incorrect opinion."[47] However, he forgot to inform those readers who did not know his previous work that he had actively contributed to the formulation of these "extreme and biased opinions". Even the list of Pichlík's works printed in the bibliography, at the end of the book, appears to have been censored by the author.

Many Czech and Slovak historians from the generation characterized by Bohumil Jiroušek as the "youth of communism" went through the same changes as Karel Pichlík. This generation had created a very dogmatic version of Marxist-Leninist historiography, which in the following decades was either abandoned or revisited (voluntarily or under pressure). However, this revision still corresponded with the contemporary policy of the KSČ, or to be more exact, the policy of the dominant wing of the KSČ's Central Committee.[48] Changes in the narrative of the creation of Czechoslovakia were even in 1968 only very gradual and careful. Attention was mainly paid to the personality of President T. G. Masaryk or to Czech politics during the First World War. These efforts were visible in the works of Jan Galandauer.[49] Contemporaries understood his approach as a change that corresponded to the atmosphere of the Prague Spring, and also partially survived during the period of normalization.

[46] PICHLÍK, K.: *Zahraniční odboj 1914–1918 bez legend*, p. 6.

[47] *Ibid.*, p. 5.

[48] JIROUŠEK, B.: *Historik Jaroslav Charvát*, pp. 28–30.

[49] GALANDAUER, Jan: Názorový převrat v letech 1914–1918. In: *Dějiny a současnost*, Vol. 10, No. 3 (1968), pp. 6–7; IDEM: Den svobody 28. října 1918. In: *Politika*, Vol. 1, No. 9 (1968), pp. 5–6; IDEM: T. G. Masaryk a československý stát. In: *Život strany*, Vol. 15, No. 17 (1968), pp. 28–31. To the professional career of Jan Galandauer see also MOSKOVIČ, Boris: „Jaký to mělo smysl?" Historikové a debaty o vzniku Československa a Jugoslávie. Bilance z konce 80. let 20. století. In: *Slovanský přehled*, Vol. 107, No. 2 (2021), pp. 399–448, here pp. 408–414.

In Slovakia, the factor that accelerated the debate about the milestones of modern history was the reestablishment of the Slovak Historical Society (*Slovenská historická spoločnosť*) and a series of conferences. The crucial turning point in the interpretation was the Sixth Congress of the Slovak Historical Society in Martin in 1968.[50] The Congress preparations started in Banská Bystrica in 1965, where some historians called for cleansing historiography from the remains of the cult of personality and accusations of bourgeois nationalism. Meanwhile, the Congress programme, which was supposed to focus on the political history of the Slovaks in the period of 1848–1948, was outlined. Apart from the revolution in 1848, organizers had to pay special attention also to the creation of Czechoslovakia, to the break-up of the republic in 1938 and to the February events of 1948.[51]

The Congress was held on 4–6 July 1968 in an atmosphere of total social and political relaxation, which also reflected in the programme. The organizers replaced the planned focus on political history with much more current issues of "deformation and lack of criticism in Slovak historiography".[52] Participants debated the problems of the concept of Slovak history and of the ideological and methodological foundations. The subjects thus repeatedly included the year 1918 and the assessments of the establishment of Czechoslovakia.

The opening lecture entitled "Úloha a postavenie historiografie v našej spoločnosti" [The Role and Status of Historiography in Our Society] was given by Ľubomír Lipták (1930–2003). The then 38-year-old historian was at that time a hopeful of the Institute of History of the Slovak Academy of Sciences (*Historický ústav Slovenskej akadémie vied*). He came from a middle-class family of a teacher and a railroad clerk. After completing his education at a grammar school in Trenčín in 1948, he continued his studies at the University of Political and Social Sciences (*Vysoká škola politická a sociální*) in Prague. In 1952, he joined the Institute of History and started his doctorate under the supervision of Miloš Gosiorovský. Five years later he defended his doctoral thesis on the takeover of Slovak industry by German capital during the Second World War. In 1962, he became a candidate for membership of the Communist Party of Slovakia and the academic secretary of the Institute as well as the head of the Department

[50] See: RYCHLÍK, Jan: Rok 1918 optikou roků 1838, 1948, 1968 a 1988. In: *Česko-slovenská historická ročenka 2017–2018*. Brno, Masarykova univerzita 2018, pp. 99–110; KOVÁČ, Dušan: Slovenský prevrat 1918: Zvraty a obraty v jeho interpretácii. In: *Ibid.*, pp. 47–63.

[51] *A SAV*, coll. Slovenská historická spoločnosť pri SAV [Slovak Historical Society at the Slovak Academy of Sciences], box 23, Zpráva o činnosti Slovenskej historickej spoločnosti [Report on the Activities of the Slovak Historical Society], 1966.

[52] *Ibid.*, box 3, Zjazd Slovenskej historickej spoločnosti v Martine 1968 [Congress of the Slovak Historical Society in Martin 1968].

of General History.[53] He was well equipped theoretically, linguistically, and ideologically, and wrote with the lightness of a journalist. Unlike his colleagues who were just a few years older, Lipták had not been confronted with the demands that the peak Stalinist period of the early 1950s placed on the work of historians and thus did not have to personally deal with his previous writings. In his opening speech given in Martin, he touched upon a few important subjects, which resonated strongly during the whole Congress. He talked about the ideological approach in historiography and the need to further professionalize historiography.[54]

This and similar appeals influenced the writings of Slovak historians published in the following years. Lipták addressed the question of the creation of Czechoslovakia a number of times in various places during 1968. He offered a thorough exposition of his opinions in the book *Slovensko v 20. storočí* [Slovakia in the Twentieth Century], published in Bratislava in 1968, which was considered an original work far from established patterns and contemporary models.[55] In this book, Lipták rehabilitated the role of the foreign resistance and its main representatives (Masaryk, Beneš, Štefánik), the activity of the Czechoslovak Legion, state-building ideas of American Slovaks, and the overall orientation towards the Allied Powers during the First World War.[56] And all this was done in a way that was also accessible to the general public. Although he chose to mention the October Revolution, he did not devote much space to it,[57] and did not repeat the earlier argument. He regarded the Martin Declaration[58] as a revolutionary step and an effort towards national revolution with the aim to transfer the power of the Hungarian authorities into the hands of the Slovak middle class. He characterized the period after its proclamation as a spontaneous revolutionary outburst,[59] and included the Slovak Soviet Republic, to which he devoted an unusually long

[53] *A SAV,* coll. Historický ústav [Institute of History], box 51, Životopis Ľubomír Lipták [Ľubomír Lipták, curriculum vitae], 1963.

[54] LIPTÁK, Ľubomír: Úloha a postavenie historiografie v našej spoločnosti. In: *Historický časopis*, Vol. 17, No. 1 (1969), pp. 98–118.

[55] KROPILÁK, Miroslav: Recenzia knihy Slovensko v 20. storočí. In: *Historický časopis*, Vol. 17, No. 3 (1969), pp. 438–444.

[56] LIPTÁK, Ľubomír: *Slovensko v 20. storočí*. Bratislava, Vydavateľstvo politickej literatúry 1968, pp. 62–72.

[57] *Ibid.*, pp. 65–66.

[58] The Martin Declaration (*Martinská deklarácia*) was a political act of the Slovak elites on 30 October 1918 in which they announced their independence from the Kingdom of Hungary and their willingness to join the Czech people in a new common state. The interpretation of this document represented one of the main points of conflict between Slovaks and Czechs in the interwar period.

[59] LIPTÁK, Ľ.: *Slovensko v 20. storočí,* pp. 77–79.

chapter. The Slovak Soviet Republic, according to Lipták, "remained just an attempt, a heroic act, an effort, which has its honourable place in history, but which has only indirectly affected history's course and direction".[60] For Lipták, the events of 1918 were an important point in Slovak history, which determined the subsequent developments and the existence of the Slovak nation.

The *reformed* historiography of the 1960s brought new methods of research, academic debate, and standards to the field of the formal construction of historiographic texts. It was not opposed to the new historiographical narrative, either. However, there still existed a certain insurmountable barrier created by the belief in the necessity to continue building socialism under the leadership of the Communist Party, which was supposed to turn from a bureaucratic and partly isolated organization into a real social force.[61] Although the reformist tendencies are often attributed to the fact that the people in question finally "started to see clearly",[62] it should be noted that this ideological change was to a large extent a reaction to the foreign policy and internal policies of the Soviet Bloc countries, especially to the process of de-Stalinization declared in 1956 and 1962 by Khrushchev.

The period of normalization in Czechoslovakia brought a renewed stability to the only mildly revised positions of the 1950s and early-1960s historiography. The victory of the reformist powers in 1968 was just temporary. In 1969 and 1970, Czech and Slovak historians experienced large-scale purges, which affected mainly historians who were members of the Communist Party and did not show sufficient loyalty to the new normalization regime.[63] One of their casualties was Karel Pichlík, who left his position as researcher at the Military Institute of History (*Vojenský historický ústav*) in Prague and in 1970 became a worker at the *Vodní zdroje* water company. Six years later, he was one of the first signatories

[60] *Ibid.*, p. 91.

[61] SOMMER, V.: *Angažované dějepisectví*, p. 311. See also: BLAIVE, Muriel: *Promarněná příležitost: Československo a rok 1956*. Praha, Prostor 2001, p. 167.

[62] PETRÁŇ, J.: *Filozofové dělají revoluci*, p. 321. On the case of historian Věra Olivová (1926–2015) see TOMEŠ, Josef: Historička v rozrušeném čase. In: BROKLOVÁ, Eva – NEUDORFLOVÁ, Marie L. (eds.): *Věře Olivové ad honorem: Sborník příspěvků k novodobým československým dějinám*. Praha, Společnost Edvarda Beneše – Ústav T. G. Masaryka, o. p. s., 2006, pp. 11–18. Historian Josef Hanzal recalls the role that ordinary human fear played in the willingness to comply with the demands of the communist regime (HANZAL, Josef: *Cesty české historiografie 1945–1989*. Praha, Karolinum 1999, p. 84). See a related personal memory: OPAT, Jaroslav: *Z času válek a chaosu v Evropě: Vzpomínky a úvahy*. Praha, Ústav T. G. Masaryka, o. p. s., 2014, pp. 40–42.

[63] For more on the purges of 1970 see e.g. RYCHLÍK, Jan: *Československo v období socialismu 1945–1989*. Praha, Vyšehrad 2020, pp. 262–270.

of the Charter 77 Declaration.[64] At that time, according to his own words, he already considered his KSČ membership to be the "mistake of a lifetime" and planned to make up for it by action.[65] Ľubomír Lipták suffered a similar fate. From 1970, he was forbidden to publish and was forced to leave the Slovak Academy of Sciences for the Slovak National Museum (*Slovenské národné múzeum*).

In the 1970s, many of the research projects that focused on modern Czechoslovak history were stopped completely or the regime prevented them from being carried out. The advancing normalization, the forced departure of experts from academic institutions and the return of the interpretations criticized in 1968 significantly changed the atmosphere and research priorities in the humanities. One of the main innovations in the narrative of 1918 came from the Slovak side. The creation of Czechoslovakia was unexpectedly set into a new framework. Marián Hronský (1940–2012) in his book *Slovensko na rázcestí: Slovenské národné rady a gardy v roku 1918* [Slovakia at the Crossroads: Slovak National Councils and Guards in 1918] interpreted the events in Slovakia in 1918 as a silenced revolution.[66]

One of the significant innovations in Hronský's work from 1976 was the thematization and comparison of the course and nature of the 1918 revolution between the Bohemian lands, where he spoke of a "decent revolution" and developments in Slovakia. Hronský understood the "decent revolution" as a bourgeois-democratic transformation experienced by the Bohemian lands after 28 October. He pointed out that the same laws continued to apply and almost the same officials remained in their positions, while the entire social dimension of the revolution was suppressed. According to him, the situation in Slovakia did not correspond at all to the example of a smooth transformation and "decent revolution" in the Bohemian lands. Hronský drew attention to the fact that the course of the disintegration of Hungary was fundamentally different from the course of the national revolution in the Bohemian lands and did not at all coincide with the ideas of the ruling Czechoslovak bourgeoisie. This group wanted to strip the revolutionary process in Slovakia of its distinctiveness (explosive social aspects) and adapt it to the Czech course of the national and democratic revolution. At the end

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[64] Charter 77 Declaration (*Prohlášení Charty 77*) was a document published on 6 January 1977 with the names of the first 242 signatories. Its release was partially motivated by the arrest of members of the rock band the Plastic People of the Universe. The Charter was critical of the Czechoslovak communist government for its failures in the implementation of human rights.

[65] MÄRZ, J.: *Osudy českého historika minulého století – Karel Pichlík*, pp. 12–13.

[66] HRONSKÝ, Marián: *Slovensko na rázcestí: Slovenské národné rady a gardy v roku 1918.* Košice, Východoslovenské vydavateľstvo 1976.

of 1918, the Slovak people were looking for their own way to realize a national, democratic and social revolution.[67]

This book represented a certain exception to the established practice, in which contemporary Slovak historiography (especially that of twentieth-century history) was merely catching up with or directly copying Czech works. Hronský proposed his own research, which focused on mapping the significance of purely Slovak actors in historical change. This approach mirrored the establishment of the Czechoslovak federation[68] and the development of Slovak nationalism. The historical narrative emphasized the pursuit of modern Slovak history, capitalizing on its own historical actors and events.

The period from the mid-1980s represented another important turn. *Perestroika*, proclaimed by the new General Secretary of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union Mikhail Gorbachev, accompanied by the launch of the *glasnost* process in 1987, were soon also reflected in the field of Czechoslovak historiography. These changes led to, among other things, a renewed interest in the history of the First Czechoslovak Republic, which in 1987 resulted in the academic conference "Slovensko a československá štátnosť v rokoch 1918–1938" [Slovakia and Czechoslovak Statehood in the Years 1918–1938], where some of the papers presented certainly could not have been published before.[69] A year later, 28 October was reinstated as the Day of the Creation of Czechoslovakia and as a national holiday, a day of rest. On the 70th anniversary of the establishment of the independent state a number of monographs were published on this subject.[70]

The political and social changes related to the fall of communism in November 1989 permitted the return of the historians who had been ousted after 1968 and banned from research and publishing. Their comeback was forceful. With their works and publicly shared opinions, they returned to the point at which they had been forced to stop their academic work. Karel Pichlík, who in the summer of 1989 was collecting signatures for the citizen petition "Několik vět" [A Few Sentences], became a member of the History Commission of the Civic

[67] *Ibid.*, p. 97, p. 161.

[68] After the Prague Spring period, federalization took place on 1 January 1969. The previously unitary Czechoslovakia became a federation of two nation states, the Czech Socialist Republic and the Slovak Socialist Republic.

[69] See KOVÁČ, Dušan: Myšlienka československej štátnosti: Jej vznik a realizácia. In: *Historický časopis*, Vol. 36, No. 3 (1988), pp. 341–352.

[70] GALANDAUER, Jan: *Vznik Československé republiky 1918: Programy, projekty, předpoklady.* Praha, Svoboda 1988; HRONSKÝ, Marián: *Slovensko pri zrode Československa*. Bratislava, Pravda 1988; PLEVZA, Viliam: *Rok osemnásty.* Bratislava, Smena 1988. For more, see HÁLEK, Jan – MOSKOVIĆ, Boris: *Fenomén Maffie: Český (domácí) protirakouský odboj v proměnách 20. století*. Praha, Academia – Masarykův ústav a Archiv AV ČR 2020, pp. 292–297.

Forum (*Historická komise Občanského fóra*) and in 1990 the director of the Museum of Resistance (*Muzeum odboje*) in Prague-Žižkov, which now included his former workplace, the Military Institute of History. In 1991, Pichlík's 1968 book *Zahraniční odboj 1914–1918 bez legend* was published once more.[71] In 1998, he received a Medal of Merit of the Second Grade from President Václav Havel, "for outstanding academic results".[72] Ľubomír Lipták also returned in 1990 to the Slovak Academy of Sciences and became the editor-in-chief of the journal *Historický časopis* [Historical Journal]. Research into the history of the creation of Czechoslovakia in the years 1948–1990 thus came to a close.

Commemorating the Establishment of Czechoslovakia in Public Space

The commemoration of the establishment of Czechoslovakia developed strongly in the interwar republic. The importance and symbolic significance of this event escalated further during the Second World War, when the official celebrations were forbidden in the Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia, and in Slovakia.[73] The renewal of celebrations in 1945 was thus a natural element of the post-war restoration of Czechoslovakia. The public space was full of various references to this event: from street names, to statues of the legionaries and T. G. Masaryk and to books, broadcasts, etc. It is not our aim here to present a complete picture, but we attempt to provide an overview of some of the more crucial moments, which illustrate the changes and use of this historic event in the public space.

The importance and interpretation of the 1918 creation of Czechoslovakia in the period immediately after February 1948 can be illustrated by the official celebration of the 30th anniversary in October 1948. It is interesting to focus on Slovakia for this point. Even after the Second World War and with the restoration of Czechoslovakia, it was problematic to unify the competing collective memories of these events in both parts of the republic. The effort to connect the heritage of 28 and 30 October (the day of the Martin Declaration, with which the Slovak elites in 1918 approved the idea of a common state of Czechs and Slovaks), was

[71] PICHLÍK, Karel: *Bez legend: Zahraniční odboj 1914–1918*. Praha, Panorama 1991.

[72] *Archiv Kanceláře prezidenta republiky* [Archive of the Office of the President of the Republic], Prague, coll. Kancelář prezidenta republiky [Office of the President of the Republic] 1992–2002, protocol 200 000, sign. 1046, 1998.

[73] See: HÁJKOVÁ, Dagmar – MICHELA, Miroslav: Oslavy 28. října. In: HÁJKOVÁ, Dagmar – HORÁK, Pavel – KESSLER, Vojtěch – MICHELA, Miroslav (eds.): *Sláva republice! Oficiální svátky a oslavy v meziválečném Československu*. Praha, Academia – Masarykův ústav a Archiv AV ČR, v.v.i., 2018, pp. 75–132.

evident. According to the organizing committee, the celebrations were intended to resonate throughout Slovakia, with the city of Martin being the centre of the ceremonies. In this way, the organizers wanted to point to the town's glorious past and place it at the centre of interest.[74] The preparations for the festivities reflected the dissatisfaction of the living declarants of 1918, who felt underappreciated and socially ignored when compared to the foreign legionaries or members of the *Maffie*, the anti-Austrian resistance group. One of their demands, rejected by the Ministry of National Defence, was to receive special pensions. Despite the effort to include different representatives in the Martin celebrations of the anniversary of 1918, many ministers and members of the Slovak National Council (*Slovenská národná rada*) excused themselves from participating.[75]

The official programme started on 28 October at 7 a.m. with a ceremonial bugle call at the garrison headquarters, followed by services in Protestant and Catholic churches. After this there was a military celebration, a parade, and a concert of military music on the Slovak National Uprising square. The commemoration of the 30 October had a similar programme sponsored by the Slovak Deputy Prime Minister Viliam Široký (1902–1971). Of the 38 living declarants from 1918 invited to Martin, 24 attended the ceremonies. The celebration of the 30th anniversary of the Declaration of the Slovak Nation took place in the building of the Tatra Bank (*Tatra banka*), where in 1918 the Declaration was signed. After the ceremony was finished, wreaths were laid at the National Cemetery. At the meeting in the town hall, President Klement Gottwald and Viliam Široký were awarded honorary citizenships of Martin.[76] In his speech, Široký emphasized the importance of the Martin Declaration and the merits of the working class. He criticized the Western powers and pointed out that the people's democratic system had already given Slovaks more than the First Republic did in its twenty-year existence. The official text prepared for the occasion, printed on a navy-blue sheet of paper with the state emblem, interpreted the events in a similar spirit: "Thirty years ago, the Czechoslovak Republic was created. Under the influence of the principles of the self-determination of nations, proclaimed by the October Revolution, and thanks to the great work of Czech and Slovak patriots, centuries of feudal and national slavery came to an end and the Czech and Slovak

[74] *Slovenský národný archív* [The Slovak National Archive], Bratislava (hereafter *SNA*), coll. Fedor Hudek, box 33, List prípravného výboru [Letter of the Organizing Committee], 12. 5. 1948.

[75] It is interesting that the organizing committee of the Martin celebrations sent out most of the official invitations as late as 22 October 1948, thus significantly reducing the possibility of participation by individuals, authorities and institutions. (*Ibid.*, Oslavy 30. výročia Martinskej deklarácie v Martine [Celebration of the 30th Anniversary of the Declaration of Martin in Martin], 30. 10. 1948.)

[76] *Ibid.*

people finally had their own state. The nations of our republic energetically set about building their state and rightfully expected the fulfilment of their age-old wishes for a just and democratic life."[77]

While in 1948 the celebrations were held at the national level and the highest KSČ authorities were in attendance, in 1950 the Communist Party leaders already planned to change this arrangement. Its resolution on 18 September 1950 declared that the main focus of the 28 October celebrations should be the commemoration of the fifth anniversary of nationalization, a step that may be viewed as symbolic of the news orders. A year later, the 28 October as the Day of Establishment of Czechoslovakia lost its status as a national day and the date, which became a day of rest, was remembered as Nationalization Day.[78]

The next major wave of interest in the heritage of the creation of the Czechoslovak Republic did not happen until 1968. In the meantime, from the mid-1960s, a gradual rehabilitation of the main personalities who had fallen victim to the ideological disputes of the Stalinist era was taking place. In Bohemia and Moravia, it was T. G. Masaryk who was remembered and in Slovakia M. R. Štefánik. However, in 1967, on the 30th anniversary of Masaryk's death (1937) not one historian was publicly heard. Instead, the Czech writer, Jan Procházka, stepped in to point out the unsustainability of the previous approaches towards the person of the first Czechoslovak president.[79] Historians only joined the debate that broke out in the spring of the following year.[80] In Slovakia, the initiators of change were not historians either, but journalists.[81] Thus, prominent personalities and important events associated with the creation of the Czechoslovak Republic started to gradually receive public attention. In some towns – for example in Hradec

[77] *Ibid*.

[78] HÁJKOVÁ, D. – MICHELA, M.: Oslavy 28. října, p. 134.

[79] PROCHÁZKA, Jan: 14. IX. 1937. In: *Literární noviny*, Vol. 16, No. 37 (1967), p. 1. Jan Procházka (1929–1971) was a Czech writer, politician and screenwriter. In the 1950s and 1960s he was an active member of the apparatus of the Czechoslovak Youth Union (*Československý svaz mládeže*) and the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia. After a split with the KSČ leadership, he became part of the so-called reformist wing. In 1968–1969, he was the vice-chairman of the Union of Czechoslovak Writers (*Svaz československých spisovatelů*). At the beginning of normalization his work was banned for political reasons.

[80] HANZAL, J.: *Cesty české historiografie 1945–1989*, p. 155. See also: PETRÁŇ, J.: *Filozofové dělají revoluci*, pp. 335–338. For more interviews on the subject of the establishment of Czechoslovakia, see e.g.: KŘÍŽEK, Jaroslav: Diskuse o T. G. Masarykovi a protisovětském vystoupení československých legií. In: *Historie a vojenství*, Vol. 17, No. 6–7 (1968), pp. 1219–1221.

[81] SCHULZE WESSEL, Martin: *Pražské jaro: Průlom do nového světa*. Praha, Argo 2018, p. 134 (originally published in German under the title *Der Prager Frühling: Aufbruch in eine neue Welt*. Ditzingen, Reclam 2018).

Králové, Brandýs nad Labem, and Prostějov – the residents or even the town halls began to return the statues of Masaryk to the main squares, from where they had usually been removed during the 1950s,[82] thus visibly showing a change in the perception of the founding figures of the state. In the normalization period, these initiatives were stopped and many of the statues were returned to museum depositories.

The next sharp turn in commemorating the creation of Czechoslovakia in the public sphere took place in 1988. On 21 September 1988 a legislative measure by the Presidium of the Federal Assembly (*Federální shromáždění*) reinstated 28 October as a national day: "9 May, the anniversary of Czechoslovakia's liberation by the Soviet Army, and 28 October, the day of the foundation of an independent Czechoslovak state, are proclaimed as national days of the Czechoslovak Socialist Republic."[83] The renewed recognition of the significance of the creation of an independent Czechoslovak state was the result of many debates at the academic and political level, as well as society's pressure to officially celebrate this day. After years of rejection and widespread condemnation of the First Republic and its bourgeois character, the communist regime was forced to face this historical heritage.

An explanatory note offered an insight into the arguments behind the amendment to the public holiday legislation. It described the birth of the country in 1918 as a historic turning point in the life of the Czech and Slovak nations, the result of their fight for national liberation within the favourable conditions at the end of the First World War and under the influence of the ideas of the Great October Socialist Revolution. Socialism was declared as continuing and reproducing these traditions and as having given them a new dimension on the day of nationalization (28 October 1945) and the birth of the Czechoslovak federation (the constitutional law on Czechoslovak Federation was approved in the National Assembly on 27 October 1968). The change in the law also sought a foundation in the collective memory and national traditions connected to this day.[84]

[82] [Anonymous:] Interaktivní mapa „Po stopách T. G. Masaryka" – Sochy. In: *tg-masaryk.cz* [online]. Praha, Masarykův ústav a Archiv AV ČR. [Accessed 2022-11-10.] Available at: http://tg-masaryk.cz/mapa/.

[83] Opatření č. 141/1988 Sb.: Zákonné opatření předsednictva Federálního shromáždění, kterým se mění a doplňuje zákon č. 93/1951 Sb., o státním svátku, o dnech pracovního klidu a o památných a významných dnech [Resolution No. 141/1988 Coll.: Act of the Presidium of the Federal Assembly Amending and Supplementing Act No. 93/1951 Coll. on Public Holidays, Days of Rest and Days of Commemoration and Significance]. In: *Zákony pro lidi: Sbírka zákonů* [online]. [Accessed 2022-06-01.] Available at: https://www.zakonyprolidi.cz/cs/1988-141.

[84] *Společná česko-slovenská digitální parlamentní knihovna: Dokumenty českého a slovenského parlamentu* [Joint Czech-Slovak Digital Parliamentary Library: Documents of the Czech and

The debates about 28 October in the late 1980s did not necessarily express only changes in collective memory and the master narrative, but also the possibility of a critical response to the communist regime and a form of protest.[85] The question of the creation of Czechoslovakia in this way became more relevant and gained a potential for mobilization. The renewed interest of society was much larger than in previous years. On 1 October 1988 the Charter 77 community issued a text entitled "Úvaha o stavu historického vědomí a nezbytnosti svobodného historického bádání, vydaná k sedmdesáti letům existence Československé republiky" [Reflection on the State of Historical Awareness and the Need for Free Historical Research Published on the 70th Anniversary of the Existence of the Czechoslovak Republic], which asked questions about historical awareness and the use of history. It opposed the official historical doctrine and called for free research and discussion. The text ended with a rather emotional proclamation: "28 October, the day of the birth of the Czechoslovak Republic, has never ceased to be a national day in Czech and Slovak minds and hearts. That is why on the upcoming anniversary no one should prevent citizens from freely expressing their feelings and the state authorities should consider this expression as an essentially positive and state-building act. For all those who take up the cause of our national society with honesty and sincerity, the day of the 70th anniversary could thus become the day of the first step towards redressing grievances and repairing damages, the day of the beginning of reconciliation of the whole nation, based on truth and justice."[86]

In mid-October 1988 in Bratislava, Brno and Prague the Movement for Civil Liberties (*Hnutí za občanskou svobodu*) was formed. It addressed the question of the creation of Czechoslovakia in its manifesto "Demokracii pro všechny" [Democracy for All]. Like other texts from the early 1980s, written mainly in exile, the authors of the manifesto posed the question of "whether it was wise to tear

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Slovak Parliaments] [online], Federální shromáždění ČSSR [Federal Assembly of the ČSSR], 19. 09. 1988, Důvodová zpráva vládního návrhu č. 98 [Explanatory Memorandum to the Government Proposal No. 98]. [Accessed 2022-06-01.] Available at: https://www.psp.cz/eknih/1986fs/tisky/t0098_00.htm.

[85] MICHELA, Miroslav: Pripomenutie sedemdesiateho výročia vyhlásenia Československa v roku 1988: Posilňovanie alebo erózia režimu? In: DUDEKOVÁ-KOVÁČOVÁ, Gabriela (ed.): *V supermarkete dejín: Podoby moderných dejín a spoločnosti v stredoeurópskom priestore*. Bratislava, Veda 2021, pp. 101–123, here p. 103.

[86] CÍSAŘOVSKÁ, Blanka – PREČAN, Vilém (eds.): *Charta 77: Dokumenty 1977–1989*, Vol. 2: *1984–1989.* Praha, Ústav pro soudobé dějiny 2007, Document No. 496 (50/1988): Úvaha o stavu historického vědomí a nezbytnosti svobodného historického bádání, vydaná k sedmdesáti letům existence Československé republiky, pp. 1044–1045.

down Austria and build an independent Czechoslovak state".[87] With a great deal of contemporary relevance, but also with certain bias, they pointed out that Masaryk and his associates "saw the establishment of our republic as a part of the era's democratic revolution, leading to Europe as a gradually unifying community of democratic states".[88] They found interwar Czechoslovakia's ideal of democracy attractive and wanted to build upon it in the new conditions.

The festivities themselves brought another change in the interpretation of the creation of Czechoslovakia by none other than the communist regime. In his speech during an official demonstration in the Wenceslas Square in Prague on 27 October, the head secretary of the Municipal Committee of KSČ in Prague and a member of the Central Committee, Miroslav Štěpán (1945–2012), as a representative of the reform-oriented faction of the then KSČ, pointed out, next to the influence of the Great October Socialist Revolution, the importance and role of the domestic and foreign resistance led by Masaryk, Beneš and Štefánik.[89] A day later, a commemorative celebration was held on Bradlo hill near Brezová pod Bradlom, the place where Štefánik is buried and where his memorial has stood since 1928. Štefánik's contribution to the establishment of the Republic was positively evaluated on this occasion. In 1988, work started on the restoration of Štefánik's memorial at Bradlo, which was in a very poor condition. By designing these repairs, the Bratislava Cultural Planning Institute (*Projektový ústav kultúry*) demonstrated a complete change of direction in shaping the narrative of modern history.[90]

However, the demonstration on Wenceslas Square in Prague on 28 October 1988, organized by dissidents, was not allowed. Very shortly before 28 October, the authorities had preventively arrested many prominent members of the opposition. Despite these measures, the demonstration still took place and was violently dispersed.[91] The commemorative event on 28 October 1989 took a similar course. Wenceslas Square witnessed two completely different events. Just a few hours after the speeches of the communist representatives and the solemn

[87] BATTĚK, Rudolf – LIS, Ladislav: Demokracii pro všechny: Manifest Hnutí za občanskou svobodu [Democracy for All: Manifesto of Movement for Civil Liberties], 15. 10. 1988. In: *Československé dokumentační středisko* [online]. Praha 1994–2019. [Accessed 2022-11-11.] Available at: http://www.csds.cz/cs/g6/5148-DS.html.

[88] Ibid.

[89] MICHELA, M.: Pripomenutie sedemdesiateho výročia vyhlásenia Československa v roku 1988, p. 112.

[90] KŠIŇAN, Michal: *Milan Rastislav Štefánik*. Bratislava, Lindeni 2019, p. 59.

[91] MICHELA, M.: Pripomenutie sedemdesiateho výročia vyhlásenia Československa v roku 1988, p. 115.

oath of the soldiers, police units violently dispersed about 3,000 people, who were demonstrating against the communist regime.

Conclusion

From the mid-twentieth century, the interpretation of the creation of Czechoslovakia underwent several important changes. The new Stalinist historiography's fight against the previously widespread narratives regarding the foundation of Czechoslovakia was not enough in the long run. It was necessary to create a new, generally accepted story, which would be appropriate for the changed political and social situation. The attempt to historically legitimize the system of government after February 1948 resulted in an effort to rewrite an established story in national history, so that the widespread nationalist tale could "shake hands" with the Marxist-Leninist perspective on historical events.[92] The First Republic narrative about the foundation of Czechoslovakia differed from its Marxist version especially in its objective. In the period of 1918–1938, the main goal was the creation of an independent national Czechoslovak state and the subsequent reinforcement of the state idea associated with it. The events of the 28 October were the culmination of a Czech and Slovak effort. However, after the February 1948 coup d'état, the aim significantly changed. The new objective was a path leading to a socialist, or communist, future. The creation of Czechoslovakia now became a mere stage along a journey in this direction. The described changes were also reflected in the period analysed in the given context. While interwar historians focused their attention on the period 1914–1918 with overlaps to the period before 1914, the Marxist historiography concentrated mainly on the years 1917–1920, i.e. the period of the proletarian revolution. The heroes of the events were also new. Historians became interested in strike movements and protests, as well as national committees and workers' councils forming in 1918, which had until then been of marginal interest. The debates about the establishment and beginnings of Czechoslovakia also updated the notions of the relations between Czechs and Slovaks, which were subsequently transformed into the federalization of the state. While in the 1950s Slovak historiography only copied and adapted models presented by their Czech colleagues, from the 1960s onwards it became more and more independent, seeking to find its own way of interpreting the course of history and putting Slovak historical actors and events in the foreground.

The view of the events of the establishment of Czechoslovakia and their significance after 1990 was formed out of three elementary trends. The first was the First

[92] SOMMER, V.: *Angažované dějepisectví*, pp. 56–58.

Republic academic and memoir production. It was all the more attractive for both professionals and the general public because in the previous forty years a large part of these texts had either been banned or difficult to get hold of. The fact that some of them had also been written on political request or served (especially in the case of memoirs) to settle personal debts was often overlooked. The second important trend was that the generation of historians who wrote about the subject of the establishment of the republic in the late 1960s and during normalization were silenced by the system. Their works were followed up by the academic debates during the *perestroika* era, which culminated with the 70th anniversary of the creation of the republic. The last distinct group, which was more important for Slovakia, were historians in exile and their texts. Similarly to the First Republic texts, the previous unavailability of the writings or the discovery of previously unknown facts and contexts was an important aspect. Jozef M. Kirschbaum (1913–2001)[93] and Milan S. Ďurica (*1925)[94] became actively involved even in the tense Slovak nationalist debates of the early 1990s, in which the national history and the assessment of the twentieth century played a crucial role. They revived the autonomist narratives – the falsification of the Martin Declaration, the breach of the Pittsburgh Agreement,[95] or an interpretation typical of the works produced in Slovakia during the Second World War. The attitude of these historians coming from exile toward Slovak colleagues was very disrespectful. They thought that Slovak historians at home were unable to create a "true" picture of Slovak history because their thinking had been impaired either by Marxism, self-censorship, or Czechoslovakism, and these factors kept them from writing a history that was not intended to serve particular interests.

The commemoration of the events of 1918 in the public space persisted despite the prohibitions and restrictions imposed by the communist regime and often took on the form of a protest, which tried to mobilize public opinion. Around 1990 the interpretation of the creation and functioning of the First Republic was picked up again by the generation of historians who had been forced to leave academia

[93] Jozef M. Kirschbaum was a Slovak politician (a member and prominent representative of Hlinka's Slovak People's Party), diplomat and Slovakist. From 1949 he lived in Canada and became one of the leading Canadian Slavists. He founded the Department of Slovak History and Culture at the University of Ottawa in 1990.

[94] Milan Stanislav Ďurica is a Slovak historian, publicist, translator and Roman Catholic priest who lived in Italy until 1998. He mainly focuses on Slovak history.

[95] The Pittsburgh Agreement, concluded on 30 May 1918 between representatives of the Czech and Slovak minorities in the United States and T. G. Masaryk, confirmed the future establishment of a common state of Czechs and Slovaks and formulated the idea of its form. Its interpretation became a subject of disputes between Slovak autonomists and the official political representation during the First Republic.

after 1968. They were now joined by the intellectuals who had been in exile and by young historians. After the dissolution of the common state in 1993, the attitude towards the events associated with the foundation of Czechoslovakia changed significantly in both new countries. While in the Czech Republic 28 October remained a central point of reference for the country's modern history, with its unwavering position of a national day, Slovak society has created its own national traditions and repeatedly searched for and revised its attitude towards the creation of Czechoslovakia and the events of 1918.[96]

This article was researched and written with the support of the Czech Science Foundation (Grantová agentura ČR) under the Contract No. 19-08819S "On the Way to the Peak of History? The Formation of Czechoslovakia in the Changing Historiography of 1918–1992/1993".

Abstract

The article focuses on the construction of historical narratives and the construction of memory regarding the emergence of Czechoslovakia (28 October 1918) in the second half of the twentieth century. It analyses Czech and Slovak historiography and the significance of direct and indirect political and ideological influences. It explores shifts in the official narrative from the establishment of the communist regime to its collapse through an analysis of party texts, scholarly publications and conferences. The authors pay equal attention to the Czech lands and Slovakia. They focus on the role of historians as a professional community and the importance of institutional networks and examine the positions and viewpoints of the new historical departments (within the Czechoslovak Academy of Sciences) and shifts in university education. While the existing universities were to concentrate exclusively on teaching, the newly established universities (such as the University of Political and Economic Sciences – Vysoká škola politických a hospodářských věd*) were tasked from the outset with educating a new type of socialist intelligentsia that had a close relationship to the people and/or to (re)educate publicity workers and state administration employees. As for historians, the article points to their professional and publishing strategies and the changes in opinions they underwent. In the second part, the authors address the issue of commemorating the founding of Czechoslovakia in the public space. They pay special attention to the celebrations in 1948, which aspired to a nationwide character, the revival of this tradition in the 1960s, and finally the society-wide response in 1988, when the significance of the establishment of the independent Czechoslovak state was reasserted in the form of granting it the position*

[96] KOVÁČ, D.: Slovenský prevrat 1918.

of a national holiday, and also the symbolism associated with this date became the impetus or mass public protest against the communist regime.

Keywords:

Czechoslovakia; creation of Czechoslovakia; 28 October 1918; state holidays; Czechoslovak historiography; communism; politics of memory; politics of history; commemorations

DOI: 10.51134/sod.2022.044

The Museal Production of Hungary's Inorganic Past and Poland's Postponed Victory

The Case of the House of Terror and the Warsaw Rising Museum

Rose Smith

Department of Russian and East European Studies, Faculty of Social Sciences,
Charles University in Prague

After the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989, post-communist countries such as Hungary and Poland sought to reinvent their national identity by rewriting and reimagining their recent history.[1] In particular, Viktor Orbán's Fidesz – Hungarian Civic Alliance (*Magyar Polgári Szövetség*) in Hungary and Jarosław Kaczyński's Law and Justice Party (*Prawo i Sprawiedliwość*, PiS) in Poland have been identified as mnemonic warriors in Michael Bernhard and Jan Kubik's monumental work on national mnemonic actors.[2] In particular, Bernhard and Kubik wrote on the post-communist transition within the context of their respective national memory regimes. As mnemonic warriors, the two parties are observed to sharply differentiate themselves from other actors claiming that they have the "true" version of the past. Any other narrative that goes against their version is considered distorted. Moreover, these mnemonic warriors also claim that unless the entire nation has agreed on the "true" version of history, present and future problems cannot be effectively addressed. Thus, for these warrior-politicians, collective memory is largely non-negotiable, and the meaning of each event is determined by its relationship to a "golden era" of national greatness.[3]

With museums playing an essential role in their memory campaign, Fidesz and PiS developed their flagship museums, the House of Terror (*Terror Háza*) in Budapest and the Warsaw Rising Museum (*Muzeum Powstania Warszawskiego*).

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[1] MANCHIN, Anna: Staging Traumatic Memory: Competing Narratives of State Violence in Post-Communist Hungarian Museums. In: *East European Jewish Affairs,* Vol. 45, No. 2–3 (2015), pp. 236–251, here p. 236.

[2] BERNHARD, Michael – KUBIK, Jan (eds.): *Twenty Years After Communism: The Politics of Memory and Commemoration*. Oxford, Oxford University Press 2014.

[3] IDEM: A Theory of the Politics of Memory. In: *Ibid.*, pp. 7–36, here p. 17.

While both parties established institutions that reflect their preferred historical narratives, they were far from being able to enforce them as the sole legitimate narrative of the past.[4] New museums were established by the successors of both Fidesz and PiS. Bernhard and Kubik framed these successors as "mnemonic pluralists".[5] When Fidesz and PiS returned to power, they "inherited" the established museums from their predecessors, as Croatian political scientist Ljiljana Radonić puts it. The new museums pose a challenge to these mnemonic warriors, primarily since the narratives of the newly established museums do not correspond to that of the two parties.[6] It is also important to note that, aside from these "inherited museums", the two flagship projects are also heavily influenced by international developments. One is that the two nations are trying to forge a new national history and identity within the context of a pan-European crisis of memory and identity. Therefore, it is crucial to examine how the nation is presented and represented in the two museums and how these presentations and representations fit into the promoted national memory and identity of the two parties.

Considering the close links the two museums have with the two political actors, they play a fundamental role in understanding the memory and identity politics of Fidesz and PiS.[7] They promote the parties' official interpretation of the past and its meaning in their respective national histories by producing a form of social knowledge legitimated by the institutional power of a museum.[8] They become political instruments that reshape contemporary national identities to fit the present political needs. Moreover, it is important to investigate how these two museums play a role in promoting national identity because of the warrior nature of the two mnemonic actors. As modern museums that can provide their visitors with an opportunity to experience the past, it is also within their capability to reconfigure collective traumatic experiences. By studying these two museums, this article aims to understand Fidesz's and PiS's current memory politics and the articulation of national identity in Hungary and Poland.

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[4] RADONIĆ, Ljiljana: "Our" vs. "Inherited" Museums: PiS and Fidesz as Mnemonic Warriors. In: *Südost-Europa*, Vol. 68, No. 1 (2020), pp. 44–78, here p. 51.

[5] BERNHARD, Michael – KUBIK, Jan: Roundtable Discord: The Contested Legacy of 1989 in Poland. In: IDEM (eds.): *Twenty Years After Communism*, pp. 60–84, here p. 76.

[6] RADONIĆ, L.: "Our" vs. "Inherited" Museums, p. 58.

[7] Ibid., p. 51.

[8] ŻYCHLIŃSKA, Monika – FONTANA, Erica: Museal Games and Emotional Truths: Creating Polish National Identity at the Warsaw Rising Museum. In: *East European Politics and Societies and Cultures*, Vol. 30, No. 2 (2016), pp. 235–269, here p. 254.

In this article I examine how national identity is articulated in the House of Terror and the Warsaw Rising Museum roughly two decades after they were opened. I analyse the permanent exhibition of the House of Terror and the Warsaw Rising Museum, which I visited from October to November 2021 and January to March 2022, respectively. To provide a more comprehensive analysis, I also include the official accompanying text for each room in the museums, the museum guidebooks, and secondary sources from various scholars who have written on both museums to support my observations further. My method of analysis borrows three methodological approaches from museum studies: analysing museums as script, text, and narrative. I created my own research protocol that uses these three tools to uncover three layers of museal articulations of identity and memory. Therefore, while these two museums have been widely studied and compared, mostly by Ljiljana Radonić, this article aims to illustrate how the nation is presented and represented and how this bolsters the museum's articulation of national identity and memory to an international audience. Therefore, it must also be noted that the scope of this research is limited to English-language sources. It engages with the English-language texts in the museums and the museum guidebooks. Moreover, it also engages only with the international scholarly literature written on the museums.

Memory, New, or Non-Museums?

By the early 1980s, memory began to be used as a concept that shapes the collective image of the past. Drawing from other memory scholars, the Hungarian historian Péter Apor aptly describes memory as "a process where the preservation of the knowledge of the past and the construction of linkages with the past are secured by radically different means".[9] He enumerates these means to include social frames of communication, the formation of communities, canons of cultural genres and meanings, the framing of identities, and the implications of power and dominance.[10] As Jeffrey Olick and Joyce Robbins point out, memory became a representation of the past that is generally independent of historical accuracy or evidence.[11] Consequentially, with many museums around the

[9] APOR, Péter: An Epistemology of the Spectacle? Arcane Knowledge, Memory and Evidence in the Budapest House of Terror. In: *Rethinking History*, Vol. 18, No. 3 (2014), pp. 328–344, here p. 333.

[10] Ibid.

[11] OLICK, Jeffrey – ROBBINS, Joyce: Social Memory Studies: From "Collective Memory" to the Historical Sociology of Mnemonic Practices. In: *Annual Review of Sociology*, Vol. 24. San Mateo (CA), Annual Reviews 1998, pp. 104–140, here p. 124.

globe considering themselves as alternate "history museums" or identifying as modern memorial museums, museums have become homes to not only various representations and spectacular recreations of the past but also constructions of, education on, and access to memory.[12] Monika Żychlińska and Erica Fontana emphasize in their work that museums become ritual sites where the interplay between authoritative knowledge and spectacle occurs. They claim that authoritative knowledge is grounded in disciplinary expertise, while the spectacle is generated through architectural and aesthetic presentation strategies.[13] By producing an amalgamation of historical knowledge on violence and commemorations of victims of atrocities, these museums provide an experience of the past that is created through "the totalizing perception of sentiments, atmosphere and multimedia sound, spectacle, and often smell and touch".[14] In response to these developments, scholars began to scrutinize how the visitors' identification with (imaginary) objects and their associated values stir emotions. They observed that these modern exhibitions run the risk of the visitors consuming rather "simplistic emotional versions of history".[15] Moreover, with museums being instrumentalized in creating and perpetuating collective memories, these exhibitions risk "directly abusing history for political aims".[16]

The House of Terror and the Warsaw Rising Museum create an immersive interpretive environment that helps convey an emotional and moral message.[17] The House of Terror identifies itself as "one among the innovative museums of memory that allegedly perform the task of displaying social remembering".[18] It uses multimedia techniques to create visualizations of the past and it seeks to not only memorialize the victims of the two totalitarian regimes but also "serve as a space of history and learning, with its central task being to morally educate its visitors to reject totalitarian and dictatorial ideologies in the future".[19] The Warsaw Rising Museum also claims to be a modern memory museum. Having been called the finest of Polish museums, the museum provides its visitors with a unique modern vision of narrating and commemorating the past, modelling its exhibitions

[12] APOR, P.: An Epistemology of the Spectacle?, p. 333.

[13] ŻYCHLIŃSKA, M. – FONTANA, E.: Museal Games and Emotional Truths, p. 254.

[14] APOR, P.: An Epistemology of the Spectacle?, p. 332.

[15] Ibid., p. 329.

[16] Ibid., p. 330.

[17] ŻYCHLIŃSKA, M. – FONTANA, E.: Museal Games and Emotional Truths, p. 254.

[18] APOR, P.: An Epistemology of the Spectacle?, p. 330.

[19] SODARO, Amy: The House of Terror: "The Only One of Its Kind". In: EADEM: *Exhibiting Atrocity: Memorial Museums and the Politics of Past Violence*. New Brunswick (NJ), Rutgers University Press 2018, p. 58–83, here p. 59.

on the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum in Washington, D.C. and the House of Terror in Budapest.[20] Aiming to compete for the attention of the Polish youth, the museum uses cutting-edge technology to stimulate its visitors' historical imaginations. Moreover, the museum's Wall of Remembrance and chapel form an integral part of the exhibition by eliciting emotions from the visitors. The exhibition aims to connect with the visitor on a personal level by prompting them to reflect on what they would do if they were in the shoes of ordinary citizens. By successfully doing so, the Wall of Remembrance and the chapel become a personal and familial pantheon or what Paweł Kowal, the museum's co-founder, calls "the Warsaw pantheon".[21] Thus, the two museums attempt to engage their visitors through innovation and sentiments fully.

With these developments in museology, the German-American philosopher Hilde Stern Hein observes how "museums now advance themselves as public institutions with a primary responsibility to people and their values rather than to the value of objects".[22] The Canadian historian Julia Creet echoes Hein's reflections, writing that these modern museums do not house collections but rather objects in "service of emotions as means to political ends".[23] This shift from taxonomy and preservation to phenomenology and affect has increased the focus of public historical culture on images and modern audio-visual media representations.[24] The disorderly mix of the original and replica or the authentic and staged provides a new type of epistemological modality for experiencing the past. In her analysis of the House of Terror, Tamara Rátz echoes these observations. Rátz notes that the original objects in the House of Terror would hardly be sufficient for a comprehensive exhibition on totalitarian terror, including wartime fascism and post-war communism in Hungary.[25] In an attempt to address the

[20] KURKOWSKA-BUDZAN, Marta: The Warsaw Rising Museum: Polish Identity and Memory of World War II. In: *Martor: The Museum of the Romanian Peasant Anthropology Review / Revue d'Anthropologie du Musée du Paysan Roumain*, Vol. 11. Bucharest, National Museum of the Romanian Peasant 2006, pp. 133–141, here p. 137.

[21] KOWAL, Paweł: A Brief History of the Museum. In: JASIŃSKI, Grzegorz – UKIELSKI, Paweł – KOWALECZKO-SZUMOWSKA, Monika – DOBRZYŃSKI, Sebastian (et al.): *Warsaw Rising Museum: Guidebook*. Warsaw, Warsaw Rising Museum 2020 (5th edition), p. 11.

[22] HEIN, Hilde: *The Museum in Transition: A Philosophical Perspective*. Washington, D.C., Smithsonian Institution Press 2000, p. 67.

[23] CREET, Julia: The House of Terror and the Holocaust Memorial Centre: Resentment and Melancholia in Post-89 Hungary. In: *European Studies*, Vol. 30. Olomouc, Czech Association for European Studies 2013, pp. 29–62, here p. 30.

[24] Ibid., p. 35.

[25] RÁTZ, Tamara: Interpretation in the House of Terror, Budapest. In: SMITH, Melanie Kay – ROBINSON, Mike (eds.): *Cultural Tourism in a Changing World: Politics, Participation and*

dearth of authentic objects on display, the curators of the House of Terror claim that the museum's subject is a period poor in conventional historical evidence, especially for museum exhibits, but they justify its establishment because it does memory work.[26] In contrast, the Warsaw Rising Museum puts a premium on historical items and showcases them as they were. Paweł Kowal writes that "historical objects are the key to understanding history and carry great value as authentic sources, such as letters, medallion inscriptions, surviving photographs, not retouched or enlarged".[27] Thus, in 2020, the museum had more than 1,000 artefacts and 1,600 photographs in its exhibition. Moreover, the museum also has more than 42,000 archived photographs, 12,242 artefacts that have undergone conservation treatment, and almost 115,000 artefacts in the museum collection, with 78,830 of them from donations.[28]

This discussion leads us to question what it means to be a museum in the world today. Recently, in August 2022, a new museum definition was approved by the International Council of Museums (ICOM) after a general acknowledgement to reconstruct the definition of a museum based on the contemporary realities and challenges of the world today.[29] As the cultural historian Anna Krakus highlighted, the Kyoto conference has identified that the definition of the museum must have a clear purpose and value base, in which museums meet the cultural, ethical, political, social, and sustainable challenges and responsibilities of today.[30] The new definition reads:

"A museum is a not-for-profit, permanent institution in the service of society that researches, collects, conserves, interprets and exhibits tangible and intangible heritage. Open to the public, accessible and inclusive, museums foster diversity and sustainability. They operate and communicate ethically, professionally and with the participation of communities, offering varied experiences for education, enjoyment, reflection and knowledge sharing."[31]

(Re)presentation. Clevedon – Buffalo – Toronto, Channel View Publications 2006, pp. 244–256, here p. 247.

[26] APOR, P.: An Epistemology of the Spectacle?, p. 331.

[27] KOWAL, P.: A Brief History of the Museum, pp. 16–17.

[28] Ibid., p. 13.

[29] KRAKUS, Anna: What Does It Mean to Be Polish? Europe and Identity in Two Museums in Poland. In: *Curator: The Museum Journal*, Vol. 63, No. 4 (2020), pp. 619–636, here p. 620.

[30] Ibid.

[31] International Council of Museums: ICOM Approves a New Museum Definition. In: *ICOM website* [online], 24. 08. 2022. [Accessed 2022-09-15.] Available at: https://icom.museum/en/news/icom-approves-a-new-museum-definition/.

Illiberalism is one of the challenges we face today. The authoritarian backlash and the weakening of democratic checks and balances, which have defined Fidesz's politics since 2010 and PiS's since 2015, raise suspicion whether these two museums would fulfil the criteria of the new museum definition.[32] In 2017 and 2018, the European Union initiated Article 7 procedures against Poland and Hungary, respectively, for a "clear risk of a serious breach" of fundamental EU values by a member state: "the values of respect for human dignity, freedom, democracy, equality, the rule of law, and respect for human rights, including the rights of persons belonging to minorities".[33] This authoritarian development is closely connected to the mnemonic regimes the two parties have been trying to enforce. Lech Kaczyński and Viktor Orbán both participated in the transformation of 1989, the period which was supposed to be a turning point for Poland and Hungary, respectively.[34] However, Fidesz and PiS imagine the 1989 round table pacts as "rotten deals" that resulted in a "pseudo-transition" that failed to sweep away the socialists and provide "moral clarity".[35] With such a memory regime, these museums risk violating the values of cultural democracy and cultural participation by endangering the plurality of voices. Thus, the museums also prove to be an essential point of analysis in understanding how memory and museums are exploited for political gains.

Analysing Museums as Scripts, Texts, and Narratives

In her work, the curator Henrietta Lidchi coins a phrase that brings together both the semantic and political readings of museum exhibitions: the poetics and politics of exhibiting.[36] She defines the poetics of display as "the practice of producing meaning from the internal orderings and conjugations of the separate but related components of an exhibition",[37] and the politics of display as "the role of exhibitions or museums in the production of social knowledge".[38] In my research

[32] RADONIĆ, L.: "Our" vs. "Inherited" Museums, p. 45.

[33] Ibid., p. 50.

[34] Ibid., p. 51.

[35] BERNHARD, Michael – KUBIK, Jan: The Politics and Culture of Memory Regimes: A Comparative Analysis. In: IDEM (eds.): *Twenty Years After Communism*, pp. 261–296, here p. 278.

[36] LIDCHI, Henrietta: The Poetics and the Politics of Exhibiting Other Cultures. In: HALL, Stuart (ed.): *Representations: Cultural Representations and Signifying Practices.* London, Sage 1997, pp. 151–222, here p. 153.

[37] Ibid., p. 168.

[38] Ibid., p. 185.

protocol, I aim to touch upon these two aspects by uncovering the three layers of national identity articulation in museum exhibitions. The layers I identify are:

(1) the presentation of the nation to the museum visitor,

(2) the representation of the nation in the exhibition, and

(3) the political production of national identity.

I argue that these three layers can be uncovered by analysing museums as scripts, texts, and narratives. I illuminate how these three approaches do so in the sections below.

Museums as Scripts

This approach draws from Carol Duncan and Alan Wallach's understanding of the museum as a physical script. They liken a *museum visit* to performativity, specifically by how the museum's organization of space guides a visitor's movement, attention, and sensory receptors (often the field of vision).[39] More importantly, the nature of the building housing the museum influences how its visitors act, especially if it has a close relationship to its story. Inside the museum, forms of control mimic the performance of a ritual. These forms of control include prompts on where to go, where to direct one's attention, and how to engage with or reflect upon the museum's content. This approach studies the nature, the size, the appearance, and the intended order of the spaces. Analysing the order of the spaces must not be confused with the analysis of the museum as narrative. While chronology is part of narrative, the intended order of the visit will only be analysed in so far as how the museum guides a visitor's movement and not how it tells its story. I ascribe to Christopher Whitehead's definition of differentiating story and narrative. He defines story as the "defined and finite sequences of related events" and narratives as the "telling" of the story.[40] By analysing the museum as a physical script, I can identify how the museum introduces the visitors to the exhibition, which includes its presentation of the nation. Therefore, this approach focuses on "meeting" the nation.

It must be noted that analysing museums as scripts does not deal with real visitors but what Whitehead refers to as the imagined visitor. An imagined visitor is a curatorial construct that is necessary to the museum's creative process but may bear little relation to many real visitors. While I do keep this limitation

[39] WHITEHEAD, Christopher: How to Analyse Museum Display: Script, Text, Narrative. In: *Critical Heritages (CoHERE)*: *Performing and Representing Identities in Europe (Work Package 1, Critical Analysis Tool 2).* European Commission [online], 30. 09. 2016, p. 4. [Accessed 2022-10-28.] Available at: https://digitalcultures.ncl.ac.uk/cohere/wordpress/wp-content/uploads/2016/10/WP1-CAT-1.2.pdf.

[40] Ibid., p. 10.

in mind in my analysis, I would also like to recognize that analysing museums as scripts still forms a robust methodical frame in understanding overtly presented prompts, enabling the researcher to investigate the motives behind it.[41]

Museums as Texts

This approach claims that museum displays can be read. Elements of the display (such as objects, photographs, or lighting) are considered units in a linguistic structure. Precisely because these are taken out of mundane circulation and put on display, Polish historian and philosopher Krzysztof Pomian claims that invisible significations are projected onto them and become carriers of signs or "semiophores".[42] Therefore, a pair of soldier's boots carries a different function from being footwear when put on display. It becomes a "semiophore" that could signify patriotism depending on how the unit is presented. This approach treats a museum exhibition as a communication system of units. Thus, each unit's signification is read in connection with the rest of the exhibit. This makes each unit's signification interdependent and relational. By studying the museum as a system of signification, I can identify what meanings are produced by the exhibition, including the significations that are ascribed to the nation. Therefore, this approach focuses on "signifying" the nation.

The drawbacks of this framework, which are often related to more practical and logistical issues, are also considered in my analysis. I am referring here to conservation requirements, floor-load limits, insurance costs, security, unavailability of objects, or lack of funding that may affect the logic and meaning production of the display. For example, poor lighting may be an electrical issue rather than a deliberate choice. While my analysis makes a conscious effort to avoid the danger of reading too much into displays, I assert that one cannot say that meaning is not there simply because it was not intentionally built into the display.

Museums as Narratives

This approach analyses how the story is being told in the museum. Narratives differ from story because the former focuses on the "telling" of the story, which involves "matters of emphasis, tone, omission, judgement, and convention". This approach studies the manner in which the museum stages temporal issues. By temporal issues, I mean causal links, ruptures, transitions, speed, and cataclysms. It does so by looking at the following:

(1) how the time and place of the story correspond to the architectural spaces and units in the museum,

[41] Ibid., p. 16.

[42] POMIAN, Krzysztof: *Collectors & Curiosities*. Cambridge, Polity Press 1990, p. 6.

(2) the story elements present in the museum and the order in which they are encountered,
(3) how the story flows (whether one storyline progresses in a linear fashion or various storylines do so simultaneously), and
(4) the agents of change.

By analysing the museum as a narrative, I can identify how the museum makes sense of its story in the context of national memory and identity. Therefore, this approach focuses on "belonging" to the nation.

It must be noted that, just like the first approach, this approach also deals with the imaginary visitor. It assumes that the visitors will pay a great deal of attention to the entire exhibition. However, as we all know, a visitor's experience will be different, especially if they only gravitate towards parts of the exhibit that interest them the most. Nonetheless, it is still worth examining these to show the political motivations behind the museum.

House of Terror

I argue that the visitors to the House of Terror meet a victimized nation. The museum presents a nation terrorized by two brutal regimes, from the building's façade to its entrance hall and throughout its exhibition. The depiction of victimhood capitalizes on the principle that victims cannot be victimizers. Thus, it represents the nation as innocent during the period of the Arrow Cross Party (*Nyilaskeresztes Párt*, NYKP) from October 1944 to March 1945 and communist dictatorships. By representing the nation as innocent, it can externalize the culpability of the crimes committed. More importantly, it can classify these periods as foreign or inorganic to national identity and memory.

Meeting a Victimized Hungarian Nation

The presentation of a victimized nation already begins even before the visitor enters the museum. The word "terror" in capital letters looms above the building, with the communist star and the symbol of the NYKP, which are two double-headed arrows forming a cross. From its appearance alone, the museum stands in sharp contrast to the rest of the neo-renaissance architecture along Andrássy Avenue. The avenue, recognized as a World Heritage site in 2002, is one of Budapest's main shopping streets and home to fine cafés, restaurants, theatres, embassies, and luxury boutiques. Upon approaching the museum entrance, the visitor sees a memorial plaque erected beside it. Its text outlines the political terror that the nation endured under the NYKP and communist dictatorships from the

late 1930s up to the communist rule. This already sets the visitor's expectations of what the museum is all about.

As Hungarian historian István Rév writes, the story of the museum building is one "of undifferentiated terror from the moment of the German occupation [March 19, 1944] until the summer of 1991, when 57 years later, the Soviet army left the territory of Hungary".[43] From 1937 until the end of the Second World War, it served as the NYKP's meeting place.[44] However, in 1944, the party used it as a prison and torture centre.[45] During Hungary's communist period, the building served as the headquarters of the State Protection Authority (*Államvédelmi Osztály/Hatóság*, ÁVO/ÁVH), which gained a reputation for brutality during the series of purges that began in 1948. Until the 1956 uprising, the building served as their interrogation centre.[46] In 2000, the government-sponsored Public Foundation for Research on Central and East European History and Society (*A Közép- és Kelet-európai Történelem és Társadalom Kutatásáért Közalapítvány*) bought the building along Andrássy Avenue to house a museum of Hungary's post-war history. Thus, the distinctive building that houses the museum is the same site where people were detained, interrogated, tortured, or killed by both regimes. The building's history elicits a certain level of respect from the museum visitors, as if paying homage to the victims.[47] The same thread continues as the visitor enters the building. The visitor is welcomed by dark gothic-like melodies and a carefully lit, narrow, gloomy stairway leading to two tombstone-like memorial plaques. The plaques commemorate the victims of the communist and Arrow Cross regimes: one is black with the symbol of the NYKP, while the other is red with the star. The overall mood of the entrance hall urges the visitor to be quiet and respectful. This mood is maintained when the visitor enters the exhibition. The visitor immediately sees a former Soviet tank T-64. Behind it, a collage of the victims' faces cascades from the roof of the building down to the ground floor.

The museum's curators intended to create an ethnographic-style exhibition to depict the past in its totality. This is similar to how conventional anthropological museums strove to capture a culture in various aspects.[48] The principal designer of the exhibition, Attila Ferenczfy-Kovács, is a former stage designer

[43] Quoted in CREET, J.: The House of Terror, p. 30.

[44] UHL, Heidemarie – FORRESTER, Sandra: Conflicting Cultures of Memory in Europe: New Borders between East and West? In: *Israel Journal of Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 3, No. 3 (2009), pp. 59–72, here p. 59.

[45] RÁTZ, T.: Interpretation in the House of Terror, p. 247.

[46] Ibid.

[47] RADONIĆ, L.: "Our" vs. "Inherited" Museums, p. 51.

[48] APOR, P.: An Epistemology of the Spectacle?, p. 330.

turned historian. Thus, it is no surprise that the museum's main object was to achieve visual intensity by turning each room into a graphic surprise to maintain the visitor's interest. Arguing that traditional historical museums are ineffective in conveying their message, the curators designed the House of Terror as a criticism of conventional historical exhibitions. In their view, a standard exhibition is text-heavy with little to no spectacle, resulting in dull exhibits. To them, this kind of exhibition cannot maintain the interest of the younger audience. Moreover, after studying the museum exhibition, it seems as though the minute details of the past become less important. The museum designers claimed that only a few objects from the period were available, forcing them to experiment with "new ways of getting access to the past".[49] Ferenczfy-Kovács said that it was difficult to visualize certain historical events accurately, adding that an accurate account would be incomprehensible and reduce the richness of their interpretation.[50] Thus, it was more faithful and effective for the museum designers to mediate such a period through "the complex experience of a multimedia installation".[51]

The exhibition is designed strictly chronologically. From its entrance, the visitors are ushered to the second floor, where the exhibition formally starts. In each exhibition room, there is only one entrance and one exit. The exit of one room serves as the entrance to the next. From the museum's façade and entrance hall, the visitor assumes that the dictatorship of the Arrow Cross Party and communism will be equally presented. However, as the visitor goes through the exhibition, it becomes clear how the museum focuses more on the crimes committed during the communist era "while only paying mere lip service to the mass murder of the Jews of Hungary".[52] Only two-and-a-half rooms are devoted to the terror of fascism and Nazism: the room on the double occupation of the fascist and communist (counted as half a room), the Arrow Cross corridor and the Arrow Cross hall. The rest deals with the crimes of the communist dictatorship.

We can see the working of the museum's script through its overwhelming concentration on the violence and brutality of the communist dictatorship and how it completely ignores the history of the authoritarian Horthy regime.[53] Where the exhibition just once refers to the Budapest ghetto, it claims that it was "lucky" to be liquidated only in 1945. As Ljiljana Radonić points out, it is "a strange choice of words, to say the least".[54] As she observes, this kind of representation downplays

[49] Ibid., 331.

[50] Ibid., 330.

[51] Ibid.

[52] UHL, H. – FORRESTER, S.: Conflicting Cultures of Memory in Europe, p. 59.

[53] APOR, P.: An Epistemology of the Spectacle?, p. 334.

[54] RADONIĆ, L.: "Our" vs. "Inherited" Museums, p. 52.

Visitors immediately encounter a former Soviet T-64 tank upon entering the entrance hall of the House of Terror. The atmosphere urges the visitor to be quiet and respectful. Behind the tank, a collage of the victims’ faces cascades from the roof of the building down to the ground floor.

The author’s own archive / © Rose Smith

the relevance of the political culture initiated by the pre-Nazi Hungarian governments during the Miklós Horthy period, failing to adequately explain the historical context of the shockingly bloody rule of the NYKP.[55] Instead, the museum disregards anti-Semitic and authoritarian aspects by depicting Hungary's Horthy era as a functioning multiparty system.[56] As scholars have pointed out, the museum guidebook published in 2007 writes: "Up to the time of the Nazi occupation of 1944, Hungary's affairs were conducted by an elected, legitimate parliament and government, with representatives of active opposition parties sitting in the chambers."[57] This effectively omits the fact that Hungarian Jews were murdered before the German occupation and blurs the fact that most Hungarian Jews were deported immediately after the Nazi occupation, while Horthy was still in power. Individuals responsible for the atrocities of the Second World War are featured only in their subsequent capacity as "victims of communist dictatorship".[58] As Péter Apor observes, "the impression is truly puzzling: as if the House of Terror evoked the horrors of communism only to render fascism irrelevant".[59]

In response to the criticisms received by the museum for effectively marginalizing the Holocaust, Mária Schmidt, the Director-General of the House of Terror and frontwoman of Fidesz's memory politics, responded that the Holocaust belonged in a separate Holocaust Museum.[60] Indeed, the Holocaust Memorial Centre (*Holokauszt Emlékközpont*) was established in Hungary in 1999 and opened in 2004. However, scholars have pointed out that it has achieved little resonance in Hungarian society. Compared to the more popular House of Terror, the Holocaust Memorial Centre is often nearly empty and visited mostly by foreign tourists.[61] The prominent presence of the memory of communism compared to the Holocaust serves as a classic example of post-communist Europe's difficulty in incorporating the destruction of the Jews into its recent memory.[62]

The primary impetus behind the creation of the House of Terror may provide a reason for this imbalance. As early as 1997, then Fidesz party vice president József Szájer, floated the idea of turning the building along Andrássy Avenue into

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[55] Ibid.

[56] Ibid.

[57] DĄBKOWSKA-CICHOCKA, Lena – JASIŃSKI, Grzegorz – UKIELSKI, Paweł: *Guidebook to the Warsaw Rising Museum*. Warsaw, Warsaw Rising Museum 2007, p. 51.

[58] RADONIĆ, L.: "Our" vs. "Inherited" Museums, p. 53.

[59] APOR, P.: An Epistemology of the Spectacle?, p. 335.

[60] RADONIĆ, L.: "Our" vs. "Inherited" Museums, p. 52.

[61] UHL, H. – FORRESTER, S.: Conflicting Cultures of Memory in Europe, p. 60.

[62] Ibid.

a museum of communism.[63] According to the museum's director Mária Schmidt, the motivation behind creating the museum was the question of what to do with the many perpetrators of crimes committed under the communist regime. As American sociologist Amy Sodaro points out, Hungary's uneasy relationship with transitional justice resulted in an uneasy amnesty, which was deeply unsatisfying to many people, especially Schmidt and her colleagues in Fidesz.[64] Thus, plans for the museum to expose the truth about the communist past were drawn up in the effort to move forward and come to terms with their history, if not juridically, then morally. Thus, when Fidesz gained power in 1998, the project began to take shape.[65] By extension, since the building was also used by the preceding fascist regime and considering the striking similarity of repression under the two regimes, the museum was also created to remember Hungary's more distant past of suffering under Nazi occupation.[66]

In terms of the exhibit in each room, the museum presents the Hungarian victims individually. The personal stories of Hungarians are threaded throughout the exhibition in video interviews, documentaries, or with their possessions on display. The first room on communist terror, Gulag, is also one of the museum's biggest (if not the biggest) exhibition rooms. It presents the individual stories of the victims. The visitor's attention is drawn to the monitors on the walls. The monitors show Hungarians recounting their memories of the forced-labour and slave camps. Speaking in Hungarian with English subtitles, they tell their stories of being separated from their loved ones and tortured by their occupiers. After one story, a video of the view from a moving train with its corresponding sound plays and then transitions to the next story. The sound grabs the attention of the visitor. Objects, which it can be inferred were owned by the detainees, are presented in display cases in the room. The display cases are in the shape of cones. The tip of the cone points to a location on a map of camps on the floor. This is the visitor's first encounter with the individual victims.

The visitor gets a clear picture of how the period has impacted the lives of many Hungarians. One encounter with the victims is during a slow, depressing and excruciating elevator ride to the cellar. During the elevator ride, a video of an elderly man describing the routine of hanging prisoners is shown. The man in the video had been a cleaning attendant at executions. The elevator doors open to the museum's cellars, where torture chambers of the ÁVO/ÁVH have been reconstructed. This may confuse the visitor into thinking that the executions the

[63] SODARO, A.: The House of Terror, p. 66.

[64] Ibid.

[65] Ibid.

[66] Ibid., pp. 66–67.

man mentions happened here. Several other rooms present the stories of individual Hungarians in the same manner. The Religion Room (112) projects documentaries about the persecuted and imprisoned members of the clergy. An entire room (113) is dedicated to József Mindszenty, a cardinal who uncompromisingly opposed fascism and communism. In the 1956 Room, the leather coat of Gergely Pongrátz, one of the victims of the Mosonmagyaróvár fusillade, hangs from the ceiling. Names of the martyrs can be heard from the loudspeaker in the Reprisals Hall. In the Emigration Room, individual postcards written by those who left Hungary after the Revolution of 1956 can be read by the visitors. Names of those executed between 1945 and 1967 are on the walls of the Hall of Tears (-07, basement). These individual stories paint a picture of a victimized nation through personal stories, possessions, and memories.

Approaching this exhibit as a text enables us to observe that the visitor mostly meets the perpetrators in rather abstract, intangible forms, which loom throughout the exhibition. The first room is the double occupation room, which reminds the visitor of the two symbols on the façade of the building as well as the two plaques in the entrance hall. The room is split in two by a dividing wall. From the wall, monitors are fixed on opposite sides. The exhibition guides the visitor's attention towards monitors that play videos of atrocities on loop without any explanatory text (except for the museum text printed on paper). The Change Room (206) displays a symbolic change of clothes with two mannequins without a head wearing a Soviet uniform and an Arrow Cross Party uniform. The Soviet Advisors Room is filled with Soviet paraphernalia to evoke the Soviet presence in Hungary. This paraphernalia includes a painting of Stalin and a big red armchair, which instantly catches the visitor's attention. The Resettlement and Deportation Room (101) displays the ZIM automobile, which is "a frightening relic of the times", evoking "the infamous 'black car' used by the communist political police to pick up its victims, usually in the middle of the night".[67] The Torture Chamber Room (102), which displays torture instruments on the wall, is the only room preserved in its original form. When the visitors can meet the perpetrators individually, a particular distance remains between them. While a figure of Ferenc Szálasi, the leader of the fascist party, is on display in the Hall of the Arrow Cross (204), his body is represented by his uniform and his head is projected in a way that blends it with the illuminated background presenting what seems like his ghostly form. In the ÁVO Entrance Hall (106), a red star stands in the middle of the room between the board of photos of the members of the communist political police's chiefs-of-staff and the visitor as he or she enters. The study of ÁVH's

[67] SCHMIDT, Mária (ed.): *House of Terror Guidebook.* Budapest, Director-General of the Public Foundation for Research on Central and Eastern European History and Society 2019, p. 28.

chief, Péter Gábor, is recreated (Room 107) but with his eery, invisible presence. Only at the end, in the Perpetrators' Wall, does the visitor come face-to-face with the victimizers. Therefore, throughout the exhibition, the visitor generally feels the perpetrators' ghostly presence, be it Nazis or communists.

Emphasizing an Inorganic Past within Hungary's National Memory

By capitalizing on spectacle, especially a shocking and depressing atmosphere of violence, this presentation of a victimized nation is, I argue, a way for it to claim its innocence. The units in the exhibition externalize all culpability. They suggest that the German occupation enabled the Hungarian Nazis to take over. Moreover, the Change Room (206), which is featured very prominently at the beginning of the exhibition, wrongly claims that the so-called Hungarian Nazis of the Arrow Cross Party simply changed uniforms after 1945 and became the communist State Security.[68] The exhibition suggests to its visitors that former Hungarian Nazis were all turned into communists. They operated large-scale terror and surveillance under orders of omnipotent Soviet advisers. In claiming this, the museum minimizes the number of the so-called evil Hungarians and makes them the exception to the rule. The individual stories are included in the exhibition "insofar as their narrative of heroic struggle contributes to the Hungarian cause".[69] The individuals were solely victims subjected to manipulation, propaganda, and show trials. The basement, which is the most emotionally charged section of the exhibition, suggests that Hungarians were executed, tortured, and jailed despite a moment of heroic resistance in 1956. Moreover, all anti-communist fighters are depicted as heroes and even martyrs who sacrificed their lives or freedom to fight the oppressor.

The representation of an innocent nation that endured the brutality of the communist political terror is rooted in Fidesz's ambitious memory politics. They "decided to build 'national pride' on a voluntaristic and mythical series of *grandeur et gloire* connected to the history of the Hungarian state and (Christian) church(es)".[70] As Péter Apor explains, to construct the Christian state as Hungary's ahistorical and eternal abstraction, the Fidesz-led government used the millennium as an opportunity to show a historical continuity of the Hungarian state. It commemorated 1,000 years after Stephen I (István), the ruler responsible for Christianizing the Magyars, who was crowned the first King of Hungary. This celebration grounded the Hungarian collective memory in Christian-clerical historicization and national particularism. Moreover, they also transferred the

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[68] RADONIĆ, L.: "Our" vs. "Inherited" Museums, p. 52.

[69] Ibid., p. 53.

[70] APOR, P.: An Epistemology of the Spectacle?, p. 334.

Holy Crown from the National Museum to the building of the Parliament. This marked the symbolic foundation of the medieval kingdom as the beginning of modern Hungary, which allowed the sacred crown of Saint Stephen to be the ultimate representative of the Hungarian political body in the late Middle Ages and early modern times. In 2000, it was regarded as the symbol of Hungarian statehood by the Fidesz-led government. This weaved together a continuous narrative of a Christian nation highlighting the essence of the Hungarian state, which is not subject to temporal change and "embodies" the deepest desire of the nation.

The House of Terror plays a special role in the politics of history in contemporary Hungary, which centres on trying to isolate the communist dictatorship as an external non-national past of political terror. The museum's attempt to detach it as an event of non-national history safeguards a range of resilient qualities and features that characterize the nation and remain unchanged despite and during communism.[71] After all, the biggest enemy of communism was religion. Thus, the House of Terror was founded to disseminate the message of anti-communism, to convince Hungarians that the political left was dangerously associated with the potential of a brutal dictatorship, and to regenerate national identity and pride as an antidote within society.[72]

Thus, memory politics in contemporary Hungary, particularly in the House of Terror, centres on the interpretation of the communist dictatorship, which is represented exclusively as an external force maintained solely by violence, coercion, and force. This portrayal of the communist dictatorship buttresses the representation of the nation as an eternal entity through its resilient qualities that remained unchanged during and despite communism. Following the museum's portrayal of the past, the appalling periods of the nation's past are regarded as regrettable accidents brought about by external forces. Meanwhile, the once victimized nation is now a success story.

The Warsaw Rising Museum

The visitor to the Warsaw Rising Museum meets, I argue, a nation that is worth fighting for. The museum presents the individual stories of the insurgents and uses techniques that immerse the visitor in the atmosphere of that time. Such techniques influence how the visitor engages with the exhibition. The depiction of a nation worth fighting for represents a strong and brave nation that endured the brutalities of the war and the occupation that followed. This representation

[71] Ibid., pp. 334–336.

[72] Ibid., p. 334.

continues to include the visitor and communicates with them as though they are part of its history. By representing the nation as strong-spirited, it can reinscribe a story of loss as that of a victory postponed within Poland's national memory.

Meeting the Nation Worth Fighting For

Originally intended to be housed in the former building of the Polish Bank on Bielańska Street, the last insurgent stronghold defending the Old Town, the Warsaw Rising Museum found its home in a municipal tram power plant built between 1904 and 1905. An architectural competition was launched for its renovation, with more than fifty projects submitted. Krakow architect Wojciech Obtułowicz submitted the winning design. His design was based on a few paradoxes, including combining modern exhibition halls with an industrial architectural setting and the transformation of a building from the time of the rule of the Russian tsar into a museum symbolizing patriotism, love of freedom and the struggle for independence. Moreover, the museum's design turned an unsophisticated factory building into one with a reverential function. The museum's chapel, the Wall of Remembrance and Freedom Park urge visitors to pay their respects to those who fought for Warsaw's freedom.

The museum was built with the intention of moving away from traditional methods of museology. The archives at the Warsaw Rising Museum, as quoted in Żychlińska and Fontana's research, show that "a visit to the museum is supposed to be an emotional lesson of patriotism directed at young people" and should "above all, and from the very beginning, avoid museal boredom".[73] Upon entering the exhibition, the visitor encounters the past by walking amidst the recreated ruins of Warsaw, touching walls, and gathering calendar cards with daily news about the battles. A heartbeat and a reproduction of the uprising's soundscape can be heard throughout the exhibit. The atmosphere in the exhibition recreates the past. In an interview in *Gazeta Stołeczna*, the museum director, Jan Ołdakowski, said that the museum aimed to present the story of the Warsaw Rising in a similar manner to the script of an American movie. This presentation would include having an introduction, plot development, culmination point, and ending, emphasizing that the texts are only supplementary, with the visual presentation of the museum being the primary medium to convey the museum's message.[74] However, the museum's design does not strictly impose a chronological visit as the House of Terror does. While it does have a map that suggests a chronological path, the spaces are designed so visitors can easily move around each exhibit, which may result in the visitor deliberately or unintentionally skipping certain

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[73] ŻYCHLIŃSKA, M. – FONTANA, E.: Museal Games and Emotional Truths, pp. 246–247.

[74] Ibid., p. 246.

exhibits. Therefore, the visitor would most likely encounter the feel of the past rather than the sequence of events.

The visitor becomes part of the museum, which means part of the insurgency. Young visitors from seven to eleven years old are invited to the Little Insurgent's Room, which serves as a playground and an educational spot. With replicas of historical toys from the late 1930s to little barricades and insurgents' helmets and camouflage jackets, they can participate in the exhibition in their own way. Moreover, the young visitors can also hear the music of Tomasz Stańko and insurgent songs in Joszko Broda's contemporary arrangement to complete their immersion. Older visitors can also have their own immersive experience in the museum. They can have a glimpse of what it was like to go through the sewer routes, which maintained the links between individual combat sites. Another exhibit that adds to the visitor's experience is an exact replica of the Liberator B-24J heavy bomber, hanging from the museum ceiling. On the walls of the ground floor, there are stereoscopes, which were popular before the war, inviting the visitor to view certain episodes of the Rising through them. These interactions with the exhibit give the visitors a different experience from simply looking at these photographs or videos behind a glass case.

Moreover, during my visit, the museum hosted an installation entitled "Reflection: I Am like You, Surely", which immerses the visitors in the past. Located in the Liberator Hall, the installation displays interactive mirrors, which scan the visitor's facial features to find his or her double among the archives of insurgent photographs.[75] The mirror projects the question: "Do you have the courage to stand face to face with your reflection from the time of the Rising?" The mirror then projects the name of the insurgent (if known) and what his or her role was during the Rising. In my case, I was an unnamed insurgent in the scout field post unit in the south district of the city centre. In the museum guide, Paweł Kowal writes that the museum was designed for people today to connect with ordinary people during the Warsaw Rising and realize that they were individuals, just like the rest of us, who were, as he poetically described, "thrown into the portals of history and left to their own fate with public affairs invading their personal lives".[76] The motive behind the museum is for people to stop and reflect: "What would I do if the Rising started now?" These techniques therefore prompt the visitor to reflect on the past through the eyes of the insurgents.

Moreover, as in the House of Terror, the visitor is confronted by the individual stories of the Polish insurgents. The creators of the museum focus on ordinary insurgents rather than political or military leaders. Upon entering the exhibition, an

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[75] Visitors were warned in advance that their biometric data would be scanned.

[76] KOWAL, P.: A Brief History of the Museum, p. 11.

A photo of the installation, “Reflection: I Am like You, Surely” is located in the Liberator Hall of the Warsaw Rising Museum. The installation displays interactive mirrors, which scan the visitor’s facial features to find their double among the archives of insurgent photographs and to engage them in a dialogue, asking them how they would have acted during the time of the Rising.

The author’s own archive / © Rose Smith

array of telephone booths welcomes the visitors. They are invited to have a "conversation" with individual insurgents. Next to the telephone, the visitor can find a set of buttons corresponding to a particular question. The questions include: "What were your tasks on the first day of the uprising?" and "How did the uprising end for you?" Moreover, the museum is dotted with the many individual possessions of the insurgents. One showcase contains a collection of 382 insurgent identification cards and three insurgent passes containing factual personal data, with some issued to code or fake names. Thus, the museum presents the insurgents' individual stories, hopes, and anxieties against the backdrop of Poland's Second World War history. The distance between the past and the present is eliminated by presenting a relatable and emotional history.[77]

Our Strong Polish Nation

The Warsaw Rising Museum adapts a totalizing abstract design for its exhibition. It depicts the Poles, the uprising, and the museum as one organic unit focusing on a heroic and martyrological Polish past that fades out any negative and controversial aspects.[78] As Żychlińska and Fontana point out, this idea can be found in one of the museum's founding documents, which states that "it is important to present the interweaving of the fate of individual insurgents with the fate of the nation and the state – the moment of making an individual decision to participate in the Rising which implied taking the risk of dying".[79] Thus, by emphasizing individuals whose fates were bound up with the nation, all wartime civilians are portrayed as having quasi-naturally supported the uprising.[80]

As Polish historian Marta Kurkowska-Budzan notes in her work published in 2006, the museum's mission statement is to show the importance of the Rising as an example of the strength of the Polish spirit.[81] The Polish spirit referred to here is the same spirit that eventually helped overthrow communism and secure Poland's status as a free country. In particular, the museum handpicked stories that generated empathy with the individual insurgents.[82] One display is an emotionally charged prayer written by an eight-year-old girl for her father, who had fought in the uprising. The prayer, which was written on a piece of paper, is assigned the following description: "Shot in combat, the bullet stopped at

[77] ŻYCHLIŃSKA, M. – FONTANA, E.: Museal Games and Emotional Truths, p. 247.

[78] Ibid.

[79] Ibid.

[80] RADONIĆ, L.: "Our" vs. "Inherited" Museums, p. 55.

[81] KURKOWSKA-BUDZAN, M.: The Warsaw Rising Museum, p. 138.

[82] RADONIĆ, L.: "Our" vs. "Inherited" Museums, p. 56.

the paper with the prayer written on it by his child."[83] As observed by Ljiljana Radonić, only Poles are individualized in such a way. Members of other groups are not depicted in such a way that would evoke similar empathy. Moreover, the museum also portrays Poles and Polish Jews in a particular manner, which does not let the Holocaust narrative overshadow that of the Polish suffering. This can be seen in how genocide, the "systematic extermination of Poles", and "selection" are used to try to equalize Polish suffering with the Shoah.[84]

The museum depicts Poland's survival under two totalitarian regimes. While, unlike the House of Terror, the Warsaw Rising Museum does make space for the crimes committed against Poles during the Nazi occupation, the museum also emphasizes Soviet betrayal to a large degree. As Radonić points out, the 2007 museum guidebook mentions Hitler in seven paragraphs and Stalin in twenty-five and defines the uprising as "the last attempt to save Poland from Soviet enslavement".[85] She also observed how the guidebook devotes a lot of space to equalizing the two totalitarian regimes: "The Germans wanted to destroy Polish national identity and Warsaw lay at its heart. [...] The other invader – the Soviet Union – had the same aim: to exterminate the Polish elite." [86] In response to visitors' critical feedback, a room, entitled "The Germans in Warsaw" was added to the cellar in 2007. The language of the museum is also telling of how the museum tends strongly to emphasize the crimes committed by Soviet perpetrators and traitors. It uses more emotionally charged language when talking about them than about their Nazi counterparts.[87] However, it cannot be denied that while the Nazi crimes feature prominently, when it comes to perpetrators, the Soviets are more conspicuous.

Engaged in the heroic anti-Nazi conspiracy, the museum presents a memory of Poles that were victimized by Germans and Soviet Russians and betrayed by Western Allies. With an overall conclusion that they were victimized by history, the dichotomy between them and us is intensely perceived and resented, leaving little room for reflecting on issues about Polish-Jewish, Polish-German, or Polish-Ukrainian relations.[88] Thus, the construction of memory is centred on those of ethnic Roman Catholic Poles.[89] Hence, we also find a church in the museum.

[83] DĄBKOWSKA-CICHOCKA, L. – JASIŃSKI, G. – UKIELSKI, P.: *Guidebook to the Warsaw Rising Museum*, p. 56.

[84] RADONIĆ, L.: "Our" vs. "Inherited" Museums, p. 57.

[85] Ibid., p. 56.

[86] Ibid.

[87] Ibid.

[88] KURKOWSKA-BUDZAN, M.: The Warsaw Rising Museum, p. 140.

[89] Ibid.

With themes such as Polish heroism and patriotism and opposition to communism used to build up mythical icons of the Polish past, the museum portrays the identity that the PiS wants Poland to have, which is "a patriotic, Catholic nation, far from the liberal democracy of the previous years".[90] Its depiction links Polish identity and Roman Catholicism, harking back to the nineteenth-century tradition of Polish romanticism, in which ideas and values were expressed in the slogan "God, Honour, Homeland". This portrayal plays a crucial social role in shaping and maintaining the PiS' uncritical, mythologized, and nationalistic history of the Poles.

Retelling a Story of Loss into a Story of a Victory Postponed with Poland's National Memory

As the museum interweaves the fate of citizens, insurgents, and the nation, some critics have observed that the exhibition risks giving its visitors the impression that heroic Poland and Warsaw won the battle.[91] This impression is due to how the museum perceives the uprising. Paweł Ukielski describes the ultimate outcome of the uprising as a "victory postponed".[92] While claiming that the memory of having resisted totalitarianism sustained and strengthened people during communism, the real victory comes about with the end of communism, which PiS claims is yet to be achieved.[93] In an expert opinion commissioned by the museum, historian Andrzej Krzysztof Kunert poses a set of rhetorical questions: "Should in the history of nations and states only the victories and successes matter? Should the place of a particular historical event in the national memory be determined only by its immediate results? And the most important issue – what perspective is sufficient to address those questions?"[94] As Żychlińska and Fontana write, these questions "rhetorically reframe the discourse about the Rising, shifting it from pragmatic discussions of its causes, the likelihood of its success, and its political, social, and historical consequences to an axiological level that addresses the values and ideals the Rising represents".[95] Thus, the Rising is represented as an exceptional event not only within the history of Poland but also within human history generally. This is not because of its scale, success, or lack thereof, but because of its symbolic value. It is taken to represent a decision to fight for freedom in insurmountable circumstances. This definition of the Rising can be

[90] KRAKUS, A.: What Does It Mean to Be Polish, p. 620.

[91] RADONIĆ, L.: "Our" vs. "Inherited" Museums, p. 56.

[92] Ibid., p. 57.

[93] Ibid.

[94] ŻYCHLIŃSKA, M. – FONTANA, E.: Museal Games and Emotional Truths, p. 247.

[95] Ibid., p. 247

found in the museum through subliminal messaging. Therefore, as Żychlińska and Fontana observe in the museum's founding documents, the Rising is described as "a moral phenomenon on a great scale", while Warsaw is referred to as "the Capital of Freedom".[96] Inevitably, the museum's originators reference the tradition of fighting for the liberation of the Polish nation expressed in the statement "For Your Freedom and Ours".[97]

Paweł Ukielski, the museum's deputy director, claims that the Warsaw Rising Museum was founded because contemporary Poles realized that only a memory community could bring real change.[98] One of the museum's frequent guests is the former Minister of Education and chairman of the nationalist League of Polish Families Party (*Liga Polskich Rodzin*, LPR) Roman Giertych, and it has been observed that conservative politicians and intellectuals are strongly engaged in efforts to set up the Warsaw Rising Museum as a core of contemporary Polish identity.[99] As American historian John Radzilowski highlights, the museum's design was "meant to serve simultaneously as a place of education and of remembrance, reflection, and commemoration".[100] Marta Kurkowska-Budzan writes that the museum serves as an essential background in public education on lessons of patriotism by offering school trips and history lessons to school children. Moreover, she also notes how the museum is constantly present in the news, commentaries and family entertainment programmes and it is praised for its mission and outstanding exhibition, which may not differ much from the methods employed by the memory politics of the communist regime.[101]

Concluding Remarks

Orbán's Fidesz and Kaczyński's PiS have established two museums of recent history as epistemological tools in advancing their own memory politics onto the national collective. The House of Terror and the Warsaw Rising Museum use spectacle to provide an alternate epistemology through "mental projections, cultural

[96] Ibid., p. 248

[97] Ibid.

[98] RADONIĆ, L.: "Our" vs. "Inherited" Museums, pp. 57–58.

[99] KURKOWSKA-BUDZAN, M.: The Warsaw Rising Museum, p. 136.

[100] RADZILOWSKI, John: Remembrance and Recovery: The Museum of the Warsaw Rising and the Memory of World War II in Post-Communist Poland. In: *The Public Historian*, Vol. 31, No. 4 (2009), pp. 143–158, here p. 147.

[101] KURKOWSKA-BUDZAN, M.: The Warsaw Rising Museum, pp. 139–140.

canons, and iconology".[102] As Péter Apor points out, memory is not only a distinct sociocultural practice concerning the past but also "a remarkably distinct methodology to get access to the past".[103] By visiting the House of Terror and the Warsaw Rising Museum, one can gain access to the past.

However, the question is: To what kind of past are you gaining access? On the one hand, by presenting an abstract image of communism as an external political horror, the House of Terror can claim that the Hungarian people as a whole were innocent and were under communism against their will. By isolating the communist dictatorship, the House of Terror supports the ambitions of the Fidesz party in building national pride on a voluntaristic and mythical history of the Christian Hungarian state. On the other hand, by weaving in the fate of the insurgents with that of the nation and the state, the Warsaw Rising Museum provides an image of Poland that has and will always patriotically fight for freedom. By generating empathy with the freedom fighting Polish Catholic insurgents, the Warsaw Rising Museum supports the ambitions of PiS to cultivate national belonging in a patriotic, Catholic nation. Thus, these museums perform the core memory work for the two mnemonic warriors.

By analysing the museum as script, text, and narrative, I was able to trace how the museum presents and signifies the nation and how these articulate the national identity these museums espouse. In the case of the House of Terror, I argue that the museum depicts a victimized and innocent nation so that it can isolate the past from its ahistorical and eternal national memory and identity. In the case of the Warsaw Rising Museum, I argue that the museum portrays a nation that is strong and worth fighting for so that it can retell a story of loss to one of postponed victory. Therefore, by borrowing methodological approaches from museum studies, I uncover three layers of national identity articulation: the presentation of the nation, the representation of the nation, and the political production of national identity.

Abstract

*More than thirty years after the fall of communism, both Hungary and Poland are still trying to reinvent their national identity by understanding their pasts. As flagship museums of Viktor Orbán's Hungary Civic Alliance (Fidesz) in Hungary and Jarosław Kaczyński's Law and Justice Party (PiS) in Poland, the House of Terror (*Terror Háza*) in Budapest and the Warsaw Rising Museum (*Muzeum Powstania Warszawskiego*) have been used as epistemological tools in advancing*

[102] APOR, P.: An Epistemology of the Spectacle?, p. 330.

[103] Ibid., 333.

the governing party's respective memory politics. Within their portrayal of the nation's contemporary past, these museums also endorse a particular national identity that serves the political desires of both Fidesz and PiS. This article traces how the museums present and signify the nation and how they articulate the national identity espoused by the museum. The author borrows methodological approaches from museum studies and formulates her own research protocol, which identifies three layers of national identity articulation: the presentation of the nation, the representation of the nation, and the political production of national identity.

Keywords:

Hungary; Poland; communism; museums; memory politics; museum studies; national identity; Terror Háza – House of Terror; Muzeum Powstania Warszawskiego – Warsaw Rising Museum; Fidesz; Prawo i Sprawiedliwość – Law and Justice Party

DOI: 10.51134/sod.2022.042

Socialism as Ideology, Socialism as Legacy

Attitudes of the (Socialist) Republic of Slovenia Towards Its Socialist Past (1980–2004)

Tjaša Konovšek

Institute of Contemporary History, Ljubljana

The study of the politics of memory,[1] or, as the German political philosopher and historian Jan-Werner Müller has defined it, the study of the past's involvement in the present, is an approach closely related to the study of categories such as nation and identity.[2] Studying the politics of memory means examining connections between memory and political power as exercised by various historical actors, including state institutions, as well as the impact of memory on shaping power relations within a community. While memory itself can be and often is a very personal experience, memory is understood here in the context of memory politics, comprised of the "public activity of various social institutions and actors aimed at the promotion of specific interpretations of a collective past and establishment of an appropriate sociocultural infrastructure of remembrance, school curricula, and, sometimes, specific legislation".[3] When dealing with the politics of memory, the main interest of scholars is most often the ways of remembering historical events, their changing impact and reception in political, scholarly, popular, and other evocations.[4] Thus, this process of remembering itself becomes a historical

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[1] I am grateful to my colleague Dr Bojan Godeša for long and fruitful debates on the topic, which helped me shape this contribution.

[2] MÜLLER, Jan-Werner: Introduction: The Power of Memory, the Memory of Power and the Power Over Memory. In: IDEM (ed.): *Memory and Power in Post-War Europe: Studies in the Presence of the Past.* Cambridge, Cambridge University Press 2002, pp. 2–19.

[3] MALINOVA, Olga: Politics of Memory and Nationalism. In: *Nationalities Papers*, Vol. 49, No. 6 (2021), pp. 997–1007, here pp. 997–998.

[4] TAMM, Marek: Introduction: Afterlife of Events. Perspectives on Mnemohistory. In: IDEM (ed.): *Afterlife of Events: Perspectives on Mnemohistory*. Basingstoke (UK) – New York, Palgrave Macmillan 2015, pp. 1–26, here p. 3. In a recent study, Georgiy Kasianov uses the term "historical politics" as a synonym for "politics of history". For a detailed analysis between memory, history, and politics, see also KASIANOV, Georgiy: *Memory Crash: Politics of History in and Around Ukraine, 1980s–2010s*. Budapest, Central European University Press 2022, pp. 8–13.

event and should be historicized, since forming and exhibiting different understandings of the past have concrete strategic, political, and ethical consequences.[5]

When taking into consideration the state's attitude towards the past, an important question emerges: Can state institutions be the entry point of historical research when thinking about the politics of memory? Or would it be more effective to focus on the activity of various politicians or memory entrepreneurs ("actors seeking social recognition and political legitimacy for their preferred narrative of the past and combining resources across political, historiographic and Eurocratic fields")?[6] While both these focuses have proven to be fruitful, I propose that setting the research focus on the state and basing the research in institutions may also prove valid. There are two aspects that I wish to elaborate on, which both reflect the empirical research presented in this paper.

First, institutions themselves contain a high level of inertia, which at least to some degree affects every individual that is active in politics, from the local to the republic and federal or other supranational levels.[7] Even the activities of memory entrepreneurs, who are crucial actors in creating memory politics, are tightly connected to political and state institutions. If nothing else, the memory institutes that memory entrepreneurs themselves oftentimes govern are founded and, in the long run, are financed by the state. This reflects the fact that even with relatively frequent changes of government the state institutions are, to a certain extent, bound to decisions and policies made by previous governments or, for practical reasons, often pick up the materials of previous governments as a basis for their own actions, including in the field of memory politics. In the case of Slovenia, the focus of this article, the state founded its memory institute, the Study Centre for National Reconciliation – SCNR (*Študijski center za narodno spravo*), under Janez Janša's government in April 2008.[8] Despite harsh criticism and subsequent government changes, the state remains the Centre's founder and financer.

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[5] HODGKIN, Katherine – RADSTONE, Susannah: Introduction: Contested Pasts. In: EADEM (eds.): *Contested Pasts: The Politics of Memory*. London – New York, Routledge 2006, pp. 1–21, here pp. 4–6.

[6] NEUMAYER, Laure: *The Criminalisation of Communism in the European Political Space after the Cold War*. London – New York, Routledge 2018, pp. 6–13; DUJISIN, Zoltán: A History of Post-Communist Remembrance: From Memory Politics to the Emergence of a Field of Anticommunism. In: *Theory and Society*, Vol. 50, No. 1 (2021), pp. 65–96, here p. 68.

[7] For the concept of *Lebenswelt*, connecting state institutions and politicians, in this case, the parliament and members of parliament, see: GJURIČOVÁ, Adéla – SCHULZ, Andreas – VELEK, Luboš – WIRSCHING, Andreas (eds.): *Lebenswelten von Abgeordneten in Europa 1860–1990*. Berlin, KGParl – Droste 2014.

[8] *Uradni list Republike Slovenije* [Official Gazette of the Republic of Slovenia], No. 42/2008, Act No. 1879, pp. 4651–4655.

Second, focusing on state institutions allows for empirical research with a longer time span. Memory entrepreneurs are intrinsically tied to the field of anticommunism as it emerged in the 2000s,[9] while state institutions have a longer continuity and exhibit some of their characteristics and functions both before and after state socialism. Focusing on the official state attitudes towards the socialist legacy as articulated via state institutions thus allows for a more continuous historical view of the emergence of modern-day memory politics as well as anticommunism itself. The impact of institutions on memory politics, usually the European Parliament, is already acknowledged in the literature.[10] This paper attempts to make further use of this knowledge by extending the period under observation and by investigating the transnational dimension by analysing its pre-history at the level of the republic.

The central perspective of existing literature often stresses the conflict surrounding the politics of memory.[11] In contrast, this paper first explores the socialist legacy expressed through state holidays in the time of state socialism as events contributing towards political unity and towards building a common (socialist and national) identity. Holidays are used here because they are periodic events that preserve particular interpretations of historical events for inscription into the collective memory of a community.[12] In the second part of my article, where the timeline moves beyond the state-socialist period, the perspective changes. The same topics that created a sense of unity before the break of 1989–1991 became a point of conflict and differentiation in the context of the Slovene nation-state. My research follows two basic questions. First, I aim to map the relationship between the state institutions and holidays as opportunities to narrate historical events. What did the socialist legacy mean in two very different time periods and in what ways was the state dependent on it? Second, I wish to investigate the specific temporality of holidays and, through them, memory politics. Their content

[9] DUJISIN, Z.: A History of Post-Communist Remembrance, p. 68.

[10] BEATTIE, Andrew H.: The Politics of Remembering the GDR: Official and State-Mandated Memory since 1990. In: CLARKE, David – WÖLFEL, Ute (eds.): *Remembering the German Democratic Republic*. London, Palgrave Macmillan 2011, pp. 23–34; DUJISIN, Z.: A History of Post-Communist Remembrance, p. 66.

[11] MALINOVA, O.: Politics of Memory and Nationalism, pp. 1001–1003.

[12] For state holidays as entry points for research of memory politics, see: MARSCHALL, Sabine: Public Holidays as Lieux de Mémoire: Nation-Building and the Politics of Public Memory in South Africa. In: *Anthropology Southern Africa*, Vol. 36, No. 1–2 (2013), pp. 11–21; ORLA-BUKOWSKA, Annamaria: New Threads on an Old Loom: National Memory and Social Identity in Postwar and Post-Communist Poland. In: LEBOW, Richard Ned – KANSTEINER, Wulf – FOGU, Claudio (eds.): *The Politics of Memory in Postwar Europe*. Durham (NC) – London, Duke University Press 2006, pp. 177–209.

was shaped by state institutions in connection, but not in direct correspondence with political events. Were there any deviations between memory politics and political breaks, and, if yes, what were they?

In the years leading to the break of 1989, socialism was the ideology of the state, and the past events from which it stemmed were used to support its validity and power as well as construct the ideological sphere and everyday life of the people.[13] After 1991, when the early stage of Slovene transition ended and socialism was no longer the ruling state ideology, it became a contested and sometimes unwanted heritage, a dark past that called for critical assessment and even condemnation.[14] The legacy for socialism became the legacy of socialism, changing to move closer to the narrative of national victimhood.[15]

The two republics under investigation here are thus the Socialist Republic of Slovenia (*Socialistična republika Slovenija*), which existed within the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, and, after 1991, the independent Republic of Slovenia.[16] The time frame of my research stretches from 1980 to 2008, including three major events that influenced the state's need for legitimation through referencing past events: Tito's death in 1980; the shorter period of the disintegration of the federation from 1989 to 1991; and Slovenia's accession to the European Union (EU) and the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) in 2004, with the subsequent rise in anticommunism and the establishment of the SCNR in 2008. The first period represents Slovenia as a part of the Yugoslav federation, bound to the wider context, yet at this time autonomous enough to represent one of the possible units of historical analysis. The second period delimits the only period in Slovene history where the state did not belong to any supranational structure, but existed as an independent national state, ending again with inclusion into a supranational organization and transnational trends.

[13] MALINOVA, O.: Politics of Memory and Nationalism, p. 999.

[14] DIXON, Jennifer M.: *Dark Pasts: Changing the State's Story in Turkey and Japan*. New York, Cornell University Press 2018.

[15] BARTON HRONEŠOVÁ, Jessie: The Uses of Victimhood as a Hegemonic Meta-Narrative in Eastern Europe. In: *Journal of Contemporary European Studies*, Vol. 30, No. 3 (2022), pp. 1–17; VERMEERSCH, Peter: Victimhood as Victory: The Role of Memory Politics in the Process of De-Europeanisation in East-Central Europe. In: *Global Discourse*, Vol. 9, No. 1 (2019), pp. 113–130.

[16] The name, the Socialist Republic of Yugoslavia was set with the 1974 Federal Constitution, while Slovenia had been a part of the Yugoslav federation under different names since the Second World War. Slovenia declared independence on June 25, 1991, while international recognition followed in the winter of 1991–1992. For a detailed analysis, see: REPE, Božo: *Jutri je nov dan: Slovenci in razpad Jugoslavije* [Tomorrow is a New Day: Slovenes and the Disintegration of Yugoslavia]. Ljubljana, Modrijan 2002.

This paper builds on the framework of performing memory politics as an element of identity building and, after the break of 1989, as an attempt to face the state's legacy. It does so by offering substantial historiographical empirical research in the primary sources, mainly archival materials and other publicly available state documents, through the lens of state institutions as crucial power centres and organizers of commemorative practices.[17]

Key Institutions and the Holidays of (Socialist) Slovenia

In the late socialist period, the state functioned both through its institutions and its socio-political organizations. The presidency of the state, the assembly and the executive council at the national level all contributed to formalizing events, managing attitudes, and facilitating debates about the past. The five socio-political organizations provided broad social, ideological, as well as political and popular platforms for the same processes, stretching their organizational structures from the federal through the level of the republic, towards the local communities.[18] The main centres of state power, representing the cornerstones of elite discourse essential for exploring the politics of memory,[19] were: the Central Committee of the Slovene League of Communists (*Centralni komite Zveze komunistov Slovenije*, CK ZKS), the highest forum of the republic; the Presidency of the Socialist Republic of Slovenia (*Predsedstvo Socialistične republike Slovenije*), the highest state institution of the collective leadership body pertaining to the structure of the state; the Republic Committee of the Federation of Associations

[17] Commemoration, as Timothy Snyder defined it, is "an attempt to fix an event at a certain point and describe it in such a way that it will be remembered in a certain way for the future". See SNYDER, Timothy: European Mass Killing and European Commemoration. In: TISMANEANU, Vladimir – IACOB, Bogdan C. (eds.): *Remembrance, History, and Justice: Coming to Terms with Traumatic Pasts in Democratic Societies*. Budapest, Central European University Press 2015, pp. 23–44, here p. 30.

[18] The five socio-political organizations, as defined by the 1974 Constitution, were the Slovene League of Communists (*Zveza komunistov Slovenije*), the Socialist Alliance of Working People (*Socialistična zveza delovnega ljudstva*), the Alliance of Socialist Youth of Slovenia (*Zveza socialistične mladine Slovenije*), the Federation of Associations of Combatants of the Slovene National Liberation Army (*Zveza združenj borcev narodnoosvobodilne vojne Slovenije*), and the Associations of Trade Unions of Slovenia (*Zveza sindikatov Slovenije*). For socialism's reach at the local level, see: KLADNIK, Ana: Local Self-Governance, Voluntary Practices and the *Sinnwelt* of Socialist Velenje. In: DONERT, Celia – KLADNIK, Ana – SABROW, Martin (eds.): *Making Sense of Dictatorship: Domination and Everyday Life in East Central Europe after 1945*. Budapest – Vienna – New York, Central European University Press 2022, pp. 83–109.

[19] MALINOVA, O.: Politics of Memory and Nationalism, p. 998.

of Combatants of the Slovene National Liberation Army (*Republiška konferenca Zveze združenj borcev narodnoosvobodilne vojne*, RK ZZB NOV), a moral authority over the events of the Second World War, which mainly legitimized state socialism; and the Protocol of the Socialist Republic of Slovenia (*Protokol Socialistične republike Slovenije*), the executive outpost of the state when organizing commemorations and other state-related events.

With the Slovene transition to parliamentary democracy after 1991, the focus of decision making shifted from the Central Committee of the Slovene League of Communists to the newly formed political parties, some of them reformed from the previous socio-political organizations, and to the parliament. The president gained the position of the symbolic head of state, performing many vital protocol and commemorative functions. Unlike other socio-political organizations, the Federation of Associations of Combatants of the Slovene National Liberation Army did not transform itself into a political party with the end of socialism and remains a point of interest in regard to the post-socialist politics of memory.[20] It struggled to preserve its position as a moral authority of the Second World War antifascist struggle, offering its opinions in connection with the celebrations and political stances towards the past.

The first period under investigation stretches from Tito's death in 1980 to the year 1989. Tito's death caused significant changes in the attitudes towards the socialist legacy, to which the existence of the federation was directly connected. The changes might not have been immediately apparent, yet they gradually manifested themselves as a decline in the incentives of the political elites to downplay the differences among the federal units. Similar to the Soviet case, this opened "spaces of indeterminacy, creativity, and unanticipated meanings in the context of strictly formulaic ideological forms, rituals, and organizations".[21] The myth of unity, based on the view of multi-ethnic partisan resistance during the Second World War, slowly began to be challenged more openly as tensions among the federal units, as well as among different segments of society, intensified.[22]

One such case of "creativity within formulaic forms" is the Day and Relay of Youth (*dan in štafeta mladosti*), celebrated in Yugoslavia on 25 May, Tito's supposed birthday (he was, in fact, born on May 7, 1892), between 1945 and 1987.

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[20] *Uradni list Republike Slovenije* [Official Gazette of the Republic of Slovenia], Nr. 33/1990.

[21] YURCHAK, Alexei: *Everything Was Forever, Until It Was No More: The Last Soviet Generation*. Princeton – Oxford, Princeton University Press 2005, pp. 24–26.

[22] REPE, Božo: *Slovenci v osemdesetih letih* [Slovenes in the 80s]. Ljubljana, Zveza zgodovinskih društev 2001, pp. 5–9; LEBOW, Richard Ned: The Memory of Politics in Post-War Europe. In: LEBOW, R. N. – KANSTEINER, W. – FOGU, C. (eds.): *The Politics of Memory in Postwar Europe*, pp. 1–39, here pp. 18–19.

After his death, a number of creative variations for how to continue his birthday celebrations emerged. Some resembled religious ceremonies, in an attempt to maintain the sense of Tito's everlasting presence, while others used the form of the event to provoke the regime. The latter reached its limit when a political art collective, *Neue Slowenische Kunst* (NSK), equated the similarities of Tito's birthday celebration with the fascist ceremonies and symbols from the Second World War by releasing a poster depicting a young Yugoslav carrying a baton and a Yugoslav flag on a template originally created by a German artist, Richard Klein, entitled *The Third Reich*. After the ensuing outrage, the federal presidency of the Alliance of Socialist Youth of Yugoslavia abolished both of the holidays.[23] This action by a narrow art collective did not mean, however, that the majority of the population either expected or suggested a change in the regime. High support for state socialism as well as for the Slovene political leadership persisted throughout the last socialist decade.[24]

The following decade of economic and political crisis in the absence of its highest authority put the actors of Yugoslav socialism in a challenging position. In order to address the critical points in the workings of the federation, politicians and intellectuals were slowly forced to rethink or defend the socioeconomic system of the state.[25] While in some federal units, the rule of the Leagues

[23] BET-EL, Ilana R.: Unimagined Communities: The Power of Memory and the Conflict in the Former Yugoslavia. In: MÜLLER, J.-W. (ed.): *Memory and Power in Post-War Europe*, pp. 206–222; KASTELIC, Monika: Day and Relay of Youth from the Death of Tito to Their Suspension (1980–1987). In: *Retrospektive*, Vol. 3, No. 1 (2020), pp. 58–90; VELIKONJA, Mitja: Jugoslovenija: Slavljenje nekdanjih jugoslovanskih praznikov v sodobni Sloveniji [Yugoslovenia: Celebrating the Former Yugoslav Holidays in Contemporary Slovenia]. In: JEZERNIK, Božidar (ed.): *Politika praznovanja: Prazniki in oblikovanje skupnosti na Slovenskem* [Politics of Celebration: Holidays and Community Formation in Slovenia]. Ljubljana, Filozofska fakulteta 2013, pp. 117–121. See also: MONROE, Alexei: *Interrogation Machine: Laibach and NSK*. Cambridge (Mass.) – London, Massachusetts Institute of Technology Press 2005.

[24] See, for example, a survey funded by the Socialist Alliance of Working People and conducted by the Slovene news group *Delo* [Work] in 1989. People were asked to give anonymous answers about their support for the Slovene political leadership and its defence of the confederal model of the Yugoslav federation against the Serbian idea of a centralized Yugoslavia. To most of the questions, more than 90% of correspondents expressed a high support for the Slovene political leadership and its actions. See *Arhiv Republike Slovenije* [Archives of the Republic of Slovenia], Ljubljana (hereafter *ARS*), collection (hereafter coll.) SI AS 1944, Predsedstvo Republike Slovenije [The Presidency of the Republic of Slovenia], box 232, archival unit (hereafter a. u.) 232/3839, Stališča in mnenja respondentov o usmeritvah slovenskega političnega vodstva, marec 1989 [Positions and Opinions of Respondents Regarding the Standings of Slovene Political Leadership, March 1989].

[25] GLIGOROV, Vladimir: Wrong Political Responses to Economic Crisis. In: PEROVIČ, Latinka et al. (eds.): *Yugoslavia: Chapter 1980–1991*. Belgrade, Helsinki Committee for Human Rights

of Communists was stringent throughout the 1980s, in others, such as in Slovenia, the controlling function of the League had already begun to lessen, mainly due to a change of generation in its leadership.[26] This enabled more critical public, intellectual and political reactions to the existing challenges. As many of them were in some way active in the wider institutional network of late socialism, their ideas directly influenced the workings of the institutions.[27]

The second period began in 1989 with the crumbling of Yugoslav socialism.[28] This year marked the beginning of the end of federal Yugoslavia. The republics of Serbia and Slovenia unilaterally changed their Constitutions, which brought about the end of the Yugoslav legal order. The early stage of Yugoslav disintegration continued until 1991, when Slovenia and Croatia declared their independence. To put it mildly, the end of socialism required a transformation of the state-socialist tradition, in Slovenia as well as elsewhere in the region.[29] Like elsewhere in the region, the door for shaping new historical narratives in order to legitimize newly emerging policies opened wide.[30] This time, the newly established Slovene state and its political elites did not have to work directly with the federation. Yet, their reassembling of the Slovene past after 1991 was still deeply rooted in the binary understanding of the recent Yugoslav past. The ways in which the state

in Serbia 2022, pp. 393–424; ĐURIĆ-BOSNIĆ, Aleksandra: Responses of Intellectuals to the Social and Political Crisis in Serbia. In: *Ibid.*, pp. 677–688.

[26] For a generational approach, see: SPASKOVSKA, Ljubica: *The Last Yugoslav Generation: The Rethinking of Youth Politics and Cultures in Late Socialism*. Manchester, Manchester University Press 2020, pp. 80–123.

[27] GABRIČ, Aleš: Lahkotnost rušenja starega in težavnost vzpostavljanja novega [Ease of Demolishing of the Old and Difficulty of Establishing the New]. In: IDEM (ed.): *Slovenska pot in enopartijskega v demokratični sistem* [The Slovene Way from the One-Party to a Democratic System]. Ljubljana, Inštitut za novejšo zgodovino 2012, pp. 11–32, here pp. 27–28.

[28] GAŠPARIČ, Jure: Rok 1989 jako začátek konce Jugoslávie – slovinská perspektiva: Slovinské veřejné mínění a povaha federace. In: *Soudobé dějiny / Czech Journal of Contemporary History*, Vol. 28, No. 1 (2021), pp. 70–98.

[29] For debates on historiography after the end of state socialism in Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland, Romania, and Slovakia, see: TRENCSÉNYI, Balázs – APOR, Péter – ANTOHI, Sorin (eds.): *Narratives Unbound: Historical Studies in Post-Communist Eastern Europe*. Budapest, Central European University Press 2007; also, including Slovenia, LUTHAR, Oto (ed.): *Of Red Dragons and Evil Spirits: Post-Communist Historiography Between Democratization and New Politics of History*. Budapest – New York, Central European University Press 2017; and, specifically for Slovenia, HADALIN, Jurij: Unwanted Heritage? Historiographic Discourse about (Second) Yugoslavia. In: *Contributions to Contemporary History*, Vol. 56, No. 3 (2016), pp. 11–21.

[30] MÜLLER, J.-W.: Introduction, p. 6.

decided to commemorate the events meant either working with or against the way they had been commemorated by the previous system.[31]

Until 1991, the Socialist Republic of Slovenia celebrated two sets of state holidays connected to the national liberation movement, which served as keystones for the legitimation of socialism.[32] The first set of state holidays was celebrated within the framework of the entire Yugoslav federation: 9 May, the Day of Victory (*dan zmage*); 4 July, the Day of the Fighter (*dan borca*); and 29 November, the Day of the Republic (*dan republike*).[33] The second set of holidays was celebrated only within the Socialist Republic of Slovenia: 27 April was the Day of the Foundation of the Liberation Front of the Slovene Nation (*dan ustanovitve Osvobodilne fronte Slovenskega naroda*); 22 July the Day of Armed Resistance of the Slovene Nation (*dan oborožene vstaje slovenskega naroda*); and 3 October the Day of Slovene Statehood (*dan slovenske državnosti*).[34]

Among these, 27 April exemplifies the shift that occurred between 1989 and 1991. In the context of a federation, the date reflected the autonomy of the Republic of Slovenia, since it represented an early beginning of the liberation struggle against the occupation during the Second World War in Slovenia compared to other parts of Yugoslavia. The date of 27 April was celebrated as a republic holiday from 1948 to 1958 and was again reinstated in 1968 until 1991, when

[31] SNYDER, T.: European Mass Killing and European Commemoration, p. 33.

[32] Here, two important historical distinctions regarding the aspects of the Slovene national liberation struggle that later became heavily disputed within the politics of memory need to be made. The ways in which the socialist system was established after the Second World War in the states of East-Central Europe and in Yugoslavia were critically different despite having some similar characteristics. First, the revolution in Yugoslavia was autochthonous and Tito's partisans were recognized by the Allies as being a part of the great anti-Hitler coalition. Second, the Yugoslav communists took over the leadership of the state by legal means, based on an agreement between Josip Broz Tito and the president of the Yugoslav government in exile, Ivan Šubašić. In East-Central European states, the presence of the Red Army and the secret police served as additional pressure when establishing a new communist system, and thus the East-Central European takeovers had less of a legislative basis. (See: GODEŠA, Bojan: Social and Cultural Aspects of the Historiography on the Second World War in Slovenia. In: RUTAR, Sabine – WÖRSDORFER, Rolf (eds.): *Sozialgeschichte und soziale Bewegungen in Slowenien.* Essen, Klartext 2009, pp. 111–125, here pp. 115–116. See also: TISMANEANU, Vladimir (ed.): *Stalinism Revisited: The Establishment of Communist Regimes in East-Central Europe*. Budapest – New York, Central European University Press 2009.)

[33] *Uradni list Socialistične federativne republike Jugoslavije* [Official Gazette of the Socialist Federative Republic of Yugoslavia], No. 6/1973, Act No. 64, pp. 128–129.

[34] *Uradni list Socialistične republike Slovenije* [Official Gazette of the Socialist Republic of Slovenia], No. 33/1989, Act No. 1732, p. 1792; *Ibid.*, No. 32/1968, Act No. 235, p. 464; *Ibid.*, No. 21/1951, Act No. 106, p. 112.

it was renamed Day of the Struggle Against the Occupying Forces (*dan upora proti okupatorju*). After 1991, 27 April remained the only state holiday from the late socialist period that survived the transition to post-socialism, albeit under a different name. It also remained the only state holiday that celebrated events connected to the Second World War until today.[35] The national side of the holiday, its wide support among the Slovene population[36] and its overlap with the European foundations of antifascism[37] enabled the holiday, commemorating the Slovene resistance movement, to endure the change.

A set of new holidays were introduced in Slovenia after 1991. The Day of the Statehood (*dan državnosti*) was established on 25 June to commemorate the day Slovenia proclaimed its independence in 1991, and the Day of Independence (*dan samostojnosti*), commemorating the plebiscite for Slovene independence, was set on 23 December.[38] After establishing new state holidays, the rest of the period until 2004, when the continuous centre-left state leadership (Liberal Democracy of Slovenia, *Liberalna demokracija Slovenije*, LDS) was replaced by Janez Janša's government (Slovene Democratic Party, *Slovenska demokratska stranka*, SDS), was extremely gradual in terms of political development as well as in shaping the state's formal stances towards the past.[39] Memory battles became one of the few areas of open political differentiations among political parties that otherwise displayed a very similar mode of operation and political ambitions, regardless of their place on the political spectrum. This set the lines for sharper political divisions that occurred after Slovenia joined the EU.

[35] GODEŠA, Bojan: 27. april [April 27]. In: *Slovenia 30 let* [30 Years of Slovenia]. [Accessed 2022-07-07.] Available at: https://slovenija30let.si/April27.html.

[36] Public opinion polls continuously showed high support for the struggle of the Slovene partisans during the Second World War and for antifascist values, even during the political transition of the 1990s. See: TOŠ, Niko et al.: *Razumevanje preteklosti: Slovensko javno mnenje 1995–2003.* [Understanding the Past: Slovene Public Opinion, 1995–2003.] Ljubljana, Fakulteta za družbene vede 2004, p. 21.

[37] DUJISIN, Zoltán: Post-Communist Europe: On the Path to a Regional Regime of Remembrance? In: KOPEČEK, Michal – WCIŚLIK, Piotr (eds.): *Thinking Through Transition: Liberal Democracy, Authoritarian Pasts, and Intellectual History in East Central Europe After 1989*. Budapest – New York, Central European University Press 2015, pp. 553–586, here pp. 557–559.

[38] *Uradni list Republike Slovenije* [Official Gazette of the Republic of Slovenia], No. 26/1991, Act No. 1091, p. 1088.

[39] RIZMAN, Rudi: *Uncertain Path: Democratic Transition and Consolidation in Slovenia*. College Station (TX), Texas A&M University Press 2006, pp. 52–62.

Stand to the Left, Comrade: The Legacy for Socialism

The date and meaning of the state holidays have been contested in both the pre- and post-1989 periods. Sometimes, the shifts in their interpretation were easy to notice. They attracted much political and public attention, while many other changes were more subtle. Some of the changes can only be noticed if we view these celebrations as a series of events – as they are holidays, they occur yearly. The long view is especially apt when observing the workings of institutions throughout the years. Institutions that appear as the main organizers of holidays and celebrations were also the ones that formed the main message of these events. As such, their workings can be divided into at least from two elements: first, from the politicians, and, in the case of mass socialist organizations, the wide membership representing a major part of the population. With their activities, they shaped a part of the social framework through which the past was organized.[40] Second, the socialist state institutions and the articulations of their understandings of the past were bound to their previous activities and to legislation adopted well before this articulation took place. In the cases represented below, the main institution that shaped the narrative was the Central Committee of the Slovene League of Communists (*Zveza komunistov Slovenije*). And yet, despite the influence its individual members held, the Central Committee was bound to other institutions, both those at the federal level as well as those within the republic.

The first example is the state's attitude towards religion, i.e. the Catholic Church as well as other smaller religious communities. In the Socialist Republic of Slovenia, state repression towards the Church already started to be lifted when the federation accepted the Belgrade Protocol in 1966, which determined that the state holds its power over politics and society, while the Church holds its authority over spiritual life, even within a socialist state.[41] The Central Committee of the Slovene League of Communists recognized the Catholic Church in its debates in 1979 as a potentially valuable ally and a subject capable of dialogue, although the State Security Service (*Služba državne varnosti*, SDV) closely followed the Church's activities throughout the rest of the decade. An important signal to the public came in 1986, when Christmas wishes were again broadcast on television (the public was addressed by Jože Smole, the president of the

[40] MÜLLER, J.-W.: Introduction, p. 3.

[41] REPE, B.: *Juri je nov dan*, pp. 97–99.

Socialist Alliance of Working People) and the radio (where Archbishop Alojzij Šuštar gave a speech).[42]

In terms of state celebrations and shaping (or, in this case, sharing) the understanding of past events, the changing political climate was reflected in the celebrations of 27 April. Until 1985, the working group for the preparation of the celebration was created "like a front" (*frontno*): this meant that all of the highest representatives of socio-political organizations and state institutions were at the forefront of the celebration, taking the central organizational role in the event together with each year's celebratory speaker, who was chosen by the Central Committee of the League of Communists.[43] By staging the celebration in this way, the state publicly excluded any religious representatives from not only the event itself, but also prevented them from sharing this specific, identity-forming and legitimacy-building part of the past, i.e. the Slovene partisan antifascist liberation struggle in the Second World War. While the Church indeed led a collaborative policy during the war, this black-and-white narrative, emphasized through (non)attendance at state holidays, excluded from the national memory many examples of individual priests, religious people, and religiously inclined political parties (such as the Christian Socialists) that were indeed active in the partisan struggle.[44] The attendance at the state celebrations thus intentionally reflected who, in the view of the state, belonged to the (imagined) Slovene nation.

After 1985, however, the front-like representation came to an end. The number of representatives of the state and the League of Communists started to decline, making the preparation of the celebration less rigid. This did not fundamentally change the meaning of the state holiday itself. In terms of state socialist ideology, the form of the funding narrative remained the same. It did, however, signal a level of flexibility within the Slovene League of Communists and the inclusion of the religious institutions at least on a symbolic level, once again taking a very well-established form of remembering and filling it with additional meaning. This extended even further in 1989, when the political opposition to

[42] IDEM: *Viri o demokratizaciji in osamosvojitvi Slovenije, del 1*: *Opozicija in oblast* [Sources of the Slovene Democratization and Independence, Part One: Opposition and the Regime]. Ljubljana, Arhivsko društvo Slovenije 2002, pp. 155–156.

[43] *ARS*, coll. SI AS 2055, Protokol Socialistične republike Slovenije 1945–1993 [The Protocol of the Socialist Republic of Slovenia], box 79, a. u. 2988, no title.

[44] REPE, Božo: *S puško in knjigo: Narodnoosvobodilni boj slovenskega naroda 1941–1945.* [With a Rifle and a Book: National-Liberation Struggle of the Slovene Nation 1941–1945.] Ljubljana, Cankarjeva založba 2015, pp. 70–77.

the socialist system started to grow and two openly oppositional and politically active individuals, Ivan Oman and Dimitrij Rupel, were formally invited to attend the event.[45]

The front-like organization and the protocol division of the most visible roles in the celebratory procedures were also visible in other state holidays apart from 27 April, such as 22 July, the Day of Armed Resistance of the Slovene Nation. In 1982, the highest representatives of all of the five socio-political representatives together with the president of the assembly, divided into two groups of three, laid wreaths at two locations in Ljubljana, at the Memorial of the Revolution and at the Tomb of National Heroes, thus commemorating the national liberation struggle in the Second World War and the subsequent revolution.[46] Again, the structure of both delegations changed in 1985: only three people laid wreaths at the Memorial of the Revolution. These three were determined by function (and not by personal merit), reflecting again a firming of institutional relations and a specific form of celebration: the current president of the state presidency, the president of the Central Committee of the Slovene League of Communists, and the president of the Republic Committee of the Federation of Associations of Combatants of the Slovene National Liberation Army. Parallel to this, the representatives of all the religious communities became regular honorary guests at the state celebrations after 1985.[47]

The establishment of a form that allowed space for variations in content during late socialism was, in the case of Slovenia, conditioned by the wider context of late socialism. First, concerns were raised about the celebration of the Day of Armed Resistance and the public image of the socialist regime it portrayed around the year 1985. The organizers tried desperately to reinvigorate both the historical narrative and the attractiveness of the socialist regime by avoiding any elements that might indicate the funeral-like atmosphere of the holiday. Debates were held at length within the organizing group about what music the orchestra should play to make the event solemn, but not morbid. In the end, they settled for Beethoven's Third Symphony, the *Eroica*.[48] Omitting laying a wreath

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[45] *Ibid*. Ivan Oman, a farmer by profession, became a party leader of the Slovene peasants' union (*Slovenska kmečka zveza*) in 1988, a political party that helped to form the first anti-communist coalition (*Demokratična opozicija Slovenije*, DEMOS). Dimitrij Rupel, one of the public intellectuals of Slovenia in the 1980s, likewise co-founded an anti-communist political party, the Slovene Democratic Alliance (*Slovenska demokratska zveza*), in 1989.

[46] *ARS*, coll. SI AS 2055, Protokol Socialistične republike Slovenije 1945–1993 [The Protocol of the Socialist Republic of Slovenia], box 146, a. u. 3752, no title.

[47] *Ibid.*

[48] *Ibid.*

at the Tomb of National Heroes might also be interpreted as an unburdening of the event, pulling it away from the decades-long tradition of socialist dogmatism towards a more stately, nationally based and somewhat more inclusive event.

Second, this was the time when the older generation of members of the Slovene League of Communists realized a generational shift was approaching. Indeed, in 1986 many of the leading positions within the socio-political organizations were taken over, with the support of their elders, by younger cadres. Milan Kučan[49] became the president of the Central Committee of the League of Communists, the aforementioned Jože Smole[50] took over the leadership of the Socialist Alliance of Working People, and Tone Anderlič[51] of the Alliance of Socialist Youth.[52] The Central Committee, as well as other socio-political organizations, were well aware of the troubles the League of Communists faced. The party membership was declining,[53] and beyond that, the narratives told by the older generations to legitimize the system and inspire the people simply did not work on the younger generations.

To stymy this trend, the Central Committee attempted not only a symbolic change through state celebrations, but in 1984 also launched a formal investigation into its own past. The Central Committee instructed both of its history commissions, one that was working with the Marxist Centre of the Presidency

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[49] Milan Kučan was a member of the Slovene League of Communists and one of the main reformers of the Slovene political system. In 1992, he was elected president of the independent Republic of Slovenia, and was reelected in 1997. His term ended in 2002.

[50] Jože Smole, a long-standing member of the Slovene League of Communists, was one of the most prominent politicians of the 1980s to open a dialogue with those the League deemed undesireable, including the Catholic Church, the political opposition and critical intellectuals.

[51] Tone Anderlič, a member of the Slovene League of Communists, represented one of the pro-reform youth strands that helped open up the political space to criticism and possible change. After the democratic changes, he continued his career as a member of parliament for the Liberal Democratic Party (*Liberalno demokratska stranka*).

[52] ČEPIČ, Zdenko: Evropa zdaj! Programski pogledi slovenskih političnih strank, predvsem slovenskih komunistov na „Evropo“ v procesu demokratizacije in osamosvajanja [Europe Now! The Views of Slovene Political Parties, Especially Slovene Communists, on “Europe” in the Process of Democratization and Independence]. In: TROHA, Nevenka – ŠORN, Mojca – BALKOVEC, Bojan (eds.): *Evropski vplivi na slovensko družbo* [European Influences on Slovenian Society]. Ljubljana, Zveza zgodovinskih društev Slovenije 2008, pp. 437–449, here pp. 440–441.

[53] ČEPIČ, Zdenko: Prenoviteljstvo Zveze komunistov Slovenije [Renewing the Slovene League of Communists]. In: ČEPIČ, Zdenko – FIŠER, Jasna – DOLENC, Ervin – GABRIČ, Aleš – GODEŠA, Bojan (eds.): *Slovenska novejša zgodovina: Od programa Zedinjena Slovenija do mednarodnega priznanja Republike Slovenije 1848–1992* [Contemporary Slovene History: From the Program Slovenia United to the International Recognition of the Republic of Slovenia, 1848–1992]. Ljubljana, Mladinska knjiga – Inštitut za novejšo zgodovino 2005, pp. 1178–1179.

of the Central Committee of the League of Communists, the other directly with the Central Committee of the League of Communists, to re-open certain historical topics and thus offer them a more modern understanding.[54] A new, critical approach would, so the Central Committee concluded, lend new legitimacy to state socialism, one that was hopefully more convincing and attractive for the younger generations.[55] In 1986, the Central Committee opened up its post-Second World War archive, exposing its own actions, such as the politically motivated show trials in 1948 and 1949, commonly known as the Dachau trials (*dachauski procesi*).[56] The material from the show trials was indeed shown to a research team mainly comprised of historians and lawyers, who were deemed to be trustworthy by the Central Committee, but not to the general public. For the researchers, access to the documents was unrestricted and they were allowed to carry out their research freely.[57]

Pulling the socialist symbolic events from the grip of stifling formality and opening them up to professional and public criticism alongside other historical topics did have a certain effect, but not the one predicted. While including a larger portion of Slovene society in the most important state events and attempting to renew the League of Communists (and, by extension, the socialist system) were both meant to strengthen the bond between wider society and the state, the strong reforming currents within the League of Communists and the rising civil opposition within the state socio-political organizations contributed to what would later become the democratization process.

Turning the Tables: The Legacy of Socialism

No holiday in the time of late socialism was as sharply contested as were those after 1991, alongside the socialist legacy itself. Contrary to the strong performative side of state holidays and commemorations during late socialism, the period after 1991 brought a shift towards a constative dimension.[58] Debating the contents of previously established practices prevailed over their performativity, to the extent that certain practices ended up being abolished altogether.

[54] *ARS*, coll. SI AS 1589, Centralni komite Zveze komunistov Slovenije [Central Committee of the Slovene League of Communists], box 1076, no a. u.

[55] *Ibid.*, box 749, no a. u.

[56] *Ibid.*, box 1080, no a. u.

[57] IVANIČ, Martin (ed.): *Dachauski procesi: Raziskovalno poročilo dokumenti* [Dachau Trials: Research Report with Documents]. Ljubljana, Komunist 1990.

[58] YURCHAK, A.: *Everything Was Forever, Until It Was No More*, pp. 22–23.

The first challenge the new state had to face was the commemoration of the 50th anniversary of the beginning of the Second World War and, in connection to it, of the Slovene resistance movement. On April 27, 1991, discussions about how the state should commemorate the occasion, began to reflect the split between the political parties active within the National Assembly. With the DEMOS coalition (a democratic coalition of newly established, anti-socialist political parties) leading the state, the funds for the state celebration were much more limited than they were in the past, while the communication between the new and old political parties (i.e. reformed political parties stemming from socialist socio-political organizations) was often conflictive or even lacking.[59]

Fearing that such an important anniversary might pass by without sufficient state recognition, the Federation of the Associations of Combatants of the Slovene National Liberation Army (*Zveza združenj borcev narodnoosvobodilne vojne Slovenije*) stepped into action to insure the preservation of the symbolic value of the event. At the moment of Slovene independence, the pronounced national sentiments, connected to the Slovene aspiration of "returning to Europe", were widespread. The Federation of Associations took the political atmosphere in its stride and somewhat reframed the narrative of the anniversary. From building socialism and starting the revolution, the event shifted towards its European significance: the partisans' collaboration with the Allied forces during the Second World War, the state-building elements of the liberation struggle, and the national character of the resistance became the main point around which, at least at the time, the anniversary was built anew.[60] In the next years, the split between the old and new political parties widened to form a fully polarized political space.

The division between the political parties started even before they were officially legalized. It was roughly based on their position on the left – right political spectrum; but, more than that, the parties were divided internally along the lines of those who were successors of the organizations of the former regime (generally left-leaning) and those who were established anew, alongside the political pluralization and democratization (generally right-leaning).[61] In terms of state holidays, this division manifested itself immediately at the beginning of

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[59] *ARS*, coll. SI AS 1944, Predsedstvo Republike Slovenije [The Presidency of the Republic of Slovenia], box 284, no a. u.

[60] *ARS*, coll. SI AS 1238, Republiški odbor Zveze združenj borcev narodnoosvobodilne vojske Slovenije [Republic Committee of the Federation of Associations of Combatants of Slovene National Liberation Army], box 685, a. u. 014/90.

[61] It is worth noting that the new political parties were to some extent comprised of individuals who were also engaged with the socialist regime – some of them as members of the League of Communists, others their critics. But only one of them, Jože Pučnik, could potentially be understood as a dissident in the same way as dissidents in other East-Central

the democratization and independence process in Slovenia: not one 25 June, celebrating the emergence of an independent Slovene state, has passed since the original event in 1991, where the political parties have not offered severe criticism, boycotted the state celebrations, or organized their own celebrations of the holidays according to the division of old and new political parties.[62]

Comparing the two newly established state holidays, 25 June, the Day of the Statehood, and 26 December, the Day of the Slovene Plebiscite that legitimized the independence process, the first soon proved to be much more prone towards political divisions.[63] Frictions emerged on the first anniversary of the event, in June 1992. One of the DEMOS parties raised various concerns, criticizing mainly the cost and grandeur of the planned event.[64] The following year, a schism occurred in connection to the holiday. The President of the Republic, Milan Kučan, who was a leading figure in the renewal of the League of Communists after 1986, awarded the most visible politicians of Slovene independence with the Golden Order of Freedom of the Republic of Slovenia: Igor Bavčar, France Bučar, Janez Janša, Jelko Kacin, Lojze Peterle, and Dimitrij Rupel, alongside Janko Pleterski and Ljubo Bavcon.[65] The first six rejected their award in June 1993, stating in an open letter to Kučan that their nomination alongside Pleterski and Bavcon, who were members of the previous regime, devalued Slovene independence.[66]

European states. (GABRIČ, Aleš: Jože Pučnik on a Path to Becoming a Dissident. In: *Contributions to Contemporary History*, Vol. 58, No. 3 (2018), pp. 78–93.)

[62] SIMONIČ, Peter: Dan državnosti kot prizorišče političnega boja: Oportunizem in praznovanja Janeza Janše [The Day of Statehood as a Stage of Political Fight: Opportunism and Celebrations of Janez Janša]. In: JEZERNIK, Božidar – SLAVEC GRADIŠNIK, Ingrid (eds.): *Države praznujejo: Državni prazniki in skupnosti na območju bivše Jugoslavije* [The States Celebrate: State Holidays and Communities on the Territory of the Former Yugoslavia]. Ljubljana, Znanstvena založba Filozofske fakultete 2017, pp. 231–254, here pp. 236–239.

[63] Cooperation in organizing the celebrations for 23 December continued as a joint task of the three state functions: the President of the Republic, the Prime Minister, and the President of the Slovene Parliament. See *Interni arhiv protokola Republike Slovenije 1991* [Internal Archive of the Protocol of the Republic of Slovenia, 1991], Ljubljana, a collection of formal invitations for 23 December.

[64] VASLE, Vinko: Več slovesnosti ob prvi obletnici samostojnosti [More Celebrations of the First Anniversary of Independence]. In: *Delo* (23. 06. 1992), p. 1.

[65] Seznam vseh odlikovancev od leta 1992 do decembra 2012 [List of All Honoured Persons from 1992 to December 2012]. In: Urad Predsednika Republike Slovenije [Office of the President of the Republic of Slovenia] [online]. [Accessed 2022-07-22.] Available at: https://www.up-rs.si/up-rs/uprs.nsf/objave/Seznam-vseh-odlikovancev-od-leta-1992-do-decembra-2012?OpenDocument#mkzczs1993.

[66] BAVČAR, Igor – BUČAR, France – JANŠA, Janez – KACIN, Jelko – PETERLE, Lojze – RUPEL, Dimitrij: Milanu Kučanu, predsedniku Republike Slovenije! [To Milan Kučan, the President of the Republic of Slovenia!]. In: *Delo* (23. 06. 1993), p. 2.

Since then, the separate celebrations of this state holiday became a tradition. From 1994 onwards, at least two separate events have been organized to commemorate Slovene independence. During Milan Kučan's presidency the official state event took place in *Cankarjev dom*, the main cultural institution of the state. Every year, the Municipality of Ljubljana has organized one or more celebrations either with the support of the opposing right-wing political parties or of various other groupings of political parties in different parts of Slovenia. It has also become customary that many or all of the politicians from the opposite political pole do not attend the celebratory events organized by their political opponents.[67]

The divide between the coalition and the opposition was relatively stable until 2004. Since the 1992 election, the Slovene right, composed from the newly established political parties, has been chronically pushed into opposition, with the exception of six months in 2000. The criticism of the state celebrations they offered were tied to their political position and hence they were relatively coherent, varying only in intensity. The most common reproach became the exclusivity of the celebration in the *Cankarjev dom* towards the public in general, as well as towards non-coalition political parties when planning the event.[68] Indeed the role of the main organizer of this celebration shifted from the government and the State Protocol Office to the President of the Republic in 1996. As the long-time president (he held the office until 2002), Kučan strengthened the symbolic function of the head of state at a time when the ambitions of the right-wing political parties aimed to reduce the office's power.[69]

The organization of different state celebrations had a very practical political message. If a politician attended or praised an event organized by President Kučan or by the government, i.e. the ruling coalition, she or he ascribed to the narrative of a successful Slovene transition and exhibited support for the reformed political elites, their activities, goals, and values. If, however, one attended any of the events organized by the right-wing opposition parties, one proclaimed the break of 1989–1991 as insufficient and the socialist past as a foreign and criminal ideology imposed on the Slovene nation.[70]

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[67] In 1999, there were seven different events commemorating the day of statehood. See ŠLAMBERGER, Vlado: Eni tukaj, drugi tam [Some Here, Others There]. In: *Ibid.* (28. 06. 1999), p. 2.

[68] Among many other newspaper articles, see: TAŠKAR, Jana: V petek bo slovesna seja DZ ob dnevu državnosti [There Will Be a Special Session of the State Assembly for the Day of Statehood]. In: *Ibid.* (22. 06. 1994), p. 1; B. T.: Še druga ljubljanska proslava ob dnevu državnosti [The Second Ceremony in Ljubljana for the Day of Statehood]. In: *Ibid.* (27. 06. 1997), p. 1.

[69] *Interni arhiv protokola Republike Slovenije 1991*, a collection of formal invitations for December 23.

[70] See, for example, REPOVŽ, Grega: Sporni naslovni moto glavne državne proslave [Controversial Motto of the Main State Celebration]. In: *Delo* (26. 06. 1996), p. 2.

Both narratives grew and branched out throughout the years, trying to encompass different political goals. All splits indicated above, facilitated by state institutions and articulated through their various attitudes towards the past, reflect the struggle of political parties over the state.[71] The first narrative stretched to include the plurality of the Slovenes' fights for freedom (political struggle to set the Slovene northern border further towards the north after the First World War, the national liberation struggle in the Second World War, and Slovene independence).[72] It interpreted the socialist past as a positive – or at least a neutral – legacy that, despite its illiberalism, included the plurality of interests into its own structures. It openly or latently compared the socialist socio-political organizations with the plural political systems of Western democracies.[73]

The second aimed at radically reinterpreting the past, especially the Second World War and socialism as a totalitarian regime equal to Nazism and fascism. This ambition reached its peak in 1997 with an (unsuccessful) proposal for a resolution and, in December of that year, for a declaration on the unlawful workings of the communist totalitarian regime. The lead signatories were, in both cases, Janez Janša and Lojze Peterle, leaders of the two conservative political parties. The propositions called for the criminalization of the former socialist regime, calling it a "totalitarian communist regime that systematically violated human rights and basic political freedoms".[74] Both proposals determined that the criminal guilt rests with the leadership of the League of Communists which should now, that the regime fell, be charged with criminal activity.[75] As this charge pertained to the coalition parties, the attempt was unsuccessful; nor was it supported by all of the conservative political parties.

What is notable, however, is the persistence of the zero-sum political game the opposition led. While the coalition of the reformed political parties responded to this accusation by bringing to the forefront the gradual Slovene political transition from socialism, emphasizing the unity and cooperation of old and new political parties between 1989 and 1991, the right-wing parties adopted a strategy

[71] DUJISIN, Z.: Post-Communist Europe, pp. 555–556.

[72] STA: Ob dnevu državnosti [On the Occasion of the Day of Statehood]. In: *Delo* (26. 06. 1999), p. 2.

[73] SMOLE, Jože: Današnja osvobodilna fronta [The Liberation Front of Today]. In: *Ibid.* (26. 04. 1989), p. 2.

[74] *Poročevalec državnega zbora Republike Slovenije* [Parliamentary Gazette of the Republic of Slovenia], Predlog resolucije o protipravnem delovanju komunističnega totalitarnega režima [A Proposal of a Resolution on the Unlawful Workings of the Communist Totalitarian Regime], November 14, 1997, pp. 5–6.

[75] *Ibid.*, Predlog deklaracije o protipravnem delovanju komunističnega totalitarnega režima [A Proposal of a Declaration on the Unlawful Workings of the Communist Totalitarian Regime]. December 23, 1997, pp. 35–36.

similar to that of the official party line from the time of state socialism. After 2004, when the Slovene transitional centre-left government lost its momentum after the state had successfully joined the EU and Slovenia got its first right-wing government, the institutionalization of the revisionist narrative started, most notably with the establishment of the SCNR in 2008.[76] With this, Slovenia's trend of a shift in the politics of memory became more similar to other East-Central European states at the time.[77]

Conclusion

This paper shows that both socialist and post-socialist Slovenia were highly dependent on shaping the attitude towards the past. Similar to the period of Slovenia as a nation state, the analysis of the socialist period reveals the state's strategies and dynamics regarding its own historical narratives, which allows not only for an observation of the various attitudes towards the past in two different political, economic, and social systems; but also contributes towards a better understanding of state institutions and commemorative practices in both settings. The sequence of state-organized celebrations, as this investigation has shown, reflects the attitudes towards certain historical events and narratives as well as the slowly changing positions of the state in relation to socialism as its ideology and later in relation to socialism as its legacy.

The study of these two very different, but connected periods shows that the performativity of commemorations related to memory politics declined after the break of 1989–1991. While the legacy of socialism and its rituals were primarily used to legitimize the system as a whole until its very end, it also indicated the attitudes of the Socialist Republic of Slovenia towards its own status in the federation and towards the federation itself. The changing attitudes had their own temporality and did not always reflect the political decisions, but rather showed the less visible shifts in attitudes towards the past, such as the gradual change in state holidays after 1991, which started taking place after Slovenia exited the federation and pluralized its political space. The attempts to criminalize the socialist legacy emerged even later, in the mid-1990s, and reached their peak in the years between 2004 and 2008, when Slovenia elected its first right-wing government.

[76] See: Study Centre for National Reconciliation [online]. [Accessed 2022-07-25.] Available at: https://www.scnr.si/en/.

[77] KRIZMANICS, Réka: Trianon in Popular History in Late-Socialist and Post-Transition Hungary: A Case Study. In: *East European Politics and Societies and Cultures,* Vol. 36, No. 3 (2022), pp. 1036–1060.

What persisted throughout the post-socialist years was the structure of the narrative, legitimizing either left- or right-wing political options. In the late socialist period, the "us vs them" divide was clear, albeit starting to lose its dogmatism and to accept new members among the "us". In post-socialism, the attitude of the socio-political organization that became a political party or parties had a positive view towards values such as a strong social state and continued to defend and promote the most visible state holiday that survived the break of 1989–1991, namely 27 April. The newly formed conservative parties, however, adopted the narrative structure of "us vs them", but pushed for the complete reversal of the positions of morally just and morally unjust subjects within it. The polarization between both political options was most visible in the continuously separate celebrations of the official state holidays.

This article was researched and written with the financial support of the Slovene Research Agency (Research Core Funding No. P6-0281).

Abstract

*Focusing on key political actors and state institutions, this article aims to map the changing and often ambivalent political attitudes of the Socialist Republic of Slovenia (*Socialistična republika Slovenija*) within the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia and the later the Republic of Slovenia (*Republika Slovenija*) towards its socialist legacy. By institutionalizing remembrance and promoting specific historical narratives, the state not only articulated its views on the past, but also expressed its understanding of the present moment and its hopes for the future. The main channels of communication between the state and the public, which are investigated in this contribution, are state holidays and state celebrations. Here, the highest state institutions appeared as main organizers and scriptwriters. Through these events, leading politicians valued, assessed, and (re)interpreted significant historical events in the name of the state. The temporal framework of the article covers two crucial periods. First, the late socialist period between 1980 (the death of Josip Broz Tito) and 1989 (the beginning of the end of Yugoslavia). Second, the period of Slovene transition between 1989 and early 2008, when the Study Centre for National Reconciliation (*Študijski center za narodno spravo*) began its operation and Slovenia joined the institutional international trend of anticommunism. During late socialism, constant economic, political, and social crises forced the state to re-evaluate and reconsider its socialist legacy and its form. After the end of state socialism between 1989 and 1991 in Slovenia, (anti-)socialist attitudes became one of the most important political markers by which the new state defined*

itself. For both periods, socialism was thus one of the central themes of memory politics, albeit in different ways.

Keywords:

Yugoslavia; Socialist Republic of Slovenia; Slovenia; state socialism; late socialism; post-socialist transition; state holidays; politics of memory; commemorations

DOI: 10.51134/sod.2022.043

Discussion

The Munich Agreement and the Molotov–Ribbentrop Pact as a Tool of Russian Revisionist Propaganda

Ivan Beliaev

Tbilisi, Georgia

In my opinion everything started from the Munich Agreement. This story is so typical in terms of political traditions of betrayal and double crossings, for the modern West as well.

Russian TV-journalist and Moscow Duma deputy Andrei Medvedev, 2019[1]

If Europe began to plunge into darkness, it happened not on August 23rd of 1939 but a bit earlier when Western capitals made a choice in favour of appeasement and the Munich Betrayal was the apotheosis of this policy.

Russian Foreign Ministry spokeswoman Maria Zakharova, 2020[2]

In December 1989 the Second Congress of People's Deputies (*Siezd narodnykh deputatov*) of the Soviet Union officially condemned the secret protocols to the 1939 Soviet-German non-aggression treaty, known as the Molotov–Ribbentrop pact. Two years before its collapse the Soviet Union admitted that the protocols were "legally untenable and invalid from the moment they were signed".[3] This stance was initially inherited by the main successor of the Soviet Union, the Russian Federation, but not for long. Elements of anti-Western resentment were

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1 MEDVEDEV, Andrei [no title]. In: *Telegram* [online], 03. 09. 2019. [Accessed 2022-09-09.] Available at: https://t.me/MedvedevVesti/1258.

2 [Anonymous:] Zakharova otvetila na zaiavlenie EK, sravnivshei SSSR s natsistskoi Germaniei [Zakharova Responds to EC Statement Comparing USSR to Nazi Germany]. In: *Ria Novosti* [online], 27. 08. 2020. [Accessed 2022-09-09.] Available at: https://ria.ru/20200827/sssr-1576390499.html.

3 FEIN, Esther B.: Upheaval in the East: Soviet Congress Condemns '39 Pact That Led to Annexation of Baltics. In: *New York Times* [online], 25. 12. 1989. [Accessed 2022-09-09.] Available at: https://www.nytimes.com/1989/12/25/world/upheaval-east-soviet-congress-condemns-39-pact-that-led-annexation-baltics.html.

already obvious during Boris Yeltsin's presidency, which became much stronger under Vladimir Putin. Very soon, it was quite clear that the Russian regime perceives any Western judgement of the pact as an attempt to challenge the whole glorious narrative of the so-called Great Patriotic War (*Velikaia Otechestvennaia voina*). "The victory is now the principal element in Russia's memory politics, with corresponding ideology used to legitimize militarism and great power ambitions," the Armenian political scientist Armen Grigoryan reminds in his recent article for *New Eastern Europe*.[4]

The pivotal moments for the Russian government were in 2008 when the European Parliament adopted the "Declaration on the Proclamation of 23 August as European Day of Remembrance for Victims of Stalinism and Nazism" and in 2009 when the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) Parliamentary Assembly voted in favour of the "Resolution on Divided Europe Reunited: Promoting Human Rights and Civil Liberties in the OSCE Region in the 21st century".[5] Konstantin Kosachev, then a parliamentarian for Putin's United Russia (*Edinaia Rossiia*) party and chairman of the Russian State Duma's foreign relations committee (and current vice-chairman of the Federation Council) defined it as "nothing but an attempt to re-write the history of World War Two".[6] A joint statement by both chambers of the Russian Federal Assembly described the Declaration as an attempt to equate the Soviet Union and Nazi Germany and labeled it as "absolutely groundless".[7] Ever since then, the very mention

[4] GRIGORYAN, Armen: The War in Ukraine and Historical Revisionism. In: *New Eastern Europe* [online], 23. 05. 2022. [Accessed 2022-09-09.] Available at: https://neweasterneurope.eu/2022/05/23/the-war-in-ukraine-and-historical-revisionism/.

[5] Declaration of the European Parliament on the Proclamation of 23 August as European Day of Remembrance for Victims of Stalinism and Nazism. In: *European Parliament – Texts Adopted* [online], 23. 08. 2008. [Accessed 2022-09-09.] Available at: https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/TA-6-2008-0439_EN.html; Vilnius Declaration of the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly and Resolutions Adopted at the 18th Annual Session. Vilnius, 29. 6. – 3. 7. 2009. In: *OSCEPA – Documents* [online]. [Accessed 2022-09-09.] Available at: https://www.oscepa.org/en/documents/annual-sessions/2009-vilnius/declaration-6/261-2009-vilnius-declaration-eng/file.

[6] [Anonymous:] Russia Scolds OSCE for Equating Hitler and Stalin. In: *Reuters* [online], 04. 07. 2009. [Accessed 2022-09-13.] Available at: https://www.reuters.com/article/newsMaps/idUSTRE5632JI20090704.

[7] [Anonymous:] Sovet palaty Soveta Federatsii i Sovet Gosudarstvennoi Dumy priniali sovmestnoe zaiavlenie v sviazi s priniatiem Parlamentskoi assamblei OBSE rezoliutsii „Vossoedinenie razdelennoi Evropy: Pooshchrenie prav cheloveka i grazhdanskikh svobod v regione OBSE v XXI veke" [The Council of the Houses of the Federation Council and the Council of the State Duma Adopted a Joint Statement on the Adoption by the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly of the Resolution "Reuniting a Divided Europe: Promoting Human Rights and Civil Liberties

of the Molotov–Ribbentrop pact was and still remains a very sensitive topic in Russian public debates.

Generally speaking, the Russian official and semi-official response was split into two main categories. The first tried to justify the whole case and whitewash Soviet policy by describing the Molotov–Ribbentrop pact as a casual non-aggression treaty. "The Molotov–Ribbentrop pact was one of thousands of unjust agreements which look at us from each page of European History," wrote Russian political scientist Sergei Karaganov in 2009.[8] "The Soviet Union signed a non-aggression agreement with Germany. They say, 'Oh, how bad'. But what is so bad about it, if the Soviet Union did not want to fight? What is so bad?," asked Vladimir Putin during his meeting with young academics and history teachers in 2014.[9] "This pact didn't generally differ from plenty of similar documents, signed by other countries at the same time," said the Russian pro-Kremlin historian and political analyst Oleg Nemenskii in 2019, when the European Parliament adopted another resolution condemning the Molotov–Ribbentrop pact.[10] The Russian journalist Nikolai Dolgopolov, an author close to the Russian intelligence services, wrote that the pact is not a "reason for self-flagellation", while the former Defence Minister Sergei Ivanov even said that the Soviet Union "didn't have

in the OSCE Region in the Twenty-First Century"]. In: *Gosudarstvennaia Duma Federalnogo Sobraniia Rossiiskoi Federatsii* [The State Duma of the Federal Assembly of Russian Federation] [online], 07. 07. 2009. [Accessed 2022-09-13.] Available at: http://duma.gov.ru/news/3185/.

[8] KARAGANOV, Sergei: Bolshaia chast Evropy – eto kontinent proigravshikh [Much of Europe Is a Continent of Losers]. In: *Rossiiskaia Gazeta* [online], 21. 08. 2009. [Accessed 2022-09-13.] Available at: https://rg.ru/2009/08/21/karaganov-pakt.html. *Rossiiskaia Gazeta* is the official newspaper of the Russian government and thus has a huge audience. In June 2022, it was the fourth Russian newspaper by number of citations in other media and sixth by number of citations in social networks. For the details of its estimated impact (also regarding cases stated further in the text), see the Russian media market research body *Medialogiia*: https://www.mlg.ru.

[9] [Anonymous:] Meeting with Young Academics and History Teachers. In: *Kremlin* [online], 05. 11. 2014. [Accessed 2022-09-13.] Available at: http://en.kremlin.ru/events/president/news/46951.

[10] BOVDUNOV, Aleksandr – MEDVEDEVA, Alena: „Orientatsiia na peresmotr itogov voiny": Kak Evroparlament obiavil pakt Molotova–Ribbentropa prichinoi Vtoroi mirovoi [Focusing on Revising the Outcome of the War: How the European Parliament Declared the Molotov–Ribbentrop Pact the Cause of the Second World War]. In: *RT* [online], 21. 09. 2019. [Accessed 2022-09-13.] Available at: https://russian.rt.com/world/article/670247-evroparlament-rezolyuciya-vtoraya-mirovaya-voina. *RT*'s (former *Russia Today*) domestic service is the second biggest Russian newspaper by number of citations in other media and fourth by number of citations in social networks.

plans to participate in the partition of Poland".[11] Russian officials including Putin himself, would sometimes express a mild condemnation, although in a very sly "yes, but…" manner. That is why the experts of *EUvsDisinfo* have called this policy a "ping-pong rally": "Denouncement (ping) – praise (pong) – denouncement (ping) – praise (pong)."[12]

The second significant part of Russian propaganda efforts in this area is a whataboutist rhetoric aimed at blaming Western powers for their friendly policy toward Nazi Germany. The *Merriam-Webster* dictionary defines whataboutism as "the act or practice of responding to an accusation of wrongdoing by claiming that an offense committed by another is similar or worse".[13] Though it is obvious that this phenomenon is very old and ubiquitous in different societies, the term itself is usually linked to the Soviet anti-Western information wars, especially relating to the Soviet Union's aggressive policy and human rights violations. As Aleksandra Srdanovic, a researcher with Harvard University's Russia Matters Initiative, reminds us, "by the time the Soviet Union collapsed, accusations of America 'lynching Negroes' had become a punchline for irreverent jokes about Soviet officialdom's own hypocrisy and […] a synecdoche for Soviet propaganda as a whole".[14]

Of course, the question must be asked at this point as to what propaganda is and what makes someone a voice of it. The neutral definition of a propagandist is: "someone who spreads ideas, facts, or allegations deliberately to further a cause or to damage an opposing cause".[15] Jonathan Day of the Civil Liberties Union for Europe writes that propaganda "has evolved to refer to very manipulated or objectively false information" and that "propagandists not only create or share their information intentionally, but they also know its [sic] propaganda specifically de-

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[11] DOLGOPOLOV, Nikolai: Kto pozvolil Gitleru razviazat Vtoruiu mirovuiu voinu [Who Allowed Hitler to Start the Second World War?]. In: *Rossiiskaia Gazeta* [online], 17. 07. 2019. [Accessed 2022-13-09.] Available at: https://rg.ru/2019/07/17/kto-pozvolil-gitleru-razviazat-vtoruiu-mirovuiu-vojnu.html; KOGALOV, Iurii: Na Zapade stalo modnym obviniat SSSR v razviazyvanii voiny [It Has Become Fashionable in the West to Accuse the USSR of Starting the War]. In: *Ibid.* [online], 04. 07. 2019. [Accessed 2022-13-09.] Available at: https://rg.ru/2019/07/04/na-zapade-stalo-modnym-obviniat-sssr-v-razviazyvanii-vojny.html.

[12] [Anonymous:] Ping Pong Pact Policy. In: *EUvsDisinfo* [online], 08. 07. 2020. [Accessed 2022-13-09.] Available at: https://euvsdisinfo.eu/ping-pong-pact-policy/.

[13] Whataboutism. In: *Merriam-Webster* [online]. [Accessed 2022-13-09.] Available at: https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/whataboutism.

[14] SRDANOVIC, Aleksandra: Two Decades of Russian "Whataboutism": A Partial Rundown. In: *Russia Matters* [online], 21. 10. 2021. [Accessed 2022-13-09.] Available at: https: //www.russiamatters.org/blog/2-decades-russian-whataboutism-partial-rundown.

[15] Propagandist. In: *Merriam-Webster* [online]. [Accessed 2022-13-09.] Available at: https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/propagandist.

signed to further an aim".[16] In this article, I put together a relatively broad range of people as propagandists such as officials, journalists of state-controlled media and regime-affiliated pundits.

It comes as no surprise that Putin's regime wishes to place the Molotov–Ribbentrop pact story into this whataboutist frame. For example, Putin wrote already on 7 May 2005 in a *Le Figaro* article, that the pact "was in no way different to the idea of the Munich Agreement. Both of them alienated objective allies in the fight against Nazism and evoked reciprocal mistrust and suspicion. Soviet leaders had the impression that Munich not only meant the division of Czechoslovakia, but also the isolation of the USSR, and pushed Hitler towards aggression in the east."[17]

This deserves a little digression. The *Le Figaro* article is remarkable as it is perhaps the first of Putin's performances as a historian. After almost two decades and several long articles, it is still unclear who is doing the main research and analysis here. The foreign policy experts Fiona Hill and Angela Stent claim that one of Putin's main assistants is Vladimir Medinskii – whose own reputation is more than controversial – but there is no explicit evidence for this.[18] Putin himself simply claims that he asks his colleagues to select archival materials for him.[19] It is obvious that the approach of Putin and his anonymous co-authors is selective. The majority of professional historians prefer to keep silent about Putin's historical texts and public comments, although sometimes there are some very critical notes. For example, the historian and journalist Stas Kuvaldin defines them as "neophyte revelations".[20]

[16] DAY, Jonathan: What Is a Propagandist: Meaning, Behaviour, Goals, How to Spot One? In: *Liberties* [online], 05. 04. 2022. [Accessed 2022-13-09.] Available at: https://www.liberties.eu/en/stories/propagandist/44143.

[17] The English version of the article can be found under the title: PUTIN, Vladimir: The Lessons of Victory over Nazism: The Lessons of the Past Are Necessary for Joint Building of a Secure Humane Future. In: *Kremlin* [online], 07. 05. 2005. [Accessed 2022-09-13.] Available at: http://en.kremlin.ru/events/president/transcripts/22949.

[18] HILL, Fiona – STENT, Angela: The World Putin Wants: How Distorsions About the Past Feed Delusions About the Future. In: *Foreign Affairs* [online], September/October 2022. [Accessed 2022-13-09.] Available at: https://www.foreignaffairs.com/russian-federation/world-putin-wants-fiona-hill-angela-stent.

[19] Vladimir Putin's Annual News Conference. In: *Kremlin* [online], 19. 12. 2019. [Accessed 2022-13-09.] Available at: http://en.kremlin.ru/events/president/news/62366.

[20] KUVALDIN, Stanislav: Nash staryi prezident: Chto my uznali iz bolshoi press-konferentsii 2019 goda o Vladimire Putine [Our Old President: What We Learned from the Big 2019 Press Conference about Vladimir Putin]. In: *Snob* [online], 20. 12. 2019. [Accessed 2022-13-09.] Available at: https://snob.ru/entry/186599/.

The following years only solidified his stance. In his 2020 article Putin underscored that the Munich Betrayal involved British and French leaders and that it "destroyed even the formal, fragile guarantees that remained on the continent", adding that nowadays "European politicians [...] wish to sweep the Munich Betrayal under the carpet".[21]

Last but not least, Russian propagandists have steadily insisted that Europe should try to neglect and ignore the Munich Agreement: "The West and the former socialist countries often remember the Molotov–Ribbentrop pact but there is very little mention of the previous events of Munich 1938 when Great Britain and France *de facto* handed Czechoslovakia over to Nazi Germany," wrote Russian historian and journalist Vadim Trukhachev in 2013.[22] Political commentator Piotr Akopov declared in 2019 that Russophobia will not help Europe to erase its romance with Hitler from memory,[23] and Aleksei Pushkov, a member of Putin's United Russia party, responsible for information policy and who later became a senator, seconded this opinion in his Telegram channel in 2020: "Precisely because of the indelible stain of Munich Agreement with Hitler and Mussolini, because of the betrayal of Czechoslovakia and then Poland, which were their allies, Western democracies zealously pass the buck to Moscow. By blaming us, these countries try to avoid responsibility for encouraging Hitler to start a war."[24] Similar arguments and statements can be found across anti-Western propaganda platforms from various political commentators,[25] some of whom are historians by (original) profession. This is the case of, for example, Modest Kolerov, editor-in-chief of the staunchly pro-Kremlin Russian website *Regnum*, when he wrote: "And if you want, for your Hitler's advocacy, to spread his responsibility among

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21 [PUTIN, Vladimir:] 75th Anniversary of the Great Victory: Shared Responsibility to History and Our Future. In: *Kremlin* [online], 19. 06. 2020. [Accessed 2022-13-09.] Available at: http://en.kremlin.ru/events/president/news/63527.

22 TRUKHACHEV, Vadim: O chem Zapad khochet zabyt? [What Does the West Want to Forget?]. In: *Vzgliad* [online], 30. 09. 2013. [Accessed 2022-13-09.] Available at: https://vz.ru/opinions/2013/9/30/652697.html. *Vzgliad* has a smaller audience than *Rossiiskaia Gazeta*, *RT* or *Regnum* but it represents much more straight-line type of propaganda.

23 AKOPOV, Piotr: Rusofobiia ne pomozhet Evrope steret iz pamiati roman s Gitlerom [Russophobia Will Not Help Europe Erase Its Romance with Hitler]. In: *Vzgliad* [online], 25. 12. 2019. [Accessed 2022-13-09.] Available at: https://vz.ru/politics/2019/12/25/1015405.html.

24 PUSHKOV, Aleksei [no title]. In: *Telegram* [online], 20. 06. 2020. [Accessed 2022-09-14.] Available at: https://t.me/alexey_pushkov/618.

25 Such as KRUTIKOV, Evgenii: Kto vynudil SSSR podpisat pakt s Ribbentropom [Who Forced the USSR to Sign the Pact with Ribbentrop]. In: *Vzgliad* [online], 23. 08. 2019. [Accessed 2022-09-14.] Available at: https://vz.ru/politics/2019/8/23/993812.html.

his accomplices you have to add to them democratic England, democratic France, Poland… and Hungary."[26]

In recent years, Russia's relations with Poland have deteriorated probably even faster than its relations with other European states. That is why the majority of pro-Kremlin contributors to the debate pay great attention to the Polish steps taken in 1938, i.e. the annexation of the contested area of Cieszyn Silesia. "Poland regularly blames the USSR and modern Russia that Moscow used Hitler's invasion and attached significant territories to Ukraine and Belarus, [but] one year before Poland used the Munich Betrayal and annexed Těšín, which is still contested," wrote the columnist Anton Krylov in 2018.[27] (Why does he consider this area to be contested?) Other bloggers and commentators published posts in a similar vein in the following years. So claimed Boris Rozhin, a.k.a Colonel K/Cassade: "Whining about Molotov–Ribbentrop pact is especially ridiculous, the main thing here is not to remember the Piłsudski–Hitler pact, Munich Betrayal, British guarantees to Poland, annexation of Těšín."[28] Another *Regnum* journalist and former diplomat, Mikhail Demurin, wrote in 2019 that "Poles so badly wanted to become Hitler's allies and attack the USSR together".[29]

Regarding the Munich Agreement, there is no attempt to dismiss its importance. It really was an indisputable failure of Western democracies, which led precisely to further and further Axis aggression in Europe and even beyond. And perhaps whataboutism itself is not that bad if it helps us to remember controversial things in the past and to test whether we are serious about our principles, as some intellectuals underscore.[30] But at the same time, it is obvious that Rus-

[26] [KOLEROV, Modest:] SSSR podoben Gitleru? Togda dobavte Angliiu, Frantsiiu, Vengriiu i Polshu [The USSR is like Hitler? Then Add England, France, Hungary and Poland]. In: *Regnum* [online], 26. 01. 2021. [Accessed 2022-09-14.] Available at: https://regnum.ru/news/polit/3173099.html. *Regnum* has a very tiny audience compared with other quoted media, but it provides the harshest version of anti-Western propaganda.

[27] KRYLOV, Anton: Pochemu v Evrope proshchaiut sotrudnichestvo s Gitlerom [Why Europe Forgives Collaboration with Hitler]. In: *Vzgliad* [online], 08. 11. 2018. [Accessed 2022-13-09.] Available at: https://vz.ru/world/2018/11/8/949807.html.

[28] [ROZHIN, Boris:] [no title] In: *Telegram* [online], 08. 06. 2021. [Accessed 2022-13-09.] Available at: https://t.me/colonel_cassad/87884.

[29] DEMURIN, Mikhail: Stoit li Rossii metat biser, vzyvaia k sovesti nyneshnikh vlastei Polshi [Should Russia Cast Pearls to Appeal to the Conscience of the Current Polish Authorities?]. In: *Regnum* [online], 21. 03. 2019. [Accessed 2022-13-09.] Available at: https://regnum.ru/news/polit/2595675.html.

[30] BURGIS, Ben: Is "Whataboutism" Always a Bad Thing? In: *Current Affairs* [online], 17. 03. 2022. [Accessed 2022-13-09.] Available at: https://www.currentaffairs.org/2022/03/is-whataboutism-always-a-bad-thing.

sian propaganda's Munich Agreement narrative is not about starting a real conversation. It is an attempt to shut down conversation about the Molotov–Ribbentrop pact, and its target audience is a domestic one: most of the sources quoted above are from Russian-language media outlets which are one way or another under state control. And, in pursuit of such an equivocal goal, Kremlin propagandists paint an inaccurate picture of the pre-war events in Central Europe. They come to false conclusions about the faults and responsibilities of the different parties. This politically motivated narrative, amplified by state-owned media and state-controlled social networks, will be echoed in the national memory for a very long time.

But Russia also uses this historical interpretation to legitimize its geopolitical claims.[31] And the aggression against Ukraine, especially in 2022, gives us a clue as to how dangerous such memory policy could be. Russian studies scholar Jade McGlynn underscores that, "by promoting its view of World War II – one in which the Soviet Union did not occupy but liberated Eastern Europe, one in which the West left the Russians to bleed dry, one in which only non-Russian people collaborated with the Nazis – the Kremlin also promotes its vision of how the world ought to look."[32]

The Russian ruling regime justifies its aggressive policy by different means and one of them is whataboutist distortion of the history of the Second World War, which challenges the European consensus interpretation and is highly confrontational, especially towards its neighbors. In February 2022 it led Russia into a bloody war against Ukraine and we cannot rule out further aggressive steps triggered by this confrontational attitude. We can hardly insist that the Czech Republic and Central Europe as a whole are under military threat right now but it is quite clear that the Kremlin will play its cards to destabilize the situation in the region and prepare its intervention, though rather indirectly.

Abstract

Under Vladimir Putin's regime Russia seeks to whitewash Soviet history and promote an anti-Western narrative in order to legitimize its territorial claims and political demands in Eastern Europe. Drawing on electronic sources such as social

[31] CHERVIATSOVA, Alina: Controlling the Past: The Recent Developments in Russia's Memory Policy. In: *Human Rights in Context* [online], 06. 08. 2021. [Accessed 2022-13-09.] Available at: https://www.humanrightsincontext.be/post/controlling-the-past-the-recent-developments-in-russia-s-memory-policy.

[32] McGLYNN, Jade: Moscow Is Using Memory Diplomacy to Export Its Narrative to the World. In: *Foreign Policy* [online], 25. 06. 2021. [Accessed 2022-13-09.] Available at: https://foreignpolicy.com/2021/06/25/russia-puting-ww2-soviet-ussr-memory-diplomacy-history-narrative/.

media posts, articles from the Russian media, newspaper comments and media statements, the author demonstrates that one of its tools is the exaggerated condemnation of the Munich Agreement of September 1938 and the emphasis on the historical guilt of the Western powers in the Nazi expansion, made to avoid discussion of the Molotov–Ribbentrop pact, signed less than a year later.

Keywords:

Russia; Soviet Union; Vladimir Putin; Munich Agreement; Molotov–Ribbentrop pact; politics of history; memory wars; propaganda.

DOI: 10.51134/sod.2022.041

The Struggle for Legitimacy

A Contribution to the Scholarship on Domination and Participation in the Socialist Dictatorships of East-Central Europe

Václav Sixta

Institute for the Study of Totalitarian Regimes, Prague

DONERT, Celia – KLADNIK, Ana – SABROW, Martin (eds.):

Making Sense of Dictatorship: Domination and Everyday Life in East Central Europe After 1945.

Budapest, Central European University Press 2022,
280 pages, ISBN 9789633864272.

When I sat in the audience of a panel entitled "Making Sense of Dictatorship" at the annual conference of the British Association for Slavic and East European Studies (BASEES) in 2022, I had no idea that I was at a launch of the book of the same name. Nor did I know that a few minutes later, in a modern seminar room overlooking the sunny springtime courtyard of Robinson College, University of Cambridge, I would feel as I did when studying in the irregularly shaped rooms of Celetná Street in Prague, where I attended social history seminars as part of my studies in history about ten years ago. It was there that I first encountered concepts such as *Sinnwelt* and *Eigen-Sinn* and a way of asking questions that went beyond my previous experience in most of the courses I attended. In the time

between these two moments, however, a number of events took place that affected how the book here reviewed would be received, and which should be considered. I will attempt to briefly summarize these events at the outset before turning to the book itself.

The beginning and institutional basis for the research and publication activities culminating in the book *Making Sense of Dictatorship* was the project *Sozialistische Diktatur als Sinnwelt: Repräsentationen gesellschaftlicher Ordnung und Herrschaftswandel in Ostmitteleuropa in der zweiten Hälfte des 20. Jahrhundert,* supported by the Volkswagen Stiftung, and conducted between 2007 and 2010.[1] The project, led by Pavel Kolář, Thomas Lindenberger and Martin Sabrow at the Centre for Research in Contemporary History in Potsdam (*Zentrum für zeithistorische Forschung Potsdam*) and Michal Kopeček at the Institute of Contemporary History of the Czech Academy of Sciences in Prague (*Ústav pro soudobé dějiny AV ČR*), asked questions about the nature and transformations of governance in socialist dictatorships in the post-war period. It also included a reflection on the methods and concepts available to historians for examining socialist societies. An important part of the identity of the project was a comparative approach, examining similar phenomena in different countries ruled by socialist dictatorships.

The researchers involved in the project were also important actors in the dispute over the interpretation of the normalization period and the causes of the regime change in 1989, a debate that was triggered by the publication of Michal Pullmann's book *Konec experimentu* [The End of the Experiment].[2] This controversy, which significantly impacted the Czech public debate, highlighted a number of questions posed by the aforementioned project. Can the stability of socialist dictatorships be explained by repression alone? Were people able to live meaningful lives under normalization? Why did these regimes collapse so quickly? These issues dominated Czech debates about "communism" in the following years. The whole controversy eventually replicated itself in a much more predictable way during the summer of 2020, in response to the refusal of the Faculty of Arts of Charles University, headed by Michal Pullmann, to display a banner with the portrait of the democratic politician Milada Horáková (1901–1951) and the slogan "Murdered by the Communists". It can safely be said that some of the issues and results of the project have over time become part of the cultural wars of Czech society, and have recurred in various transformations and contexts.

[1] See KOPEČEK, Michal – KOLÁŘ, Pavel: Projekt „Socialistická diktatura jako myšlenkový svět". In: *Soudobé dějiny,* Vol. 19, No. 2 (2012), pp. 189–195.

[2] PULLMANN, Michal: *Konec experimentu: Přestavba a pád komunismu v Československu.* Praha, Scriptorium 2011.

Although the publication of *Making Sense of Dictatorship* is symbolically the culmination of the project, a number of studies have already been published by members of the project team and their collaborators, based on their work on the project. The aforementioned book by Pullmann as well as Matěj Spurný's book entitled *Nejsou jako my* [They Are Not like Us] were published in 2011.[3] However, in the book reviewed here, Spurný has already dealt with a sub-topic relating to the demolition of the city of Most in Northern Bohemia and the construction of a new city.[4] Among foreign authors, Czech readers could become acquainted with a part of Ana Kladnik's research.[5] Ciprian Cirniala published a book on the Romanian police apparatus in 2018.[6] An issue of *Soudobé dějiny* was also dedicated to the project.[7] Thus, in the scholarly publishing practice, there are already a number of outputs linked to the *Sozialistische Diktatur als Sinnwelt* project, either directly by the author's themselves or through shared methodological assumptions.

Making Sense of Dictatorship, edited by Celia Donert, Ana Kladnik and Martin Sabrow, was published in 2022 by the Central European University Press. The book is introduced by two theoretical studies written respectively by Martin Sabrow and Thomas Lindenberger, explaining the key concepts of *Sinnwelt* and *Eigen-Sinn*. These give an insight into the theoretical background behind the project and the discussions that took place among its members. According to the foreword by Pavel Kolář and Michal Kopeček, the book presents to an international audience the results of a project that contributed to a "gradual paradigmatic turn" in the study of socialist dictatorships. The authors characterize it as follows:

"In historical research, 'communist totalitarianism' is no longer taken out of its historical context as the opposite of democracy but has instead become a standard historical phenomenon in a particular time and place. This largely natural historicization of socialist dictatorships opens up the possibility of comparative studies: if communism is becoming an historical phenomenon with a clear beginning and end – like, say, the Great Depression – then it is obviously not a national exception, but a general manifestation of European modernity. More than a decade has passed since our group carried out its research." (p. xi)

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[3] SPURNÝ, Matěj: *Nejsou jako my: Česká společnost a menšiny v pohraničí (1945–1960).* Praha, Antikomplex 2011.

[4] IDEM: *Making the Most of Tomorrow: A Laboratory of Socialist Modernity in Czechoslovakia.* Prague, Karolinum Press 2019.

[5] KLADNIK, Ana: Vietor veje v smere severovýchod–juhovýchod. In: *Historie – otázky – problémy*, Vol. 2, No. 2 (2010), pp. 127–133.

[6] CIRNIALA, Ciprian: *Ceauşescus Polizei: Herrschaft, Ruhe und Ordnung in Rumänien (1960–1989).* Berlin, De Gruyter 2018.

[7] *Soudobé dějiny*, Vol. 19, No. 2 (2012), pp. 189–274.

At the core of the book are studies that examine the nature of socialist dictatorship always from a specific case and perspective. The first set of case studies focuses on the relationship between authority and domination. In his study, Ciprian Cirniala, a Romanian historian based in Germany, describes the career of a member of the Romanian criminal police force through the analysis of oral history interviews and written sources. He shows that even a member of the security forces was part of longer-term transformations in the regime's legitimacy, and that the behaviour of the investigator (among other things, a non-member of the Communist Party and a man of faith) was both legitimizing and delegitimizing.

The German historian Hedwig Richter focuses on the system of informing, reporting and denunciation in East Germany. However, she turns her perspective not only to the "informers" who knowingly cooperated with the secret police, but also to the flow of information in general, which was directed from the population to the state authorities. She shows that this way of reporting information about subversion was significantly more widespread and accepted in East German society than cooperation with the police. The study thus presents surveillance during the dictatorship as a bureaucratic process that was perceived as legitimate by most of society. It is a pity that more space is not devoted to the ways in which the state handled this information, especially in relation to those who were identified in the reports as threatening elements.

In his contribution, Michal Pullmann uses the term "uncertain elite" to characterize the top leaders of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia (*Komunistická strana Československa*) in the face of perestroika and its challenges in the form of pressure for economic and social change. He cites, as the causes of this situation, the breakdown of the ideological language and its inability to absorb new stimuli and issues, the unpreparedness of the leadership after years of normalization for a real debate, and the prevalence of the ideal of individual success over the vision of a collective effort for a more just society.

Another part of the book is devoted to "everyday social practices". It opens with a text by Slovenian historian Ana Kladnik focusing on self-governance and volunteering in the Slovenian industrial city of Velenje. She examines the extent and forms of participation of the inhabitants in the development of the city, which was made possible by the policies of the League of Communists of Yugoslavia (*Savez komunista Jugoslavije*) after the split with the Soviet Union. The construction of Velenje appears here as an example of long-term volunteerism that resulted in both the modernization of the city and a greater cohesion of the local community. In her study, the Hungarian historian Annina Gagyiova examines consumer practices in the context of the Hungarian Trade Union's "Washing Machine Campaign" in the late 1950s. According to the author, consumer practices in this period can be understood as a way of expressing an attitude towards

the ruling regime, including the arbitrary appropriation of its social policies for purposes other than those originally intended. It is also one of the texts in the book that deals with the emancipation of women under socialist dictatorships.

In her study, the Polish historian Barbara Klich-Kluczewska, who has also published several books on the subject, examines the project of socialist modernity from a female perspective.[8] The focus of the study is the status of unmarried, single mothers in the People's Republic of Poland (*Polska Rzeczpospolita Ludowa*). She documents the significant neglect of unmarried mothers by Polish society, as well as significantly lower support from the state compared to other socialist countries. This study is also based on a combination of the personal testimonies of women and official sources documenting the social policy of the People's Republic of Poland. The story of an unofficial kindergarten in East Berlin is explored by the British historian Celia Donert. She uses the case of an independently run children's group to thematize the relationship between private and public, as well as the post-war reconstruction of Berlin, during one of the phases in which the old city centre became the seat of alternatively minded communities, particularly linked to the anti-war and environmental movements.

The last series of studies focuses on the role of intellectuals and experts in (de)legitimizing socialist regimes. Matěj Spurný's main hypothesis is "that the change in the *Sinnwelt* of the local people, which is linked to the crisis of organized industrial modernity beginning in the 1960s, could not be stopped even in an authoritarian system such as a socialist dictatorship" (p. 179).[9] The example of Most shows that the late socialist elites were unable to integrate the new narratives associated with the crisis of industrial modernity into their language and thus deprived themselves of an essential pillar of their legitimacy. The Hungarian historian Péter Apor, who deals with the transformation of community life, asks questions in a similar framework. Using several examples, he shows community life as a reaction to the technocratic approach of socialist elites and rigid official collectivism.

The American historian Jonathan Larson focuses his study on Czechoslovak samizdat. In his chapter, he points out some neglected parts of the samizdat

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[8] KLICH-KLUCZEWSKA, Barbara: *Family, Taboo and Communism in Poland, 1956–1989*. Bern, Peter Lang 2021. (The book had been published in Polish in 2015 under the title *Rodzina, tabu i komunizm w Polsce, 1956–1989*. Kraków, Liberian 2015.) See also: STAŃCZAK-WIŚLICZ, Katarzyna – PERKOWSKI, Piotr – FIDELIS, Małgorzata – KLICH-KLUCZEWSKA, Barbara: *Kobiety w Polsce 1945–1989: Nowoczesność, równouprawnienie, komunizm*. Kraków, Universitas 2020.

[9] Spurný's chapter entitled "Problems with Progress in Late Socialist Czechoslovakia: The Example of Most, North Bohemia" (pp. 179–202) is based on research that has previously been published in his monograph *Making the Most of Tomorrow*.

archives (e.g. Czech tramping, science fiction and other productions that did not contain explicit criticism of the regime) and the related implications for understanding what a samizdat was. Michal Kopeček examines dissident legalism in a comparative Czechoslovak-Polish perspective. He points out the differences between the two countries and observes that the concepts of socialist legality and dissident legalism can be understood as the two sides of the same coin. Kopeček also draws attention to the connection between the legalistic strategy of dissent and the non-violent and essentially legalistic transition to democracy.

The preceding list partially summarizes the theses that the texts in the book present to the reader, but also the breadth and nature of the topics addressed in it. Thus, viewed as a whole, the case studies present the theoretical framework of the book as applicable to a wide range of topics and sources. The actors in the book include party elites, members of the power apparatus, and members of alternative communities and dissidents. However, in all cases it is clear that the main focus of research is the dynamics of power, legitimacy and delegitimization in socialist dictatorships.

Although the selection of case studies does not follow any pre-determined structure, the absence of the perspectives of national or sexual minorities, and the predominant focus on urban populations and on activities that were often concentrated in cities rather than in the countryside, cannot be overlooked. For the whole book and for some of the studies, this raises the question of their representativeness. That is, to what extent do they describe a general phenomenon, or rather an exception that captures the experience of a minority of a given country's population. For example, whether volunteering played a similarly productive role in towns and villages in Slovenia other than Velenje. At the same time, it should be stressed that we do not hold in our hands a synthesis of the social history of socialist dictatorships, so these claims go beyond the contributors' own stated goals.

What most of the chapters succeed in doing, on the other hand, is to point to some of the more general phenomena associated with research on socialist dictatorships. Firstly, it is clear from all the studies which cover a longer period of time that the nature of socialist regimes had changed considerably, and with it the shape of repressive practices and people's responses to them. This, in turn, had an impact on the (de)legitimization and ultimately the collapse of these regimes. A transnational perspective is crucial. It shows that the different states – however much they shared the same power and ideological camp – had their own specificities, mainly determined by the legacy of the period before the rise of communism. This legacy then strongly influenced which social groups resisted the regime (this is well illustrated, among others, by Michal Kopeček's study) or coexisted with it in some way. At the same time, however, it can also be

seen that the policies of particular states were not identical – for example, their social policies or the ways in which they supported the emancipation of women.

The more general question is how to read the book as a whole, bearing in mind its institutional background in the original project and the leading role of some of the authors in disputes over the interpretation of the Czech experience of socialism. Moreover, whether it can bring something to readers who are not experts on particular subtopics, for example, the history of the police apparatus in Romania, or the history of volunteerism and urbanism in Slovenia, or research on socialist dictatorships in general. Several possible perspectives could be offered here.

Those who follow or have followed the scholarly debate on the study of socialist dictatorships and the search for interpretations other than strictly totalitarian ones from the beginning are likely to have the least to gain from the book. This is mainly because much of the research has already been published, either in book form or as studies in scholarly journals, and those following the debate will thus not be surprised by the nature of the texts or the methodology employed. In this respect, however, the significance of the book lies in the joint presentation of local case studies to the international expert community. What stands out in this context is the strong representation of Czech historians, and with them Czech or Czechoslovak realities, in the book.

For historians of contemporary history, however, the publication of the book creates a platform for a reflective debate on where approaches to research on this period have shifted. How would research on developments in post-socialist states during the 1990s fit into this framework? Matěj Spurný's text offers a link to the developing subject of environmental history. It also raises the question of where to look for case studies from Czechoslovakia that would correspond to foreign examples. Did independent kindergartens emerge in Czechoslovakia and how did the context of their emergence and closure differ from that of East Berlin? This reflexive perspective assumes that the approaches presented in this book will be understood not as the final stage in the development of approaches to the study of socialist dictatorships, but as part of a story with an open ending in which new paradigms are still likely to emerge.

I perceive a great potential for the book especially in relation to students of history and other humanities and social sciences. The book brings them not only theoretical studies but also a wide range of their applications. All the studies clearly present the problem under investigation and the methodology used, and at the same time have the potential to raise questions and motivate further research. The combination of reading one of the theoretical introductions and one of the studies can thus represent a model lesson for a social or contemporary history seminar at a university. Another group of readers who might find the book

useful are journalists and other professionals who comment on the past and engage in disputes over its interpretation. The book offers concrete examples of what research on socialist dictatorships can mean. Reading them does not confirm the potential authors' exaggerated notion that they deny the repressive nature of the regimes they examine, although repression is not the primary lens applied to the phenomena in question. It is in the specific cases that the interconnectedness of the pressures that socialist dictatorships exerted on their populations, the opportunities that these same regimes offered, and the strategies that populations and communities used to deal with them in lived practice, is well illustrated.

In conclusion, *Making Sense of Dictatorship* well illustrates that a scholarly text is not simply another piece in the imaginary puzzle of historical knowledge, but that its reading and reception is conditioned by a range of material, institutional and discursive circumstances both within the scholarly community as well as among the wider public. It is certain that the reading of this book will be different today than it would have been ten years ago. One can only wish that this book will not fade into obscurity as a monument to wars already fought today (at least in academia), but that it will find its own active and critical readership.

Making Sense of Dictatorship thus lives up to its name on several levels. First, it provides insight into how different actors across the societies of socialist dictatorships struggled to make sense of their social reality. But beyond that, it also comes (albeit with some delay) at a time when a number of debates about the nature of these regimes have taken place in the public sphere, including the participation of some of the contributors in this book. The latter is thus also part of the contemporary trend for "making sense of dictatorship" at the level of the cultures of memory. Last but not least, the book documents one essential phase of how historians have tried to deal with modern dictatorships. Most importantly, however, it is an imperfective aspect, because making sense of dictatorship is certainly not yet over.

Keywords:

East-Central Europe; communism; socialist dictatorships; world of meaning (*Sinnwelt*); socialist modernity; everyday life; transnational history

“Made in Czechoslovakia” Socialism as a Failed Social Experiment

Searching for the Causes of Failure

Denisa Nečasová

Institute of History, Faculty of Arts, Masaryk University in Brno

RYCHLÍK, Jan:
Československo v období socialismu 1945–1989.
Praha, Vyšehrad 2020 and 2022, 415 pages,
ISBN 978-80-7601-334-6 and
978-80-7601-638-5.

A synthesis of the state socialist period in Czechoslovakia is something which the wider historical community has been waiting for for thirty long years. If we disregard more textbook-like publications, the book under review is truly groundbreaking in this regard. Jan Rychlík did not balk at the many pitfalls involved in a synthesizing project of this type and boldly led the way for other authors hopefully to continue further along this route.

Jan Rychlík, a noted Czech historian, an expert on the modern history of Czechoslovakia and the Balkan countries, decided to focus on the period from 1945 to 1989 primarily from a political and social perspective, striving for a balanced and fairly comprehensive view. He approached the issue from the perspective of the internal development of Czechoslovakia and, as he writes, he “aims to try to describe the period in question as a failed social experiment and

to establish the reasons for this failure" (p. 33). In order to achieve the stated objective, he studied dozens of published sources and works of specialist literature in a number of archives in the Czech Republic (in addition to the Slovak National Archive). However, the writing of the synthesis is primarily based on many years of researching and publishing works on twentieth-century Czechoslovak history. Another important factor was the author's experience of teaching the history of Czechoslovakia during this period at the Faculty of Arts of Charles University, as Rychlík mentions on the very first page of the book.

Apart from the introduction and conclusion, *Československo v období socialismu 1945–1989* [Czechoslovakia in the Period of Socialism, 1945–1989] is divided into seven chronological chapters. The individual time periods reproduce the conventional division of state socialism. Some chapters are allocated more space than others and therefore more significance for the shaping of the entire forty-year period, as Jan Rychlík indicates in the introduction. The chapters cover the Third Republic (1945–1948), the founding era of the communist regime (1948–1953), another part of the 1950s termed the period of the thaw and re-solidification, the 1960s, the Prague Spring, normalization and the brief period from the Velvet Revolution to Václav Havel's election as president. At least in terms of the ratio between the number of pages and the length of the stage being discussed, the author devotes a great deal of attention to the Prague Spring and to the post-1989 events in particular. For comparison, the twenty years of normalization are allocated the same amount of space as the period 1968–1969.

There are various ways to write a synthesis, and Rychlík's approach will not please everyone. He did not set out to write a "story" of state socialism that would offer an exhaustive explanation or possible interpretation of this period of history. Instead, he chose to describe events and phenomena that he regarded as characteristic of the period. This does not mean that Rychlík refrains completely from interpreting some aspects; for example, he clearly expresses the view that the period of the Third Republic was a stage that cannot be referred to as a time of "freedom in the true sense of the word" (p. 37), and he criticizes the brutality associated with the expulsion of the Germans. However, these are exceptions that confirm the rule of the positivistic approach. Nevertheless, the question remains why Rychlík opted for this approach, which in itself is interpretative in principle because it *a priori* assumes that the mere description of facts will objectively speak for itself – an illusion that has been refuted many times. At the same time, this is why the reader cannot expect these issues to be placed in a wider context – especially the much-discussed topic of modernity, or particular features of it such as industrialization and urbanization. This question arises even more conspicuously in the context of the main objective set out for the book:

the search for the causes and roots of the social experiment known as state socialism in Czechoslovakia.

At the same time, it should be noted that Rychlík *a priori* treats the period of state socialism as a totalitarian system, as is shown by the use of the terms "totalitarian power", "totalitarian regime" and so on. However, there is no systematic anchoring in one of the theories of totalitarianism. As mentioned above, he does not explain his theoretical basis and to a large extent the impression given is that his approach is more of an intuitive one. One commendable exception is the deliberate stance he takes to the one-sided scholarly view of the period through the lens of the population's repression and resistance and also to the interpretation of Czechoslovak state socialism as a mere consequence of Soviet power dominance (see introduction). I must also stress the fact that, unlike many texts which make use of terms like "totalitarian regime", Rychlík's book does not contain emotive moralizing judgements.

Another aspect related to the highly conventional positivistic approach is Rychlík's primary focus on central institutions. This essentially reduces individual events and phenomena to goings-on at the highest power levels of the system. This approach is not only applied to political history, which to a large extent would be understandable given the synthetic nature of the work, but also to the social questions and to the more specific cultural aspects that are dealt with on occasion. And in these two areas it is particularly true that, in spite of certain dictates "from above", practice is modified by the specifics of the local conditions, which means that the resulting nature of one of the sub-stages is in its entirety defined by this. Although the relatively detailed paraphrasing of the debates about social and cultural politics in the central institutions of power offers some kind of an explanation, I believe that readers would be more interested in their repercussions and a full picture of the more diverse situation in Czechoslovakia as a whole.

As previously mentioned, Rychlík's intention was to focus on social issues as well as on the political history of the period. He does an excellent job of this in the chapters dedicated to the Third Republic and the first five years of the new state socialist system. However, as the time period progresses towards the present day, this aspect is increasingly neglected. The worst chapter in this respect is the one devoted to normalization, where the social history of Czechoslovakia is reduced to just a few pages (pp. 270–274). Rychlík's approach reaffirms the prevailing notion that nothing of real importance happened or changed in this area over that twenty-year period.

My other more fundamental reservation about the book is also connected to this issue. Rychlík primarily drew on older post-1989 historical texts where the date of publication is rarely later than 2010. And yet the last decade (Rychlík's

book came out in 2020) has seen the publication of a number of works that have provided new findings from previously under-researched areas but also new stimuli for more profound interpretations of state socialism. In this context the historiographical excursus in the introductory section of the book is in itself very revealing. Rychlík devotes most of the space to basic trends in research into state socialism while the system was in place, i.e. prior to 1989 (pp. 13–28), and summarizes his reflections on post-1989 historical works (with a reference to the high level of output) on three pages.

In the last part of his book, Rychlík attempts to answer the central question posed by the work: what is behind the failure of the state socialist social experiment. He believes (bearing in mind the complexity of the answer) that the reason lies in the utopian and unrealistic foundations of the system itself in the form of a classless society of socially equal individuals. And he also adds that by "the 1980s few people were willing to get behind this utopian dream" (p. 371). In this context, however, I find myself wondering why the question of the ideology or intellectual basis of the system was side-lined in Rychlík's book and why the chapter about the 1980s and normalization offers the least information about the life of society at that time. And finally a perhaps slightly provocative question: does not every society need certain ideals and visions of a better future to cling to? And are not the values of justice and democracy recognized these days equally utopian and therefore impracticable for real life?

As we can see, Rychlík's book raises new questions and stimuli for further research, which is one of the purposes of academic texts. And even if I am not satisfied with his approach in some regards, I am glad that this synthesis exists.

Keywords:

Czechoslovakia; communism; state socialism; Third Czechoslovak Republic; Stalinism; Prague Spring 1968; Czechoslovak normalization; Czech-Slovak relations

Recalling the Story of a Forgotten University

Michaela Budiman

Institute of Asian Studies, Faculty of Arts, Charles University

HOLEČKOVÁ, Marta Edith:
Příběh zapomenuté univerzity: Universita 17. listopadu (1961–1974) a její místo v československém vzdělávacím systému a společnosti.
Praha, Univerzita Karlova, Filozofická fakulta 2019,
202 pages, ISBN 978-80-7308-921-4.

For a historian to find “a blind spot” in history is just the same as for an entomologist to find a new species of bug. It is not impossible, but it is very unusual and, in my opinion, also very exciting. Marta Edith Holečková managed to do just that. She found a topic that for various reasons disappeared from the collective memory of the people of Czechoslovakia and gathered enough information to publish the first book on this topic: The University of 17th November (*Universita 17. listopadu*) that existed between the years 1961 and 1974.

The historian Marta Edith Holečková works at the Institute of Contemporary History of the Czech Academy of Sciences and specializes in contemporary Czech history with an emphasis on universities in communist Czechoslovakia and the interaction between students from the Global South and Czechoslovak society. Her professional scholarly interests resulted in the book entitled

Příběh zapomenuté univerzity: Universita 17. listopadu (1961–1974) a její místo v československém vzdělávacím systému a společnosti [The Story of a Forgotten University: The University of 17th November (1961–1974) and Its Place in the Czechoslovak Education System and Society].

The book consists of 202 pages and is divided into four chapters (not counting the Introduction and Conclusion). The Introduction presents the three major areas of interest that are related to the establishment and existence of the University of 17th November. The first is the history of the institution itself, the second is the coexistence of the foreign students with the local population and the third explores the question of why this university was displaced from the collective memory of Czechoslovak society. In this section the author also analyses the image and reputation of the university. She also presents the secondary literature that was relevant for writing the book – such as works by Petr Zídek, Pavel Urbášek and Jiří Pulec, Josef Běhounek and most notably the unique memoirs of Milan Janoušek, the offspring of a former student from Guinea.[1] The most pertinent resource, however, was the large but unorganized archive of the University of 17th November, accessible in the National Archives of the Czech Republic in Prague, which provided information pertaining to the inception and the development of the university in addition to its operations and curriculum. The archive also contains data on teachers (sometimes including their political profile), on the student magazine's editorial staff and other historical records which helped to paint a picture of academic life at the time. An especially illuminating resource was the monthly journal *Fórum zahraničních studentů* [Forum of Foreign Students] that was published only in the years 1968–1969 but became the main platform wherein the foreign students were able to present their experiences, problems and opinions. Holečková also makes use of oral history interviews. The memories and narratives of the contemporary witnesses help to expand our factual base and, together with other sources, serve as an additional context when trying to analyse historical facts.

The first chapter entitled "Communist Czechoslovakia and the Third World" discusses the bonds between these two entities. In the second half of the 1950s Czechoslovakia became (due to its convenient geographical position and good post-First World War diplomatic relations) a mediator of Soviet influence in postcolonial countries in Africa, Asia and South America. The USSR offered loans as well as economic and military aid, and through these means, tried to use

[1] ZÍDEK, Petr: *Československo a francouzská Afrika 1948–1968.* Praha, Libri 2006; URBÁŠEK, Pavel – PULEC, Jiří: *Vysokoškolský vzdělávací systém v letech 1945–1969.* Olomouc, Univerzita Palackého 2012; BĚHOUNEK, Josef: *Můj život.* Teplice, Gymnázium Teplice 2003; JANOUŠEK, Milan: *Kolín – Conacry: Příběh naší babičky.* Kolín, M. Janoušek 2013.

the emancipation efforts of those newly established countries in its own favour. During the late 1950s and 1960s Czechoslovakia sent hundreds of experts with the mission to help build modern nations and establish positive political, economic and diplomatic relations with those countries. The functional tools of political and ideological propaganda manifested in cultural exchange and scholarship grants to students from those countries.

The second chapter entitled "Czechoslovak Society and the Third World" acquaints the reader with the way Czechoslovak society was informed about developing countries in the 1950s and 1960s. The increasing interest in the decolonized world resulted in more publications of a wide range of travelogues, reportages and occasionally, films. The most famous Czech travellers who visited Africa, and subsequently Asia, were Miroslav Zikmund (1919–2021) and Jiří Hanzelka (1920–2003). Some of the material presented during this time was part of a propaganda campaign trying to link the decolonization process with the ideology of Marxism-Leninism. Last but not least, another source of information was the translations (usually through other European languages) of writers from countries in Asia, Africa and South America.

The third main chapter, "The University of 17th November" provides information on the founding and mission of the university, its structure, its teachers, and its dissolution thirteen years after it was created. As I mentioned above, Czechoslovakia started to be interested in post-colonial countries in the mid-1950s, and the government tried to build bonds between the states by granting scholarships to students from countries in Asia, Africa and South America, and also by sending experts to those regions. For this purpose, in 1961 the University of 17th November was established.

The institution was founded with the optimistic idea that its students would become the future elite of the newly created decolonized states and that they would be promoting communist ideology in their homelands. These foreign students were believed to be opening the door to better cooperation between Czechoslovakia and the developing world. However, these expectations were not fulfilled for several reasons. First, the base-level of knowledge that foreign students possessed varied dramatically, so the pedagogical efforts were hampered by inefficiency. Second, most of the courses were in Czech initially, which made the educational process more difficult for the students. Third, it was also challenging to influence the students ideologically since very often they were disenchanted after experiencing life in a communist country and they became anti-communist.

Another problem with the plan to have students be ambassadors for communism was that many would not return home because the political situation in their home countries was not safe or because they got married and settled down in Czechoslovakia. Moreover, if they did return, there could be mistrust towards them in their own country because it was known that they studied

in a communist state, and consequently they were considered suspicious. This could possibly explain why they did not become the part of the elite that Czechoslovakia wanted to collaborate with.

The above-mentioned reasons, disillusion and the lack of political interest in the Global South in the mid-1970s contributed to the closing of the University. As to the curriculum itself, after some years of its existence, the University transitioned from teaching specialized majors in Czech to providing a one-year language (Czech or Slovak) course to all foreign students who wanted to study at any kind of Czechoslovak university. However, the University also offered certain majors in English and French. One of the possible reasons why the University of 17th November disappeared from the collective memory was the fact that its reputation was already problematic and unclear during the time of its existence. There were rumours among the general public that the school was a place for training spies, terrorists and that both the students and the teachers had to have "the correct" political profile to be able to be involved at the University. However, Marta Edith Holečková concludes that many of the lecturers were actually employed there not because of their cooperation with the communist regime but because of their (at that time very exceptional) knowledge of languages such as English and French and their expertise in foreign affairs. Another observation by Holečková is that the Czechoslovak secret service was really interested in the students, but not only to gain new contacts through them, but surprisingly, also because the foreigners represented a certain security threat. They were allowed to travel abroad, own foreign currency and their attitude towards the communist regime was not always evident.

The main contribution of the University to the Czechoslovak education system and scholarship was the establishment of the field of translatology, the study of the theory and practice of translating and interpreting. The interest in developing countries also led to the emergence of new and to the development of already existing scholarly specializations such as Egyptology, African studies, Indonesian studies, Ibero-American studies or ethnography.

The fourth chapter, "Foreign Students" informs the reader about the origin of the students, their socio-economic background, and how they adapted to the new (very often dramatically different) living conditions in communist Czechoslovakia. One of the subchapters even depicts their life at the dorms which was not always conflict-free. The clashes arose amongst the students mainly due to political reasons, but they also occurred between them and the local students, who often envied their generous scholarships and the interest of the local women. Their social and public life was affected by the fact that the Czechoslovak society in the 1960s and 1970s was extremely homogenous. Therefore, the students from Asia, and especially from Africa, with their "exotic" look, stood out from

the majority of society that feared anything unknown. This sometimes led to manifestations of racism and the University of 17th November did not know how to cope with this problem.

The choice of the topic of the book was very well-considered and, in a way, we can say that it was almost brave and praiseworthy. To explore a theme that can be recognized as a "blind spot" in our history requires a certain amount of risk but it is also exciting because one cannot truly know how much of the "unknown" will be revealed in the end.

Holečková's language is sophisticated and at the same time very readable. There are no word repetitions and no typographical errors. In general, the text is very smooth and highly pleasurable to read. Conversely, the English resumé at the end of the book could have used the hand of an experienced native editor.

The book cover is likeably simple and gets its message across. However, the visual experience could have been improved if the text was accompanied by period photographs (for example of the foreign students, the interior of the University, the city of Prague, the local centres for teaching Czech/Slovak) from the 1960s and 1970s.

The publication is coherently and logically structured. The author gradually introduces the problematics in the first and second chapters so by the time the reader reaches the core of the book in the third chapter entitled "University of 17th November", the context has been established and the issue clearly understood.

Marta Edith Holečková was able to uncover an unknown place in the history of Czechoslovak universities, one that mainly catered to foreign students from Third World countries – the University of 17th November – which existed in the communist period between the years 1961 and 1974. Due to her diligent work, consisting of the analysis of an extensive array of books and consulting a wide range of archives, including the archive of the University of 17th November, as well as interviewing several people such as the former Indonesian student Soegeng Soejono, she has managed to contribute to a better understanding of the history of Czechoslovak society by writing a book of high quality.

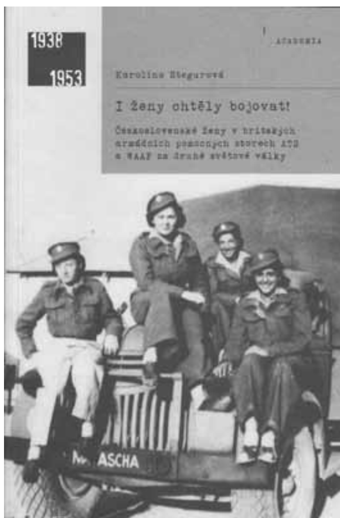
Keywords:

Czechoslovakia; University of 17th November; communism; Czechoslovak education system; Czechoslovak society; foreign students in Czechoslovakia; Third World and Czechoslovakia

Czechoslovak Women in British Uniforms during the Second World War

Daniela Spenser

Centro de Investigaciones y Estudios Superiores en Antropología Social, Ciudad de México



STEGUROVÁ, Karolína:

I ženy chtěly bojovat! Československé ženy v britských armádních pomocných sborech ATS a WAAF za druhé světové války.

Praha, Academia 2021, 287 pages,
ISBN 978-80-200-3181-5.

The phrase "Vital to the offensive" stared out in block capital letters from posters affixed to the walls in public spaces. "Thousands of women needed now" was the appeal at recruiting centres and employment exchanges to enrol in the Army, the Navy or the Air Force. "No British woman will stand aside" was the War Ministry's call, to which thousands of British girls who had just finished school and women who had been working in jobs responded. Nothing could match the sense of duty, patriotism and exhilaration that the prospect of joining the war effort meant, even if it was on the home front far from the battleline.[1] Refugee women from countries occupied by Germany responded as well, believing that

[1] *The National Archives* (London), Poster collection, Inf. 3/119; *ibid.*, AIR 2/6187, WAAF pre-entry training, 13. 9. 1941.

by joining the war effort in Great Britain they could help the liberation of their own country from Nazism.

Czechoslovak women who had emigrated to Great Britain or women who acquired Czechoslovak citizenship, for example by marrying Czechoslovak men, were among them. They joined the British army auxiliary units because they wanted to but also because they were prevented from being part of the Czechoslovak foreign army.

This is the background to Karolína Stegurová's study of the Czechoslovak government and the military administration's political and logistical reasonings and manoeuvrings in Great Britain during the Second World War with regards to women's engagement in the military units. The book's basic premise is that women wanted to join the Czechoslovak foreign army but, because they could not, they enrolled instead in the different units of the British army or air force which were open to them: the Auxiliary Territorial Service (ATS) and the Women's Auxiliary Air Force (WAAF). Independently of their capacities, women in general were prevented from direct employment in combat but as the war progressed and more men had to be drafted to the battlefront, women were recruited to replace men, filling vacancies in industries, in agriculture and in the service sector, some even in British intelligence.

The bulk of the book *I ženy chtěly bojovat! Československé ženy v britských armádních pomocných sborech ATS a WAAF za druhé světové války* [Women Wanted to Fight Too! Czechoslovak Women in the British ATS and WAAF Auxiliary Units during the Second World War] is comprised of exchanges of letters, information and arguments for and against the participation of Czechoslovak women in the war effort. Women rarely got a word in edgeways in this argument. The book touches on three war zones – Great Britain, the Middle East and the Soviet Union – juxtaposing the different rationale that led women to or that prevented them from participating in the war effort. This juxtaposition illustrates the argument that women wanted to be helpful in various capacities, to win the war on behalf of their country. One woman appealed to men on the battlefield to accept them as follows:

"Friends-soldiers! We salute you from one camp, 'somewhere in the Middle East'. We don't know how you view women's emancipation, but we believe that you were pleasantly surprised when you learned that we have decided to exchange our civil [clothes] for khaki. You don't have to be jealous, for the time being we shall not meddle in the affairs of cannons nor do we want to shoot down airplanes. But you must reconcile yourselves to the fact that we shall sit

behind the driving wheel, that you will meet us in hospitals, in warehouses or in offices." (p. 154)[2]

But the impediment to women joining the Czechoslovak foreign army lay not with the "friends-soldiers".

After a brief review of the state of the art and before broaching the crux of the book's central issues, Stegurová gives a useful historical background to women's participation in the war effort in several European countries prior to the Second World War and to the circumstances, the fears and the prejudices that surrounded their recruitment during the war. The Ministry of National Defence in exile preferred men without rank to fill the spots in the Czechoslovak foreign army. Around 1941, women began to join the ranks of their British counterpart. The initiative was undertaken by the Council of Czechoslovak Women (*Rada československých žen*) in Great Britain founded in the second half of 1941. Was the government in exile behind the initiative? We do not know. With the government's acquiescence but without it taking much interest in their welfare, Czechoslovak women joined the auxiliary units of the British army and air force. They learned the ins and outs of handling weapons but were not allowed to use them. This rule could not always be enforced. Should the need arise, women did operate the guns.

The book delves into the negotiations between the British War Office and the Czechoslovak Ministry of Defence regarding the issue of female volunteers who wanted to join the war effort. While the Czechoslovak military establishment in Great Britain was unwilling or incapable of organizing the women's units attached to the Czechoslovak foreign army, the British were unwilling to let the Czechoslovaks meddle in British affairs by allowing the formation of Czechoslovak women's units within the British army. Women could join the auxiliary units but on an individual basis.

When probing into the situation of Czechoslovak women in the Middle East, Stegurová gives a more intimate portrayal of the women who joined the land force. Mainly spouses of officers, these women became an economic burden to the government, which wanted to evacuate them, separating them from their male partners. Enrolling in the army was not only the fulfilment of a perceived duty and of their desire but a way not to be removed from the locations which they shared with their men. It was true that men's bias against women wearing uniforms was ever-present. The war disrupted the traditional social order, women either abandoned their traditional role or had to combine their engagement in the war effort with that of being mothers, homemakers and wives. If in the process

[2] The translation from the original Czech is mine.

women felt emancipated, that was an unintended consequence of any government's political and economic decision.

Czechoslovak women in the USSR war zone illustrate the complexity of the phenomenon. Legally, women were prevented from belonging to the army, but Lieutenant Ludvík Svoboda (later General and Czechoslovak President) encouraged them to participate in the war effort, independently of what the Ministry of Defence and the government in London might have thought. Indeed, according to Svoboda's memoirs, President Edvard Beneš and the Minister of National Defence, Jan Sergěj Ingr, had no interest in strengthening the Czechoslovak army in the Soviet Union in any way so that the liberation of Czechoslovakia did not come from there. A women's fighting force would not have made a difference, but this might have been one element in putting the brakes on women joining the battlefield, or Svoboda might have thought so.[3] But Svoboda ignored the legalities of women's participation in the war effort and women went to the front.

In Great Britain Czechoslovak women participated in the war effort shoulder to shoulder with British women, usually in the service sector: they trained together and they went to dances together. But overall, the information regarding their day-to-day hardships and joys is thin. True, these women left piecemeal testimonies which did not allow the author to reconstruct a coherent war time experience. However, the existing testimonies of British women with whom the Czechoslovak women served in the same units would have helped to fill this void. Therefore, Stegurová's book deals more with men's board room discussions than with women's experiences. It is also true that war was the realm of men, but the reason why we are given more from the world of diplomacy than of women's lives on the ground lies in the methodology and sources adopted.

Karolína Stegurová states at the outset of the book that her conceptual approach is one of "traditional historical analysis" (p. 19), not gender theory. Indeed, her method is a critical analysis of sources and literature, providing the reader with a detailed description of the protracted decision-making processes of Czechoslovak bureaucracy regarding women's participation in the Czechoslovak foreign army. This document-based historical research thus becomes an accumulation of opinions and rhetoric. The advantage of sticking rigorously to the facts is that Stegurová leaves no room for speculation. However, it would have been useful to pause from time to time and to provide reflections and elucidations of the primary sources so as to engage the reader in a dialogue.

Stegurová's book follows on from Ivan Procházka's *A královskou korunu měly* [Those with the Royal Crown], which is a useful register of women in British

[3] I thank Prokop Tomek for this insight.

military units, however not a thorough investigation.[4] This makes her study a pioneering incursion into unchartered territory but at the same time it is a missed opportunity to advance the field of gender studies.[5] Stegurová's bibliography shows that she is aware of that path but decided not to take it.

Finally, Karolína Stegurová delves into women's return to liberated Czechoslovakia. The Red Army received a warmer welcome than the women arriving from the Middle East or from Great Britain. One reason was that the official end of the war was marked on 8 May 1945, so by the time most of these women were demobilized and returned home, the celebration was long over. Consequently, their period of service was recognized as lasting only until 8 May 1945, even though they might have been demobilized a year later. This was not an insignificant subtraction from their service sheet because every year deducted was a year less to be counted for their pension. After the war, women were accepted into the Czechoslovak army, an option denied to them during the war. But the change in regime in 1948 altered the original meaning of women's desire to participate in the armed forces and their numbers subsequently decreased.

In sum: the war had a drastic impact on gender roles, on emancipation, on gaining authority and power in the domestic realm, when male employees and workers, husbands and sons, were drafted to the frontline. Women gained access to public spaces and to employment previously closed to them. How did the gender roles of women who had returned from the war change in post-war Czechoslovakia? The examination of this question could perhaps be on the agenda for future research.

Keywords:

Czechoslovakia; Great Britain; Middle East; Soviet Union; Second World War; Czechoslovak resistance; British Army; Auxiliary Territorial Service; Women's Auxiliary Air Force; women and war; women in the armed forces

[4] PROCHÁZKA, Ivan: *A královskou korunu měly: Stručný pohled na službu čs. žen v jednotkách britské armády za druhé světové války.* Praha, Vojenský historický ústav 2016.

[5] See, for instance, SUMMERFIELD, Penny: *Reconstructing Women's Wartime Lives: Discourse and Subjectivities in Oral Histories in the Second World War.* Manchester – New York, Manchester University Press 1998; WINGFIELD, Nancy M. – BUCUR, Maria (eds.): *Gender and War in Twentieth-Century Eastern Europe.* Bloomington – Indianapolis, Indiana University Press 2006.

On the Most Diligent Chronicler of the Eastern Bloc

Tomáš Zahradníček

Institute of Contemporary History of the Czech Academy of Sciences, Prague

PRZEPERSKI, Michał:
Mieczysław F. Rakowski: Biografia polityczna.
Warszawa, Instytut Pamięci Narodowej 2021,
432 pages, ISBN 978-83-8229-221-3.

Mieczysław Rakowski (1926–2008), the last communist leader in Poland, is one of the more colourful figures among the politicians that ruled in the former Eastern bloc. He stood out by being different from the average, but only to the extent that allowed him to be part of the circle of functionaries. As the editor-in-chief of the party weekly *Polityka* [Politics], he was considered a political talent from the late 1950s. He liked to give the impression that he would do everything better, more generously and more worldly, if only he were allowed to. Once he arrived at the political summit – he reached the top of the leadership in the early 1980s – he lost his drive and appeal and made no substantial changes. He was already starting to fall into oblivion when, at the turn of the millennium, he published ten large volumes of his *Dzienniki Polityczne* [Political Diaries] from

the years 1958–1990.[1] It turned out that, apart from his well-known journalistic and political career, he also produced another piece of work; for four decades, he chronicled political events, written first in the antechamber of political power and later from its seat. This chronicle mapped in detail developments both in Poland and in the world and provided information obtained at first hand, or through one or – in the worst case – two intermediaries, on how national and foreign policy was formed. It also recorded – often as the only source – the course of hundreds of talks, meetings, discussions, negotiations and travels abroad.

Michał Przeperski, the author of Mieczysław Rakowski's first critical biography, was faced with a challenge on how to tackle such a multitude of sources. How difficult the task was can be shown by a simple calculation: take ten extensive volumes of diaries, expand them with the broadest possible list of resources, complete the missing initial one-third of the biography and present the result in one-tenth of the length of the original. A researcher who is not overwhelmed by this assignment may rejoice at working with an interesting source of information delving into the recesses of communist rule. He or she will examine the veracity, accuracy and authenticity of the published version of diaries, he or she will be seduced by its vision of the world and evaluation of people and events – but he or she will also soon tire of it and start disputing its perspectives and putting his or her own questions to the sources. It is a good thing that Michał Przeperski (born in 1986), a researcher at the Institute of History of the Polish Academy of Sciences in Warsaw (*Instytut Historii Polskiej Akademii Nauk*), went down this whole path during his previous publications as he was preparing the book. The first of these was published as early as 2012, nine years before the book under review appeared. The outstanding strength of this excellent biography, from beginning to end, is the way in which a relationship is successfully established with the main character, both in terms of understanding and cool evaluation.

In the first chapter, "Youth (1926–1949)", we follow the first steps of the future politician in a small agricultural village near the German border, where his father had a farm of twenty hectares and led a relatively rich political life: he was one of the founders of the local peasant cooperative. In the 1930s he became the mayor of a regional town and represented the political institutions of the authoritative government at local level. This world disappeared completely within the course of a few days in the autumn of 1939: his father was shot right at the beginning of the occupation during a large-scale massacre of prisoners

[1] RAKOWSKI, Mieczysław F.: *Dzienniki Polityczne,* Vol. 1: *1958–1962.* Warszawa, Iskry 1998; Vol. 2: *1963–1966.* Warszawa, Iskry 1999; Vol. 3: *1967–1968.* Warszawa, Iskry 1999; Vol. 4: *1969–1971.* Warszawa, Iskry 2001; Vol. 5: *1972–1975.* Warszawa, Iskry 2002; Vol. 6: *1976–1978.* Warszawa, Iskry 2002; Vol. 7: *1979–1981.* Warszawa, Iskry 2004; Vol. 8: *1981–1983.* Warszawa, Iskry 2004; Vol. 9: *1984–1986.* Warszawa, Iskry 2004; Vol. 10: *1987–1990.* Warszawa, Iskry 2005.

from among the local Polish elite. The then thirteen-year-old Mieczysław and his mother went to live with his aunt in Poznań, where both of them had to start working. The farmer's boy became a worker in a factory that repaired trains. He spent five years of the war there.

After the liberation, he was eighteen years old and joined the army. In the autumn of 1945, after a four-month course, he began his career in Cracow as a political education officer. The biographer refutes later claims by Rakowski about the dangerous adventures that he allegedly had while in uniform near the Polish-Ukrainian ethnic borderland. This was not quite true. The young political officer was sent to a garrison in a large conservative town. Here, he read newspaper reports to soldiers and organized day camps. It soon became evident that, despite not being too refined, he was diligent, a fast learner and extremely ambitious. In March 1947, he joined the communist party. A year later, he completed his secondary distance education and sat for a final exam at a Cracow grammar school. In the rush to further his career, he made certain adjustments to his curriculum vitae, leaving out compromising information about his father's political activity and giving himself a few additional grades of school education. Yet, none of those deceived in this way had any reason to complain. He became a zealous communist and was an above-average student. As a result, in January 1949, he found himself in Warsaw in the first year of the party's newly opened School of Journalism at the Central Committee of the Polish United Workers' Party (*Polska Zjednoczona Partija Robotnicza*, PZPR).

The second chapter of the book, "Janissary of the Regime (1949–1957)", starts with his arrival in the capital. The expanding apparatus of the ruling party was being filled with energetic young men, occasionally also women, who quickly settled into the capital city and learnt how to climb the career ladder. Rakowski discovered the benefits of his knowledge of German, which was better than that of his peers in Warsaw, and made use of it both during his study and work activities.

And it was in East Germany in 1952 that he met a twenty-three-year-old violinist, Wanda Wiłkomirska (1929–2018), a soloist at the Days of Polish Culture in Berlin, and in less than half a year they married. For both of them, marriage meant leaving the paths that were usual in their family backgrounds. Wanda was a prodigy and, under the leadership of her father, a professor at a conservatory, had been performing in public since the age of four. This was actually a family standard as her considerably older siblings had all performed as a children's chamber ensemble, the Trio Wiłkomirskich, in Moscow before the First World War. By marrying a government official, Wanda broke from her role of the youngest sibling, and ultimately she was also the most successful of all her relatives, performing in concerts across various continents in the 1960s and 1970s.

According to his biographer, the marriage was also the most important event in Rakowski's professional career. Thanks to his new relatives, he discovered the world of traditional town families, and in the late 1950s he took off his "rádiovka" beret and transformed himself into an elegantly dressed man of fine manners and good taste. Very soon, he made the acquaintance of all of Warsaw's young bohemians and built a solid network of friends in the world of music, theatre and film, a network that probably no one else in the party apparatus had and which helped him greatly in his later career.[2]

This is because he was in charge of the press. After half a year of training on a party follow-up course in journalism, he left the army and started working directly for the Central Committee as an operative in the press and propaganda services. He organized additional courses for journalism training, supervised the regional press and, after three years, applied to study at the Institute for Education of Scientific Staff. This recently founded institution, under the leadership of philosopher Adam Schaff, offered postgraduate studies for those in top positions in the fields of philosophy, law, economy and history. Rakowski chose the last of these. Any candidate without a university education could participate in these studies after his or her learning potential had been assessed with a preparatory course. Rakowski did well and in the autumn of 1952 started studying diligently and ambitiously. Apart from German, he also refined his Russian, learnt English and filled the gaps in his education. In the preparation for his graduate dissertation and later doctoral thesis, he used the press collection in the Central Committee library. He became an expert in German policy, but he was most active in party organization, becoming its president by the time he completed his studies.

In the autumn of 1955, he returned to his original post in the Central Committee, where he encountered a considerably changed environment. The management of the press was being transformed from a semi-military system with set rules and a strict hierarchy, but it was not clear where it was heading. Factional conflicts resulted in Władysław Gomułka's rise to power. Soon after taking up his post, Gomułka made it clear that discipline should be restored. For the media, this meant limiting the autonomy of the editorial offices, scrapping some press titles and establishing completely new ones. This is how the weekly *Polityka* was founded in the spring of 1957, with a promising operative, Doctor Rakowski, appointed to its management by the party centre.

And this is where the story starts to become really remarkable. We are in the chapter "Maturing: *Polityka* and Practice (1957–1960)". A thirty-one-year-old

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[2] It was far less beneficial to his family life: Rakowski's philandering period resulted in establishing a parallel household with a young actress. In the 1970s, Wanda was a signatory of opposition memoranda and in the 1980s they divorced.

deputy of the editor-in-chief (and soon to be editor-in-chief) keeps on educating himself, developing his strengths and applying them. The weekly did not become a sleepy tribune of the minor Polish "normalization", as was the assignment, but instead gradually evolved into the most interesting and least clichéd press title of the Eastern bloc, with reports at the edge of the possible, and often beyond, leading to much censorship intervention in the preparation of each issue. The mere fact that such a magazine could exist at all was undoubtedly to Rakowski's credit. No one other than a tried and tested comrade from the Central Committee, enjoying the almost unlimited confidence of the members of the highest leadership could dare to enter into permanent conflict with the supervision of the press. In this case, the position of an agile editor-in-chief was clearly understood not as unacceptable arbitrariness, but as a legitimate display of political debate among comrades within the party headquarters (p. 73).

The description of this extraordinary example can help us to understand the entire political ecosystem of officialdom of the Polish communist party at the middle and higher levels. Further adventures of our hero are described by his biographer in the chapters entitled "'Libertarian' of Poor Socialism (1961–1970)" and "In the Antechambers of Power (1971–1980)", which map the power networks in which Rakowski was involved. The terms "patron" and "client", borrowed from Roman history, help to explain these relationships. Part of the narrative reminds one of the words of the sociologist Ireneusz Krzemeński in a debate on the nature of social order in communist Poland, according to which it was "a pseudo-feudal hierarchic system of legalized ideologies" (p. 166).

The material that Rakowski's biographer had in his hands, thanks to the rich documentation in the diaries, raises questions for which the existing historiographic debate has not yet developed corresponding concepts. Rakowski's persistent efforts tested different unwritten rules of government practice, the results of which he noted down in his diary. This source contains images from political life that allow us to see, on the one hand, how interests of all kinds searched for political representation, and, on the other, how politicians and aspiring politicians searched for interest groups which they could rely on. Their coalitions grew through central apparatuses like cobwebs. Individual professions, big enterprises and entire production fields, towns and regions, important institutions of all kinds, all these sought to advance their interests in an incessant struggle for sources. They formed coalitions and promoted their representatives to the highest possible posts in the power apparatuses, blocking or eliminating representatives of opposing coalitions. At the very top sat the party leader and his personal secretariat, which can metaphorically very aptly be called "the court", if we use terms borrowed from elsewhere. That is also where the final decision was taken on unsettled disputes that extended through central apparatuses to

the top. The ruler and his closest circle did not repress these disputes, but rather used them to strengthen their own position, for which it was important that the ongoing struggles should be in a sort of equilibrium. This means that at the court, the disputes at lower levels were not only moderated, but also, to a certain extent, encouraged. This is also why a somewhat undisciplined editor-in-chief of a weekly, which was feared even by higher party officials, could have existed within the system for so long. And if, as a result of injudicious publishing, this editor-in-chief caused such trouble that certain high and mighty officials protested and the existing patron withdrew his support, the party leader, after an impassioned plead for mercy accompanied by a profession of faith in communism and a love for his leader, could reappoint him to the post from which he had been dismissed. This incident happened in 1960 (pp. 86–88).

Rakowski's confidence grew even faster than all his real successes on the way to the top. Over time, he started displaying a pattern of ridiculous grandiosity, which dragged him like a locomotive towards new activities and pursuits, and always and everywhere towards constant self-promotion. This was ideally on television or at private meetings with the most influential politicians or celebrities. When not invited somewhere, he complained and demanded the situation be corrected. We can see how his character helped him to deal with failures, how he never tired of forcing his way to the top. His biographer also vividly describes how Rakowski's nature sometimes impeded him from being able to evaluate many events realistically, because he increasingly interpreted everything through the lens of his personal success.

In the course of his career, he served under four party leaders and was able to become close to each of them, playing the role of a loyal supporter, useful assistant and intimate advisor, whom the leader met – at least occasionally – in private. He was always there when a new leader took up his post and he also saw each of them off pitilessly as a supporter of the next new leader. He always provided leaders with witty thoughts regarding their work and also paid them many compliments, of which, it seems, no leader ever has enough. Gradually, his style as an arduous careerist changed: a promising young man of the 1950s was replaced by an experienced professional in the 1970s.

Then there is the chapter "Deputy Prime Minister (1980–1985)", which describes how he joined the government in 1980 in connection with the mass movement of the independent trade union Solidarity (*Solidarność*). In December 1981, he supported martial law and in its beginning, he formed part of an informal directory, a group of close collaborators of General Wojciech Jaruzelski, which ruled the country. In the mid-1980s, he lost his position in the innermost government circles. The post of vice president of the Polish parliament (*Sejm*), which he was appointed to in 1985, looked like the first step on his way to premature

retirement. However, in the meantime, Mikhail Gorbachev had introduced his doctrine of "new thinking" and Rakowski regained his position. This leads us to the chapter "Grand Finale (1985–1990)". It describes how Rakowski became the last communist Prime Minister of Poland and how, under his government, the opposition triumphed in the elections. After that, he was elected the last leader of the Polish United Workers' Party, which his aides, Aleksander Kwaśniewski and Leszek Miller, transformed into an undertaking with a far greater perspective, a newly established social democracy. Much to his disappointment, however, there was no major role for him in it. Obviously, he wrote them letters full of ideas and comments. This is described in the final chapter, "The Pensioner".

The final chapter also deals with Rakowski's diaries, the ten-volume edition of which was published in Warsaw by Iskry publishing house between 1998 and 2005. We learn that the primary sources of the edition are preserved in the collection of the Rakowski papers stored at the Hoover Institution Library and Archives at Stanford University, California. In the last chapter, Przeperski describes the results of the detailed research into these materials that he carried out in the archive, informing us that the published version is not to be trusted: Rakowski made far more substantial changes to the diaries than he admitted to in the published edition's notes.

As we learn here, the history of the diaries was rather intricate. At the beginning, they were just pieces of papers with notes. After some time, Rakowski retyped them, adjusting the notes and complementing them with quotes from documents, newspaper clippings and correspondence. We learn about him regretting in the early 1980s that the notes for the diaries would have to be recorded orally. In the unpublished part of the diaries from 1990 to 1998, simple factual errors mount up, for example, in the first names of people close to Rakowski. This implies that somebody else retyped the notes. Is it not possible that the clean copies had been typed by somebody else even earlier? We do not know much about this, but it would be useful to find out.

In the preparation of the edited version, Rakowski made further changes to the clean copies of the diaries, amending them quite substantially. Yet these were no cosmetic changes in the sense of polishing the style, correcting clear mistakes or the necessary omission of some overly personal details. On the contrary, he added two completely new passages for periods of several months when, in the midst of political turbulence, he did not keep a diary. This was for last three months of 1980, and for October and November of 1988, when he was in charge of forming a government. He also made substantial changes to the entries elsewhere, changing their meaning, adding comments and making evaluations. The published version of the diaries includes many minor observations that seem to be written with great foresight, for example, when he says he immediately recognized

the great talent of a new editorial apprentice. However, as we see now, some of these notes were added a whole thirty years later. On other occasions during the editing, Rakowski removed some sarcastic or envious remarks, or some of the malicious comments that he often made on the fortunes of his colleagues and the rise and fall of men at the centre of power. In the book, everything seems more polished, well considered and poignant. His biographer sums up the result of his research: "Rakowski's interference in the original entries is substantial. Relatively fewer changes were made to the entries in the 1970s; most were made to the entries in the 1980s. With the regime coming to an end, the additions and changes multiply." (p. 385)

The *Political Diaries* represent "a key to Rakowski", and as such Polish historians have embraced them, "but it should be added that the vast majority of cuts and additions, which they had no idea about, shed a different light on this characteristic and give it a different meaning", Przeperski ironically comments (p. 385). Yet, in the same breath, he adds quite correctly that, despite these problems with the edited version, the diary kept for forty years is probably still Rakowski's greatest achievement. Full stop. But actually, this is not the end of the matter, because much remains to be done.

The task of writing Rakowski's political biography can be ticked off. Michał Przeperski's book fulfils this role very well. The overall image is plausible; it shows the progress of the main figure, and it accompanies him with great skill through all the stages of development. It shows how useful the genre of biography is for the current state of contemporary history, where the most recent and interesting analytical works dealing with political history often tend to limit the period they cover to only a few years in order to include all the necessary sources and offer, to a certain extent, accurate and novel interpretations. In the Polish context, works like this have been published in the last decade, for example, on the end of the old regime by Paweł Kowal,[3] or on the first three post-communist governments in 1989 to 1993 by Antoni Dudek.[4]

In skilled hands, however, a biography can be light-footed and can stretch over several decades, representing each event, no matter how important, in a broader context. In a biography, events are faster paced and they guide us through different environments. The research on the dynamics and topography of political careers can be attractive, especially if the life described is eventful and provided

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[3] KOWAL, Paweł: *Koniec systemu władzy: Polityka ekipy gen. Wojciecha Jaruzelskiego w latach 1986–1989.* Warszawa, Instytut Studiów Politycznych PAN – Instytut Pamięci Narodowej – Trio 2012.

[4] DUDEK, Antoni: *Od Mazowieckiego do Suchockiej: Pierwsze rządy wolnej Polski.* Kraków, Znak 2019.

the biographer knows how to capture this. In our case, the biographer excels in his description of the main character's involvement in the army, but there is relatively little information on the *Sejm* in the second half of the 1980s. In general, it can be noted that, in his rise to the top, the subject's clear characteristics become rather blurred. It is easy for a newcomer in Rakowski's position to be sharply critical in his diary entries, and it is also easy for a historian to describe this. However, it is much more difficult for a biographer to zoom in on the same character some twenty years later, when he is at the top of the centre of power and is skilfully juggling the different forms of his public persona, in the midst of a torrent of revolutionary events and unreliable resources. Perhaps, the blurriness of Rakowski's image in these passages is an accurate depiction of a long-serving political professional who adapted himself to the changing circumstances so well that he almost vanished as a real person. To sum up, in my view, the image of Rakowski, the politician is practically complete.

But this is not the case for Rakowski, the chronicler. The findings regarding the published version of the diaries raise the question of a new edition of the diaries, which would clarify the development of the text in all the available versions, as well as make available to the public the last part of the diary entries from 1990 to 1998. A new edition is necessary so that full use can be made of this extraordinary source of information on the history of the former Eastern bloc. Given that the edition clearly has transnational importance, this would be necessary not only for Poland, but also for a number of other countries, especially Germany, which Rakowski often visited during his journalistic and political careers, occasionally serving as an emissary for his government. It also contains rich material on the Soviet Union, the United States, Hungary and Austria. Although Rakowski did not have much interest in Czechoslovakia, with the exception of the year 1968, the small and sleepy neighbouring country did get in his way from time to time and we can therefore also find several comments of interest to us.[5]

Translated by Blanka Medková

Keywords:

Mieczysław Rakowski; Poland; communism; Polish United Workers' Party (PZPR); political diaries

[5] For the commented list of Czech elements from the published version of the Rakowski's diaries from the 1960s and 1970s, see ZAHRADNÍČEK, Tomáš: Poučený šéfredaktor (Mieczysław F. Rakowski). In: IDEM: *Polské poučení z pražského jara: Tři studie z dějin politického myšlení 1968–1981.* Praha, Ústav pro soudobé dějiny AV ČR 2011, pp. 59–109.

On Todor Zhivkov's Tastes, *Shkembe Chorba* and Food for Astronauts

Martin Franc

Masaryk Institute and Archives of the Czech Academy of Sciences, Prague

SHKODROVA, Albena:
Communist Gourmet: The Curious Story of Food in the People's Republic of Bulgaria.
Budapest – Vienna – New York, Central European University Press 2021, 251 pages,
ISBN 978-963-386-403-6.

The history of food and eating in the countries of the former Soviet bloc as a research field has developed quite successfully in the past ten or fifteen years, with a relatively broad range of methodological approaches. Yet, no solid monograph providing a synthesis on the issue has been written so far. This may be, to a certain extent, due to the attractiveness of the issue as it might be tempting for the authors to take a rather journalistic approach, characterized by a search for partial stories with a wide appeal and often with a very limited critical analysis of the sources. Moreover, archival documents are still largely difficult to access and are scattered among different collections, and therefore challenging to find. Nevertheless, there are some works that have been able to overcome these pitfalls more or less successfully, albeit not perfectly. A number of studies and monographs deal with the situation in South-East Europe – apart from the in many ways specific Yugoslavia, the works focus on different aspects of food in Bulgaria and Romania. This may be somewhat surprising, but less so if we consider that, for example, the already classic work of the Austrian historian Ulf Brunnbauer

from 2007 about socialist lifestyle focused on Bulgaria.[1] A thematic issue of the journal *Food & History*[2] also contains studies dealing with the situation in Romania and Bulgaria, whereas similar contributions, for example, on Hungary and Poland are lacking. This may be influenced by the fact that, in addition to the Belgian historians Peter Scholliers and Yves Segers, a Bulgarian historian and journalist, Albena Shkodrova, was also a member of the guest editorial team.

Albena Shkodrova is also the author of an extraordinary book entitled *Communist Gourmet: The Curious Story of Food in the People's Republic of Bulgaria*, which I review in this article for its great potential for comparing many issues related to the history of food and eating in Czechoslovakia (or the Czech lands), mainly in the period between 1948 and 1989. It is in fact a revised English version of her very successful book, published in Bulgarian under the title *Sots gurme* in 2014.[3] It is definitely not perfect, nor does it offer a synthesis of the history of food in Bulgaria between 1944 and 1989. On the contrary, it is a relatively loose mosaic of essays on selected issues, of different lengths and not all equally detailed. As the title clearly indicates, Shkodrova focuses mainly on some curious cases, for example, the start of Coca-Cola production in the country (surprisingly enough, Bulgaria, which was always very loyal to the Soviet Union, was also the first state in the Soviet bloc to introduce this symbol of American pop culture and the American lifestyle); the taste preferences of the long-time leader of the Bulgarian Communist Party (*Bulgarska komunisticheska partiia*) and the most influential man in the country, Todor Zhivkov (1911–1998); and the food for astronauts produced in a cryobiology laboratory. In addition, she also tries to identify some of the typical and specific aspects of food and eating in the People's Republic of Bulgaria.

In doing so, she does not limit herself to the description of food preparation and consumption, but also analyses other issues related to the further stages of the food chain, that is, agricultural production and the food industry. She perhaps pays too much attention to a well-known phenomenon in most socialist countries: the obligatory seasonal work for students, administrative workers and intellectuals in agriculture and the food industry. In this part, she naturally uses recollections obtained through oral history interviews. These cast more light on this practice, which may seem unbelievable today but was generally accepted in both Czechoslovakia and Bulgaria at the time. She also nicely illustrates the impact

[1] BRUNNBAUER, Ulf: *„Die sozialistische Lebensweise": Ideologie, Gesellschaft, Familie und Politik in Bulgarien (1944–1989)*. Wien, Böhlau 2007.

[2] *Food & History*, Vol. 18, No. 1–2 (2020).

[3] SHKODROVA, Albena: *Sots gurme: Kurioznata istoriya na kuhnyata v NRB*. Sofiya, Zhanet 45 2014.

that this obligatory temporary work in agriculture and in food conservation enterprises had on the quality of the final food products – demotivated students often intentionally reduced the quality of the vegetable cans, which were one of Bulgaria's important export products. While reading this part of the book, I realized that this key issue in Czechoslovakia has not yet been analysed in detail by historians, even though especially the seasonal hop-picking work represents in many aspects an extremely interesting theme, as was also reflected frequently in film and TV productions of the period.[4] Moreover, in my view, the obligatory seasonal work in agriculture remains for many contemporary witnesses a painful trauma, like any other, albeit partially paid, forced labour.

Interesting parallels can also be found in other essays dealing with the food industry. For example, the production of "chocolate" from different substitutes also has a long tradition in the Czech lands, such as various kinds of "soya titbits" that appear on the Czech counters during retro sales events. The issue of food brands is also fascinating, although the situation in this area in Czechoslovakia was, also due to previous development, markedly different.

The same applies to the chapter on food distribution, which describes, among other things, the already traditional issue of supermarkets (unlike in Czechoslovakia, they appeared in Bulgaria after a delay of several years), as well as networks of shops with luxury goods, where only Western currency could be used (*Pokazne obchody*). The difference between the Bulgarian and the Czechoslovak versions of these shops was that in Bulgaria the customers had to prove the origin of their Western currency. Consequently, the local hustlers did not sell the currency or vouchers (*bony*) like in Czechoslovakia, but mainly resold the acquired goods. Despite the existing parallels, Shkodrova points out that even according to research carried out during the socialist period, Bulgaria lagged behind in the quality of retailing not only compared to Western countries, but also with the other countries of the Soviet bloc, for example the German Democratic Republic (GDR).

The subject matter of the previously mentioned essay on the arrival of Coca-Cola in Bulgaria, possibly as early as the 1960s, is of course very attractive. In contrast with other chapters, in this one Shkodrova also compares the situation with other states of the Eastern bloc (with the Czechoslovak *Kofola* also being mentioned). Her critical approach to the not entirely reliable tale of Toncho Mikhailov, who was responsible for the arrival of the American food giant in the completely unsaturated Bulgarian market for non-alcoholic beverages, is also

[4] One exception to this is the masters dissertation of Jiří Verner (see: VERNER, Jiří: *Fenomén chmelových brigád v socialistickém Československu* [online]. Praha, Filozofická fakulta Univerzity Karlovy 2014. [Accessed 2022-11-06.] Available at: https://dspace.cuni.cz/bitstream/handle/20.500.11956/67930/DPTX_2011_2_11210_0_342534_0_123017.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y).

valuable. In general, it is clear that the chapter about Coca-Cola underwent a review process in a scholarly journal, which resulted in an improved line of reasoning.[5] Still, it is somewhat surprising that she practically ignores the role that efforts to encourage international tourism in the country could have played in promoting one of the symbols of American lifestyle in Bulgaria. From my point of view (and also according to the experience of contemporary witnesses), this aspect clearly played an important role in Bulgaria being able to obtain a similar licence for Schweppes soft drinks around the 1980s.

A large part of *Communist Gourmet* is taken up by chapters on public eating in Bulgaria in the period between 1944 and 1989. In these, Shkodrova reflects not only on restaurants, but also on school and company canteens, as well as on a network of popular *shkembedzhiinitsas*, where people relished the Bulgarian version of tripe soup (*shkembe chorba*).[6] This part also describes a number of features that can be compared with the reality in Czechoslovakia at the time. What I see as an important observation, valid not only for Bulgaria, but also for other countries of the Soviet bloc, is her statement that what restaurants and other similar hospitality establishments lacked most was personality. While this may easily be labelled as a trivial observation that can be deduced from Shkodrova's description of the obsession with various patterns and models, which was apparent not only in model standards and mass centralization of kitchens, but also in typified construction, this fact has not been reflected sufficiently in the analysis of gastronomy in the Soviet bloc countries so far. There are also other comments on the meals offered in public eating establishments which give a number of ideas for comparison with the situation in other countries of the socialist camp, be it the involvement of the secret police in the operation of the more luxurious restaurants intended mainly for Western visitors, or a diet based mainly on simple and quick meat-based dishes from relatively cheap ingredients (in Bulgaria, these were mainly *kebapche* and *kiufteta* from grilled minced meat). The comment on the inclusion of classic meals of French *haute cuisine*, considered by Shkodrova to be proof of the provincialism of luxury gastronomy, is also interesting.

What I am not quite sure about is whether in the case of Czechoslovakia we could confirm the statement about the low social status of cooks, which contrasted starkly with the exceptionally strong position of waiters (which we know

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[5] The chapter is based on the following article: SHKODROVA, Albena: Revisiting Coca-Cola's "Accidental" Entry into Communist Europe. In: *Gastronomica*, Vol. 18, No. 2 (2018), pp. 59–72.

[6] See EADEM: "Tripe Soup for All Women!" Transgression of Gender Boundaries as Part of Female Identity in Communist and Contemporary Bulgaria. In: *Soudobé dějiny / CJCH*, Vol. 28, No. 3 (2021), pp. 648–675.

from the Czechoslovak environment very well). As early as the 1960s, a group of celebrity cooks emerged in Czechoslovakia, who, among other things, were able to travel to different events in the West, which was seen as an extraordinary benefit. Needless to say, cooks in ordinary restaurants could only dream of such privileges. Another big issue is the food supplies to restaurants – I remember how in the mid-1980s we were told in one of the most luxurious restaurants in Prague, Alcron, that they did not have supplies of veal. The situation was identical in Bulgaria and Czechoslovakia with regard to high number of economic criminal activities related to the operation of restaurants, such as the theft of food, the sale of alcohol acquired by the waiters from retail shops or spirits diluted with water. However, many of these problems also existed and still exist in Western countries, as is shown, for example, by Arthur Hailey's famous novel *Hotel*.[7] Shkodrova also touches upon the issue of tips, which were officially prohibited in Bulgaria, as well as the issue of restaurants that focused on the gastronomy of other nations. A brief comment here: unlike in Prague, in Sofia a restaurant called Berlin, offering German food, operated successfully, which shows how differently German gastronomy was perceived in Bulgaria and Czechoslovakia.

A relatively brief chapter on the influence of the taste preferences of Todor Zhivkov, the leader of the Bulgarian Communist Party, and on the general eating habits in Bulgaria, in principle copies a situation discussed in the studies on Erich Honecker in the GDR,[8] which could also be expected to be similar in Czechoslovakia, for example, in the cases of Czechoslovak presidents Antonín Zápotocký and Antonín Novotný. Zhivkov's parents owned a pub, where he also occasionally helped as a waiter, but his interest in food (and, in contrast to other communist leaders, also in alcohol) was only minimal. If he loved anything, it was the most simple and popular meals. This contributed to the concept that a good meal amounts to a big helping of food. However, it is worth noting that the image of a political leader or even a "father of the nation", as an ascetic, without much interest in anything so mundane as food, has parallels in our country in the person of the first Czechoslovak president, Tomáš Garrigue Masaryk (president from 1918 to 1935), and his successor, Edvard Beneš. Even the current democratic politicians usually do not present themselves as lovers of refined *haute cuisine*, because it could harm them in the eyes of some of their voters. The image of lovers of fast food restaurants in the United States or jovial beer drinkers, for example, in Germany, Austria or in the Czech Republic is much more advantageous.

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[7] See HAILEY, Arthur: *Hotel*. Garden City [N. Y.], Doubleday 1965.

[8] See for example: VOIGT, Jutta: *Der Geschmack des Ostens: Vom Essen, Trinken und Leben in der DDR*. Berlin, Gustav Kiepenheuer 2005, pp. 17–18.

Not even in this relatively long review do I want to analyse in detail the individual essays or chapters. Perhaps, I will just note that I was slightly disappointed by the chapter on school and company canteens. In general, Shkodrova draws an image similar to that in Czechoslovakia, that is, monotonous and low-quality food prepared by demotivated and often incompetent female cooks, because the more capable ones have left in search of better jobs in restaurants. There is also a passage describing school canteens as a place of repulsive repression or even "terror" against children, a notion which is also popular in the Czech Republic.[9] However, overall, I found this part of the book sketchier and less insightful than other essays, especially as I find the issue of school and company canteens extremely inspiring.

On the other hand, I appreciate the fact that Shkodrova focuses at least partially on restaurants patronized by the popular classes – in the case of Bulgaria, places where tripe soup was served. These include the most famous restaurant of this type – *Bumbarnika*, which, ironically, was part of the luxury hotel Trimontsium in Plovdiv. Among other issues, this chapter focuses on how the working class mixed with the intelligentsia in these restaurants, a situation that we know from the classic Czech pub.

However, Chapter Eleven was a real pleasure, because it deals with my favourite issue of national cuisine: its creation and how the communist power worked with it. An insight into Bulgaria is all the more interesting for Czech historians as in the 1950s and 1960s Bulgarian cuisine was presented in Czechoslovakia, mainly through the professional discourse on nutrition, as the best model worth following. Shkodrova draws primarily on the analysis of published cookbooks. This shows that, in comparison with the situation in Central Europe, the concept of a Bulgarian national cuisine was slightly delayed. She also pays attention to the specific dilemma of whether Bulgarian gastronomy should subscribe to the influence of the Ottoman Empire or rather embrace the impulses from Western Europe. From 1944, after the communists came into power in Bulgaria, the fight against nationalism influenced cookbook publishing, which also impacted on the cuisine. Yet, Shkodrova also states that interest in cooking in general declined, demonstrating this by the decreasing number of cookbooks published in Bulgaria at the time, in comparison with the numbers during the interwar era. However, this is a questionable argument given the major changes in book publishing in general. She also fails to consider the number of copies printed and sold. For example, in Czechoslovakia, cookbooks had a very high print volume and were bestsellers.

[9] See DRDA, Adam – MLEJNEK, Josef Jr. – ŠKODA, Stanislav: *Mýty o socialistických časech*. Praha, Člověk v tísni 2010, p. 17.

It is probably not surprising that mainly in the 1950s any references to Western cuisine disappeared from the cookbooks and many dishes were renamed, with all references to the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy and the Church disappearing. Moreover, Christmas dishes became New Year dishes. The second half of the 1950s saw the rise of "Arcadian names" for meals, referencing the bucolic paintings of pre-modernism, which was quite interesting given the atmosphere of the general celebration of industrialization. This was probably related to the creation of the popular national Bulgarian cuisine by nutritional experts, and by following their concept people planned their diet by healthy instincts. These instincts, however, degenerated under the influence of the city and capitalism. Since the 1960s, the concept of a national Bulgarian cuisine was also greatly influenced by tourism. This manifested itself in a certain "re-westernization" of meal names on the menus of luxury restaurants, although these were often merely formal changes. The emphasis put on "national traditions" was also stressed. This came to a head in 1981, when the Congress of the Bulgarian Communist Party demanded that the national cuisine must be implemented to a greater extent in public dining.

Apart from this main narrative, Shkodrova mentions two other interesting phenomena, which also have parallels in the Czech environment – one is the surprisingly small influence of "Soviet" gastronomy, even though Bulgaria, like Czechoslovakia, willingly adopted Soviet influences in practically all other areas, including lifestyle. The second issue is the existence of a personality that embodied continuity with interwar *haute cuisine*. In Bulgaria, this was the chef of the tsar, Boris III, Natsko Sotirov (1894–1968), who later also cooked for the first Bulgarian communist leader Georgi Dimitrov, and, most importantly, published a very influential cookbook, entitled *Savremenna kuhnya* [Contemporary Cuisine] in 1959.[10]

Shkodrova's long-term interest is in home-cooking and especially the position of women in this domestic setting. Therefore, it is only logical that she also includes a chapter in the book on canning in Bulgarian households. This was an important activity conducted by women, even in families ruled by men. According to her, it was interesting that the state adopted a rather ambivalent attitude towards canning. On the one hand, it was seen as a technologically old-fashioned activity, while, on the other hand, home canning helped deal with supply problems. Again, we can identify a number of parallels with the Czechoslovak environment: for example, the problems with purchasing lids and other necessary items. This issue offers plenty of opportunity for comparative studies, and not only for a comparison of the Czechoslovak and Bulgarian realities, because home canning was also very popular, for example, in the GDR and traditionally in Austria.

[10] SOTIROV, Natsko: *Savremenna kuhnya: 3000 retsepti*. Sofiia, Tehnika 1959.

The icing on the cake in the book is the essay which offers an immensely fascinating parallel with one aspect of food history that I have also touched upon in my research on Czech gastronomy: the history of the preparation of food for astronauts.[11] However, whereas the Czech efforts using algae did not prove very successful, the production based on lyophilization (i.e. vacuum freeze-drying), promoted by the Bulgarian academic Tsvetan Tsvetkov, was a huge success, turning Bulgaria into a great power in this field. It is interesting to note that, according to research by James Eduard Malin, which was presented at the International Commission for Research into European Food History (ICREFH) symposium in Rome in 2021, American intelligence associated the failure of Czechoslovakia in the field of astronaut food, rather unconvincingly, with the ideologically conditioned aversion of the Soviet leaders towards Czech national cuisine.

Hopefully, this somewhat lengthy review clearly shows that I consider Albena Shkodrova's book *Communist Gourmet* crucial for research on the history of food in the countries of the Soviet bloc and that I believe anyone interested in this field of research should become familiar with it. It offers excellent opportunities for comparative research mainly in the Central and Eastern European regions. Nevertheless, the "mosaic" format of the book, which focuses the reader's attention on selected "interesting" issues, also has some significant shortcomings. We learn relatively little, for example, about the influence of doctors on the discourse around diet, and it offers no deeper insight into the eating habits of specific age groups (such as children and seniors) or eating in the army, nor into the role of ethnographic research works or the differences between everyday and festive eating. There are many other issues that require attention. Shkodrova's approach is also not always sufficiently critical, for example when dealing with the data obtained through oral history interviews (the chapter on Coca-Cola, however, is an exception). Nevertheless, none of this takes away from its significance and excellence, nor from the numerous inspirational observations that it contains.

Translated by Blanka Medková

Keywords:
Bulgaria; communism; Cold War; gastronomy; everyday life; history of food; restaurants

[11] See FRANC, Martin: *Řasy, nebo knedlíky? Postoje odborníků na výživu k inovacím a tradicím v české stravě v 50. a 60. letech 20. století*. Praha, Výzkumné centrum pro dějiny vědy – Scriptorium 2003, in particular p. 159.

First Steps Towards a Fruitful Analysis of the Causes and the Outcome of the Kosovo Crisis

Reflections on the Book by the Serbian Historian Petar Ristanović

Jan Pelikán

Department of South Slavic and Balkan Studies, Faculty of Arts, Charles University

RISTANOVIĆ, Petar:
Kosovsko pitanje 1974–1989.
Novi Sad – Beograd, Prometej – Informatika 2019,
580 pages, ISBN 978-86-515-1555-5.

Dealing with the trauma caused by the bombing of Yugoslavia and the subsequent loss of Kosovo is understandably difficult for Serbian society. Bitterness related to this was one of the main reasons why Serbian historiography has been unable to make any serious attempt in the past two decades at mapping the development of this region in the modern era. However, it appears the time is ripe now for Serbian researchers to start approaching this issue more or less free of strong emotions and prejudice. Hopefully, they will stop seeing the adverse outcome of a long crisis in Kosovo as a national catastrophe for Serbia and will cease to relate it solely to adversity, the treachery of superpowers, the betrayal of unfaithful allies and the ungratefulness of the Albanian population. This opens up an opportunity to search for a reply to the key question that arises in this connection: Why did Belgrade's elites fail to bind the majority Kosovo population,

either by pressure or by a generous responsiveness, closer to Serbia and Yugoslavia for nearly a century? Apart from abandoning a deep-rooted nationalistic paradigm, the analysis of a broad scope of sources that have so far been overlooked is a precondition to finding the right answers to this and many other of related questions.

A representative source base is the main strength of monograph *Kosovsko pitanje 1974–1989* [Kosovo Issue 1974–1989] under review. Petar Ristanović based his work on an analysis of an incredibly broad and varied spectrum of information sources, mainly archival. Only researchers who have had the opportunity to examine documents produced in the 1970s and mainly in the 1980s in connection with the activities of the key bodies of the Yugoslav union and its republics can imagine how arduous such a research undertaking is. All the top party and state institutions made decisions collectively, usually after lengthy debates extending over several days. The transcripts of audio recordings or stenographic notes taken at their meetings comprise thousands and thousands of typewritten pages.

The monograph is based mainly on the collection of documents of the League of Communists of Yugoslavia's (*Savez komunista Jugoslavije*, SKJ) federal leadership and on the documents of the influential Federal Council for the Protection of the Constitutional Order (*Savezni savjet za zaštitu ustavnog poretka)*, established as an advisory body to the Presidency of the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (*Socijalistička federativna republika Jugoslavija*, SFRJ). The author also thoroughly analyses the archival collections of documents produced by similar bodies active on the level of the Socialist Republic of Serbia (*Socijalistička Republika Srbija)*. However, as regards the documents resulting from the activity of Kosovo's institutions, he was only able to gain partial access to them. According to his findings, Pristina's authorities often did not hand over copies of key documents to the Serbian leadership at all, or since the late 1960s they repeatedly sent them only in Albanian (a language not read by Ristanović).

The research into the periodical press that Ristanović carried out was equally rigorous. The dailies, political journals and semi-tabloid newspapers and magazines are very rich sources of essential information on the social and political conditions in the then Yugoslavia, especially for the period of the mid-late 1980s, which saw press control practically disappear from the Yugoslav public space.

The high and even exceptional quantity as well as quality of the sources used by Ristanović in the preparation of his monograph also apply to the memoirs. He knows all the important autobiographies written by actors in Yugoslav political life of the final two decades of its existence. He also drew on several unpublished memoirs and diaries. In this regard, especially the diary entries of Dragoslav Marković (1920–2005), among the three or four most influential politicians of Serbian origin active in the Yugoslav public scene in the last years of Tito's life as

well as the first period after his death, certainly made a great contribution.[1] Given the meticulousness with which Ristanović gathered the information sources, it is somewhat surprising that he has omitted the Sarajevo edition of the translation of Azem Vllasi's memoirs.[2] Vlassi (b. 1948) was probably the single most important representative of the younger generation of Albanian party functionaries in Kosovo and an important figure in the political scene in the last decade of Yugoslavia's existence.

Ristanović is familiar with the basic secondary English-language literature on modern Kosovo history. His approach towards the "pivotal" works of British authors Noel Malcolm[3] and Miranda Vickers[4] is legitimately and reasonably critical. He not only (aptly) states that neither of them has seen any archival documents on the modern development of Kosovo produced in the Yugoslav environment, but he also repeatedly confronts both historians' inaccurate or incorrect data and interpretations using relevant documents.

Due to the unfamiliarity with the language, the author was not able to use secondary literature and published documents written in Albanian, nor carry out research in Kosovo's archives. This is certainly a handicap, as Ristanović has to view a number of aspects of Kosovo's reality of the period solely through the lens of documents, mostly official, written in Serbo-Croatian. His reflections on the everyday life of the majority (that is, Albanian) society in Kosovo and the activity of illegal Albanian groups and organizations are therefore necessarily distorted. On the other hand, when he enters a field that is historically *de facto* unexplored, the lack of knowledge of Albanian documents is not, in my view, a fundamental flaw. Ristanović still had to deal with a large number of documents. The need to analyse a similar quantity of additional archival documents, press articles and diaries might have represented a serious complication in completing the book. By building on Ristanović's pioneering research, future researchers with knowledge of both Serbian and Albanian will have the opportunity to take the research on the political and social development of Kosovo in the last period of Yugoslavia's existence to a new level.

[1] In 1987, when this kind of title attracted public attention, Marković published two volumes of diary entries from 1967–1978. His diary entries not only serve as an important source for understanding how the political system of Tito's federation worked, but also vividly reflect the everyday life of a top party and state functionary. (See MARKOVIĆ, Dragoslav D.: *Život i politika 1967–1978* [Life and Politics 1967–1978]. Beograd, Rad 1987.)

[2] VLLASI, Azem: *Kosovo, početak raspada* [Kosovo, the Beginning of Disintegration]. Sarajevo, Šahinpašić 2016.

[3] MALCOM, Noel: *Kosovo: A Short History*. London, Macmillan 1998.

[4] VICKERS, Miranda: *Between Serb and Albanian: A History of Kosovo*. London, Hurst & Co. 1998.

Ristanović's erudition and undeniably high professionalism in working with a voluminous heuristic basis, so far unexplored by other historians, stands out even more if we take note of his brief biographical information in the book. Ristanović published his monograph as a barely thirty-year-old researcher, working in a regional research centre in one of the Serbian enclaves in the north of Kosovo. He drew on his doctoral thesis entitled *Serbian Intellectual Elite and the Kosovo Issue 1974–1989*, defended at the Faculty of Philosophy, University of Belgrade. His relative youth, short professional career thus far and his post in a provincial research institution increases one's respect for his diligence and erudition.[5]

The scope of the heuristic basis and the related knowledge of relevant political, economic and social facts gave Ristanović an opportunity to seek a more fundamental revision of views and evaluations of the Kosovo issue that have long been ingrained in Serbian historiography and offer a new interpretation of key issues in Kosovo's modern development. Ristanović did not take up this opportunity, which is, given the atmosphere prevailing in Serbian historical circles as well as society is quite understandable. His monograph therefore represents an important contribution to the knowledge about the modern history of Kosovo. It is, however, not a ground-breaking work that will determine the basic direction of further research on the previously mentioned issues in the long-term.

One of the reasons for this is the chronological and interpretative framework he selected. Ristanović did not publish his doctoral thesis as a work with a clear thematic focus and chronology, offering, on the one hand, a dense and clearly arranged account of one of the most important aspects of the Kosovo issue, and providing, on the other hand, space for explaining the broader issues. Instead, Ristanović tried to write a synthetic work dedicated comprehensibly to the entire issue and covering a period of more than fifteen years, filled – or rather overfilled – with key events and revolutionary milestones. However, this decision contributed little to the quality of the monograph. Given the extremely low level of the current scholarly knowledge of the researched issues, he merely outlines some of the problems, while omitting others altogether. He does describe the other phenomena or processes, but he renounces their analysis or interpretation without making any further comments. Moreover, the angle from which he views the development of the Kosovo issue and the problems, which he covers in the individual time periods, are in many ways different.

[5] Ristanović currently works as a researcher at the Institute for Serbian Culture Pristina/Leposavić (*Institut za srpsku kulturu Priština/Leposavić*) in the capital of Kosovo. His second book is entitled *Iluzija moči: Srpski kritički intelektualci i komunistički režim* [The Illusion of Power: Serbian Critical Intellectuals and the Communist Regime]. Beograd, Fondacija Alexandar Nevski – IP Princip 2020.

The first issue that could be considered as rather problematic is the periodization of his narrative. Ending it in the spring of 1989, when the newly elected Yugoslav president Slobodan Milošević enforced major restrictions on Kosovan autonomy, is logical and correct. However, the year 1974, which Ristanović takes as a starting point of his narrative, represents a problematic chronological boundary. A new constitution was adopted that year, in many aspects *de facto* transforming the union into a confederation. But these constitutional changes were not reflected, to a greater extent, in Kosovo's position and internal development. Vast autonomy, which put Kosovo in line with other members of the federation with full rights, was attained by Pristina's leadership as early as the end of the 1960s and beginning of the 1970s. Logically, if Ristanović wanted an ambitious chronology, he should have started as early as 1969 when the situation stabilized (after the manifestations in the autumn of 1968) and the more than a ten-year-long phase of relatively quiet development of Kosovo began. This phase ended in the spring of 1981 with a wave of much larger and very explosive public protests. Thus, 1981 would have been a more suitable starting point for the book. Or, alternatively, it could have been moved nearly a year earlier, to 1980, when with Josip Broz Tito's death, the last period of the development of the Yugoslav federation began both symbolically and in actuality.

What I perceive as a rather unfortunate and somewhat pedantic decision is the inclusion of two chapters on the main features of Yugoslav development in the chosen period. The author obviously intended to set the issues he analyses in a broader framework, but he was rather unsuccessful in his aim. In these chapters, he mostly repeats well-known facts as well as some simplified or even completely incorrect and clichéd interpretations, but he fails to sufficiently clarify the relationship between these more general problems and processes and the Kosovo issue. Adding some more general passages to the narrative on Kosovo, which lacks the necessary context, would have been more to the point.

Ristanović's aim to provide a comprehensive picture of the Kosovo reality is also reflected in the chapters on the engagement of Enver Hoxha's Albania in the Kosovo issue and on the influence of Albanian exiles in Western countries on the events in Yugoslavia. These parts of the book are expertly written and the facts and findings given are relevant. However, they may be misleading for an uninformed reader. Ristanović (probably unconsciously) repeats in them the buck-passing interpretation which was used in respect of events in Kosovo by the Yugoslav leaders and later, in the late 1980s and early 1990s, also by the Serbian establishment. Propaganda from Tirana and the different activities of the politically rather fragmented Albanian émigrés in the West certainly did influence the events in Kosovo, but the impact of these activities was by no means decisive.

While the chapters on developments up to approximately 1982 seek to capture all the circumstances of the Kosovo issue, in the subsequent parts of the book the author focuses only on two important, albeit key, aspects of the Kosovo issue. The first of them is the mobilization of the Serbian minority in Kosovo. The spontaneous birth of a vital movement was connected to the concerns of Slavic minorities in this autonomous area, provoked by the previously mentioned Albanian demonstrations in 1981, as well as by the increasing concerns over the further deterioration of interethnic relations. Taking advantage of the gradual weakening of the authoritarian regime, informal leaders of this movement sought to enforce a major change in the situation which was created in Kosovo after 1966. As Ristanović correctly points out, speedy removal of barriers which until then had limited media space greatly helped the Kosovo Serbs. Reports on the difficult situation in Kosovo and dramatic news coverage of the real or alleged harassment of the Slavic minority quickly drew public attention. This only increased after Serbian activists from Kosovo started to pursue their goals by staging demonstrations in Belgrade. The Yugoslav, and mainly the Serbian leadership, therefore, could not ignore the increasing tensions in the autonomous southern province of Serbia.

In the final part of the narrative, Ristanović focuses on the changing approach of the Belgrade (Serbian rather than Yugoslav) leadership towards Kosovo, on the internal conflicts among its key members and the attitude of the still informal Serbian opposition to these problems. These passages, related roughly to the period of 1985–1988, are written with high competence and expertise and are also the best stylistically. This is clearly an issue that Ristanović is well versed in.

The monograph lacks a conclusion. I would not consider this a flaw if the author had included necessary evaluations and generalizations in the individual chapters or thematic parts. Occasionally, Ristanović does so. Some of his observations are correct, others are even very apt. However, in many cases he avoids any evaluation at all or paraphrases a clichéd interpretation that has been long entrenched in Serbian journalistic and historiographic discourses.

I agree with the author that in the 1980s the Serbian opposition in the long-term avoided any comments on the developments in Kosovo primarily because its position on this issue was, in many aspects, in line with the approach of the Serbian party leadership. The oft-repeated statement that, in comparison with Kosovo, the position of Albanians in Macedonia was far worse and that the authorities in Skopje did not hesitate to use open discrimination against them is entirely truthful. The thesis that there was no fundamental difference between the conceptual and programme goals with regard to the Kosovo issue as pursued by Ivan Stambolić (1936–2000) and Slobodan Milošević (1941–2006), the two key figures in the Serbian leadership of the mid-1980s, can also be agreed with. The differences in opinion between them concerned only the methods of how to achieve these

goals. However, in this regard, we cannot really say whether, only some years later, Milošević's former unsuccessful opponent would have let things go as far as a confrontation with the Albanian population's violent resistance. Ristanović also repeats a well-known thesis according to which Milošević, for a long time, at least until the spring of 1987, showed no interest in nor took any stand on the events in Kosovo. However, according to some documents, as early as November 1986, the future authoritative leader of Serbia spoke out very radically on this issue at the internal meeting of the top state and party functionaries, calling for firm action against "Albanian irredentism".[6]

The author differentiates little among the Albanian party functionaries. He repeatedly claims that nearly all members of the highest Kosovo leadership belonged to the "Gjakova group", named after one of the local centres in the west of Kosovo where these leaders came from. He emphasizes their family, tribal and neighbourly ties. However, he writes little about how they approached everyday political questions or how they viewed key issues related to the existence and future of Kosovo, its place within the Yugoslav federation or its relationships with Albania. He merely states that their main goal was to acquire as much power as possible for the Pristina authorities and to prioritize the Albanian part of the population. According to Ristanović, who again clearly oversimplifies here, the more responsive attitudes towards Yugoslavia and Serbia that could be observed in the activities of several other Albanian functionaries (for example Sinan Hasani and Kolë Shiroka) were related to their family ties within the Serbian environment. Global condemnation of Serbian communist politicians, who were active in the Kosovo leadership, also seems overly simplistic to me. Ristanović views their influence as only marginal and their role, which they egoistically used to achieve purely private goals, as merely ornamental.

I could mention many more similar critical observations. Ristanović fails to reflect on why, as late as the 1970s, a large part of the Kosovo Albanians kept looking to Albania with hope, even though Enver Hoxha (1908–1985) had transformed it into a tough and unattractive country. He makes no attempt to find out why Hoxha's authentically Stalinist regime served as a model for most of the illegal groups and organizations, which had formed in the environment of Yugoslav Albanians since the 1960s. Was it merely fascination with the "Albanian Piemont", or was this bizarre attraction also influenced by the enormous poverty and large social differences in Kosovo, to which the ascetic socialism in Albania could serve as an attractive alternative?

[6] *Arhiv Jugoslavije* [Archives of Yugoslavia], Beograd, collection 803, Predsedništvo SFRJ [Presidency of SFRY], cardbox 439, transcript of stenographic notes taken at an internal meeting of 6 November 1986.

Ristanović also puts forth the thesis that, after the Balkan wars in 1912 and 1913, periods of Serbian and Albanian dominance alternated in the development of Kosovo. He sees the periods of Italian and German occupation of Kosovo during the Second World War and the post-1966 period as phases of Albanian dominance. This in principle is a correct statement. However, without taking into account the level of dominance, its form and the impact of this situation on everyday life in Kosovo, it is rather vague and misleading. The uninformed reader will not understand that, for example, between 1948 and 1958, Serbian domination meant strict, even brutal, police surveillance over Kosovo's majority Albanian population as well as privileges for the Serbs in many areas of public life. After 1966, police surveillance was considerably reduced, and although the dominance of local officials of Albanian origin in the administration of Kosovo was established at that time, and was to last for more than twenty years, it cannot be claimed that the state authorities systematically discriminated against the Serbian minority. Yet, there is no doubt that informal pressure by the majority on the Slavic minority increased at that time. While we know how it was exerted, defining its scope and intensity is far more difficult.

The theses long present in the Serbian reflection of Kosovo's development that Ristanović adopts include the claim on retrogression experienced by the region in the 1970s under the administration of Albanian functionaries, which was under little control from the centre. He stresses that the patriarchal character of Albanian society was strengthened again in this period. While this may be true for social and economic conditions in rural Kosovo, it is not necessarily true for the younger, more educated class of town dwellers whose cultural and civilizational standards clearly increased at that time. The very fact that the modern national movement of the Kosovo Albanians accelerated at that time and grew stronger is indicative of the onset of the modernization processes. This was also the case when the class of factory workers formed, which later in characteristic fashion entered the public scene as one of the driving forces of the Albanian national movement in active resistance against the restrictions of Kosovo's autonomy, as enforced by Milošević. The class of the intelligentsia also grew and was no longer formed almost exclusively of humanities graduates, but also of doctors and engineers. This modernization fully manifested itself both during the passive resistance of Kosovo Albanians in the first half of the 1990s and during the subsequent national liberation war. Nothing is changed by the fact that with the reduced police surveillance in Kosovo in the 1970s the number of cases of blood feud temporarily increased or that the high fertility rates, typical of the Albanian part of the population, did not drop at that time. After all, as we know today, the modernization processes in Albanian society in Kosovo since the late 1950s led to the rapid decrease of fertility rates in this region by the end of the millennium.

Petar Ristanović repeatedly points out that the problems in Kosovo were caused, to a great extent, by the radical lessening of the Serbian leadership's influence on the situation in this autonomous province after 1966. However, this claim is not grounded in arguments. In this context, the question arises as to how else the Serbian leaders could direct or regulate the development in Kosovo. How could they accelerate economic development and eliminate the spontaneous radicalizing national movement of the Albanian majority? Milošević succeeded in radically limiting Kosovo's autonomy, but he was at his wits' end when he encountered protests and subsequently passive resistance. As I have mentioned above, Ristanović repeatedly reiterates that the Macedonian authorities did not hesitate to radically suppress any displays of national emancipation of the Albanians living in this republic. However, when Yugoslavia disintegrated, coexistence with this ethnic group was no different than relations between the Albanians and the Serbs in Kosovo.

As Ristanović states in his introduction, which is written elegantly and placed carefully in perspective, the Kosovo issue persisted into the twentieth century as an unresolved relic of a complex of problems which a century before were known as "the Eastern issue". Yet he does not expand on this thesis nor provide any details on it, even though further deliberation on it could help us to understand the Kosovo issue. As the historical experience from the post-1945 development shows, the stabilization of the situation in Kosovo was an unsolvable task for both Serbia and Yugoslavia. Neither repression, generous responsiveness nor support of the broadest possible modernization could convince or force the region's majority population to accept the borders defined in 1913 and the division of the Albanian ethnic space. European metropolises underwent a similar experience during the disintegration of colonial empires. Algeria did not become a French region, even though in that case its modernization would have brought the local Arab majority a more rapid economic growth and the conditions for social and cultural transformation than it experienced as an independent state.

I am well aware that as a foreign researcher, I can reflect on this context in a broader perspective than Serbian historians. Still, I think that – probably later rather than sooner – these issues will also be discussed in Serbian historical circles. This innovative and expert monograph by Petar Ristanović is a significant step in that direction.

Translated by Blanka Medková

The review was written as part of the research project "Crisis – Reform – (In)stability: Yugoslav Socialist System from the Actors' Perspective (1980–1986/1987)" funded by the Czech Science Foundation under the Contract No. 21-14095S.

Keywords:

Kosovo; Serbia; Yugoslavia; Albania; Kosovo issue; ethnic minorities; ethnic conflicts; Serbian historiography

Chronicle

An Active Participant and Witness to a Century

Karel Hrubý (9. 12. 1923 – 6. 6. 2021)

Petr Zídek

Institute for the Study of Totalitarian Regimes, Prague

On 6 June 2021, Karel Hrubý, the sociologist, exile activist, social democratic politician, journalist, as well as former footballer and political prisoner, died at the advanced age of 97. His name may not be well-known to the broader public, but he left behind an extensive quantity of work, which can also be read as a commentary on his extraordinary life.

Karel Hrubý was born on 9 December 1923 into a large working-class family in Pilsen. He grew up in poverty – he lived with his parents and three older siblings in one room in Roudná in the suburbs of Pilsen – but this did not lead him to political radicalization. On the contrary, especially under the influence of his father, who encouraged him to read the works of Eduard Bernstein and Tomáš Garrigue Masaryk, he turned to non-Marxist reform social democracy, remaining faithful to his ideological and political convictions throughout his life.

During the Protectorate, he trained as a turner in the Škoda factory and in 1941, he started studying at the Teachers' Institute. After the war, this opened the way for him to study at the Faculty of Arts at Charles University in Prague, where in 1949, he managed to successfully defend his doctoral thesis with Albert Pražák, a noted Czech literary historian. Its title was *Ruský realismus a Masarykovy názory literárně kritické* [Russian Realism and Masaryk's Literary Critical Views]. From his youth, Hrubý had played football, even making it into the junior team of Viktoria Pilsen. The beginning of his career in journalism was also related to sports: before the communist coup d'état in February 1948, he helped out as a sports editor in the editorial office of the social democratic daily *Právo lidu* [The People's Right].

In 1950, after finishing his studies, he started teaching Czech language and literature – first at the middle school in Zbůch, a village in the Pilsen-North district, later at the grammar school in Stříbro. Following his military service, from November 1951 to January 1954, he taught at grammar schools in Domažlice and Pilsen. In May 1955, while teaching in Pilsen, he was detained. It was his contacts with former social democrats and mainly an analysis of the political situation, which he wrote in 1949, that proved to be his undoing. Together with a group of former social democrats, he was sentenced by the Supreme Court to ten years in prison for treason. Until the extensive amnesty of May 1960, he was imprisoned in a labour camp

known as the Dark Mine (*Tmavý důl*) near Rtyně, where he dug coal.[1] After his release, he was only allowed to work as a turner. In his free time, he continued studying and carried out scholarly research, focusing on the issue of the Hussite movement, the interpretation of which was greatly distorted by the communist ideology in the 1950s. Hrubý presented a sociological model of the Hussite revolution, publishing two studies on this issue in 1967 and 1968. With these, he established himself as a sociologist. After the fall of Antonín Novotný, the president of Czechoslovakia and First Secretary of the Communist Party, he was offered the position of head of the social research department at the Research Institute of Production Cooperatives (*Výzkumný ústav výrobního družstevnictví*). During the Prague Spring, Hrubý participated in the attempts by former social democrats to revive their party. Immediately after the Soviet invasion, he left the country, together with his wife, who was a doctor, and their fourteen-year-old son. They found exile and a second home in Basel, Switzerland.

Hrubý obtained very good employment in Switzerland at the multinational company Geigy (since 1970 Ciba-Geigy, today Novartis). He successfully used his sociological model of the Hussite revolution in the marketing of new medicines (in simple terms, just as the Hussite ideas were initially accepted and spread by a group of townsmen who were open to new ideas, it is also possible to save time and money when introducing new medicines by promoting them not among all doctors, but only among selected innovators). In his free time, he joined exile activities in three main areas. From 1973, he served as the vice-chairman and later as chairman of the Czechoslovak Social Democracy in Exile. He was a member of the representative body and later of the presidium of the Council of Free Czechoslovakia (*Rada svobodného Československa*), and he also became chairman of the Swiss branch of the Czechoslovak Society of Arts and Sciences (*Československá společnost pro vědy a umění*). In 1983–1991, he published *Proměny* [Transformations], a prominent cultural-political exile journal issued quarterly in New York, and also often contributed to it as an author. He organized and moderated conferences, published collective editions and tried to maintain awareness of the Czechoslovak issue among Western politicians, mainly among the ranks of social democrats.

After the fall of communism in November 1989, Hrubý participated in the revival of social democracy in his homeland. However, it was an "opposition" movement around Jiří Horák that came to the fore in the new party. The victory of Miloš Zeman at the Czech Social Democratic Party Congress in Hradec Králové in 1993, sealed the defeat of exile activists around Karel Hrubý. Two years later, Hrubý received the Order of Tomáš Garrigue Masaryk from President Václav Havel.

[1] He described his experience in prison in the book: HRUBÝ, Karel: *Mohlo to být horší: Usmířené vzpomínky na komunistický kriminál*. Praha, Ústav pro soudobé dějiny AV ČR, v.v.i., 2017.

From the mid-1990s, Hrubý was mainly active as a journalist. His articles were mostly published in fringe periodicals of a social democratic orientation (*Trend, Listy, Právo lidu, Nová Přítomnost*). He was the editor and co-author of the collective volume *Léta mimo domov* [Years Abroad], in which he sought to narrate the history of social democracy in exile through the lens of the group he belonged to.[2] At the beginning of the new century, he began an intensive collaboration with this journal, in which he published a number of studies, essays, and reviews, as well as polemics. In 2018, the book *Cesty komunistickou diktaturou* [Journeys through Communist Dictatorship] was published, which included texts that had appeared previously in *Soudobé dějiny*, but also in other periodicals, especially in *Listy* [Letters], a successor of the exile periodical of the social democrats published in Rome. The book also contained a complete bibliography of his works published to date.[3]

Hrubý's last book was his memoir *Věřil jsem v budoucnost* [I Believed in the Future], which was published after his death. The memoirs came into being in the spring and summer of 2020 in the form of interviews through correspondence with the author of this obituary. In it, Hrubý described not only his life from childhood to old age, but also gave an interesting picture of the "history of the everyday" and reflected on the events he had witnessed or played an active role in.[4]

With the passing of Karel Hrubý, who maintained extraordinary mental clarity and an impressive memory to the very last months of his long life, we have lost a public intellectual and one of the last distinctive exile activists. His life path was marked by all the major events that Czech society had gone through in the past century. He was not a passive viewer of history but rather an active participant who always tried to act in accordance with the ideals that he embraced in his youth, despite the defeats that befell him.

Translated by Blanka Medková

Keywords:

Karel Hrubý (1923–2021); Czechoslovakia; Czechoslovak intellectuals; exile; Czechoslovak Social Democracy in exile; Czech historiography; sociology

[2] HRUBÝ, Karel (ed.): *Léta mimo domov: K historii Československé sociální demokracie v exilu*. Praha, Eduard Grégr a syn 1996. The book includes texts written by Václav Holub, Čestmír Ješina, Jaroslav Krejčí, Jiří Loewy and Jaroslav Zběhlík.

[3] IDEM: *Cesty komunistickou diktaturou: Kritické studie a eseje*. Praha, Argo 2018. Tomáš Hermann is the co-editor of the book and the author of the foreword and the bibliography.

[4] HRUBÝ, Karel – ZÍDEK, Petr: *Věřil jsem v budoucnost.* Praha, Torst 2022.

Historians of the Czech Lands Met in Ústí nad Labem

Veronika Pehe

Institute of Contemporary History of the Czech Academy of Sciences, Prague

The largest professional gathering of historians in the Czech Republic, the Twelfth-Congress of Czech Historians (*Sjezd českých historiků a historiček*), took place in Ústí nad Labem on 20–22 September 2022. The event, which takes place every five years at a different institution, gathered together several hundred historians and scholars of related disciplines, working on the history of the Czech lands from the medieval period until the present. The Congress was not only an opportunity to survey the newest research related to the history of the Czech lands; its social function is also invaluable, allowing scholars from institutions across the country, who otherwise have little contact with one another, as well as scholars from abroad, to engage with each other's work.

Three days of panels in parallel blocks and a rich accompanying programme demonstrated that Czech historiography is in good shape. The Congress was divided into main sessions and congress panels, with the main panels addressing more general themes relating to historical research, including, among others, taking stock of the progress of Czech history as a discipline in the past thirty years; the relationship of historiography and humanities research; the issue of memory and how Czech society remembers the past; and oral history during the Covid-19 pandemic.

The rest of the programme was dedicated to congress panels, most often organized thematically or conceptually. Participants could visit panels dealing with the medieval, early modern, modern and contemporary periods. Intellectually refreshing were also several panels that brought together scholars of different periods and enabled conversations that otherwise rarely happen at more specialized conferences. Such was the case of two blocks on intellectual history, which featured papers on both early modern, nineteenth-century and more contemporary topics.

The conference also gave space to reflections on Czech history from abroad. The keynote speech of the opening night, which took place in the Ústí nad Labem Theatre, was delivered by French historian Alain Soubigou, who spoke about the relationship of Tomáš Garrigue Masaryk with historians. Other guests of the opening ceremony, attended also by representatives of the city council

of Ústí nad Labem, included delegates from professional organizations of historians from Slovakia and Poland and one of the main sessions was dedicated to a debate with German historians who work on the history of the Czech lands.

For the readers of this journal, it will be good news that contemporary history, or more broadly the history of the twentieth century, was particularly well represented in the Congress programme. The Congress enabled panel organizers to divide their panels into up to three blocks if they received enough applications. This system provided a good opportunity to identify which topics and approaches are currently trending within contemporary history. Among these we can count labour history, which over three panels provided perspectives on workers, trade unions and social democratic thinkers especially in the period up to the Second World War, with excursions into the second half of the twentieth century. An equally well-represented subdiscipline was environmental history, also spanning three blocks which focused on questions as diverse as histories of nature conservation, the environmental thought of Charter 77 (*Charta 77*), or the state of environmental history in Slovakia. Much attention was also devoted to the question of didactics and the teaching of history organized by the Department of Education of the Institute for the Study of Totalitarian Regimes (*Ústav pro studium totalitních režimů*), with three blocks gathering together both scholars and practitioners – teachers of history in primary and secondary schools. Gender history also attracted substantial interest, with two blocks focusing on the twentieth century.

A perhaps somewhat surprising conclusion of two blocks on the history of the everyday under dictatorship was that among researchers of this topic, the work of German historians Alf Lüdtke and Thomas Lindenberger, which has become well-established also in the Czech academic environment, or the anthropological analysis of Alexei Yurchak, no longer seem as inspirational as the conceptual frameworks developed by sociologist Pierre Bourdieu, whom a number of papers quoted.

Like any large event, the Congress was not entirely devoid of its own controversies. The inclusion of Ladislav Kudrna, the current director of the Institute for the Study of Totalitarian Regimes, in one of the main sessions about research ethics, despite the fact that Kudrna has been accused of plagiarism, provoked a heated reaction from the audience at the session. Other events in the main sessions were perhaps not controversial, but also generated much discussion. Such was the case of the session on history and populism, which despite its title turned into a lively debate on the merits and dangers of popular historical magazines.

Lastly, it is worth mentioning that one of the talking points of the Congress was its name. Given that Czech is a gendered language, organizers have to make a conscious choice whether to use a more inclusive form that will give space to both male and female historians. Although the Congress of Czech

Historians (*Sjezd českých historiků* – male only form) is an established "brand", the organizers of the previous Congress in Olomouc in 2017 attempted to resolve the issue by introducing a subtitle acknowledging that the event is a professional gathering of male and female historians and this year's Congress followed suit. The organizers of the next Congress in five years will, however, undoubtedly be faced with the question of whether the event's main title should also not be revised to be more inclusive.

Keywords:
Czech historiography; Congress of Czech Historians 2022; Czech Republic

Abstracts in Czech

Hitlerovi kňazi na Slovensku?

Ku konvergencii katolicizmu a fašizmu v nacistickej „novej Európe“

Miloslav Szabó

Štúdia sa zaoberá fašizáciou katolíckeho duchovenstva na východnej periférii nacistickej „novej Európy“, konkrétne vo vojnovej Slovenskej republike (1939–1945), nacistickom satelite vo východnej časti strednej Európy. V nadväznosti na nedávne historiografické debaty pracuje autor s pojmom „klerikálny fašizmus“ ako nástrojom pre analýzu ideológie najvýznamnejšieho slovenského „klérofašistu“, prezidenta a katolíckeho kňaza Jozefa Tisa (1887–1947). Konkrétne skúma transformáciu sociálneho katolicizmu v nástroj fašistickej disciplinácie. Venuje sa tiež fašizácii ďalšej trojice slovenských klerikov: Karola Körpera (1894–1969), Ladislava Hanusa (1907–1994) a Viliama Riesa (1906–1989). Prostredníctvom analýzy pôsobenia jednotlivcov z radov umiernených i radikálnych „klérofašistov“ na pozadí režimu Hlinkovej slovenskej ľudovej strany počas druhej svetovej vojny sa autor usiluje vysvetliť dôvody politickej a náboženskej radikalizácie v stredovýchodnej Európe v priebehu prvej polovice dvadsiateho storočia.

Kľúčové slová:

Slovensko; Slovenský štát (1939–1945); Československo; katolicizmus; katolickí kňazi; fašizmus; „klerikálny fašizmus“; Hlinkova slovenská ľudová strana; druhá svetová vojna; politická radikalizácia; Jozef Tiso; Karol Körper; Ladislav Hanus; Viliam Ries

Věčný odkaz Velké vlastenecké?

Politická instrumentalizace sovětského vítězství nad fašismem a její používání v Československu po roce 1968 a v současné České republice

Marie Černá

Autorka v této studii s teoretickým zakotvením v paměťových studiích rekonstruuje, jak byl a je oficiální sovětsko-ruský mýtus Velké vlastenecké války politicky instrumentalizován a zneužíván k prosazování a legitimizaci mocenských záměrů Kremlu. Podoby, mechanismy a aktéry této systematicky uplatňované politiky dějin a paměti konkrétně zkoumá nejprve v kontextu sovětské intervence do Československa v srpnu 1968 a ospravedlnění následného pobytu Sovětské armády v zemi, poté zejména v souvislostech propagandistického působení proruských aktivistů v České republice a současné ruské agrese proti Ukrajině. Mýtem Velké vlastenecké války se rozumí účelově vytvořený, udržovaný a idealizovaný obraz vítězného tažení Rudé armády v letech 1941 až 1945, nezištného a bezpříkladného sovětského hrdinství, které zachránilo evropské národy před německým fašismem. Tento sakralizovaný příběh, potlačující jiné historické narativy, je v současné politice ruského státu monopolizován jako důležitý nástroj, který má tvořit svorník historické paměti ruské společnosti a sjednocovat ji proti novým domnělým nepřátelským hrozbám. Autorka demonstruje strategii, v níž byli vojáci Sovětské armády, kteří údajně v srpnu 1968 poskytli „bratrskou pomoc“ při potlačení kontrarevoluce v Československu, během normalizace v sedmdesátých a osmdesátých letech prezentováni jako následníci a „synové“ hrdinných osvoboditelů z roku 1945, a ukazuje, jak se přitom sami podíleli na jejich kultu a zaštiťovali se jím při „družbě“ s českou společností. Po pádu komunistického režimu tento oficiální narativ ztratil váhu, do České republiky však pronikal „ruský svět“ (*russkij mir*) jako myšlenkový konglomerát spojující segmenty ruské kultury, pravoslaví, nacionalismu a sdílené historické paměti, který během Putinovy vlády slouží jako „marketingová značka“ k šíření geopolitického vlivu Ruska. Autorka prostřednictvím ruskojazyčného tisku, webových platforem a sociálních médií mapuje aktéry a formy působení „ruského světa“ v Česku, jehož zázemí tvoří část zdejší ruské krajanské menšiny a místní proruské spolky či iniciativy. Zvláštní pozornost přitom věnuje nacionalistickému motorkářskému spolku Noční vlci (*Nočnyje volki*) a původně občanskému, postupně však postátňovanému hnutí Nesmrtelný pluk (*Bessmertnyj polk*), které intenzivně oživují a propagují mýtus Velké vlastenecké války v intencích politiky Kremlu a zakládají své odnože za hranicemi Ruska včetně České republiky.

Klíčová slova:

Velká vlastenecká válka; druhá světová válka; Rusko; Sovětský svaz; Česká republika; Československo; historická paměť; politika dějin; propaganda; Sovětská armáda; válka na Ukrajině; „ruský svět“; ruské krajanské komunity; fašismus; Noční vlci; Nesmrtelný pluk; komemorace; Vladimir Putin

Železný, nebo nerezový Felix?

Felix Dzeržinskij jako symbol revolučního fanatismu, banalizace bezpráví a pochybné demokracie v sovětské éře i postsovětském Rusku

Tomáš Sniegoň

Studie se zabývá kultem spojeným s osobností Felixe Edmundoviče Dzeržinského (1877–1926), revolucionáře a zakladatele politické policie v Sovětském svazu, a proměnami tohoto kultu v různých etapách dějin SSSR a postsovětského Ruska. Jako vedoucí nejvýznamnější represivní složky, známé pod zkratkou Čeka, stál Dzeržinskij jasně v pozadí zcela konkrétní institucionalizované podoby sovětského státního teroru. Jak autor ukazuje, obraz Dzeržinského jako základ mytologizace sovětské politické policie se stal velmi užitečným ve všech etapách vývoje sovětského systému, přičemž nejvýznamnější pro rozvoj tohoto kultu bylo paradoxně období po dvacátém sjezdu Komunistické strany Sovětského svazu v roce 1956. Glorifikace Felixe Dzeržinského a banalizace teroru, který zavedl, zcela nezmizely ani později, navzdory mnoha odhalením zločinů komunismu. Zatímco mýtus o zakladateli Čeky zůstával po celou dobu v hlavních rysech podobný, nebo dokonce totožný, jeho funkce se časem proměňovaly. Odkaz na Dzeržinského represivní organizaci je dodnes přítomný ve způsobu, jakým sami sebe označují příslušníci ruské státní bezpečnosti („čekisté“). Autor proto dochází k závěru, že kult tohoto muže se stal pro státní moc v Kremlu dlouhodobě užitečnějším než kulty jiných vůdců sovětské éry, včetně Vladimira Iljiče Lenina a Josifa Vissarionoviče Stalina.

Klíčová slova:

Felix Dzeržinskij; Sovětský svaz; Rusko; bezpečnostní služby; Čeka; komunismus; postkomunismus; historická politika; historická paměť; historické památníky; komemorace

Interpretace vzniku Československa v letech 1948–1989

Posuny a změny v politice dějin a paměti

Jan Hálek – Jakub Štofaník

Studie se zaměřuje na budování historických narativů a konstrukci paměti o vzniku Československa (dne 28. října 1918) ve druhé polovině dvacátého století. Zkoumá posuny oficiální interpretace této události od doby etablování komunistického režimu až po jeho rozpad, a to prostřednictvím rozboru stranických textů a odborných publikací. Rovnocennou pozornost přitom vedle českých zemí věnuje Slovensku. Analyzuje českou a slovenskou historiografii a sleduje význam přímých i nepřímých politických a ideologických vlivů. Soustředí se především na roli historiků jako odborné komunity a na význam institucionálních sítí. Všímá si budování nových historických pracovišť (v rámci Československé akademie věd) a posunů na poli univerzitního vzdělávání. Zatímco stávající univerzity se měly zaměřit výhradně na výuku, nově zakládané vysoké školy (jako například Vysoká škola politických a hospodářských věd) měly od počátku vychovávat nový typ socialistické inteligence s blízkým vztahem k lidu a (do)vzdělávat propagační pracovníky a zaměstnance státní administrativy. Pokud jde o historiky, studie poukazuje na jejich odborné a publikační strategie i na názorové proměny, jimiž procházeli. Ve druhé části článku se autoři věnují tomu, jak se vznik Československa připomínal ve veřejném prostoru. Zachycují podobu oslav třicátého výročí v roce 1948, již v režii komunistického režimu, nahrazení svátku vzniku republiky Dnem znárodnění počátkem padesátých let a oživení původní tradice československé státnosti v šedesátých letech. Na závěr se zamýšlejí nad celospolečenskou odezvou sedmdesátého výročí v roce 1988, kdy byl význam vzniku samostatného československého státu znovu potvrzen v podobě uznání 28. října jako státního svátku, ale také se symbolika spjatá s tímto datem stala impulzem k masovému veřejnému protestu proti komunistickému režimu.

Klíčová slova:

Československo; vznik Československa; 28. říjen 1918; státní svátky; československá historiografie; komunismus; historická politika; politika paměti; komemorace

Maďarská „neorganická minulost“ a polské „odložené vítězství“

Muzejní produkce národních identit na příkladu Domu teroru a Muzea Varšavského povstání

Rose Smith

Více než třicet let po pádu komunismu se Maďarsko i Polsko snaží skrze minulost znovu a jinak uchopit svou národní identitu. Vládnoucí strany Maďarská občanská unie (*Fidesz*) v Maďarsku a Právo a spravedlnost (*Prawo i Sprawiedliwość* – PiS) v Polsku využívají svá „vlajková muzea“ – Dům teroru (*Terror Háza*) v Budapešti a Muzeum Varšavského povstání (*Muzeum Powstania Warszawskiego*) – jako epistemologické nástroje k prosazování vlastní politiky paměti. Obě muzea zobrazují soudobé dějiny „svých“ národů a zdůrazňují typ národní identity způsobem, který slouží politickým přáním Fidesz i PiS. Autorka si v článku klade otázku, jak tyto muzejní instituce prezentují a jakým významem naplňují kategorii národa a jak artikulují národní identitu, k níž se hlásí. Využívá přitom metodologických přístupů z oblasti muzejnictví a formuluje vlastní tezi o třech vrstvách artikulace národní identity: prezentace národa, reprezentace národa a politická produkce národní identity.

Klíčová slova:
Maďarsko; Polsko; komunismus; muzea; politika paměti; muzejnictví; národní identita; Dům teroru; Muzeum Varšavského povstání; Fidesz; Prawo i Sprawiedliwość

Socialismus jako ideologie, socialismus jako dědictví

Postoje (socialistické) republiky Slovinsko k vlastní socialistické minulosti (1980–2004)

Tjaša Konovšek

Článek se zaměřuje na klíčové politické aktéry a státní instituce Socialistické republiky Slovinsko (*Socialistična republika Slovenija*) v rámci federativní Jugoslávie a pozdější Republiky Slovinsko (*Republika Slovenija*) a na jejich měnící se a často ambivalentní postoje ve vztahu k vlastnímu socialistickému dědictví. Institucionalizací paměti a podporou specifických historických narativů slovinské

politické vedení artikulovalo nejen své hodnocení minulosti, ale také chápání přítomnosti a utváření nadějí do budoucna. Autorka v článku zkoumá státní svátky a státní oslavy jako hlavní komunikační kanály mezi státem a veřejností. Nejvyšší státní instituce vystupovaly jako jejich hlavní scenáristé a organizátoři, čelní slovinští politici prostřednictvím těchto akcí (a ve jménu státu) oceňovali, hodnotili a (re)interpretovali významné historické události. Časový rámec článku zahrnuje dvě období: pozdní socialistickou éru mezi lety 1980 a 1989 (od Titovy smrti do počátku rozpadu Jugoslávie) a etapu slovinské transformace v letech 1989 až 2008, během níž začalo fungovat Studijní centrum pro národní usmíření (*Študijski center za narodno spravo*) a slovinská politika se ve vztahu k minulosti připojila k širšímu mezinárodnímu trendu institucionalizovaného antikomunismu. Autorka dochází k závěru, že neustálé ekonomické, politické a sociální krize pozdního socialismu nutily politické vedení slovinské svazové republiky opakovaně přehodnocovat a reinterpretovat socialistické dědictví a že po převratných změnách v letech 1989 až 1991 se antisocialistické postoje ve Slovinsku staly jedním z nejdůležitějších politických znaků, jimiž se nový stát vymezoval. V obou obdobích tak byl socialismus klíčovým tématem politiky paměti, i když pokaždé jinak.

Klíčová slova:

Jugoslávie; Socialistická republika Slovinsko; Slovinsko; státní socialismus; pozdní socialismus; postsocialistická transformace; státní svátky; politika paměti; komemorace

Mnichovská dohoda a pakt Molotov–Ribbentrop jako nástroj ruské revizionistické propagandy

Ivan Beljajev

Rusko se pod vládou Vladimira Putina snaží překreslovat sovětskou historii a propagovat protizápadní narativ, aby legitimizovalo své územní nároky a politické požadavky ve východní Evropě. Na základě elektronických zdrojů, jako jsou příspěvky na sociálních sítích, články z ruských médií, komentáře v novinách a mediální prohlášení, autor ukazuje, že jedním z nástrojů tohoto narativu je účelové zdůrazňování Mnichovské dohody v září 1938 a historické viny západních velmocí na nacistické expanzi, které má odvádět pozornost od diskuse o paktu Molotov–Ribbentrop, uzavřeném o necelý rok později.

Klíčová slova:

Rusko; Sovětský svaz; Vladimir Putin; Mnichovská dohoda; Pakt Molotov–Ribbentrop; historická politika; paměťové války (memory wars)*; propaganda*

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Soudobé dějiny / Czech Journal of Contemporary History (ISSN 1210-7050)
www.sd.usd.cas.cz

Published by the Institute of Contemporary History of the Czech Academy of Sciences
Cover and graphic design: Markéta Jelenová
English-language translations: Blanka Medková, Phil Jones, Hana Bortlová-Vondráková
English-language editor: Andrea Talabér
Typesetting: Dana Weberová
Printed by Protisk Ltd., České Budějovice

Cover photo: March of the Immortal Regiment in Karlovy Vary on 5 May 2018. A red banner with the symbols of the Soviet Union and Stalin's portrait reads: "Spasibo dedu za pobedu!!!" [Thank You for the Victory, Grandpa!!!] Photo: Martin Stolař, © ČTK (Czech News Agency)

The journal is indexed in the following databases: Scopus, ERIH PLUS, CEEOL and CrossRef.
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The Czech Journal of Contemporary History was registered by the Czech Ministry of Culture on 16th April 1993 under the number MK 6475.
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