

Summaries

STUDIES

JUDr. Jaroslav Preiss – A retribution probe

► Igor Volný

The paper is dedicated to Dr. Jaroslav Preiss, a leading personality of the inter-war era, with a focus on his post-war retribution prosecution. The years 1945–1948 were a critical period, as in that time the Communist Party grabbed positions in the state security apparatus. A description is given of the methods of the communist intelligence subversion during the investigation.

The retribution agenda may be perceived as one of the tools used by the KSČ to strengthen its power, as along with real criminals and collaborators also other individuals were unjustly persecuted who by no means should have been tried by the National Court. At the end of the study, the author highlights an often forgotten fact that the Ministry of Justice, controlled by the National Socialists, had more control over the retributions than is commonly thought. National prosecutor Tržický was in fact controlled by the minister of justice. Further, an almost nihilistic approach of national prosecutor Tržický, who declined to abide by the law and prosecute his fellow party member Evžen Erban, and Prokop Drtina, who refused to allow prosecution of his fellow party member and ambassador who handed over the embassy after Munich without much resistance, is unmasked. Thus, the article highlights the joint interest of National Socialists and Social Democrats in prosecuting mainly members of the banned right-wing parties. It can, therefore, be concluded, with some simplification, that Social Democrats and National Socialists contributed to the dismantling of the rule of law and helped create a framework for political trials. This was the reason why in the framework of Preiss's retribution prosecution no interest existed in shedding light on his involvement in the resistance movement. The fact that Preiss was involved with resistance is completely new information.

The paper's main aim is to point out manipulations during investigation, including intercepting of the report by general Bartík to the effect that Preiss did not commit any offence against national honour and the complete misinterpretation of the reason why Preiss cooperated with his son-in-law, Joe Hartmann, who worked as a courier for general Eliáš.

Presidential amnesties and the institute of pardons in the years 1948–1957. A historical excursion

► Radek Slabotínský

The study looks into presidential amnesties in the 1950s. Their implementation was not easy and was often problematic. Also the outcome can be evaluated as confused at best as in the end they did not satisfy either of the parties, i.e. neither the ones who had unjustly received sentences of imprisonment of varying length for no reason at all, nor the ones who had the authority and political power to decide on these complex issues. The regime in power turned the issue into a highly politicized one and it was alluded to in many governmental and party announcements.

Amnesties and pardons that were stipulated in the Constitution of 9 May 1948 and since 1960 also in the Constitution of the Czechoslovak Socialist Republic as one of the major constitutional powers of the president of the republic, were rooted in the tradition of announcing amnesties and granting pardons in the so-called First Czechoslovak Republic and, on the outside, looked like an element of continuity of the legal order of the First Republic; however, when taking a closer look, it is clear that it was just a trick that was devised to show the citizens a more friendly face and serve as evidence of the regime's humanity that responded to the gross violations of the legal order and the rule of law during the political trials after February 1948. The very selection of the people that were included in the individual amnesties was linked to a small group of powerful people. Thus, unjustly convicted individuals were at the mercy of those who decided about them. The convicted were of course often disappointed when they learned that their name was not included in the amnesty. The fact that some political prisoners were released from jail only during the so-called Prague Spring is also telling. Moreover, the affected people did not become fully-fledged citizens after they were released, but were still regarded as second class citizens who had trespassed against the people's democratic regime. Also some people who were living alongside the people who were granted amnesty or their loved ones had changed. Family bonds and friendships faded and many recipients of amnesty felt coldness or even animosity of the people around them. It was with these handicaps that the recipients of amnesty entered civic life after their release from prison.

“I did not wish to be a passive witness.” The story of Roman Catholic priest, P. ThDr. Stanislav Sasina, in the 1950s

► **Jiří Řezníček**

The study investigates the case of Stanislav Sasina (28 April 1920 – 30 October 2001), a Roman Catholic priest, from Předbořice near Milevsko. He graduated from the Grammar School of J. V. Jirsík in České Budějovice, studied in Rome and after that, from October 1948, worked at the parish in Benešov nad Černou. After the political changes after February 1948, he experienced harassment from the local KSČ functionaries and after the parishioners’ revolt prompted by news that he could be forced to leave the parish or be arrested, he fled to Austria and later on to Rome. He was then sent to work as a priest in Brazil, and so he decided to pay a visit to his parents illegally to bid them farewell. A certain Dr. Pastor, an agent of an unspecified western secret service, promised to help him. As a repayment for his help, he asked Sasina to acquire information and collaborators in Czechoslovakia. Sasina crossed the Czechoslovak border in the Novohradské Mountains on 23 July 1953. After that he went into hiding in Borovany in South Bohemia. He did not manage to find his parents as he was not willing to risk travelling by public transport and was not able to find anyone who would give him a lift. As he tried to do some intelligence work, he was unfortunate enough to contact Alois Khodl, an StB agent, and was arrested on 7 August 1953. On 19 December 1953, the Supreme Court in Prague sentenced him to 20 years of imprisonment for high treason and espionage. He was released on 24 December 1966.

From Kharkiv all the way to New Mexico

► **Michaela Skořepová**

The study reviews the life of Natalie Nonna Ausky, a Ukrainian doctor and writer. It provides details about her family background, the experience of the famine and war in Ukraine that formed her opinions and very probably also her conduct in later years. It primarily focuses on Natalie Ausky’s life in the post-war period and her collaboration with the StB. In part, the paper also gives a description of the circumstances in which the Ukrainian minority lived in Czechoslovakia and the distrust it created in secret services. In addition to a preserved collaborator file and other materials from the Security Services Archive, the author also made use of information from regional archives, the Charles University Archive and specialised literature focusing on the Ukrainian minority.

The 1960s in the prison system: self-reflection, professionalization and expertization

► Klára Pinerová

The 1960s in the prison system – the same as in society as a whole – brought a number of new impulses for change. In the prison system, these changes took the form of self-reflection, expertization and an accent on socialist rule of law. The present text aims to analyse factors and conditions that affected the new form of the prison system. It primarily focuses on several key questions: How did the prison sector and its workers cope with the oppressive legacy of the 1950s? How did the role of the prison system change in the new legislation, prison codes, and approach to prisoners? To what extent did the new, technocratic narrative that was evidenced throughout Czechoslovakia by the emphasis on expert knowledge and university education affect the theory and practice? How did the events of the Prague Spring affect the very operation of the prison system and what main topics were most discussed? And last but not least: Were any tendencies from the 1960s preserved or were they all rejected during the so-called normalization? The aim of the paper is to provide a basic insight into the changes in the prison system in those, to a certain extent, revolutionary years, as understanding the basic tendencies that were implemented in the system in the period of democratization and opening up of the society can help us better understand the trends in the prison system in the years that followed, i.e. not only in the period of normalization, but also after 1989.

14th Directorate of the National Security Corps

► Lucie Hanáčková

The article deals with security threats that the CSSR considered most dangerous for the security of the state in the 1970s and 1980s. Further, it focuses on the 14th Directorate of the National Security Corps (SNB), which was established in 1981 in order to tackle these threats. Attention is given to the establishment and development of the Directorate, the rules of organization of the Directorate and its main departments, responsibilities of the staff at the Directorate, cooperation with other parts of the SNB and security agencies of foreign countries and selected investigated issues and implemented security operations.

MATERIALS

Thumbrest, or fast information for the chief. Exploitation of the information flow of the State Security from 20 November to 8 December 1989

► Pavel Žáček

From 20 November to 8 December 1989, i.e. after the key student demonstration and in the situation of a deepening crisis of the communist regime, the analytical department of the 2nd Directorate of the SNB presented to the chief of the Counter-Intelligence Main Directorate, Col. PhDr. Karel Vykypěl, a specific combined form of special information and information for the directorate's leadership, so-called fast information ("thumbrest"). This information, which exceeded the scope of the existing directives, was prepared by exploiting and condensing the information flow, i.e. outcomes from agency-confidant sources, intelligence-technical tasks, and from individual members of the SNB.

A member of the analytical department of the 2nd Directorate of the SNB whose work was *selection* selected information from all agency-operative reports delivered to the individual departments of the State Security and then passed it on to the *brief compiler*. A brief compiler at the analytical department processed the materials from operative departments, working on the content and form; they were responsible for the preparation of daily situation reports and their due presentation to their superiors. A senior specialist officer prepared the following documents: "CIRCLE" (a summary assessment of the collection of ciphers from regions and possibly operative departments of the 2nd Directorate of the SNB, designated solely for the minister of the interior of the CSSR and the 1st deputy); "THUMBREST" (information and knowledge not used in the daily situation reports that presented the picture of the social, political and economic situation and which was compiled for the chief of the Counter-Intelligence Main Directorate), "ACTIVITIES" (information about the activities of the opposition in the nearest future, presented in the form of a separate annex to the thumbrest).

The volume of documents includes 34 fast information bulletins presented by the analytical department of the 2nd Directorate of the SNB, on 27 November 1989 also including the annexes "information so far not confirmed" and "expected activities", on 2 December 1989 including also "activities" and "expected activities", on 28 November and on 7 December 1989 including also "expected activities" and on 28 November including also "activities".

The published documents confirm that the communist secret police was able to obtain necessary information also at the time of the biggest threat to the communist

regime before the fall of the totalitarian regime in Czechoslovakia and fill the information flow with relatively good-quality and timely information.

REPORTS

Report from the conference "Archivierung von Unterlagen aus digitalen Systemen" (Prague 12–13 May 2019)

Zuzana Zedníková

1939 – The year of the change. Slovakia and Europe at the beginning of World War II (Banská Bystrica 23–25 April 2019)

Miroslav Lacko

Report from the 18th National Archival Conference (Plzeň 23–25 April 2019)

František Prepsl

Lectures in Grenzlandmuseum Eichsfeld (Eichsfeld 26 May 2019)

Pavel Vaněk

Armed forces and the Czechoslovak state (Brno 18 and 19 June 2019)

Pavel Vaněk

Open Doors Day at the Security Services Archive (Prague–Brno 20 June 2019)

Iva Kvapilová, Zuzana Marková

Velvet Přerov and Islets of Freedom (Přerov 15 August – 20 September 2019)

Jiří Garncarz

Velvet and tender revolution in regions (Prague 11 and 12 September 2019)

Pavel Vaněk

Conference "Revision of the political trials and judicial rehabilitation of their victims in communist Czechoslovakia" (Prague 23 September 2019)

Tomáš Hemza