

Summary

Prokop Tomek: Amon Tomašoff – Adventurer in the Service of the Communists

The life and activities of the Czechoslovak Intelligence Services agent Amon Tomašoff (1922–1953) is a concrete example of the situation in Czechoslovakia after the Second World War. After the war Tomašoff appeared in Czechoslovakia and as a professional agent he used his undoubted skills. But he was not an intelligence agent; he acted as an informer, unscrupulously enriched himself, smuggled and willingly participated in provocations. He was like a duck to water in any surroundings, which is amazing. He was active even after the communist coup in February 1948 when, among other things, he became involved in the State Security (StB) provocation called KAMENY (Stones). But the post-February period was averse to such kind of people. His contacts and abilities were highly respected but he was too unpredictable and spontaneous, and primarily untrustworthy and unable to be vetted. Although he strived for recognition, he died unexpectedly and forgotten in obscurity at the age of mere 31 years. The text is based mainly on the analysis of incomplete archival materials of the former State Security and its pre-February predecessor the Provincial Security Department II.

Jan Kalous: General Klecanda – Patriot, Soldier, Diplomat

General Vojtěch Vladimír Klecanda (1888–1947) belonged among prominent personalities of the Czechoslovak Army between the wars. He held commanding positions, gave lectures and published, and was also a diplomatic representative of the ČSR. After 1945 he had to face an accusation of collaboration. As a member of the delegation appointed by K. H. Frank he participated in an unsuccessful mission the aim of which was to conclude a truce with the Allies on the Western Front at the turn of April and May 1945. Although he was acquitted by court, his scandalization, mainly in the communist press, continued. In April 1947 he was found dead beneath his flat windows. After 1995 the Office of Documentation and Investigation of the Crimes of Communism (ÚDV) made efforts to examine the circumstances of his death but due to contradictory testimonies they failed to come to an unambiguous conclusion.

Šárka Rokosová: The Case Miloslav Choc and Co.

The political trial of a group Choc and Co. was one of the first large political trials after February 1948. In May that year a prominent communist official Major Augustin Schramm, one of the leading representatives of the Union of Czechoslovak Partisans was murdered. Even though the real murderer has never been detected, the State Security attributed this act to 23-year-old Miloslav Choc who was sentenced to death by the communist judiciary. Apart from him, another 7 members of the main group were given the same sentence, two persons received 30 years imprisonment, one person 25 years, one person 20 years and one person 18 years (three judgements were exercised, whereas the other not because the convicted persons concerned were in emigration). In the context of this trial, however, further 4 trials took place during which 52 persons were sentenced. There was no death sentence given but life sentences were passed. The youngest convict was only a 17-year-old girl.

Šárka Rokosová: Intervention of the National Security Corps Units against Students on 25 February 1948

One of the not generally known facts relating to 25 February 1948 is that apart from the communist demonstration held at Wenceslas Square, one more manifestation took place in Prague. A student's march, starting from the building of the Technical University at Charles Square and reaching the Prague Castle, expressed support to President Beneš and democratic handling of the February crisis. The student delegation wanted to meet the President but instead, they were received only by President's Chancellor

Jaromír Smutný who thanked them on behalf of the President for the confidence placed in him, but he told them that the President had just signed a new composition of the Government.

On 25 February 1948 in connection with this march 71 persons altogether were detained, of which 66 were students. 59 of them were sentenced by imprisonment from 2 to 14 days. While marching, one student was wounded by shooting by a National Security Corps (SNB) member; but it has never been established who caused the young man his wound with permanent consequences, partly also for unwillingness of the investigators at that time.

Petr Cajthaml: Resistance Group of Jaromír Horák and Escape of Dr. Petr Zenkl

A resistance group consisting of Jaromír Horák, Oldřich Jandera, Miroslav Fiala and others operated in Prague in spring and summer 1948. Its members were mostly young national socialists. Through O. Jandera the group was connected to the American Intelligence Services in the American sector of Germany, and through R. Pick to the US Embassy. Its most important action was assistance in an escape abroad of the Czechoslovak National Democratic Party former chairman Petr Zenkl on 7 August 1948. Zenkl and his wife were transferred in boots of the vehicles of the US military attaché in Prague M. Michela and Secretary of the American Embassy W. Birge. On the same day as Zenkl, part of Horák's group and two policemen, assigned to guard Zenkl, decided to emigrate too. The rest of the group who, for the most part, did not directly participate in its intelligence activity were arrested by the State Security (StB) at the turn of August and September 1948. Although the StB possessed certain information that the group contributed to Zenkl's escape, investigative and judicial materials of the group did not contain any such information and those people were sentenced to harsh punishments for petty and fabricated crimes such as a purchase of maps or gathering publicly available information about factories. One of the group members, M. Fiala, became a victim of an intelligence game played by the State Security and was, as its unreliable agent, unlawfully kept in prison for a long time and hidden even before the judicial authorities.

Martin Pulec: A Contribution concerning the Background of the „Pardubice Trials“

This contribution describes unlawful methods applied by the State Security between 1948–1949. Using the case Žemla and Co. as an example, it describes in more detail provocations, fictional liberation as well as fictional transfers across the border, violent interrogations and other methods which were commonly used at that time. The author pays his attention to a complex path towards rehabilitation of those illegally sentenced, trying to map the fate of Jan Žemla even after his emigration until the 1970s.

Eduard Stehlík: Major General Karel Lukas

After its assumption to power the communist regime focused its attention first of all on personalities who could be dangerous for it in future. Former members of our foreign military units and representatives of domestic resistance were among them, of course. By their armed struggle against the brown Nazi totality they proved that they will not hesitate a single minute to defend freedom and democracy against the red totality. One of those who lost their lives in the conflict with the communist security units was also Colonel of the General Staff (Major General in memoriam) Karel Lukas (1897–1949). In view of the date of his death he belongs among the first killed in the fight against communist unlawfulness. The current study deals in detail with his life and career. It maps his activity within the Czechoslovak Legions during the First World War as well as his professional career as a soldier between the wars, and a great attention is also given to his activities in France, Great Britain, the Middle East or the USA during the Second World War. The detailed description of Lukas' resistance merits aims at making a contrast to his death in the communist jail, which is depicted in preserved archival materials as well as in testimonies of eyewitnesses.

Jiří Plachý: Major René Černý – a Forgotten Victim

René Černý is one of more than twenty professional soldiers who were sentenced to death in fabricated trials of 1950s and subsequently executed. This study attempts to document the life and career of this talented officer who after finishing compulsory military service remained in the Czechoslovak Army as a professional officer. After the occupation of Czechoslovakia he became involved into the activities of the resistance organization Obrana národa (Defence of the Nation) and in October 1939 he joined the forming Czechoslovak foreign army; he served in France and Great Britain. He participated in the fights at Dunkerque (1944–1945) and was decorated several times. After his return home, he studied at the Military College (1945–1947) where later he worked as a professor of tactics of the rear. In February 1948, however, he was thrown out and on 1 May 1948 arrested while attempting to cross the state border. In December 1948 he was sentenced to 19 years in prison by the State Court in Prague. In September 1949, together with General Janoušek, he allegedly planned to escape, and therefore in March 1950 he was sentenced again, this time to a life imprisonment. But only a month later he was declared to be a member of a fabricated group of the so called prominent prisoners and the prison guard members and in May that year, together with the former deputy, Stanislav Broj, and a police constable Čeněk Petelík sentenced to death. All the three were executed on 23 May 1950 in Prague at the Pankrác prison.

Martin Pulec: The Case MASNA (BUTCHER'S)

The article describes the murder of three people in 1950 who had been provoked by an agent of the State Security (StB) in Brno to leave the country for abroad. The agent led them to a previously agreed place where members of the StB and the Border Guard killed them. Using this example, the author describes methods of work of the security staff, trying to find out why the perpetrators had not been judged for the murder.

Prokop Tomek: Two Anticommunist Groups in Moravia in 1950s

The text deals with two events in Moravia in the period of anticommunist resistance at the beginning of 1950s. Agents of the Czechoslovak branch of the British Intelligence Service FSS (Field Secret Service) in the Brno region formed an informal network of collaborators which acquired intelligence information, dispatched it via courier channel or by radio transmitters and smuggled various people abroad. Due to gross mistakes with regards to confidentiality, the network was broken in autumn the same year, its members being exposed and harshly punished. At least 64 persons were arrested; the National Security Corps (SNB) member Leopold Doležal was executed and the others received long imprisonment. The operation continued covertly – one of its actors, a radio operator Jaroslav Hajda, was secretly arrested by the State Security and sent out as a provocateur to detect other FSS collaborators in northern Moravia. As a radio operator and under the State Security (StB) control, he led its allegedly first radio-game called A GAME OF CHESS. In March 1952 he was taken out of the case (the State Security stage-managed his death), his collaborators were arrested and after harsh interrogation by the State Security sentenced to many years imprisonment. The text draws on the archival materials of the State Security and the Ministry of the Interior not used so far.

Jiří Bašta: The „Figh Against Reaction“ in the Labour Camp Nikolaj

In the labour camp Nikolaj near Jáchymov town convicts scraped along in early 1950s of the 20th century, mining ore in the nearby uranium mine Eduard in primitive conditions. The communist camp Nikolaj became infamous for brutality employed there especially against internated political prisoners. Unlike bullying of powerless convicts by camp wardens quite common at that time, almost an absurd drama took place at Nikolaj in the spring and summer months in 1952. A large group of criminal and retribution prisoners led by a former gestapo and State Security (StB) confidant Břetislav Jeníček was consciously integrated into a repressive machinery by the camp management headed by an educational official

Jaroslav Kvasil with the aim to utilize their brutality for terrorizing prisoners sentenced by the State Court. The only wrong of political prisoners consisted in their refusal to sign a voluntary commitment to celebrate the occasion of the Labour Day. During several collective and repeated organized attacks it was only by chance that nobody of the attacked political prisoners was killed. Some of them, however, sustained permanent health consequences, apart from psychological traumas, of course. Except for a symbolic punishment of the camp leader Ladislav Schamberger four years later, none of the aggressors were rendered liable. This unprecedented campaign, in camp slang called „class struggle“ or „struggle against the camp reaction“, has been documented in the interrogation protocols of those involved within the framework of the inquiry of the Inspection of the Ministry of the Interior in 1956 as well as through testimonies of surviving victims or culprits given after the year 1989.

Monika Veselá: IPRA – mechanism of power

The study describes the creation and development of a number of „economic unlawful acts“ from the late 1950s. Hundreds of representatives of the so called technical intelligentsia were sentenced in the course of numerous trials who worked internally or externally for the IPRA Company (Advertising, Promotion and Publicity Agency of the Publishing House ‚Lidová demokracie‘ which was owned by the Czechoslovak People’s Party). The work reveals the procedure prior to the court trials. At first it was cooperation between the Ministry of the Interior and the Ministry of the State Control, and later between the Ministry of the State Control and the Economic Counter-Intelligence Agency, part of the former National Security Corps. Such cases were also handled by the Political Counter-Intelligence Agency (where each case took its start because of its connection with the Czechoslovak People’s Party) as well as a number of further structural components of the Ministry of the Interior at that time. After passing the judgements the tragedy of the „IPRA people“ resulted in serving long sentences in prison where they usually carried out design and project work for the socialist state, receiving no money for it...

Martin Pulec: The Case VRAŽDA (MURDER)

The article deals with the shooting down of two Rumanian re-emigrants in 1952 who were provoked by the Border Guard (PS) intelligence officers to escape abroad. These officers planted an agent on the victims who pretended to be a courier of a foreign resistance group, promising them both a safe transfer abroad, and employment within the American Army. Instead, he took them to the place where the Border Guard members waited and they killed the two unarmed men. The study also deals with further sanctions of the perpetrators.

Prokop Tomek: Life and Time of the Interior Minister Rudolf Barák

The purpose of the current article is to bring some new information, recall neglected facts, and to make an attempt to clearly formulate basic conclusions and evaluation of Rudolf Barák’s case in the context of the political situation in Czechoslovakia at the turn of 1950s and 1960s. Rudolf Barák (1915–1995) was Minister of the Interior between 1954–1960. His life considerably differs from the fates of the other interior ministers in pre-November Czechoslovakia. The rise in power of R. Barák was extraordinary quick but his fall-down was even quicker. As the only interior minister he was sentenced and imprisoned by the communist regime for the abuse of his position. In the course of investigation and the court trial there were political pressures, and consequently, formal defects. This by no way means that Barák was not to blame roughly in the meaning of the charge. But he was particularly blamed for acts, which had not been part of the charge, especially for many unlawful actions of the Interior Ministry staff, which he was well aware of and which he approved in his capacity as an interior minister. Although after his release from prison in 1968 he strived for rehabilitation and return among the top officials of the regime, he had to stay in obscurity for the rest of his life. The article is based on the original material sources, especially from the period after Barák’s arrest and conviction.

Peter Dinuš: The Evangelical Church of Czech Brethren and the State Security between 1957–1967

Renewal of the Churches' activities in Czechoslovakia, subject to the church policy of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia (KSČ), was affected by international political events of the year 1956. Advancement of the church and religious activities manifested particularly within the Evangelical Church of Czech Brethren (ČCE). Since the late 1950s a free association of priests and laymen under the title New Orientation had been forming within this church, critically directed towards the regime church policy as well as towards the official church leadership, which in 1966 initiated public criticism of the State Security (StB) activities. The StB strived for the control and gradual disintegration of any opposition within the churches for the purpose of which it made use of a network of secret collaborators from among priests, laymen or church officials. It also gave its support to the activities of the Christian Peace Conference (association of non-catholic churches created in 1958 in Prague which promoted pro-Soviet „peace“ policy). The StB gave its extraordinary attention to establishing a dialogue between Christians and Marxists (until the year 1967 seminars were held within the Evangelical Church of Czech Brethren in the street „V Jirchářích“). The StB responded to the opposition approaches within the churches by increasing its agency activity primarily within the New Orientation environment.