

## Chapter 1

### MILESTONES IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE PRISON SYSTEM AFTER THE SECOND WORLD WAR

The Czechoslovak prison system underwent a number of significant changes after the Second World War, be it organisational, financial or political. In spite of the fact that current historiography outlines a historical story of three different prison systems (the 1950s, the 1960s and the period of “normalisation”) that have nothing in common and developed independently, our aim in this chapter is to point at the notable inaccuracy of these divisions. This book deals primarily with the period from 1965 to 1992. As we shall demonstrate, the year 1965 – which saw Act no. 59/1965 Coll., On the Execution of Punishment by Imprisonment – did not represent a major milestone, but was rather the result of changes which had begun in the late 1950s. Later on, in the 1980s, perestroika had no effect whatsoever on the workings of the prison system nor on the treatment of convicts, even though, for some leading figures of the prison system, the events of 1989 were, literally, shocking. Our examination ends in 1992, the year in which a new concept of the prison system was created (Act no. 555/1992 Coll., On the Prison Service and the Judicial Guard of the Czech Republic). Over this period there were a number of people who remained in top positions in the prison system. Various commanders of prisons in the 1970s had established their careers in the 1950s, for example. There are countless similar individuals found in the history of the Czechoslovak prison system, and while this book deals primarily with the period from 1965 to 1992, we have decided to start our account at the end of the Second World War and observe the main tendencies in the prison system that affected the treatment of the convicted and the conditions during their imprisonment since then.

#### **Retribution and Hatred of Anything German**

A long-standing conflict ended in 1945, leaving millions of deceased people, devastated cities and a traumatised population. Like many insti-

tutions, the prison system encountered many difficulties. Prisons were looted and partly damaged during war, and the prison administration was also burdened with a lack of prison personnel, who had to undergo a denazification process. Those employees who had cooperated with the Nazi regime more than it was necessary for the purposes of their occupation were made to leave. Prisoners were to be treated sensitively and humanely again. However, despite the changing behaviour towards convicts under the new circumstances, not all convicts were treated equally well, especially Germans. This insensitive treatment resulted from the Second World War, during which millions had died, and the fear of losing relatives during the German occupation was still in the mind of the public, as well as the memory of the brutal destruction of the villages of Lidice and Ležáky by the Nazis. People were returning from concentration camps and extermination camps, sharing stories filled with torture, suffering and death. This in their eyes justified retribution inflicted on those who were – even reputedly – responsible for these acts. The principle of collective guilt inflicted upon Germans led to violent acts driven by nationalism and property possession in the early days of the end of the war, and resulted in 30,000 deaths. At the same time, people were being arrested, their property confiscated and almost three million citizens were forced out of their former homes.<sup>41</sup>

In the post-war Czechoslovakia, political, economic, legal and other changes were being gradually introduced, which also significantly affected penal policy aimed at harsh, uncompromising punishment of war criminals and collaborators in the post-war years. Discussions about the range, methods and goals of post-war policies touched upon a many questions, including the level of severity. On 19 June 1945, President Edvard Beneš signed two legal documents, crucial from the viewpoint of retribution, namely Decree no. 16, concerning the punishment of Nazi criminals, traitors and their helpers, and concerning extraordinary peoples' courts, and Decree no. 17, concerning the National

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41 For more information, see Spurný, *Nejsou jako my*.

Court.<sup>42</sup> In the period 1945–1948, Prokop Drtina<sup>43</sup> was the head of the Ministry of Justice, a lawyer and a member of the National Socialist Party who made his name during the war under the alias Saint Paul (Pavel Svätý), a radio commentator in the Czechoslovak broadcast of the BBC in London and who was a certain guarantee that the prison system would go in the humanistic direction of the pre-war period. However, the social climate after the war caused quite the opposite.

Prisons were full of people convicted as Nazi criminals, traitors and their helpers by extraordinary peoples' courts. In May, two years after the end of the Second World War, the two decrees mentioned above were no longer effective. According to Minister Drtina, 713 persons had been sentenced to death,<sup>44</sup> 741 persons to heavy life imprisonment, and 19,888 people to an ordinary imprisonment.<sup>45</sup> The approach towards the convicted demonstrates the initial deformations of the penal system diverting from humanistic principles and fundamental human rights. Post-war prisons faced a number of obstacles. The greatest were overcrowding, missing disinfectants, clothes, shoes and bedding for prisoners, as well as unsatisfactory sanitary conditions. Food supplies were inadequate. Repressive and unequal treatment of prisoners of other nationalities, mainly German, was the major deforming feature. For instance, Czechs and Germans had different dietary norms, and part of the public strongly opposed any improvement of the conditions of German convicts or persons convicted of collaboration with Germans. This diversified approach was abandoned in 1947. Prisoners would be forced to toil and their working time would often be disproportionately extended.<sup>46</sup> Prisoners sentenced according to the retribution decrees, Germans in Czechoslovakia or Hungarians in Slovakia, did not qualify

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42 For more on the activity of extraordinary peoples' courts, see Jarkovská, *Odplata, či spravedlnost?*; Hlavsa, "Nástin právního vývoje civilního."

43 Several publications dealing with Prokop Drtina are available, e.g. Koutek, *Prokop Drtina*; Koutek, "Říkali mu Pavel Svätý"; Koutská, "Lépe zemřít vstojе, než žít na kole-nou."

44 The number stated in Jan Kuklík's book is 778. Kuklík et al., *Vývoj československého práva*, 45.

45 "Z projevu dr. Prokopa Drtiny ministra spravedlnosti."

46 Staněk, "K problematice tzv. retribučních vězňů," 117–126.

for any wages for their work.<sup>47</sup> In addition, part of the society also demanded these convicts be harshly treated at the time. Soon after 1948, however, the ideological climate and hatred towards anything German changed, and so did the Czechoslovak judicial and the prison systems.

### **Self-Sovietisation of the Czechoslovak Prison System**

The takeover of the state by the Communist Party in February 1948 led to significant changes of the Czechoslovak prison system at various levels, in terms of not only structural changes following the example of the Soviet Union, but also the understanding of the purpose of punishment with regard to specific groups of people. During this period, punishment as retribution was no longer used only against prisoners of retribution, but also against persons who presented even a potential threat to the newly established Communist Party dictatorship. Apart from criminal and retribution prisoners, a new category of prisoners was sent to prisons.

The change of the social discourse linked to the “thesis of the escalating class struggle” during the socialist era had a major impact on the treatment of convicts. The class principle was manifested in legal norms, which should create a feeling of legality in both laws and the prison orders where the threat posed by the criminal and social security of the prisoner were no longer valid criteria, as these were replaced by the class criterion.

Also, a number of major organisational changes took place as a consequence of numerous influences, the main among which was the Soviet Union. The Czechoslovaks were choosing from a variety of options and later put them into practice, not infrequently in an altered form, since the potential for their application depended upon several factors. The final shape of the Sovietised prison system only partially resembled the original, and eventually was its specific variety.

In accordance with the Soviet system, the system in Czechoslovakia was gradually centralised, politicised and administered by a single in-

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<sup>47</sup> Bajcura, “Nástin periodizace dějin vězeňství,” 12.

stitution, the Ministry of National Security, later after its dissolution the Ministry of the Interior. Soon, a system of labour camps was built. In these camps, as well as in other detention facilities, prisoners were used as a cheap, available and massive labour source to fulfil the needs of the centrally planned economy. Still, labour was presented as an educational means to re-educate criminals. Military and agency-operative activities were applied in penitentiaries to enforce prisoners' discipline, and educational means for the purposes of prisoners' political indoctrination. This can be considered the basic features of the Sovietisation of the Czechoslovak prison system that were implemented and applied to different degrees.<sup>48</sup>



Fig. 1: Prison labour camp Vojna

In 1956, Khrushchev delivered his “Cult of Personality” speech at the 20th Congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, saying, amongst other things, that due to the new position of the social-

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48 Pinerová, “Komparace československého a německého vězeňského systému,” 39–47.

ist group, a war with the West was no longer inevitable.<sup>49</sup> It did not take long for changes to come. While the Czechoslovak public, unlike that of Poland and Hungary, remained loyal to the Communist Party dictatorship in 1956 and no big protests took place, the social climate changed notably. The main factor cause that had caused this shift was the abandonment of the “thesis of the escalating class struggle”. The most outrageous excesses of the Stalinist system were gradually removed, the fanatic hunt for “class enemies” was ended, and trials were being reviewed, although initially focused on persecuted members of the Communist Party. Committees of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia (Komunistická strana Československa, KSČ) were established, aiming to deal with cases of “breaching socialist law” and to clear the names of the arrested and convicted in the 1950s.<sup>50</sup>

These changes were reflected in the prison system in the late 1950s, mainly in the internal life of the institutions and in the treatment of the convicted. Wardens stopped using repression against political prisoners. Violence was still present, but lower in intensity. Criminal prisoners<sup>51</sup> were no longer excessively used to bully political prisoners, as was the case in the early 1950s. Some political prisoners could even reach higher positions, since the commanders of the prison used their education to their advantage.<sup>52</sup> They held various administrative jobs in financial and administrative departments. They were often placed in administrative positions where they observed the performance of their co-convicts, counted salaries, administered maintenance, etc.<sup>53</sup> In spite

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49 Blaive, *Promarněná příležitost*, 32.

50 McDermott and Pinerová, “The Rehabilitation Process in Czechoslovakia,” 111–118.

51 The majority of retribution prisoners were released between 1953 and 1955. See Staněk, *Retribuční vězni*.

52 Hejda, *Žil jsem zbytečně*, 393–400. Cf. Pinerová, “Prison and Society Connected,” 160.

53 Written statement by Alena Marešová (12 September 2019), the author’s archive (hereinafter AA); (Kv), “Některé problémy třídního výkonu trestu v souvislosti s výběrem odsouzených do funkcí,” *Na pomoc náčelníkům a jejich zástupcům v útvech NZ* 2 (7) (1958), f. SSVN – nezpr., kart. Bulletin 1968, Národní archiv (hereinafter NA) Prague.

of the fact that the prison order from 1955 remained valid, the climate in prisons changed.



Fig. 2: Workshop in the prison Valdice

Heads of the Communist Party realised that changes and improvements in the prison system were necessary. As early as 1957, a committee of the Ministry of the Interior thoroughly discussed the situation in the prison system, in particular focusing on the use of the labour and education of convicts, the recruitment of wardens and their training, and financial matters. The first hints of changes can be spotted in proposals dealing with the execution of the prison sentence. These documents contain no self-reflection with regard to the use of violence in prisons; however, changes regarding the requirement that prison staff must have finished their primary education are seen, while in the course of the 1960s, the importance of education was further emphasised.<sup>54</sup> Surprisingly, even calls for a scientific approach in the prison system are seen. One such proposed idea was to establish a study group com-

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54 19. schůze kolegia, Základní otázky činnosti nápravných zařízení (4 July 1957), f. A 2/1, i. j. 254, Archiv bezpečnostních složek (hereinafter ABS) Prague; Základní otázky činnosti nápravných zařízení (29 June 1957), f. SSNV – nezpr., kart. 117, NA Prague.



posed of members of the Ministry of Justice, the General Prosecutor's office, the Czechoslovak Academy of Sciences, the faculty of law and representatives of the prison resort. These proposals were implemented years later. Still, the requirements are clear evidence that the perceived role penitentiaries should play was changing. However, the "thesis of the escalating class struggle" was still present, which was mainly caused by the fact that individuals in leading positions had acquired their jobs on the basis of class and political criteria in the late 1940s and the early 1950s.<sup>55</sup> It was quite difficult to change their way of thinking and approach towards convicts. It was the new Czechoslovak Constitution from July 1960 that ended the "thesis of the escalating class struggle", which stated that de jure the Czechoslovak population had become "socialist individuals". It was ceremoniously declared that socialism had won in Czechoslovakia. Also, the main aim of further development was defined in the declaration, namely the social shift to communism. Besides, the principle of the use of science and technology in further development was anchored in the constitution, and this tendency was also reflected in the prison system in the following years.<sup>56</sup>

Another big step, which took place three months before, might have been related to this change. A presidential amnesty was declared to commemorate the 15th anniversary of the freeing of the country. It was not the first wide-ranging amnesty after 1948, but it was the first one to have an impact on political prisoners convicted in the course of the 1950s. Political prisoners were allowed to leave prisons after many years of incarceration and to return to their families. In total, 5,601 political and 1,491 criminal prisoners were released.<sup>57</sup> After the amnesty, out of the total of 24,795 prisoners, 3,212 constituted political prisoners

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55 Pinerová, *Do konce života*, 194–200.

56 Act no. 100/1960 Coll., Constitution of the Czechoslovak Socialist Republic; Bajcura, "Nástin periodizace dějin vězeňství," 44; Kuklík et al., *Vývoj československého práva*, 323–327.

57 Provedení amnestie prezidenta republiky a vlády československé socialistické republiky (26 July 1960), f. KSČ-ÚV-02/2, sv. 273, a. j. 355/15, NA Prague; cf. Slabotínský, "Amnestie prezidenta republiky"; Rokoský, "Amnestie 1960"; Kaplan, *Druhý proces*, 44–46.



(2,985 convicted, 227 accused).<sup>58</sup> Two years into the presidential amnesty in 1962, the number had decreased to 2,508 convicted prisoners.<sup>59</sup> After the amnesty in 1965, only a small number of persons convicted for political acts in the period 1948–1954 remained in prisons.<sup>60</sup>

At the same time, the situation of political prisoners who had not been granted amnesty and remained incarcerated deteriorated after 1960. The reason was a change in the prison population as well as in the values promoted. While before 1960, people convicted of political crimes accounted for approximately 50% of prisoners, after the amnesty they accounted for only 15%. In the wake of legislative changes, the social composition of convicted prisoners was also changing. While a large number of political prisoners were sent to prison based on the Criminal Code in 1950 (which was largely caused by the declared class struggle), this law was replaced by the new legislature<sup>61</sup> in 1961 with one that emphasised economic and general crime. People could now be sent to prison for “misappropriating socialist property”, for example, despite the insignificance of the harm.<sup>62</sup> It was mainly people with a working-class or agricultural background who were sent to prison for parasitism and recidivism.<sup>63</sup>

This tilted the balance between the individual groups of prisoners, which had been building up in the course of the 1950s. While political prisoners in the previous period managed to earn respect and were mentally supportive of one another, the fact that a large number of political prisoners were released was a real catastrophe for those who remained. Women incarcerated in the Pardubice prison give a vivid

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58 Informační zpráva – stav vězňů – vývoj od 1. 1. 1960 (25 September 1961), f. A 2/2, i. j. 40, ABS Prague.

59 Informace o současném stavu vězeňství k 1. 1. 1963 (31 January 1963), f. A 2/2, i. j. 210, ABS Prague.

60 Kaplan, *Druhý proces*, 45.

61 Act no. 140/1961 Coll., Criminal Code.

62 Kuklík et al., *Vývoj československého práva*, 417.

63 33. schůze kolegia MV, Hlavní úkoly SNZ na rok 1961 (16 December 1960), f. A 2/1, i. j. 1174, ABS Prague.

picture of the situation.<sup>64</sup> Dagmar Šimková, arrested in 1952 for hiding military deserters and distributing flyers, wrote:

We are left to the mercy of the stronger. We can't even put a bar of soap down in the bathroom without them directly stealing it right before our eyes. We can't take a shower since there is always a stronger person who pushes us away. We don't have a second of rest, only experiencing screaming, yelling, brutality, fear, and sleep broken by the desperate shrieks of the insane.<sup>65</sup>

Also, fake homosexuality spread in prisons.<sup>66</sup> In Pardubice, lesbians were divided into two “sexes”: “female mothers” and “female fathers”, while each sex was distinguished by the style of clothing and behaviour.<sup>67</sup> Růžena Vacková, a Charles University professor, eventually decided to bring the situation in the prison, the never-ending yelling and screaming, to the attention of the authorities by sending a letter to the Minister of the Interior.<sup>68</sup> However, the help never came. Dagmar Šimková was released in 1966, and Růžena Vacková a year later.

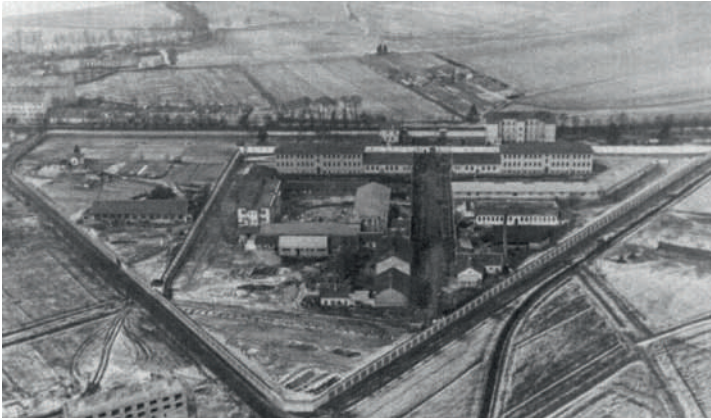


Fig. 3: Prison Pardubice

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64 For more information, see Pinerová, *Do konce života*, 146–148.

65 Šimková, *Byly jsme tam taky*, 81.

66 Nedbálková, “Má vězení střední rod?”

67 Šimková, *Byly jsme tam taky*, 86. For more on homosexuality in prisons, see Pinerová, *Do konce života*, 35–139.

68 The letter is available in her personal prison file: Dopis náměstku MV z 16. 2. 1961 (16 February 1961), f. SSNV – nezpr., Osobní vězeňský spis Růženy Vackové, NA Prague.

Even the wardens themselves, shocked by the changes, did not know how to behave. The political prisoner Jindřiška Havrlantová, released in 1963, said in an interview that they had been told by the wardens to find help on their own.<sup>69</sup> According to Dagmar Šimková, wardens made a radical decision. Instead of separating political prisoners to let them live in at least partially decent conditions, they dispersed them among criminals, which had the opposite effect. This action failed to decrease violence and homosexuality among prisoners, but political prisoners were also found among the victims.<sup>70</sup> It is difficult to say precisely what the situation was like for male prisoners, but it can be presumed that the conditions deteriorated for them also.



Fig. 4: Women in the Pardubice prison

Not only wardens had to respond to the new situation, who were experiencing it first hand, but also the managing staff, who had to raise the question how to treat this type of convict. In 1957, the committee of the Ministry of the Interior took note of the prisoners' labour and productivity. Three years later new topics were raised, which were predominantly related to the changes in penitentiaries and the social atmosphere. In 1960, members of the committee discussed the new

<sup>69</sup> Interview with Jindřiška Havrlantová was led by Klára Pinerová, 2006 and 2008, Centrum orální historie Ústavu pro soudobě dějiny AV ČR.

<sup>70</sup> Šimková, *Byly jsme tam taky*, 82.

matters pertaining to educational work with various types of convicts or post-penitentiary care. The end of the year heralded a symbolic, as regards the concept materials, new era of the Czechoslovak prison system. The then predominant political-ideological master narrative was extended with a technocratic master narrative, which concentrated on the application of scientific knowledge in various areas of human activity, and a humanistic master narrative, observing human rights of convicts serving time. A departure from the class treatment of the convicted is also apparent in the 1960s. Also, it was more strongly accentuated that individuals in managing positions and experts involved in the prison system were required to be university educated.<sup>71</sup> At the beginning of the 1960s, education-wise, the structure of employees in the prison system was not particularly optimistic, and university-educated staff were rather an exception. Psychologists and expert educators appeared in prisons for the first time at the end of 1963. It took several years to issue the codex of their work and to clarify the structure of their activity. The most important legislative step in this respect was Act no. 59/1965 Coll. (On the Execution of Punishment by Imprisonment), which, amongst others, defined the essentials of penitentiary and post-penitentiary care. Based on this law, the Correctional Education Corps (SNV) was established, whose main task was to guard prisoners.<sup>72</sup> The emphasis on scientific knowledge was manifested in different ways.<sup>73</sup> The Scientific Council of the Ministry of the Interior, which consisted of experts in the field of the state, law, education, psychology, sociology, medicine and representatives of national law-enforcement agencies and representatives of central bodies of societal institutions, was founded in 1965. The council was to partake in improving the educative work of the convicted and to apply scientific knowledge and experience in the

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71 Úkoly složky nápravných zařízení z usnesení XII. sjezdu KSČ, Rozpracování úkolů vyplývajících pro složku nápravných zařízení z usnesení XII. sjezdu KSČ (1963), f. A 1, i. j. 42, ABS Prague.

72 Hladíková, "Pedagogové a psychologové," 30; Kuklík et al., *Vývoj československého práva*, 422.

73 Rozkaz ministra vnitra č. 27/1967, Zajišťování vědecko-technického rozvoje ve Sboru národní bezpečnosti a Sboru nápravné výchovy (10 August 1967), f. A 6/4, i. j. 1085, ABS Prague; Náměty na řešení problematiky vědecko-technického rozvoje v MV (1968) f. A 1, i. j. 509, ABS Prague.

prison system gained from socialist as well as Western countries. The council was also to participate in drafting a long-term perspective in the prison system.<sup>74</sup>



Fig. 5: Jiří Čepelák

The climax of the application of scientific knowledge in the prison system was the establishment of the Penology Research Institute.<sup>75</sup> It was led by Jiří Čepelák, who joined the Correctional Education Corps in 1966. Originally a psychologist in the Institute for Mother and Baby Care, he was not that associated with the prior development of the prison system, which enabled him to concentrate on research into penological and penitentiary aspects with the convicts. The institute was officially founded in March 1967, when the statute of the Penology Research Institute of the Correctional Education Corps was released. The emphasis on education was nothing unusual at the time, as the

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74 Rozkaz ministra vnitra 4/1965, Zřízení Vědecké rady Ministerstva vnitra pro činnost nápravných zařízení (15 January 1965), f. A 6/4, i. j. 978, ABS Prague; Vědecká rada MV – jmenování pro činnost nápravných zařízení (1965), f. A 5, i. j. 797, ABS Prague; Zápis z 1. zasedání vědecké rady MV pro činnost nápravných zařízení MV (1965), f. A 1, i. j. 276, ABS Prague.

75 Rozkaz ministra vnitra č. 36/1966, Zásady pro uspořádání řídicí činnosti ve Sboru národní bezpečnosti a Sboru nápravné výchovy (8 September 1966), f. A 6/4, i. j. 1054, ABS Prague.

establishment of various research institutes can be observed during the same period, which was strongly supported by the leaders of the Czechoslovak Communist Party. Also, it was a global phenomenon supporting the scientific-technical revolution. Science was also accentuated in countries on the other side of the Iron Curtain.

### Coming to Terms with the Past

During the 1960s, the question of illegal actions in the security and judicial services in the 1950s was increasingly discussed. The Soviet Union, not the Czechoslovak communists, re-introduced the topic of political processes in 1961, which affected the outcomes of the 12th Congress of the KSČ. In the wake of the congress, the Kolder and Barnabite Commissions were established and were active in 1962–1963. The Piller commission, established in 1968, dealt only with cases involving communist officials. It is an incontrovertible fact that these commissions were more inclined to follow political interests of those in power than the dictates of law and justice.<sup>76</sup> The options for a rehabilitation of non-communist victims were quite limited up until 1968. The then valid legislature gave the victims only limited possibilities.<sup>77</sup> The first wave of applications for process reviews came in the late 1950s, followed by another after 1962, which was associated with the opening of the issue of illegalities in the highest political circles. However, only a fraction was successful. It was the period of the Prague Spring in 1968 that brought some hope. Part of the Communist Party's Action Programme, which represented the concept of an attempt at reform in economic, political and social terms, was the requirement that the legislature deal with rehabilitation.<sup>78</sup> As of 1 August 1968, Act no. 82/1968 Coll., On Judicial Rehabilitation, came into force. The former political prisoners did not fully approve it as they had asked for comprehensive rehabilitation. Violence in prisons was also discussed in the media. Former political prisoners established K 231 (Association

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76 More in Kaplan, *Druhý proces*, 47–144; McDermott and Pinerová, “The Rehabilitation Process in Czechoslovakia,” 111–118.

77 Hoppe, *Opozice '68*, 211.

78 “1968, 5. duben, Praha. – Akční program KSČ.”



of Former Political Prisoners or Klub 231, Klub bývalých politických vězňů)<sup>79</sup> and appeared in the media to share their experience of being in prison. The prison system was heavily criticised by the public as a result.<sup>80</sup> After decades of having been kept silent, political prisoners shared their personal accounts in the press and on the radio and TV. This was the reason behind the establishment of the documentation committee of K 231. There had been calls in circulars among the former political prisoners and at meetings for ex-convicts to write down their stories and send these stories to either public authorities or organisers of K 231.<sup>81</sup>

Due to the atmosphere in the society and calls for rehabilitation and investigation of use of violence in prisons and labour camps, various screening and rehabilitation committees were established. To some extent, they were created as an initiative of the Minister of the Interior Josef Pavel, who had been sentenced for treason to 25 years of imprisonment in 1953. In spring 1968, a committee was set up in order to investigate violence from the 1950s taking place in penitentiaries and labour camps. In the summer of the same year, another screening committee came to existence, which was to deal with the responsibilities of the prison staff who had seriously breached their duties.<sup>82</sup> By and large, there were attempts to investigate illegal actions in relation to the execution of punishment at the beginning of 1968, but this situation began to change after the invasion of the Warsaw Pact troops, which also led to changes of the committee's opinions on various cases. This

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79 Hoppe, *Opozice '68*, 213–311.

80 SNV members even replied to some television programmes with an open letter. Similarly, there was also a letter by the members of the grassroots organisation of the KSČ at the SNV Administration to the Member of Parliament Josef Zvár, in which they took exception to the statement of the Member of Parliament Alois Poledňák regarding how the representatives of the National Assembly had condemned the methods of investigation and the system of some correctional facilities. By and large, it can be said that the SNV members had an issue with the fact that no difference was made between the execution of prison sentences in the 1950s and in 1968. *Otevřený dopis od příslušníků SNV Mírov Československé televizi* (2 May 1968), f. A 24, i. j. 871, ABS Prague; *Otevřený dopis poslanci Národního shromáždění ČSSR s. ZVÁROVI* (26 March 1968), f. A 24, i. j. 867, ABS Prague.

81 Bauer et al., *Jáchymovské tábory*.

82 Pinerová, “Šedesátá léta ve vězňství.”



is why their results can be considered a disgrace. On the one hand, the committee acknowledged that individuals had committed breaches in the given period; on the other hand, the committee stated that the main causes for the trouble in the labour camps at the uranium mines had been the large number of convicts, the severe sentences, insufficient differentiation, low numbers of wardens and the provocative behaviour of some prisoners. According to the committee, some complaints about food were unjustified, nobody was found to have overstepped authority when giving disciplinary punishments, and the healthcare of the convicts was, allegedly, at a higher level than the healthcare of the employees. The prosecutor's office dropped the majority of the accusations that had been made.<sup>83</sup> The investigation was abandoned as of 31 March 1970. The former political prisoners found no justice in 1968.

A change of direction came in the 1970s. The focus was no longer on the investigation of illegal actions from the 1950s, but on the "rehabilitation" of the Correctional Education Corps. The articles written by former political prisoners were referred to as a "hate campaign", and the information they contained was refuted in different ways. For instance, the article "Case: Jáchymov" provided the readers with the information that labour camps in the Jáchymov area in the vicinity of uranium mines had been equipped with adequate dining and healthcare facilities, that some checks had proved that there were such vast quantities of food in the camps that it had to be thrown away, and that visitors to Jáchymov had received gifts, such as radios, TV sets or motorbikes.<sup>84</sup> Eight talks were broadcast on the radio, and four programmes on the television. "The Truth about Mírov" was claimed to be among the best shows made for Czechoslovak television.<sup>85</sup> For the years to come, former prisoners had no option to reconcile with their past regarding the

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83 Document without title (the content concerns the work of the Commission of the SNV Administration) (n.d., probably 1970), f. SSNV – nezpr., kart. Jáchymov III). For the activities of the commission, see also Bauer et al., *Jáchymovské tábory*, 658–720.

84 Karlíček, "Rehabilitace Sboru nápravné výchovy (vyhodnocení, dokumentace)," f. SSNV – nezpr., kart. Bulletin SNV 1971–1972, NA Prague.

85 Ibid.