

# Terror, Failure, Resistance

## *Conflicting Memory of Armed Acts of Anti-Communist Resistance in Czechoslovakia*

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The study sheds light on the phenomenon of armed violence by civic resistance groups against the communist regime in Czechoslovakia. It also points out the means of its commemoration. It draws from a documentary project concerning memorial sites of the communist regime. By the same token, it offers an interpretation of the process of constructing collective memory through the foundation of the sites concerned and its reception and/or rejection within society. Memory culture is one of the approaches to study society and the means to understand the reproducing, updating, recycling of memory. The same possibly holds true for comprehending politicization and the exploitation of memory today.<sup>1</sup> It delves into the question of what is the opposite

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1 Of the voluminous literature on the subject, see, e.g., ČINÁTL, Kamil: *Naše české minulosti, aneb Jak vzpomínáme* [Our Czech pasts or how we commemorate]. Praha, Lidové noviny 2014; HALBWACHS, Maurice: *Kolektivní paměť* [Collective memory]. Praha, SLON 2009; HLAVAČKA, Milan – MARÈS, Antoine – POKORNÁ, Magdaléna et al.: *Paměť míst, událostí a osobností: Historie jako identita a manipulace* [Memory of sites, events and people: History as identity and manipulation]. Praha, Historický ústav AV ČR 2011; KRATOCHVIL, Alexander (ed.): *Paměť a trauma pohledem humanitních věd: Komentovaná antologie teoretických textů* [Memory and trauma through the prism of humanities: A commended anthology of theoretical texts]. Praha, Akropolis 2015; MAYER, Françoise: *Češi a jejich komunismus: Paměť a politická identita* [The Czechs and their communism: Memory and political identity]. Praha, Argo 2009; NORA, Pierre: *Mezi paměťí a historií: Problematika míst* [In between memory and history: The issue of sites]. In: *Antologie*

to the commonplace phenomenon with regard to communism, i.e. violence exerted on the part of the regime on its opponents largely portraying them as victims. The study focuses on commemorating the agents of anti-communist violence, at points mediated through the victims of the violence. It attempts to identify the circumstances of such commemoration and their place within the overall constitution of Czech public memory of the communist regime.

The text explores three main areas of memory of violence during the founding period of the communist regime. It first focuses on developments related to armed crossing of the national borders, the memory of the Iron Curtain and the activities of the Border Guard.<sup>2</sup> The second area addresses politically-motivated murders that were often an unplanned and tragic culmination of cases of armed deterrence on the part of communist figures. Common memory largely associates them with the Babice affair.<sup>3</sup> The third and final part of the study is dedicated to the commemoration of the Mašín brothers as a specifically seen means of political violence.<sup>4</sup> In a number of aspects the uncharacteristic Mašín brothers affair negatively affects the straightforward reception of the narrative that is publicly promoted especially by the Confederation of Political Prisoners (*Konfederace politických vězňů*). The argument identifies resistance to the communist regime with that of the “third resistance.”<sup>5</sup> The definition is linked to a number of points. It enables to trace the

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*francouzských společenských věd: Město* [The anthology of French social sciences: The city] (Cahiers du CEFRES, No. 10.) Praha, CEFRES 1996, pp. 39–64; ŠUSTROVÁ, Radka – HÉDLOVÁ, Luba (eds.): *Česká paměť: Národ, dějiny a místa paměti* [Czech memory: Nation, history and sites of remembrance]. Praha, Academia 2014; VAŠÍČEK, Zdeněk – MAYER, Françoise: *Minulost a současnost, paměť a dějiny* [The past and present, memory and history]. Brno, Centrum pro studium demokracie a kultury 2008.

- 2 The Border Guards were founded in 1951 as the basic component of the new army system of border protection. Soldiers serving their compulsory military service were being assigned *en masse* to the border guard units. At the same time border lines were constructed along the border with engineering and technical security placed directly along the border itself that turned the “green line” (hitherto safeguarded by border units of the National Security Corps, in Czech *Sbor národní bezpečnosti* or SNB) into the Iron Curtain.
- 3 In the village of Babice on the Bohemian–Moravian border, three Communist Party officials of the local national committee were shot dead on 3 July 1951. Killing a Communist Party official or a member of the national committee (the national committees were public administration authorities organized hierarchically from the level of municipalities to regional units) was classified as political murder (even though the motives of the perpetrator did not always necessarily bear a political feature) and were tried according to political legal clauses (most often as high treason). The Babice case was used by the regime for the purposes of propaganda to portray “class terrorism in the countryside.” The exemplary sentences reflected the regime intentions (11 people were executed).
- 4 Ctirad (1930–2011) and Josef (\*1932) Mašín, sons of the hero of anti-Nazi resistance, the Lieutenant Colonel Josef Mašín (†1942), carried out acts of sabotage and armed raids, during which they killed two police officers and one civilian. In October 1953, they managed to make their way to West Berlin; in shootouts with the East German police they killed three police officers.
- 5 The third resistance, as understood by the Confederation of Political Prisoners (an association of individuals jailed mainly in the 1950s) was to epitomize historical succession of the

developments in memory over a longer period of time. Events related to violence in the communist regime are commemorated prior to and after 1989, i.e. from the 1950s until today (including most of the pre-November 1989 memorial sites captured in the currently constructed documentation).<sup>6</sup> Essentially, though, such a means of commemorating these events continues to penetrate current discourse: they prove to be a conflicting and polarizing point of reflection where controversies over the memory of communism are publicly manifested, and are accompanied by quite a degree of politicization and instrumentalization of the past. If taking collective memory as an expression of the relationship of some social groups to the past, as their identification with the values linked to the past, and understanding commemoration as an act of presentation of such memory in public space,<sup>7</sup> the following material outlines the dominant forms of making the past in connection to violence within civic resistance against the communist regime topical. Civic and/or anti-communist resistance are understood here as synonymous labels for diverse anti-regime activities used by individuals or groups trying to resist the inception and implementation of communist power, including the right to leave the country.<sup>8</sup>

### *Iron Curtain Memory*

The officially constructed post-1948 memory identified the Western border of Czechoslovakia with the image of the “main battleground of the Cold War” where the Czechoslovak border guards “stood in the defence of peace.” The untouchability of the national border had to be defended not merely against the outer enemy – be it enemy armies or agents “serving the interests of imperialism,” but also against their own compatriots who saw the border as a barrier separating them from the

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first – anti-Habsburg – resistance during the First World War, the second resistance (anti-Nazi) during the Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia and during the Second World War and the third (anti-communist) resistance between 1948 and 1989.

- 6 The documents include memorial sites related to the period of the communist regime that are identified by some of the artefacts (memorial plaques, statues, memorial, crosses, etc.) or which use a museum means or those of public education (museums, information trails, etc.). See: Pamětní místa na komunistický režim: Jak poznáváme a reflektujeme dobu nesvobody 1948–1989 a jak si toto období připomínáme na veřejných prostranstvích? [Memorial sites of the communist regime: How do we learn about and reflect the period of lack of freedom in the period of 1948–1989 and how we commemorate the period in public spaces]. Ústav pro soudobé dějiny AV ČR 2015 [online]. Accessed at: [www.pametnimista.usd.cas.cz](http://www.pametnimista.usd.cas.cz).
- 7 See for example: HLAVAČKA, Milan: Místa paměti [Memory sites]. In: ČECHUROVÁ, Jana – RANDÁK, Jan et al.: *Základní problémy studia moderních a soudobých dějin* [Fundamental issues in the study of modern and contemporary history]. Praha, Lidové noviny 2014, pp. 602–609.
- 8 The term “anti-communist resistance” used in this study therefore does not follow its definition endorsed in the Act on the Participants in the Struggle and Resistance against Communism (No. 262/2011 Coll.), commonly referred to as the law on anti-communist or the third resistance.

free world. The question to “why do we not let them go” therefore became the fundamental argument used by political officers of the Border Guard in defence of dropping the Iron Curtain and the need to point arms against their own nationals: they were running towards the Nazis and imperialists, taking along national wealth and state secrets. They were being arrested because it was clear they would join the enemies of their own country and would openly fight against their own country. The presumption was largely proved by the practice which thus also reaffirmed the validity of the post-February 1948 measures. Moreover, the Czechoslovak communist regime, in guarding the national border, bore a wider responsibility for the entire communist bloc.<sup>9</sup> In much of family memory or that of closer circles, however, the national border epitomized the loss of relatives and loved ones, either directly or, in most cases, metaphorically as a result of a failed attempt to leave for exile. Here is where the dividing line emerges between the two basic narratives and the process of constructing two different memories. In connection with the East and the West they reflect a number of aspects, not merely that of an armed clash on the border. Yet even such reflections are an integral part of the discourse about the Iron Curtain and/or counter-discourse about protecting the national border.<sup>10</sup> For this reason, the text takes all of them into account.

One of the first acts that established the modern tradition of protecting national borders is linked to raising a statue of a border guard to mark the fourth anniversary of the foundation of the Border Guard on 11 July 1955 in the Municipal Gardens of the city of Cheb.<sup>11</sup> The Border Guard Day was launched the subsequent year: the date refers to the adoption of law on the protection of the national border in 1951.<sup>12</sup> The memorial was an initiative of members of the Border Guard. They fundraised for the construction of the site that bears a number of symbolic messages. The memorial was installed on the site of an earlier memorial that stood there between 1947 and 1951 and was dedicated to the memory of those US soldiers who fell while liberating the city. The initiative was part of an intentional process of isolating the memory of participation of Western troops in liberating the country in the spring of 1945. Similarly, though, in this respect not quite intentionally, the “conquest” of the borderlands by the Border Guard put local memory of the period of peaceful Czech–German coexistence *ad acta*. Quite on the contrary, the title of the memorial, *Guarding Peace*, carved in a two-metre tall base, and its artistic interpretation embodied new symbolism – the superhuman size that gave robustness of the border

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9 See KRATOCHVIL, Miloslav: *Dvacet let ochrany čs. hranic* [Twenty years of protecting Czechoslovak borders]. Praha, Naše vojsko 1965, pp. 13–14.

10 See ŠMIDRKAL, Václav: “Železná opona” jako české místo paměti [The Iron Curtain as the Czech memory site]. In: *Střed*, Vol. 4, No. 1 (2012), pp. 56–79.

11 It was a provisional plaster sculpture that was later replaced (by a slightly altered) stone statue. See: Interaktivní encyklopedie města Chebu [The interactive encyclopaedia of the city of Cheb] [online]. Accessed at: <http://encyklopedie.cheb.cz/cz/encyklopedie/mestsky-park-pomnik-3>.

12 See ŠEFRANÝ, Stanislav (ed.): *Sborník dokumentů k dějinám Pohraniční stráže* [A collection of documents on the history of the Border Guard]. Praha, Naše vojsko 1989, p. 96.

guard (popularly nicknamed the Golem) armed with a machine gun, demonstrated the might of the new armed protection of the national borders. The emblematic dog by his feet was a reference to the Chod tradition adopted by the Border Guard.<sup>13</sup>

As early as in the late 1950s a decision was made to found a Museum of the Border Guard in the Prague quarter of Karlov. Its exposition opened in 1962 and was entrusted with (self)presentation of the history of the Guard and its tradition. The most attractive item on display, particularly for school groups, was a preserved Alsatian dog of the name Brek. The children were allowed to caress it, whilst learning about border “perpetrators” and their fate: the legendary dog allegedly caught 62 of them.<sup>14</sup> The museum, the visual publications, documentary films and other historical artefacts helped to develop and maintain the main propaganda images related to the phenomenon of border protection. They depicted the threats arising in the West (“revanchism” of the “Sudetists” – the Sudetenland Germans“), countered Western “ideological diversion” bearing the narrative of the Czech borderland as a dead land and portraying the idyll of the demanding, yet honest life of the border guards (notions of collective life, brothers in arms, honest commanders, faithful dogs by their side), as well as the residents along the border line (images of vigilance among the aides to the Border Guard, enjoying the benefits of communist lifestyle by families of the soldiers that settled here).<sup>15</sup> The officially commemorated traditions of the Border Guard were complemented, during the period of the so-called “normalization” by a sequence of activities of members of the Border Guard side-by-side with other armed forces of the regime during the historical political crossroads: at the time of the communist takeover in February 1948, in June 1953

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13 See HOJDA, Zdeněk: Pomníky železné opony aneb Proč (ne)saht psovi na čenich? [Iron Curtain memorials or why (not to) touch the dog’s nose]. In: *Dějiny a současnost*, Vol. 34, No. 10 (2012), p. 12. Until 1946 it was a site of a monumental memorial unveiled in 1912 as commemoration of the fallen soldiers of the Cheb Infantry Regiment that took part in the last Prussian–Austrian war; after it was dismantled, another foundation stone was laid in the place, this time for an “American” memorial. The memorial dedicated to a border guard was removed in 1990 (the statue is now placed in the lapidarium of the local museum in Cheb) to be replaced by a new “American” memorial. (For more information see: Interaktivní encyklopedie města Chebu.)

14 See RUTAR, Václav: Reflexe historického vývoje Pohraniční stráže v expozici Muzea Pohraniční stráže: Praha, 1965–1973 [A reflection of the historical development of the Border Guard in the exposition of the Border Guard Museum: Prague, 1965–1973]. In: VANĚK, Pavel (ed.): *Ochrana státní hranice 1948–1955* [The protection of the national border 1948–1955]. Brno, Technické muzeum 2013, pp. 130–134. In 1973 the Border Guard Museum was transformed into the Museum of the National Security Corps and Troops of the Ministry of the Interior. The new exposition also included the “case of the Mašín brothers.” See MAŠÍN, Ctirad – MAŠÍN, Josef – PAUMER, Milan: *Cesta na severozápad* [Heading north-west]. Eds. Petr Blažek and Olga Bezděková. Praha, Academia 2010, visual appendix, p. cix.

15 See, e.g., a film by Karel Forst *Služba na hranici* [Serving on the borders] of 1984.

after the announcement of the monetary reform, and in August 1969 on the first anniversary of the occupation of Czechoslovakia by the Warsaw Pact troops.<sup>16</sup>

### “Death by the Iron Curtain”

Constructing the memory of one’s history of individual border guard units was concentrated in stories of successful actions against the trespassers. A reference to members of the Border Guard killed in action and commemorated by small-scale memorials on sites where the events took a wrong turn served as a contract for combat deployment. These tiny memorials also bear a characteristic image (a five-pointed star and the Chod dog), along with an appellative rhetoric (“They shall not pass!”).<sup>17</sup> These sites remain the destination of borderland tourism on the part of the Border Guard veterans and are looked after as “combat memorabilia.”<sup>18</sup> Nonetheless, the central motive of contemporary propaganda images of the fallen guardians of the country in the armed struggle against the “alien enemy,” “servants of imperialism” and “traitors,” i.e. traffickers and couriers, is, altogether unsustainable when confronted with the findings at the Office for the Documentation and Investigation of the Crimes of Communism (*Úřad pro dokumentaci a vyšetřování zločinů komunismu*; hereinafter ÚDV) or of military historians. Of the total number of the deceased border guards, a mere statistical fraction was shot dead by border “trespassers.” Even more remarkably, six out of 18 such cases were attributed to the deserting men, serving compulsory military service as attached to the Border Guard units, i.e. those who were members of the subject of the heroization. Even the additional two cases were caused by deserters (from the Czechoslovak and East German armies) and mere 10 cases (some sources suggest that 11 border guard members became victims of refugees or couriers).<sup>19</sup> Memorials unveiled prior to 1989 that were dedicated to the killed members of the Border Guard, including the site that is currently the most known from the media, the reinstated memorial

16 See WEIS, František (ed.): *Stručný přehled dějin Pohraniční stráže* [A brief overview of the history of the Border Guard]. Praha, Naše vojsko 1986, p. 95. The clash between members of the Border Guard and the “remnants of the counter-revolution forces” in August 1969 are discussed in the testimonies by some of their members in: ŠEFRANÝ, Stanislav (ed.): *Na stráží hranic socialismu a komunismu, sv. 3: Jsme v prvním sledu* [Safeguarding the borders of socialism and communism, Vol. 3: We are in the first line]. Praha, Naše vojsko 1982 (2<sup>nd</sup> revised edition), pp. 23–24.

17 Though these memorials tend to be portrayed in virtually every visual publication, the dates of their unveiling are not listed anywhere. It is, however, possible to presume that they emerged on the site soon after of the commemorated event.

18 It has been possible to find and document 20 memorials dedicated to clashes on the borders with “trespassers.” Yet it is most unlikely that the figure is exhaustive. See [www.pametni-mista.usd.cas.cz](http://www.pametni-mista.usd.cas.cz).

19 See PEJČOCH, Ivo: *Vojáci na železné oponě* [Soldiers on the Iron Curtain]. Cheb, Svět křídél 2012, pp. 88–167. The figure also includes members of border units of the National Security Corps. See TOMEK, Prokop: *Ochrana státní hranice a Pohraniční stráž* [Protecting the national border and the Border Guard]. In: *Historie a vojenství*, Vol. 60, No. 3 (2011), p. 39.

in Březník in the region of Šumava bear no notice of the fact that the commemorated members of the Border Guard were shot dead by their fellow Border Guards.

The national borders are essentially the main memory site of the Czechoslovak–Czechoslovak conflict in which, by and large, there was only one side to be armed. The toll of 280 deaths (estimated by the ÚDV), or according to the Institute for the Study of Totalitarian Regimes (Ústav pro studium totalitních režimů, hereafter ÚSTR) 276 deaths represent a balance of the Iron Curtain on the part of refugees.<sup>20</sup> This is, admittedly, a surprisingly low number, when compared with the losses among the armed border guard forces. Some figures on losses among the border guard service suggest a number of 650 (and/or 654) lives. Of those nearly 90 percent concerned men serving their compulsory military service and being posted in the border regions.<sup>21</sup> “Death by the Iron Curtain” – be it directly on the border (by electric current, being shot by another patrol, etc.) or by manipulation with explosive devices used in connection with the Iron Curtain or with armaments, alternatively as a result of diverse accidents and a high suicide rate, thus offers quite a different picture to that which was presented to the public by communist regime propaganda. Desertions across the Iron Curtain similarly distort the official image of ideological unity among the border guards, which used to be kept secret in the past.<sup>22</sup>

### Club of the Czech Borderlands and the Březník Affair

The following part explores the transition of the memory of “the border of the world of communism” within the past 25 years. Is the post-November 1989 commemoration exclusively dedicated to the traffickers and agent-walkers? Who initiates new memorial sites and what is their symbolic content?

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- 20 See PULEC, Martin: *Organizace a činnost ozbrojených pohraničních složek: Seznamy osob usmrčených na státních hranicích 1945–1989* [Organization and operations of armed border units: Lists of people killed on the national border between 1945 and 1989]. Praha, ÚDV 2006 (Sešity Úřadu dokumentace a vyšetřování zločinů komunismu [Notebooks of the ÚDV], Vol. 13); MAŠKOVÁ, Tereza – RIPKA, Vojtěch: *Železná opona v Československu: Usmrcení na československých státních hranicích v letech 1948–1989* [Iron Curtain in Czechoslovakia: Killings on the national border between 1948 and 1989]. Praha, ÚSTR – Sociologický ústav AV ČR 2015. ÚDV suggests that 192 Czechoslovak nationals and 88 alien refugees were killed between 1948 and 1989 (PULEC, M.: *Organizace a činnost ozbrojených pohraničních složek*, p. 173), ÚSTR 146 Czechoslovak nationals, 58 alien nationals and 62 unidentified cases and/or nationalities impossible to verify (MAŠKOVÁ, T. – RIPKA, V.: *Železná opona v Československu*, p. 96).
- 21 See PULEC, M.: *Organizace a činnost ozbrojených pohraničních složek*, p. 109; PEJČOCH, I.: *Vojáci na železném oponě*, p. 88. At least 584 involved soldiers serving their compulsory military service. See: TOMEK, P.: *Ochrana státní hranice a Pohraniční stráž*, p. 39. The figure concerning the number of dead draws from ÚDV internal materials. All the mentioned documents include cases of killings on the “green line” before the Iron Curtain was installed.
- 22 According to new research conducted by Libor Svoboda, over 380 members of the Border Guard deserted their units between 1951 and 1989 (presented at a ÚSTR seminar on 30 May 2017). See: PEJČOCH, I.: *Vojáci na železném oponě*, p. 168.

Undoubtedly the chief impulse behind the post-November power public debates concerning the interpretation of activities of the Border Gard comes from the very members, veteran guards associated in different more or less formal groups, usually copying the structure of the abolished military units, drawn together by different online projects and, last but not least, also within the Club of the Czech Borderlands (*Klub českého pohraničí*) that is seen as an umbrella organization of border guard veterans. The common denominator of the public input that comes from this group is quite an unreflected account of the meaning and purpose of the foundation of the Border Guard which it served for decades. A typical example of such selective memory is the memorial in Stálky in the Znojmo region that dates back to 2008. It was built by the Border Guard veterans and dedicated to themselves to commemorate the “friendships that were forged here.” They are to distance themselves from all sorts of ideology. Meanwhile the history of the unit contains a number of morally most controversial backgrounds when the officers in command of the intelligence service, the local commander of the Border Guard and his deputy, with the consent of a number of oversight authorities (including the future investigating officer of the affair), decided to execute a military intelligence agent suspected of being a double agent on the border, and to cover up the deed as a “standard” obliteration of an “intruder.”<sup>23</sup>

Memorials installed by the post-communist, nationalistic and anti-German Czech Borderlands Club, the activities of which are monitored by the Czech Ministry of the Interior because of potential manifestations of political extremism, have also triggered public criticism. Civic criticism, however, tends to focus on manifestations that accompany ceremonies, rather than on the memorial *per se* (the town of Cínovec in 2008 and the village Krásná near Aš in 2011), which are, after all installed in a non-confrontational manner. That was the case until the re-installment of the pre-November border memorial by the former Schwarzenberg gamekeeper house in Březník in the very heart of the region of Šumava that stirred public debates. Coincidentally, this is a unique or perhaps the only case when an officer of the Border Guard was shot dead by a deserter directly on the border.<sup>24</sup>

The memorial bears an inscription informing that in 1959, a lieutenant of the Border Guard of the name Václav Horváth was shot dead on the site by an enemy. Without any contextualization, the memorial was unveiled in 2010 by the Club of

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23 The person executed was Karel Dufek, an agent of the Military Intelligence Service. See PEJČOCH, I.: *Vojáci na železné oponě*, pp. 25–29; PULEC, Martin: *Operace československých zpravodajských služeb na státních hranicích po roce 1948* [Operations of the Czechoslovak intelligence services on the national border after 1948]. In: *Sborník Archivu bezpečnostních složek* [Proceedings of the Archive of the Security Services], No. 6. Praha, Archiv bezpečnostních složek – Ústav pro studium totalitních režimů 2009, pp. 126–139; KARNER, Stefan: *Halt! Tragödien am Eisernen Vorhang: Die Verschlussakten*. Salzburg, Ecowin 2013, pp. 151–161 (in Slovak translation as *Stoj! Tragédie pri železnej opone. Tajné spisy*. Bratislava, National Memory Institute 2015, pp. 143–155).

24 See PEJČOCH, Ivo: *Poručík Václav Horváth* [Lieutenant Václav Horváth]. In: *Historie a vojenství*, Vol. 60, No. 3 (2011), p. 108.



the Czech Borderlands. The mayor of the village of Modrava which is the municipal administrative unit for the memorial (the municipality co-financed the restoration of the memorial) replied to questions raised by the media that he was unaware of the activities of the Club of the Czech Borderlands.<sup>25</sup> He further argued that the controversy surrounding the dedication of the memorial from 1960 “might be good,” as the public tends to forget the work of the Border Guard and “it is not about the history of the Border Guard but that of the Iron Curtain.”<sup>26</sup> Over time two explanatory plaques appeared by the memorial (it is characteristic that no author is mentioned on either). Only the second (dated 2014) informs that the memorial is an initiative of the Club of the Czech Borderlands. Nonetheless, even that refrains from any specific description of the commemorated event.<sup>27</sup> The subject matter of the site is a fact documented in the archives (this was not the first case of the kind) indicating that member of the Border Guard Václav Horváth crossed the border with West Germany whilst pursuing a trespasser. That, naturally, was in conflict with the laws even at the time. The dying lieutenant was aware of it: as his last instruction, he requested his fellow members of the guard who, inspired by him, followed him in the pursuit, to immediately retract behind the line thus not to leave any evidence of having crossed the line to alien territory.<sup>28</sup>

Whilst the public debate about the unveiling of the memorial develops a theme of a question (raised among the first ones by Czech theatre theorist Vladimír Just) of who actually was the enemy, the former border guards, claim online at vojensko.cz that the original re-instalment is “no distortion of history” (without further explanation). They criticize the second information plaque for allegedly “distorting the border guards.” Their rejection of any alternative view of the event is further exacerbated by the fact that the second protagonist of the conflict remained alive and, moreover, the “murderer Řanda was pardoned by former President Václav Havel for his treacherous and murderous act!” That is quite a tendentious statement. Its actual significance lays in the criticism of the post-November developments (as personified by Havel) and related “enemy attacks” on the Border Guard.<sup>29</sup> The

25 ŠRÁMKOVÁ, Jitka: Pomník na Šumavě opět uctívá mrtvého pohraničníka a “bojs nepřitelem” [Memorial in Šumava again worships a dead soldier and the “struggle against the enemy”]. In: *iDnes* [online]. 2011-07-14 [quoted 2017-06-09]. Accessed at: [http://zpravy.idnes.cz/pomnik-na-sumave-opet-uctiva-mrtveho-pohranicnika-a-boj-s-nepritelem-1ir-/domaci.aspx?c=A110714\\_124911\\_plzen-zpravy\\_alt](http://zpravy.idnes.cz/pomnik-na-sumave-opet-uctiva-mrtveho-pohranicnika-a-boj-s-nepritelem-1ir-/domaci.aspx?c=A110714_124911_plzen-zpravy_alt).

26 VRÁNA, Karel: Spor o pomník [A dispute over a memorial]. In: *ČT24* [online]. Reportéři ČT, 2014-10-19 [quoted 2017-06-09]. Accessed at: <http://www.ceskatelesee.cz/ivysilani/1142743803-reporteri-ct/214452801240040/obsah/356697-spor-o-pomnik>.

27 Transcriptions of the inscriptions are available online at: <http://www.pametnimista.usd.cas.cz/modrava-breznik-pomnik-vaclavu-horvathovi/>.

28 See PEJČOCH, I.: *Vojáci na železné oponě*, pp. 98–99. There were earlier cases when a deserter was shot dead and his body brought back. See for example “Případ vojína Čepka” [Soldier Čepka’s case] (*Ibid.*, pp. 20–24) and the subsequently executed Sergeant Jeřábek (*Ibid.*, pp. 189–193). The surname of Lieutenant Horváth is not spelled uniformly.

29 Příběhy ze státní hranice: 06. příběh. Poručík Václav Horvát [Stories from the national border: Story 06. Lieutenant Václav Horvát]. In: Klub českého pohraničí, z.s. [online] [quoted 2017-06-09].

amnesty did not merely concern the penalty of expulsion to which the deserter was sentenced in 1980 by the military tribunal in the city of Příbram after he had served 13 years in jail in the most severe correctional category.<sup>30</sup>

The second line of criticism that passes through the publications issued by the Club of the Czech Borderlands leads to Havel's apology for the expulsion of ethnic Germans from Czechoslovakia (yet the Club is by no means isolated in this position). All acts of commemoration of the Czech–German or rather German–Czech reconciliation, as well as private initiatives among the former Germans residents in the borderlands who wish, through the memorial sites, to rekindle the memory of the German (defunct villages, cemeteries, churches).<sup>31</sup> Such initiatives are received most adversely by Border Guard veterans and their circles.<sup>32</sup>

The burden borne by the “Border Guard veterans” of their own past (whilst any attempt to quantify the extent of the burden would prove mere speculation)<sup>33</sup> prevents them from reflecting at least partially the role they played in safeguarding the communist regime. At the same time, it prevents them or makes it altogether impossible for them to grasp the memory of the Iron Curtain that is being constructed within the society outside their circles. The memory also includes the awareness that the victims of the Iron Curtain on both sides were first and foremost the victims of the then ruling regime. Former border guards are naturally critical about the post-November commemoration of the Iron Curtain victims, as such memory is (bound to be) an indictment of the Border Guard at the same time.<sup>34</sup> With determination and mental root in the times when the profession of border guards was lauded as one of the most honourable services to the homeland, they adhere to the former narrative. It argues that their fellow citizens who tried to cross

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Accessed at: <http://www.klub-pohrani-ci.cz/news/a06-pribeh-porucik-vaclav-horvat/>.

30 Vladislav Řanda arrived in Czechoslovakia as a US national in 1979 and was arrested there. For more information see: PEJČOCH, I.: *Vojáci na železně oponě*, pp. 99–102.

31 For instance, in České Žleby, Knižecí Pláně, Kvilda, Prášíly and elsewhere. See [www.pametnimista.usd.cas.cz](http://www.pametnimista.usd.cas.cz).

32 See, e.g., *Z letopisů odvážných: Hranice byla jejich osudem* [From the chronicles of the brave: The border was their fate]. Praha, Národní rada Klubu českého pohraničí – Nella 2013; *Ve šlépějích Chodů: Fragmenty z historie ochrany státních hranic ČSR–ČSSR očima přímých účastníků. Politicko-historická sonda do dějin ochrany a obrany československých státních hranic 1918–1989. Sborník příspěvků* [In the footsteps of the Chods: Fragments from the history of the protection of the national border of CSR–CSSR through the lenses of direct participants. Political and historical probe into the history of the protection and defence of Czechoslovak state borders from 1918 to 1989. A collected volume]. Praha, Klub českého pohraničí 2010; *Sloužili jsme v Pohraniční stráž* [We served in the Border Guard]. Divišov, Orego 2007; *Stalo se na hranicích: Příběhy ochránců státních hranic v období studené války 1945–1990* [It happened on the border: Stories of the protectors of national border during the Cold War 1945–1990]. Praha, Klub českého pohraničí – Nella 2005.

33 The membership base of the Club of the Czech Borderlands consists of ca. 6,000 people. See ŠMIDRKA, V.: “Železná opona” jako české místo paměti, p. 73.

34 In a chronological sequence, the memorials were built in Všeruby in the region of Domažlice (1996), in Hůrka by Prášíly (2004), in Svatý Kříž by Cheb (2006) and in Mikulov (2014). See [www.pametnimista.usd.cas.cz](http://www.pametnimista.usd.cas.cz).

the border to the free world were the “internal enemies” of society; therefore, as border “trespassers” they should not be commemorated.<sup>35</sup> The dual line of memory on the border is also manifested at a semantic level: memory of the former border guards relates to safeguarding “the borders of the world of communism,” while the majority collective memory reflects the Iron Curtain as a physical and metaphorical barrier keeping Czechoslovak society away from the Western free world.<sup>36</sup> Quite a significant number of memorial sites that operate with the Iron Curtain artefacts, its topography (“the freedom paths”) and with the acts of its dismantling bear such a symbolic content.<sup>37</sup>

A new initiative in 2016 overshadowed the hitherto most familiar case of re-installing the former border memorials in the public space. The Club of the Czech Borderlands raised the aforementioned statue of the border guard from 1955 on the hilltop of Dyleň by the border with Bavaria where the current private owner opened a monitoring and eavesdropping museum and “radio-electronic war.” The statue was loaned by the city of Cheb for the ceremony that marked the anniversary of the foundation of the Border Guard. This event met with major media interest. Following the successful civic protest petition, the statue was returned to the lapidarium of the museum in Cheb.<sup>38</sup>

### Issues of Post-November Commemoration: The Lanžhot Case

In 2009 a memorial cross was raised by Lanžhot in the region of Břeclav. It commemorates two Austrian nationals shot dead in 1956 by the Border Guard on the local river border line. The site, however, essentially bears a story of the shameful conduct of the regime which for decades kept the fate of the killed men secret from their relatives. The memory of the case not only evokes the place of death of the two Austrians which is since 2011 also one of the stops along the Freedom Path that is dedicated to the event. It also includes the cemetery in Břeclav, the last repose of their remains that were secretly buried in a mass grave of German soldiers. Both memorial initiatives on the border that are linked to the civic group Memory (in Czech *Paměť*; Milan Vojta, Miroslav Kasáček, Luděk Navara), and were received with sharp criticism by documentarists Antonín Kratochvíl and Lukáš Klučka, the curator of

35 They undoubtedly sensitively reflect also the court hearings of the cases that involve suspicion of breaching contemporary legislation on the part of the members of the Border Guard. The number of cases the investigation of which ended in front of the court is, however, very limited. They include the mentioned actions on the territory of a foreign country. See PEJČOCH, I.: *Vojáci na železné oponě*, pp. 24 and 193.

36 See ŠMIDRKA, V.: “Železná opona” jako české místo paměti, pp. 60–61.

37 For example, in Čížov in the region of Znojmo, Kadolec by Slavonice, Kvilda, Mikulov, Nové Hrady, Nové Domky by Rozvadov, Rozvadov, Stožec in Šumava. See [www.pametnimista.usd.cas.cz](http://www.pametnimista.usd.cas.cz).

38 Vrcholek Českého lesa opět “hlídá” pohraničník se samopalem. Lidi to pobouřilo [The hilltop of Český les is again “watched” by a border guard with a machine gun. People were outraged]. In: *ČT24* [online]. 2016-07-22 [quoted 2017-06-09]. Accessed at: <http://www.ceskatelesee.cz/ct24/regiony/1854332-vrcholek-ceskeho-lesa-opet-hlida-pohranicnik-se-samopalem-lidi-pobourilo>.

the Iron Curtain Museum in Valtice. Referring to the sources in the Archive of the Security Services, they pointed out the issue of the problematic wartime as well as postwar past of Walter Wawra, one of the two Austrians. They considered the commemoration of an agent of the State Security to be a scandal.<sup>39</sup> The public was able to follow the quest to learn more about the fate of the two Austrians virtually made alive in a televised documentary *Ztracení otcové* [Lost Fathers]. The “story that took everyone’s heart” acquired different contours altogether.<sup>40</sup> Public criticism showed that acts of vandalism at the Břeclav cemetery where the son of Mr Wawra placed a provisional memorial of his father, the same as the destruction of the aforementioned cross might have had a different connotation.

A report by the Austrian public radio also addressed the story of the investigated facts preceding the deaths of the Austrians. The Czech televised documentary ends at the point when the researchers and documentarists hand the son of Walter Wawra results of their archival research after they had presented him their interpretation of the tragic event. They did so while they were on the authentic site. The documentary does not provide any context to the rumours that Wawra was an agent. Walter Wawra Jr. visited the Slovak National Memory Institute together with Austrian journalists where he was given documents about his father’s cooperation with the State Security. His activities were most likely to be motivated by a financial reward. Wawra’s assignment was to keep uncovering identities of specific members of the traffickers’ network operating between South Moravia and Austria. He was allegedly passing through the river Dyje by using an agreed signal for the Czechoslovak patrol. The report further mentions the case of a kidnapped Czechoslovak agent of the US Central Intelligence Council (CIC). Wawra got him drunk, drugged him and then, with minor difficulties brought him across the Dyje back to Czechoslovakia.<sup>41</sup>

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39 Pomník pro agenta StB [A memorial dedicated to an agent of the State Security]. In: *Informační institut* [online]. 2012-08-06 [quoted 2017-06-09]. Accessed at: [http://www.informacniinstitut.cz/informacniinstitut/Informacni\\_Institut/Aktuality/Entries/2012/8/6\\_Pomnik\\_pro\\_agenta\\_STB.html](http://www.informacniinstitut.cz/informacniinstitut/Informacni_Institut/Aktuality/Entries/2012/8/6_Pomnik_pro_agenta_STB.html).

40 It was filmed by director Aleš Koudela based on a screenplay by Luděk Navara and was broadcasted by *Czech Television* on 22 November 2009; it was re-broadcasted on 19 April 2014: *Ztracení otcové* [Lost fathers]. In: *ČT2* [online]. 2014-04-19 [quoted 2017-06-09]. Accessed at: <http://www.ceskatelesee.cz/ivysilani/10258908743-ztraceni-otcove/>.

41 The report by Ernst Weber *Tod an der Grenze* was broadcasted by *Österreichisches Rundfunk 1* on 26 March 2011. The report is available in Czech transcription and translation by Petr Žaloudek as *Smrt na hranici*. In *OŘÍK: Farníci z Ostrovačic, Říčan a Veverských Knínic* [online]. 2001-05-11 [quoted 2017-06-09]. Accessed at: <http://www.orik.cz/content/smrt-na-hranici>. The State Security hoped for cooperation with Wawra in order to receive information about the Austrian border security (they took into consideration his nearby residence and job), as well as to uncover the network among Czech postwar emigrants (in 1952 Wawra espoused a Czech wife) whom the Czechoslovak authorities suspected of helping the traffickers. Yet even Wawra was suspected of cooperating with US counter-intelligence. The kidnapping of the CIC agent was to be his first assignment commissioned by the Czechoslovak intelligence service in 1951. The sources do not provide any timing of the kidnapping, the identity of the agent and his further fate. See KARNER, Stefan: “Skrátka,

Though it is understandable that Milan Vojta and the Memory group did not wish to confront Mr Wawra Jr. on camera with the darker site of his father's past, a question remains unanswered – what kind of memory they constructed in the public space no matter how unrelated was the commemorated event with the collaboration of Walter Wawra Sr. He and Karl Benedikt were passionate fishermen and fell victim to an “ordinary” action against the border “perpetrators,” an action that was kept secret until the fall of communism.

### Commemorating Traffickers

A closer look into the acts of post-communist commemoration reveals that traffickers and couriers do not dominate the memory of the Iron Curtain. One of the not yet implemented commemorations is expected to be unveiled also in Lanžhot and is to be dedicated to the local trafficking legend, the “king of the southern woods” František Gajda. He was disclosed and died after a shootout with border guards in 1950.<sup>42</sup> His son who lives in the United States (his mother with him along with three other siblings were taken by traffickers across the border in 1950, a few months prior to his father's death) tried to have a memorial site installed. After he passed away in 2011 it is the Memory group that is trying to bring the plan to fruition. Within the context of the earlier memory initiative it reflects the paradox nature of past events on the Czechoslovak–Austrian border.

On the western border a memorial launched in 2004 commemorates both German and Czech traffickers. The memorial was unveiled by the Friends of Czech–German Understanding. It is located by the border crossing over Teplá Vltava in Františkov on the route of the so-called Canal 54 from Vimperk to Finsterau that was used by Franz Kilian Nowotny, one of the “kings of Šumava.” The image of the legendary trafficker and smuggler is most probably forever carved in public memory as he was portrayed by the iconic film *Král Šumavy* [The King of Šumava] from 1959 based on a book by Rudolf Kalčík about border guards from the unit in Kvilda.<sup>43</sup> Contrary

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zmlátte ho do bezvedomia a dopravte cez hranice!": Smrť agenta “Alberta” na rybačke v rieke Dyje [Just beat him till he is unconscious and transfer him across the border!: The death of agent “Albert” while fishing by the river Dyje]. In: IDEM: *Halt! Tragödien am Eisernen Vorhang*, pp. 143–155.

42 See TOMEK, Prokop: František Gajda (\*30 November 1913, †6 October 1950). In: Ústav pro studium totalitních režimů [online]. Dokumentace usmrčených na československých státních hranicích 1948–1989: Portréty usmrčených [Documents concerning those killed on the Czechoslovak national border between 1948 and 1989: Portraits of the killed] [quoted 2017-06-09]. Accessed at: <http://www.ustrcr.cz/cs/frantisek-gajda>. See: Documentary by director Marcel Petrov based on the screenplay by Luděk Navara *Smrť převaděče* [The death of a trafficker] made for the series *Přísně tajné vraždy* [Top secret murders]. *Czech Television* first broadcasted the film on 18 May 2010 (in: *ČT* [online]. 2015-11-24 [quoted 2017-06-09]. Accessed at: <http://www.ceskatelesee.cz/porady/10267422798-prisne-tajne-vrazdy/410235100221020-smrt-prevadece/>).

43 For more information, see e.g.: KOPAL, Petr: Film *Král Šumavy ve světle* (a v temnotě) symboliky zla [The film *King of Šumava* in the light (and darkness) of the symbolism of evil]. In: IDEM (ed.): *Film a dějiny, sv. 2: Adolf Hitler a ti druzí. Filmové obrazy zla* [Film and

to the culmination of the film narrative, Nowotny lived until his death (1977) on the Bavarian side of the border after he managed to escape injured after a shootout with border guards in 1950 from the site where the current memorial was erected.<sup>44</sup>

A bit on the margins of interest lays a private initiative that commemorates the traffickers and agent-walker, Josef Zíka, in the heart of Český les. Rather than from specialist literature he is better known through the fiction account by Zdeněk Šaroch. The book *Výstřely z hranice* [*Shots from the Border*, 1972] dedicates to Josef Zíka the opening short story *Jezdec Černé Máry* [The rider of black Máry].<sup>45</sup> A cross with a memorial plaque was erected in 2000 in the cemetery in Pleš: as part of the reconstruction of German graves, a body without a coffin was found buried in a shallow hole in the early 1990s. The discovery instantly led to the belief that it was the body of agent Zíka shot dead by border guards along this part of the Bavarian–Czech border in 1951. His dead body was brought to the unit in Pleš, its further fate remains unknown.<sup>46</sup>

The most recent memorial site that was unveiled at the cemetery in České Žleby is dedicated to agent-walker Bohumil Hasil, shot dead in September 1950 during one of his crossings that he undertook with his brother Josef (he managed to escape from the site of the clash).<sup>47</sup> The memorial site is indirectly related to the (as yet unsuccessful) endeavour to identify the authentic site of the last repose of his remains.<sup>48</sup> It is, however, essentially connected to family memory – it reminds of his brother who still lives in Canada, who was yet another “king of Šumava” (the memorial plaque was unveiled to mark his 90<sup>th</sup> birthday in February 2014). It also

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history, Vol. 2: Adolf Hitler and the others. Film images of evil]. Praha, Casablanca 2009, pp. 214–240. See also TICHÝ, Martin: Rudolf Kalčík: Životopisná črta [Rudolf Kalčík: A biographical feature]. In: SVOBODA, Libor – TICHÝ, Martin (ed.): *Cesty za svobodou: Kuryři a převaděči v padesátých letech 20. století* [Paths to freedom: Couriers and traffickers in the 1950s]. Praha, ÚSTR 2014, pp. 205–225. A plan was to develop an Iron Curtain museum on the premises of the Border Guard in Kvilda; the project fell apart in 2008.

44 See FENCL, Pavel: *Králové Šumavy – Die Könige des Böhmerwaldes: Katalog výstavy* [The kings of Šumava: The exhibition catalogue]. Praha, ÚSTR 2012, pp. 45–46.

45 Six short stories of which one was dedicated to the border guard dog (here the directly mentioned Brek); the book includes an ideological introduction and epilogue so that the reader, immersed in the “adventure” stories, does not identify with the undesired character. As part of psychologizing the “negative” characters, the author hints at points to empathize with their conduct (as in the case of “The rider of the black Máry” where he empathizes with illegal trespasses of German expelees who kept returning across the border to collect possessions they had left behind). ŠAROCH, Zdeněk: *Výstřely z hranice* [Shots from the border]. Praha, Naše vojsko 1972.

46 His fate is briefly summarized by Zdeněk Procházka in *Putování po zaniklých místech Českého lesa, sv. 1: Domažlicko* [Wandering through the defunct places of Český les, Vol. 1: The region of Domažlice]. Domažlice, Nakladatelství Českého lesa 2007, pp. 210–211.

47 Zdeněk Šaroch also puts in fiction the story of the Hasil brothers in the short story entitled “O Hasilech bez legend” [About the Hasils without legend]. ŠAROCH, Z.: *Výstřely z hranice*, pp. 83–125.

48 The identification work draws from the initiative of the former ÚSTR Director Daniel Herman.

commemorates his mother (as a symbolic donor of the plaque)<sup>49</sup> and of the fact that she had been unable to bury her son and tend his grave. Nonetheless, the site is equally a memorial to a family divided by the Iron Curtain and of the harsh persecution of relatives who remained on its Eastern side.

Some historians consider the established martyrological discourse after November 1989 about the Iron Curtain to be stuck in a totalitarian manner in the simplistic (and over-polarized) “paradigm of the Iron Curtain.” Its unifying role in the post-November society remains controversial.<sup>50</sup> As much as the story of the Lanžhot cross supports such a perspective, it might be appropriate to raise a question asking whether such a discourse could be in any way different (and, through it, also the commemoration of the Iron Curtain). The difficulty of finding common points with the bearer and keeper of the border guard memory can be illustrated by a report issued by the Czech Borderland Club in the spring of 2015. It was published on the occasion of a commemorative act by the memorial to three members of the border guard units of the National Security Corps by the building of the former unit in České Žleby in order to commemorate victims of two different cases from 1949: in March 1949 Miloslav Mutinský and Josef Pekař, constables of the National Security Corps, died in a shootout.<sup>51</sup> The narrative suggests that the opponent in the armed clash was “former lieutenant of the army of the clerical-Fascist Slovak State” and “Nazi offspring” Jaroslav Gajdoš.<sup>52</sup> Nonetheless, Mr Gajdoš was actually a member (First Lieutenant) of the 1<sup>st</sup> Czechoslovak Army Corps in the Soviet Union.<sup>53</sup> Perhaps more importantly, the narrative informs that participants at the commemorative gathering were shocked to learn that “someone” was planning to re-install the original memorial plaque at the authentic site of the event. The president of the local branch of the Club considered it a “scandalous and blatant act,” for he “hesitated to believe” that the organized members “would so blatantly breach both the principles of the operation of the Club of the Czech

49 Rosálie Hasilová died in 1972. The church ceremony and memorial mass were served by Miroslav Vlk (under the oversight by the State Security); the event turned into “a protest march of Šumava” and contributed to the decision by the regime to withdraw the state licence to Vlk’s pastoral work in Lažiště and Záblatí. See VODIČKOVÁ, Stanislava: Čím větší tlak, tím kvalitnější, co odolá: Kardinál Miloslav Vlk ve střetu s komunistickou diktaturou [The greater the pressure, the finer the quality of all that resists: Cardinal Miroslav Vlk in confrontation with the communist dictatorship]. In: *Paměť a dějiny*, Vol. 5, No. 4 (2012), p. 93.

50 See ŠMIDRKAL, V.: “Železná opona” jako české místo paměti, pp. 76–77.

51 Members of the SNB border unit.

52 See ZACH, František: Pietní vzpomínka u pomníčku zavražděných příslušníků Pohraničního útvaru SNB České Žleby [Commemoration by the tiny memorial dedicated to the murdered members of the SNB border unit České Žleby], 26 March 2015. In: Klub českého pohraničí, z.s. [online] [quoted 2017-06-09]. Accessed at: <http://www.klub-pohranici.cz/news/pietni-vzpominka-u-pomnicku-zavrazdenych-prislusniku-pohranicniho-utvaru-snb-ceske-zleby/>.

53 See PEJČOCH, I.: *Vojáci na železné oponě*, p. 133. After escaping to the West, Gajdoš, as a technical Sergeant of the US Air Force, took part in the Korean and Vietnam wars. He is buried in the National Cemetery Riverside in California (having died in 2005).

Borderlands, and the overall principles of decency and ethics.” Arguing that the site of the original memorial was located on pastures above the town where “imported cattle” graze year round, which thus makes the site inappropriate for the re-installment of the memorial plaque, he concluded his report by appealing to the unknown originator to abandon “such a barbarian, poor and inhuman conduct” that represents “unprecedented interference in the activities of the local Club.”<sup>54</sup> The horror of the possibility that some independent civic initiative would participate in the re-installment of a memorial shows the degree of appropriation of border guard memory and its interpretation. That happens despite the fact that this is one of the original border guard mini-memorials which in no way distorts the narrative of the veteran border guards. Quite on the contrary, it is being confronted through a new commemoration of the Hasil brothers. It concerns the commemoration of the second incident in 1949: during a shootout by Soumarský Most, Josef Hasil killed a constable of the National Security Corps of the name Rudolf Kočí. Thus, České Žleby becomes yet a new place of encounter of two memories of armed clashes on the green line.

The story of the old and new commemoration in České Žleby has currently reached an unexpected climax. It transpired that the memorial plaque to Miloslav Mutinský and Josef Pekař was unveiled again in May 2015 by members of the Club of the Czech Borderlands (though from a different branch). The initiative proved quite timely. In November, the Club lost the central memorial in České Žleby that was constructed in the 1980s in connection with the completion of a new building for the Border Guard unit. The current owner of the building decided to close it to public.

The commemoration of the Iron Curtain after 1989 is indeed dominated by the martyrological perspective. That, however, comes as no surprise given the fact that victims of the Iron Curtain could not have been commemorated prior to November 1989. Together with the commemoration of the German past on the borderlands, the sites dedicated to the memory of the Iron Curtain through its artefacts represent a substantial portion of such commemoration. Carriers and/or traffickers receive just minor commemoration, none of which puts, as yet, their activities explicitly in connection with armed anti-communist struggle. That also applies to memorial sites installed outside the borderlands, except for the perhaps best-known case that received major media attention – the long rejected public comments by executed agent-walker Rudolf Fuksa that were initiated by his great-nephew and supported by public petition in the north Bohemian town of Chrástava. The memorial sites dedicated to the “traffickers” bear two characteristic features: they either address the circumstances of their violent death when crossing the border, or are contextualized by references to judicial repression on the part of

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54 ZACH, František: Pietní vzpomínka u pomníčku zavražděných příslušníků Pohraničního útvaru SNB České Žleby, 26 March 2015 (<http://www.klub-pohranici.cz/news/pietni-vzpominka-u-pomnicku-zavrazdenych-prislusniku-pohranicniho-utvaru-snb-ceske-zleby/>)



the communist regime.<sup>55</sup> In this respect, the memorial in Kvilda–Františkov is the only one to bear a “positive” symbolic content of revolt against the regime. This highlights the longing for freedom by those leaving for exile and the bravery of their traffickers.

### *Memory of Political Murders*

#### **“How Much Does a Life Cost”**

In 1960 the writers Karel Šiktanc and Jiří Šotola published in the journal *Kultura* a series of reports dedicated to the cases of recent political violence in Czechoslovakia.<sup>56</sup> They explored the circumstances of murders of communist figures in the 1950s and their commemoration against the background of the description of contemporary life in towns and regions affected by the events and their new contextualized reflection. They offered a factually quite faithful reconstruction of the cases, placed within the framework of an ideological image of communist transformation of villages that proved successful despite the numerous barriers. This was one of the first forms of fiction literature to interpret such events where the authors worked with otherwise inaccessible archival sources. One can suggest that the public commission responsible for the reports was related to the officially declared completion of collectivization of village life and economy.<sup>57</sup> This argument is supported by the choice of cases and by the final reflection that freely follows the form of the report series *Kolik stojí život* [How much does a life cost]. It was written by Jiří Šotola only. In his piece entitled *Odkud jsme přišli* [Where we came from], Šotola summarizes some of the leitmotifs of the reports about the “old” lifestyle in the countryside (religious sentiments and traditions, the gradually disappearing identification with economic life in the courts of former nobility, etc.). Its roots, he argued, “must be cut” to enable the people to mentally part with them.<sup>58</sup> At the same time it would allow them, the argument went on, to identify with the “new” postwar life and its cooperative agenda, hence also with the memory of the Communists who fell victims to the enemies of communist transformation.

55 See SVOBODA, Libor: Kurýři a převaděči jako jedna z forem protikomunistického odboje [Couriers and traffickers as one of the forms of anti-communist resistance]. In: SVOBODA, L. – TICHÝ, M. (ed.): *Cesty za svobodu*, pp. 9–15.

56 The weekly published under the auspices of the Ministry of Education and Culture lasted from 1957 to 1962 when it merged with *Tvorba* and continued to be published under the title *Kulturní tvorba*.

57 The question about the existence of the commission and its issuer is also raised by literary historian Milan Blahynka in his review of the book *Řeč neřeč: Rozhovor Jaromíra Slomka s Karlem Šiktancem* [Speech non-speech: A conversation of Jaromír Slomek with Karel Šiktanc]. Praha, Univerzita Karlova – Karolinum 2007. BLAHYNKA, Milan: Karla Šiktance tance. In: *Obrys-Kmen*, insert to *Haló noviny*, Vol. 14, No. 36 (13 September 2008), p. 3. It is also accessible online at: [www.obrys-kmen.cz/archivok/?rok=2008&cis=36&tisk=03](http://www.obrys-kmen.cz/archivok/?rok=2008&cis=36&tisk=03).

58 ŠOTOLA, Jiří: *Odkud jsme přišli* [Where we came from]. In: *Kultura*, Vol. 5, No. 17 (1961), p. 10.

The first report, which can be translated as “A murder in Rataj Park” was dedicated to a case called by historian and journalist Petr Zídek a shadow of anti-communist resistance.<sup>59</sup> It portrays the murder of Anna Kvášová (1908–1952), local deputy chairwoman of the local communist organization and official of the national committee in the village of Chrastná by Uhlířské Janovice. Those involved in the case were discovered only five years later. In March 1958, they were subjected to a public hearing in the Tyl Theatre in Kutná Hora. Three of them were sentenced to capital punishment – Antonín Landstoff, Josef Pták and Josef Kubelka (they were executed on 9 July 1958). As late as at the end of the 1950s murdering a communist leader was qualified also as high treason. The authors of the report portray it as a planned execution (“dismissing it as a Bolshevik”). Zídek (who seems to have worked with the same archival sources) reconstructs the event by suggesting that the protagonists had agreed to punish the keen official by humiliating her (tying her to a tree and cutting her hair off). Yet, when on site the development followed a different course that proved far more fatal.<sup>60</sup> Similarly to other cases, even here the central figure is someone with quite a complicated psychological profile (Zídek even speaks of a psychopathic personality). He assumed the leading role in a group which he had joined *de facto* by chance without having had any closer social ties with its members. Moreover, he used a legend that he was a member of the resistance linked to abroad. Antonín Landstoff did not even have any reason to take revenge on Anna Kvášová. Yet he adopted the idea that occurred to Josef Pták who, on the contrary, had a concrete motive because as a result of Kvášová’s impulse, he had been repeatedly questioned concerning his trade activities. Landstoff then unexpectedly completed the plan, altogether spontaneously, with no link to anti-communist resistance. A memorial dedicated to Anna Kvášová was located on the site of the murder 30 years after the event.

Another report explores the fate of the proponents of a murder of Jan Benada (1910–1949), the chairman of the local communist organization and member of the national committee in a small village of Javorník in the district of Veselí nad Moravou where he worked as teacher. What characterizes the case is that Benada as a dedicated Communist Party member was quite unpopular in the town. That is also hinted at in the report (“no matter what your mentality was, you

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59 ŠIKTANC, Karel – ŠOTOLA, Jiří: Vražda v Ratajské oboře [A murder in Rataj Park]. In: *Ibid.*, Vol. 4, Nos. 10 and 11 (1960), pp. 10 and 10. See ZÍDEK, Petr: Stín protikomunistického odboje [The shadow of anti-communist resistance]. In: *Lidové noviny*, insert *Orientace* (7–8 June 2008), pp. 19–20.

60 The frustration arising from the fact that the planned action led to murder became the cause of indiscretion that ultimately helped to clarify the event. It ought to be added that the literary account of the event from the 1980s depicts the act of cutting the hair and an idea that occurs to Kvášová. However, she is shot dead as one of the actors skips his tongue and says out loud the name of his accomplice. Through him the group is uncovered. This is quite an exaggerated *cliché* of crime stories. VRBECKÝ, František [ŠAROCH, Zdeněk]: *Mrtví nemluví* [The dead do not talk]. Praha, Naše vojsko 1985, pp. 161–163.

were not killed for that”).<sup>61</sup> Similarly to other comparable cases, a number of local residents were suspected of the murder carried out in March 1949. Benada’s activities presented an existential threat to each of them (“he squeezed black traders and loafers by pliers”). The investigation brought result only after the appointment of an agent provocateur that led to Tomáš Rumíšek (1923–1953), who confessed to the murder to members of the State Security. Hence, after a staged escape abroad in July 1952 he was arrested, sentenced and executed on 6 May 1953.<sup>62</sup> The story *Javorník není Amerika* [Javorník is no America] is constructed on the contrast of the undocumented “director” of the drama Josef Švardala (\*1908), who, in August 1950 emigrated by having hijacked an airplane<sup>63</sup> and the hand of the murderer who had been “lured” by Švardala. He is portrayed as an unscrupulous capitalist (owner of a distillery) and Rumíšek as a simple blacksmith for whom one can find minor signs of compassion (“vagrant, drunkard and fighter” who took a “nasty end”). In fact, considering the local economic and social standards, Rumíšek was also a relatively well-off tradesman who owned modern equipment. The report further fails to mention that Benada moved to the town in the late 1930s. It was in part also because of his tarnished personal life that the locals did not accept him as one of their own. His memory, the authors argued, is embodied by the burning candles on his grave at the local cemetery

From the current perspective, the aforementioned events illustrate the memory that is ambiguous (court sentence of 1969 about procedural flaws and lacking evidence presented to the court of 1953 heightened the doubts about the guilt of the executed; these doubts last until today). They also exemplify the rejected memorial sites the mayor of Javorník did not accept an offer to install a memorial to the executed Tomáš Rumíšek in the town. His name is merely carved on the memorial dedicated to political prisoners in Uherské Hradiště that was installed in the early 1990s.

Different memories are also connected to the case of a political murder which took place in Koubalova Lhota in the region of Přeboram. Its consequences are briefly mentioned by Karel Kaplan in his monograph *Nekrvavá revoluce* [A bloodless revolution] as an example of the so-called economic trials. Orchestrated by the State Security, the trials became the “instrument of collectivization” (in this sense Kaplan draws a connection between these events and the far more widely known Babice events). In the trials that were unveiling the “face of wealthy village residents” the accused appeared as alleged members of anti-state groups, agents of imperialism

61 ŠIKTANC, Karel – ŠOTOLA, Jiří: Javorník není Amerika [Javorník is no America]. In: *Kultura*, Vol. 4, Nos. 28 and 29 (1960), pp. 10 and 10.

62 See MALLOTA, Petr: Zapomenutý příběh o několika dějstvích: Kovář Tomáš Rumíšek a „javornická“ vražda z března roku 1949 [A forgotten story in several acts: Blacksmith Tomáš Rumíšek and the murder committed in Javorník in March 1949]. In: *Sborník Národního muzea v Praze* [Proceedings of the National Museum in Prague]. Řada A – Historie, Nos. 3–4 (2016), pp. 59–64.

63 See PEJČOCH, Ivo: *Přechody přes železnou oponu* [Crossing the Iron Curtain]. Cheb, Svět křídél 2011, p. 37.

or their helpers, possibly terrorists and arsonists. Thus portrayed, they were to help break the resistance in the countryside to forced collectivization and imposition of communist cooperatives.<sup>64</sup> The events in Koubalova Lhota bear some features similar to the previously mentioned case. Here, too, the murdered Communist Party official was an “intruder” (a Czech originally from the region of Volyn in North-Western Ukraine who married to the village). Here, too, under the impression of the liberating rehabilitation proceedings (due to a lack of evidence) that took place in 1965, a belief gradually arose that those sentenced were innocent victims of a game of high politics. In reality though, as is evidenced by the conclusions of the review by the ÚDV in the 1990s, it was a power struggle between four members of the local Communist Party cell and, at the same time, officials of the local national committee. It ended with four deaths: the murdered Vladimír Mandík (1892–1951) and the executed Václav Junek (1906–1951), Alois Lacina (1904–1951) and Karel Máša (1905–1951).<sup>65</sup> Even though the National Court in Prague sentenced the latter to capital punishment in an appropriately used propagandist public trial in Milevsko, the events are still linked to more and less common myths. They speak of a departing black car right after the murder, of a gun wound behind his ear (Mandík died of rod hits on his head) and of a mysterious death of the pathologist who carried out the autopsy, as well as of the imprisonment of the arrested in the nearby concrete bunker and of dropping their corpses in the nearby fishpond in Kosobody where the locals found them with legs partly eaten by rats.

The report entitled *Ulice Vladimíra Mandíka* [Vladimír Mandík street] written by Šiktanc and Šotola is dedicated to the case. It ends with an image of the near future, when, in 1970 in an unnamed town by the Orlická dam on the river Vltava, one of the new streets is named after Mandík following a proposal by the officials of the local national committee. The dedication was to serve as symbolic climax of the trial dating back to 1945 that represents the end of the “stale, poor, bear-footed and bigoted Koubalova Lhota.”<sup>66</sup> In reality though, the first mention of the event from the turn of the 1960s and 1970s is, quite on the contrary, a common grave of the executed at the cemetery in the nearby Lašovice that bears an inscription expressing a belief: “The Lord shall reward the innocents.” Only then, in the mid 1970s Vladimír Mandík was commemorated by a memorial that his son had built on the site of the event.

The last thought that concludes the report series published in the early 1960s in the journal *Kultura* mentions (the not yet reconstructed) case of a political murder that took place in the then Zlaté Hory in the region of Podblanicko in 1951.

64 KAPLAN, Karel: *Nekrvavá revoluce* [A bloodless revolution]. Praha, Mladá fronta 1993, p. 341.

65 See BURSÍK, Tomáš: *Vražda předsedy MNV v Koubalově Lhotě* [A murder of the national committee chairman in Koubalova Lhota]. In: PERNES, Jiří – FOITZIK, Jan (eds): *Politické procesy v Československu po roce 1945 a “případ Slánský”* [Political trials in Czechoslovakia after 1945 and the “Slánský case”]. Brno, Prius 2005, pp. 257–270.

66 ŠIKTANC, Karel – ŠOTOLA, Jiří: *Ulice Vladimíra Mandíka* [Vladimír Mandík street]. In: *Kultura*, Vol. 4, Nos. 16 and 17 (1960), pp. 10 and 10.

It is connected to several years of wandering of František Slepíčka (1929–1955), a deserter from the Auxiliary Technical Battalions.<sup>67</sup> Between 1951 and 1955 he repeatedly threatened, being armed, communist officials in the regions of Votice and Sedlčany. The very first case turned into (political) murder. As a deserter he was naturally dependent on help given him by local residents. His legend of being a member of foreign anti-communist resistance made the circumstances quite aggravating to anyone who had lent him material aid. These people were then arrested and tried in connection with his activities. In the case of the murder of Václav Burda (1900–1951), chairman of the local national committee in Zlatá Hora, Slepíčka’s alleged mission of an agent proved fatal to the second protagonist in the event, Alois Jaroš (1923–1952). The latter was identified by the National Court in Prague as the leader of a “terrorist gang” and “large scale farmer.” Even though testimonies offered by the Burda family suggested that the gun was fired by accident and Alois Jaroš did not own any gun and allegedly did not deliberately help Slepíčka to kill Václav Burda, Jaroš was together with the absent Slepíčka sentenced to death and was executed on 17 May 1952. Slepíčka escaped the fate and died in May 1955 in the town of Dubno in a shootout with František Brabec, the official of the district national committee of Příbram.<sup>68</sup> Václav Burda is commemorated by a memorial plaque on his native house in the town of Kamberk that was installed there in 1971.<sup>69</sup> Memorial plaques in nearby Křekovice and Zvěstov (both dating to 2001) are dedicated to the victims of the investigation of his death and of the trial.<sup>70</sup>

### Commemorating Babice and the “Normalization” Interpretation of “Class Struggle in the Countryside”

The sad role of the exemplary case of terrorist deterrence of the leading “builders of communism in the countryside” with a nation-wide remit ended up being attached to political murders in the village of Babice in the region of Třebíč. The interpretation of the Babice case was promptly published and included in the exhibition entitled “30 Years of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia” that was at the time already open at the Liberation Memorial in Vítkov as part of constructing the memory of the revolution.<sup>71</sup> As suggested by Karel Kaplan, the “lesson learned” from Babice

67 The Auxiliary Technical Battalions were army units to which “politically unreliable” soldiers were assigned to complete their compulsory military service.

68 See BURSÍK, Tomáš: Některé aspekty násilné kolektivizace venkova ve světle archivních dokumentů na příkladu okresu Sedlčany [Some aspects of forced collectivization of the countryside in the light of archival sources, the case of Sedlčany]. In: BLAŽEK, Petr – KUBÁLEK Michal (eds): *Kolektivizace venkova v Československu 1948–1960 a středoevropské souvislosti* [The collectivization of the countryside in Czechoslovakia in the period 1948–1960 and the Central European context]. Praha, Dokořán 2008, pp. 224–234.

69 In 1949–1990 the official name of Kamberk was Zlaté Hory.

70 See TICHÝ, Martin: Náhlá úmrtí ve vězeňských zařízeních [Sudden deaths in prison facilities]. In: *Paměť a dějiny*, Vol. 3, No. 1 (2010), pp. 93–107.

71 OPAVSKÝ, Jaroslav: *Babice*. Praha, Svoboda 1951. For the exhibition entitled “30 Years of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia,” see SOMMER, Vítězslav: *Angažované dějepiscectví:*

contained also a methodological aspect that concerned the need to whitewash “theories” of the developments related to the rural wealthy strata, to differentiate them between good and bad and to identify and/or uncover the “shameful roles of the Vatican.” Waves of repression of wealthy farmers accompanied collectivization endeavour on the part of the communist regime in Czechoslovakia throughout the 1950s. Temporary periods of relief were criticized by its proponents: “There are still wealthy rural strata as a class. Let us not be mistaken by believing that no shooting and murdering takes place in the countryside. In other words, we also note the fingers of the class enemy that changes face and tactics, whilst its nature remains the same,” warned, for instance, the then Prime Minister Antonín Novotný.<sup>72</sup> Karel Kaplan also speaks of the strength with which “political circles” even during the rehabilitations in the 1960s were annoyed by any attempts to shed light also on the Babice affair. Along with additional doubts it supported a conclusion that the entire case had been a provocation prepared by the State Security.<sup>73</sup> After years of failed attempts to find evidence in the archives that would support such view widely held by researchers, opposing opinions start to prevail.<sup>74</sup> The latter makes the Babice case seem similar to the aforementioned events in Chrástná and Zlaté Hory (Kamberk) in that they all had been fundamentally affected by an involvement of an alleged member of foreign resistance on “assignment,” whilst local residents had been willing to assist him in executing the assignment.<sup>75</sup>

In any case, researchers and publications that opened these old cases at the time of the Prague Spring the same as their review and re-interpretation, mean major questioning of the pre-reform interpretation suggesting that the enemies of communism had been recruited from among “wealthy rural residents,” former tradesmen or altogether “former people” and that “class” justice was fair when it dealt with the murder cases that were inspired by a whole range of motives, treating the murders as political that simultaneously met the defining criteria of high treason. The onset of the so-called “normalization” in the early 1970s thus brought along pressure to review or altogether abolish the rehabilitations of the reform period. The most effective and often used methods involved questioning

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Stranická historiografie mezi stalinismem a reformním komunismem (1950–1970) [Committed historiography: Party historiography between Stalinism and reform communism (1950–1970)]. Praha, Nakladatelství Lidové noviny – Filozofická fakulta Univerzity Karlovy 2011, pp. 72–88.

72 Quoted according to: KAPLAN, K.: *Nekrvavá revoluce*, p. 345.

73 *Ibid.*, pp. 341–344.

74 For the most recent research results see: STEHLÍK, Michal: *Babické vraždy 1951* [The Babice murders 1951]. Praha, Academia 2016.

75 The couriers arriving from the West were not assigned to organize any domestic resistance. Ladislav Malý, member of the US intelligence service special group led by General František Moravec, left for Czechoslovakia without having informed his superiors and the events in Babice were his “single-handed action.” See TOMEK, Prokop: *Na frontě studené války: Československo 1948–1956* [On the frontline of the Cold War: Czechoslovakia 1948–1956]. Praha, ÚSTR 2009, p. 51.

the very protagonists, their motivations and moral credibility.<sup>76</sup> In connection with reporting the unveiling of the memorial plaque dedicated to Václav Burda in 1971, the daily *Rudé právo* raised a rhetorical question: “What to make of the people from among the ‘ex’ in the region of Benešov who, in 1969, attempted to rehabilitate members of the Jaroš gang and to swiftly turn them into national heroes?”<sup>77</sup> The commentary on the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the event in Babice lent a welcome opportunity to remember how the modern “reaction” attempted to “publicly taint the very 1950s (even trying to rehabilitate the murderers of Babice), how it attempted to use some of the mistakes, shortfalls and fallacies of the time to depict the period as the ‘age of darkness.’”<sup>78</sup> Another material published on the occasion of the anniversary informed about laying the foundations stone for the Babice memorial. It contains the author’s personal confession: “I have repeatedly thought of the Babice events, particularly over the recent years when all kinds of people called for ‘communism with a human face.’ Such a cheap term was also frequently used by those who had inspired the murderers. Everyday their transmitters were busy communicating on the western border of our country. They also called for the human face for the murderers and those who had been helping them.”<sup>79</sup> Even in Babice and the neighbouring Šebkovice, during the period of political meltdown, the whole matter kept tragically affecting their lives. In 1968, local parishioners arranged for the churches in both towns the so-called “reconciliation bells” that were to serve both as a token of gratitude for the preservation of faith, as well as “satisfaction over ‘Babice’ 1951” as is stated on the dedications.

Critical identification *vis-à-vis* the rehabilitations (judicial as well as societal) of the reform period is an integral part of the equally novel approach to the recount of a number of political cases of the postwar period in fiction as had been published by Zdeněk Šaroč (having published them under the pen name of František Vrbecký).<sup>80</sup> In the final chapter, entitled *Takoví byli a zůstali* [The way they were and remained] he even used the documentation work by Ota Rambousek in K 231 to be at the heart of his “enemy” activity. By “uncovering” his past of a courier and political prisoner, as well as of a post-August 1968 émigré, he highlighted the morally questionable motivation behind his public involvement in the Prague Spring.

76 See, e.g., the media campaign against the Klub 231. HOPPE, Jiří: *Opozice ‘68: Sociální demokracie, KAN a K 231 v období Pražského jara* [Opposition ‘68: Social Democracy, KAN and K 231 in the period of the Prague Spring]. Praha, Prostor 2009, pp. 256–264.

77 HEČKO, Jiří: Cennější zlata: Dvacáté výročí zavraždění komunistického funkcionáře Václava Burdy z Kamberku [More valuable than gold: The 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the murder of Václav Burda, the Communist Party official from Kamberk]. In: *Rudé právo* (18 September 1971), p. 4. It is also accessible online at: [www.ceskasibir.cz/dok/d495.php](http://www.ceskasibir.cz/dok/d495.php).

78 HOŘENÍ, Zdeněk: Komentujeme Babice [Commenting on Babice]. In: *Ibid.* (1 July 1971), p. 2.

79 MALÍK, Josef: Vraždili za dolary: Před dvaceti lety vkročila smrt do babické školy [They killed for dollars: Twenty years ago death walked into a school in Babice]. In: *Ibid.*, insert *Haló sobota* (3 July 1971), p. 3.

80 VRBECKÝ, F.: *Mrtví nemluví*. Similarly to the case of the *Výstřely na hranici*, the author worked with archival sources. The book contains “seven true stories of the fight against the enemy of communism in our country,” as is stated on the cover.

In the story *Vražda na pokyn* [Commissioned murder], dedicated to Babice, Šaroch subjects to criticism the interest of reporter Sláva Volný (also a post-August 1968 émigré) who in 1968 prepared a radio programme about the case. Šarich argues that the recorded material proves that Volný intended to use his questions about the role of Ladislav Malý in the events to convince the public that “Babice were actually masterminded by the Communists themselves.” He further argued that the report on “Anti-Babice” fell apart when none of the locals “realized what Volný wanted to hear: that the person concerned was a member of the State Security.” Šaroch suggests that (unlike him), Volný had no moral right to travel to Babice asking around. The fact that he even called on the widow of the murdered Tomáš Kuchtík, “whom he intended to use for the provocation” (meaning report) was a sign of his “utmost arrogance” Šaroch learns this from the chairman of the district national committee of Moravské Budějovice.<sup>81</sup>

Covering the reform narrative with the updated reflection of the old memorials was a method that Šaroch used in additional chapters, including the new interpretation of the murder of Anna Kvášová (*Výstřel v Ratajské oboře*), that had previously been described in the report series by Šiktanc and Šotola. By quoting from an interview with the then chairman of the local national committee in Chrastná, he offers an “authentic” interpretation of “the political murder as an attack against the Communist Party that was to discourage the farmers from the cooperative spirit.” The outcome, however, was quite the opposite: “The authority of the Communist Party had further risen here. As early as in the autumn of that year we founded the cooperative [...]. Lively discussions often took place in *U Chromasů* [the local pub], for instance when the question arose whether to include also larger-scale farmers in the cooperative. It was ultimately decided that we would all farm together. [...] The people thus gradually came to believe that Anna Kvášová once promoted the right thing.”<sup>82</sup> Petr Zídek (in 2008), however, offers a testimony, claiming that the foundation of the local agricultural cooperative was carried out differently: “When they murdered her, everyone joined the cooperative out of fear.”<sup>83</sup> Even the cooperative in Babice was founded within a year after the local events.<sup>84</sup>

In 1971 a manifestation was held in Babice of laying the foundation stone for a memorial that was unveiled four years later. Twenty years later it recounted the Babice events. Whilst the memorial plaque installed in 1951 bore an inscription reminding that “in this school fell, in a middle of their endeavour for a happier life of our peoples, by the hand of agents of Western imperialists, comrades Tomáš Kuchtík, Josef Roupec and Bohumír Netolička” (along with providing information about their civic professions and posts in the local national committee), the inscription on the stone placed the narrative in a historical context without altering the overall

81 *Vražda na pokyn*, pp. 130–132.

82 *Výstřel v Ratajské oboře*, pp. 166–168.

83 ZÍDEK, P.: *Stín protikomunistického odboje*, p. 19.

84 In 1952, 20 farming cooperatives were founded in the district of Moravské Budějovice whilst only one came into being the previous year. See HOLUB, Ota: *Vlčí komando* [The wolf commando]. Praha, Práce – Naše vojsko 1981, pp. 138–139.



message of the text: “they fell by the insidious hand of the class enemy whilst implementing the general line of constructing communism.” Along with the unveiling of the memorial in 1975 a hall of revolutionary traditions opened in the local school. Both new memorial sites served the commonplace “normalization” rituals (mass visits by work groups, passing oath by adepts to join the Pioneers – the communist youth organization, etc.). That it was primarily to fulfil its ideological and educational purpose is highlighted also by the fact that their establishment was secured by the central committee of the union teachers and academicians and researchers. The ceremony of laying the foundation stone brought together about 200 teachers who participated in the so-called Comenius Days in Uherský Brod. Teachers and pupils had to volunteer to renovate the road in connection with the construction of the memorial in the village, and the hall of revolutionary traditions was opened by Minister of Education Josef Havlín.<sup>85</sup>

From the current perspective, the cases of so-called political murders after February 1948 present forgotten stories that are merely commemorated by the sites from the period of the “normalization” that itself fell into the abyss of memory.<sup>86</sup> The public is not keen to revisit the cases, as is shown by the aforementioned rejection of the initiative in Javorník. The handful of post-November 1989 commemorations (Uherské Hradiště, Křekovice, Zvěstov) present their protagonists as victims of political trials within the context of the general commemoration of the victims of repression conducted by representatives of the communist regime. The fact that they are connected to concrete cases of political murders remains a side issue here.

Babice represents yet a different case. As much as it epitomized, prior to 1989, the interpretation of class struggle in the countryside, today it symbolizes a conflict over that memory. Even though the post-November 1989 representatives of the town would have liked to “draw a thick line” behind the events of the 1950s,<sup>87</sup> it became clear that such an approach proved *de facto* impossible in practice. Pressure exerted by anti-communist activists and organizations (Confederation of Political Prisoners) to remove the pre-November 1989 memorials dates back to 1990. It is

85 See KÁBELE, Stanislav: *Babice 1951–2011: Dokumenty a polemiky o babické tragédii* [Babice 1951–2011: Documents and polemics over the Babice tragedy]. Praha, Futura 2011, p. 80; HOLUB, O.: *Vlčí komando*, pp. 145–146; [ČTK]: Památník obětem v Babicích [A memorial to the victims of Babice]. In: *Rudé právo* (22 September 1975), p. 1.

86 These cases include the murder of Major Augustin Schramm on 27 May 1948. A memorial plaque was unveiled in his memory (to be later removed) in Prague 3. This study does not focus on this commemoration as it is altogether outside the context of the presented other cases. See TOMEK, Prokop: Mýty a pravda o atentátu na majora Augustina Schramma [Myths and the truth about the assassination of Major Augustin Schramm]. In: *Historie a vojenství*, Vol. 60, No. 1 (2011), pp. 54–68.

87 A statement by the mayor of Babice: “As early as in 1991 we agreed at the town council that we would close it. We drew a thick line and I have no mandate to speak about it.” See KONTRA, Martin: Rozrušená země: Co všechno nám zbylo z teroru padesátých let [An upset land: All that we are left with of the terror of the 1950s]. In: *Respekt*, Vol. 9, No. 52 (1998), pp. 9–11. (See also BRABEC, Jan: *Nemilosrdné příběhy českých dějin* [Merciless stories of Czech history]. Praha, Národní divadlo – R-Press 2006, pp. 154–159.)

obvious that such initiatives are seen in the town as a new ideological dictate.<sup>88</sup> In response to the first public appeals, the municipal council held a local poll in August 1990 in which the majority of the Babice residents preferred to retain the central memorial (less than 40 percent of respondents voted for the removal of the communist symbol). The town council also consulted the issue of the pre-November commemoration with lawyers, trying to clarify whether the look of such memorial sites might be deemed meritorious of a crime of promoting intolerant ideologies. The town council had eventually removed the memorial plaque of 1951 from the Babice school in the latter half of the 1990s and in connection with the new face of the village it also removed the 1971 foundation stone for the memorial in about 2010. An “alternative” memory of the events in Babice emerged and stayed in place until 2013 when the bust of Fr. Václav Drbola was installed in front of the local parish house. Fr. Drbola was sentenced for high treason and instructions for the (Babice) murders. He was executed on 3 August 1951 in the city of Jihlava.<sup>89</sup> Yet the regional structures of the Roman Catholic Church of the early 1990s generate a few initiatives that called for at least some symbolic reconciliation with the consequences of the Babice tragedy. Memorial services in 1990 and 1991 to mark its 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary were to climax by raising a memorial cross dedicated to all of its victims. The bells, hidden in the church spires, became virtually forgotten. Whilst elsewhere in the region memorial sites emerged and are dedicated to lay victims of the Babice trials as well as to the priests affected (in Jihlava in 1993, Starovičky in 1994, Lukov in 1995, Třebíč in 1996, Rokytnice nad Rokytinou in 1998),<sup>90</sup> in Babice itself the presentation of a new perspective did not grow root. A new initiative presented by the local Roman Catholic parish, Day of Truth and Reconciliation in 2011 (referring to the ceremony in 1991) and the unveiling of the Drbola bust two years later presents no doubt also a reaction to the fact that the “normalization” memorial in Babice was adopted by supporters of communist ideology.<sup>91</sup> The reconciliation of memory and/or memories has not, as yet, taken place even among the residents of Babice. It is them who have been confronted with the tragic events

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88 As early as in December 1989 the West Moravian Museum in Třebíč (today the Museum of Vysočina) closed the local memorial (hall of traditions).

89 It is a copy of an identical reminder discovered in 2012 in Starovičky, the native town of Václav Drbola, on the centenary of his birth.

90 After the year 2000 additional ones emerged – in Brno and Letonice in 2002, in Kuřimská Nová Ves in 2004, in Bučovice in 2005 and 2011, in Heřmanov in 2011. See [www.pametnismista.usd.cas.cz](http://www.pametnismista.usd.cas.cz).

91 See BARTŮŇKOVÁ, Andrea: Desítky lidí si připomněly Babický případ, šedesát let starou tragédii [Dozens of people commemorated the Babice case, the 60-year old tragedy]. In: *iDnes* [online]. 2011-07-06 [quoted 2017-06-09]. Accessed at: [www.zpravy.idnes.cz/desitky-lidi-si-pripomnely-babicky-pripad-sedesat-let-starou-tragedii-1eb-/domaci.aspx?c=A110706\\_110629\\_jihlava\\_zpravy\\_mav](http://www.zpravy.idnes.cz/desitky-lidi-si-pripomnely-babicky-pripad-sedesat-let-starou-tragedii-1eb-/domaci.aspx?c=A110706_110629_jihlava_zpravy_mav). A similar gathering convened in 2011 in Čelákovice (see below). Both events marking the 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Babice events and the raid on the SNB offices by the Mašín brothers' group were convened by the Communist Party of Bohemia and Moravia and the Club of the Czech Borderlands.

and their consequences for over 60 years. Reconciliation has not occurred within the wider Czech society either.

### Mašín Brothers' Commemoration

It is quite symptomatic that the symbol of anti-communist resistance and, at the same time, the core of controversies in the public debate is the “Mašín brothers case,” even though the operation of the group is not characteristic for the context of anti-communist activities in Czechoslovakia at the turn of the 1940s and 1950s. Sabotage and raids carried out by the group led by the Mašín brothers bore military features not merely in terms of their technicality, but also because of the mindset behind them. That was underpinned by the contemporary and the then widespread idea of the possibility of a new military conflict between the West and East for which they wanted to be prepared (i.e. armed). The group aimed to leave for the West by autumn 1951 at the latest to face the anticipated clash. The Mašíns considered the people against whom they had planned their actions to be protagonists of the communist regime that declared war against a portion of the population (i.e. the non-Communists).<sup>92</sup> They drew from a somewhat simplistic construct (that was being defended for decades) that armed individuals (members of the National Security Corps in the first place) had been entrusted by the Communist Party and their killing, in the case of difficulties with the original plan, were not in conflict with ethical principles. Yet even the trafficking legend Josef Hasil was a constable with the National Security Corps when he had started to assist the people who were in danger or persecuted by the communist regime. He, along with other police officers worked, later as a courier and participated in anti-regime activities. Historians have documents three dozens of cases of executed police officers or members of the Penal Guard Corps who had fallen victim to “the other shore.”<sup>93</sup> Their fate is commemorated by a few memorial sites.<sup>94</sup> Yet another, a more challenging link leads to the Communists. Their ranks included both eager promoters of the new regime,

92 See Mašín: České občanství ani za miliony. Rozhovor Luďka Navara se Ctíradem Mašínem [Mašín: Czech citizenship? Not even for millions. Luďek Navara's interview with Ctírad Mašín]. In: *iDnes* [online]. 2004-07-28 [quoted 2017-06-09]. Accessed at: [www.zpravy.idnes.cz/masin-ceske-obcanstvi-ani-za-miliony-d7y-/domaci.aspx?c=A040727\\_224811\\_domaci\\_pol](http://www.zpravy.idnes.cz/masin-ceske-obcanstvi-ani-za-miliony-d7y-/domaci.aspx?c=A040727_224811_domaci_pol); Jsou tři kategorie – odboj, odpor a disent (Rozhovor Martina Vadase s Josefem Mašínem) [There are three categories – struggle, resistance and dissent (Martin Vadas' interview with Josef Mašín)]. In: *Totalita.cz* [online]. 2011-03-17 [quoted 2017-06-09]. Accessed at: [http://www.totalita.cz/odbsk/odbsk\\_masin\\_rozh\\_mj\\_01\\_01.pdf](http://www.totalita.cz/odbsk/odbsk_masin_rozh_mj_01_01.pdf).

93 See PEJČOCH, Ivo – TOMEK, Prokop: *Policisté na popravišti: Příslušníci SNB popravení v Československu z politických nebo kriminálních důvodů v letech 1949–1962* [Policemen on the gallows: SNB members executed in Czechoslovakia on political or criminal grounds in 1949–1962]. Cheb, Svět křídel 2013, p. 5.

94 For instance, in Frýdek-Místek (Ladislav Céé), Klatovy (František Havlíček, Václav Šnajdr), Chrastava (Rudolf Fuksa), Horní Bříza (Josef Sporka) and elsewhere. The executed SNB members are collectively commemorated by a memorial plaque originally unveiled on the building of the Czech Police Presidium in Prague, which was recently handed over to the Museum of Czech Police in Prague – Karlov.

as well as those who joined the resistance stream against communism. Ultimately, the cracks in fundamental anti-communism can be noted also in the Mašín family history: Communist Party membership of Zdena Mašínová and Ctibor Novák, the interest on the part of both of the brothers in enrolling in the military academy. Their orientation – as could be expected – began to change fundamentally after February 1948.<sup>95</sup> In connection with the emotionally charged debates surrounding the Mašíns and the commemoration of the protagonists in the first phase of anti-communist resistance, a general question arises whether the public desires any other heroes than those who ended up in the gallows or had spent years in prison. The uncharacteristic nature of the Mašín brothers' case, apart from the captivating emigration story, lays in the fact that they managed to stay alive.

Commemoration after 1989 and the launch of public debates concerning the Mašíns was preceded to some extent by the publication of a book by Ota Rambousek *Jenom ne strach* [Everything but fear]. An argument that it was Rambousek to discover the story of the Mašíns for the public is not entirely accurate, as the story had been used in fiction of “communist detective stories.” Yet it does correspond with a fact that, unlike Rambousek's book, those interpretations were not as reflected by the public. Ultimately, the impulse for Ota Rambousek who worked for Radio Free Europe to approach Ctirad Mašín in 1986, was the fact that they both had appeared in one of the books of the above provenience. Their stories (with adequate ideological message) have been processed by the aforementioned Zdeněk Šaroch in his chapters *Mrtví nemluví* [The dead do not talk] and *Takoví byli a zůstali* [The way they were and remained].<sup>96</sup> The interview led by Ota Rambousek with Ctibor Mašín for Radio Free Europe marked the beginning of their cooperation on their own book. It was intended to be a “true” story of the group led by the Mašín brothers. Discussions among those who had been familiar with the manuscript that Ota Rambousek handed to Josef Škvorecký in 1987, signals in many respects the essential line of the post-November 1989 discourse concerning the Mašíns (in addition to the no longer current hypotheses about how could the book be used by the communist regime for propaganda purposes).<sup>97</sup> It points out the degree of surprise by the story as it might be presumed to be quite known in the context of exile. Additionally, it showed that the brutality of description met with proposals for smoothing the edges – on the one hand through family and contextualization by linking it to the second resistance and, on the other hand, by contemporary reflection of the earlier conduct on the part of the protagonists themselves.

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95 See NĚMEČEK, Jan: *Mašínové: Zpráva o dvou generacích* [The Mašíns: A report on two generations]. Praha, Torst 1998, p. 167. For the means of interpreting the conflict in the Mašín narratives, see ŠVĚDA, Josef: *Mašínovský mýtus: Ideologie v české literatuře a kultuře* [The Mašín myth: Ideology in Czech literature and culture]. Příbram, Pistorius 2012, pp. 119–127.

96 VRBECKÝ, F.: *Mrtví nemluví*, pp. 73–107, 205–226.

97 Correspondence about the preparation of the interview and the publication of the book is published in: MAŠÍN, Ctirad – MAŠÍN, Josef – PAUMER, Milan: *Cesta na severozápad*, pp. cxi–cxviii.

Ota Rambousek was a former courier, political prisoner and one of the founders of K 231. He felt a connection with the positions of the Mašins.<sup>98</sup> He considered the editors' notes to be personnel reviews, called "cadre material" in communist jargon. He refused to "dwell about what was or was not to happen," as the core of the debates was not *how* it was written, but *what* was written. Škvorecký did not want to publish the manuscript in the current shape. He was one of those who kept suggesting that memoirs written with a distance of time also contained current statements by the Mašins ("a reflection of whether they should have done it and some confession that it perhaps was not that easy"). In this respect, he was in line with Václav Havel who expressed at least an amazement over the unreflected shape of the "narrative of the Cold War veterans" (in 1987).<sup>99</sup> The two shapes (of which one represents intentional refusal to reflect the past) have become major components of the perspective on the activities of the Mašín group. The debate reached Czechoslovakia after 1989 where the narrative of Ctibor Mašín edited by Ota Rambousek appeared in the edition *Revolver revue*.<sup>100</sup>

It might, however, also be argued that criticism of the Mašins for their use of ruthless violence is influenced by the current perspective that does not accept the use of violence (in civilized Europe). The same might also apply to their attitude of "no mercy with the enemies to the very death" which is in conflict with the culture of reconciliation. It is worth asking whether the supporters of the Mašins are right when stating that we have no other heroes and we should leave those whom we have. The fact that the Mašins opted for violence because the same was done by the Communists in power and, as long as they do not feel any urge to (intellectually) dissect every aspect of their motives and conduct, it is their legitimate view to be respected (instead of forever questioning the "conscience of the heroes").<sup>101</sup> Yet another point worth considering is that though the Mašins had dirtied their hands, the hands of those in power then had been far more covered with blood, and that it was impossible to fight the latter effectively with the mere power of a thought or ethical principles (for we know how this type of struggle ended).

98 See, e.g., BEZDĚKOVÁ, Olga: Odchod za úsvitu: Statečný kurýr a pěšák protikomunistického odboje Otakar Rambousek odešel na věčnost [Leaving at dawn: The brave courier and infantryman of the anti-communist resistance Otakar Rambousek passed away]. In: *Paměť a dějiny*, Vol. 3, No. 2 (2010), p. 67.

99 A letter to Josef Škvorecký dated December 1987, in which Václav Havel responds to the interview of Ota Rambousek with Ctirad Mašín published under the title *Vyprávění veteránů studené války* [The stories of Cold War veterans] in April 1987 in the exile journal *Západ*, was reprinted in *Cesta na severozápad*, p. cxiv.

100 RAMBOUSEK, Ota: *Jenom ne strach* [Just not fear]. Praha, Nezávislé tiskové středisko 1990. Rambousek and, later additional authors (e.g., NOVÁK, Jan: *Zatím dobrý: Mašínovi a největší příběh studené války* [So far so good: The Mašins and the biggest story of the Cold War]. Brno, Petrov 2004) drew from the manuscript completed by Ctirad Mašín in the late 1950s and later edited by Petr Blažek and Olga Bezděková.

101 See KAČOR, Miroslav: *Svědomí hrdinů: Jiná tvář odbojové skupiny bratří Mašínů* [The conscience of heroes: The other face of the resistance group of the Mašín brothers]. Praha, Rybka Publishers 2009.

Additionally, one might suggest that “you cannot write poetry against the regime that wants to sentence you to death.”<sup>102</sup> In sum, would it be right to question them because they “did not fight with steam buns?”<sup>103</sup> Or that one should not question everything, including who in their case is the perpetrator and who should bear the guilt for their victims.

Let us now explore the current state of the Mašíns commemoration and that of their victims. In the early 1970s memorial plaques were unveiled dedicated to members of the National Security Corps – to Oldřich Kašík in the town of Chlumec nad Cidlinou and to Jaroslav Honzátko in Čelákovice. The plaque dedicated to the latter was removed following the decision of the town council in 1994. It was deposited in the town’s museum. The local communist organization keeps borrowing the plaque for annual commemorative acts.<sup>104</sup> In the late 1990s the municipal culture council in Chlumec nad Cidlinou also recommended to remove the memorial plaque there on ideological grounds. Yet the town council did not support the proposal. The supporters of the preservation of the plaque include the owners of the house that used to serve as an office of the National Security Corps. It is worth mentioning that the communist regime somehow forgot to install a memorial to the third, civilian victim (Josef Rošický) and that also in the case of both murdered men the piety to them and their relatives most probably was not the primary motive for the construction of the memorial sites.<sup>105</sup> The omission was picked up from the ashes by members of the Communist Party of Bohemia and Moravia in 2011 when they publicly asked the Czech President to pay respect to the victims of the Mašín group raids in Czechoslovakia as part of the annual medal awards ceremony. They supported their proposal by arguing that their memory had been tainted, that in August 2011, the then Minister of Defence Alexandr Vondra awarded the Mašín

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102 The quotation comes from an interview with Petr Skála, a councillor in the town of Sadská, who in 1997 awarded the Mašín brothers and Milan Paumer with so-called honourable residence (*Ibid.*, p. 110).

103 CHALUPOVÁ, Markéta: *Nebojovali švestkovými knedlíky: Odbojová skupina bratří Mašíků v zrcadle dobového tisku* [They did not fight with steam buns: The resistance group of the Mašín brothers as reflected in contemporary press]. Brno, Computer Press 2011.

104 It happened again – with greater media coverage – during the 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the tragic incident in 2011. See: *Stovka lidí uctila památku strážmistra, kterého zabili Mašíni* [A hundred people paid respect to the memory of the constable killed by the Mašíns]. In: *Novinky.cz* [online]. 2011-09-28 [quoted 2017-06-09]. Accessed at: [www.novinky.cz/domaci/245871-stovka-lidi-uctila-pamatku-strazmistra-ktereho-zabili-masini.html](http://www.novinky.cz/domaci/245871-stovka-lidi-uctila-pamatku-strazmistra-ktereho-zabili-masini.html); DASTAN, Josef: *Komsomolci v Čelákovicích jasně vyjádřili, že teroristická vražda nevinného je zločin* [Members of the Komsomol in Čelákovice clearly stated that terrorist murder of an innocent person is a crime]. In: *Svaz mladých komunistů Československa, Východní Čechy* [Union of Young Communists of Czechoslovakia, East Bohemia] [online]. 2011-10-08 [quoted 2017-06-09]. Accessed at: [www.smkc-vychodnicechy.webnode.cz/news/komsomolci-v-celakovicich-jasne-vyjadrili-ze-teroristicka-vrazda-nevinneho-je-zlocin-/](http://www.smkc-vychodnicechy.webnode.cz/news/komsomolci-v-celakovicich-jasne-vyjadrili-ze-teroristicka-vrazda-nevinneho-je-zlocin-/).

105 In an interview with Miroslav Kačor, the daughter of Oldřich Kašík describes the undignified treatment of the family that accompanied the planning and unveiling of the memorial plaque in June 1970. KAČOR, M.: *Svědění hrdinů*, pp. 45–46.

brothers a military medal of the Golden Linden Tree (the ceremony was held in Cleveland on the occasion of the funeral of Ctirad Mašíň).<sup>106</sup>

At the same time, on the occasion of the 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the tragic event in Chlumec nad Cidlinou a local Civic Group of Those Culturally Minded put forward a new initiative – to construct a memorial site in the vicinity of the remaining memorial plaque from the 1970s. An inscription on the memorial plaque would offer an objective interpretation consulted with historians. It was to describe the raids on the police station as a “failed attempt to acquire machine guns for the purposes of organized anti-communist resistance,” which resulted in the “regrettable killing of Oldřich Kašík, the younger officer.” The memorial was designed by sculptor Aleš John as triangular pyramid with initials of names of the protagonists of the raid inscribed, the base of which would carry a plaque with the text. The Group won support on the part of the municipal culture council, whilst the town council in Chlumec nad Cidlinou did not recommend further deliberations of the matter. About 20 people came to the public presentation of the model of the monument.<sup>107</sup>

The same year saw an installation of children’s zodiac clocks on the colonnade in the city of Poděbrady. Lucie Seifertová, artist and co-author of the popular comics *Dějiny udatného českého národa* [The history of the brave Czech nation] placed on the tube of the clocks’ posters depicting the history of the country, including the mention of the Mašíň brothers which was an invitation to a cross-country run Poděbrady–Berlin. The artefact encountered a rejection similarly to the memorial plaque to Milan Paumer that was unveiled a year later. The plaque was paid by financial contributions made by anonymous donors. The location of the plaque was adopted by a tight majority at the Poděbrady city council despite the widespread concern that the plaque would become a target of vandals. A memorial plaque dedicated to the third member of the group who managed to escape to the West in 1953 was unveiled. It clearly refers to the activities of the entire group, as had been affirmed by Jiří Cihlář who had initiated the memorial site and is the President of the Milan Paumer Charitable Fund.<sup>108</sup>

106 WIRNITZER, Jan: Pohraničník, členové KSČ i milicí: Filip navrhl oběti Mašíňů na metál [The border guard, members of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia as well as the militias: Filip proposed a medal for the victims of the Mašíns]. In: *iDnes.cz* [online]. 2011-09-11 [quoted 2017-06-09]. Accessed at: [http://zpravy.idnes.cz/pohranicnik-clenove-ksc-i-milici-filip-navrhl-obeti-masinu-na-metal-1d7-/domaci.aspx?c=A110910\\_182754\\_domaci\\_jw](http://zpravy.idnes.cz/pohranicnik-clenove-ksc-i-milici-filip-navrhl-obeti-masinu-na-metal-1d7-/domaci.aspx?c=A110910_182754_domaci_jw). The Cleveland ceremony was preceded by an award-giving in 2008 when, during his visit in Washington, Prime Minister Miroslav Topolánek awarded Josef Mašíň “a private” prime ministerial plaque. Both acts triggered a wave of protests.

107 See CATULUS: Prezentace pamětní desky [A presentation of memorial plaque]. In: *Chlumecké listy*, No. 10 (2011), pp. 24–25. See VÍTKOVÁ, Kateřina: Lidí přišlo pár, o pomníku Mašíňů rozhodne vedení Chlumce [A handful of people came, the Chlumec council to decide on the fate of the Mašíns memorial]. In: *iDnes* [online]. 2011-09-15 [quoted 2017-06-09]. Accessed at: [www.hradec.idnes.cz/lidi-prislo-par-o-pomniku-masinu-rozhodne-vedeni-chlumce-p3Z/hradec-zpravy.aspx?c=A110915\\_1651955\\_hradec\\_zpravy\\_klu](http://www.hradec.idnes.cz/lidi-prislo-par-o-pomniku-masinu-rozhodne-vedeni-chlumce-p3Z/hradec-zpravy.aspx?c=A110915_1651955_hradec_zpravy_klu).

108 ČTK: Protikomunistický odbojář Paumer má pamětní desku v Poděbradech [Member of the anti-communist resistance Paumer has a memorial plaque in Poděbrady]. In: *deník.cz*

Milan Paumer himself initiated the commemoration of Zdena Mašíňová – who was arrested after her son emigrated; she was tried and died in prison – and to her husband, General Josef Mašíň, the hero of the so-called second resistance. The memorial plaque from 2003 complements an earlier memorial to the victims of Nazism and is located in the first court of the castle in Poděbrady. The member of the Mašíň group, Ctibor Novák, is listed among professional soldiers executed in political trials in the 1950s. The list is on a memorial plaque placed on the building of the General Staff of the Czech army in Prague – Dejvice. Nonetheless, the definition is quite formal in respect to his postwar professional path and in connection with his trial in which he was sentenced.<sup>109</sup> Zdena Mašíňová, Ctibor Novák, Zbyněk Janata, as well as Václav Švéda are also commemorated within the framework of the memorial arrangement of the burial site in Ďáblice.

The memory of the Mašíňs continues to divide the public into those for whom they embody anti-communist rebels and heroes, and those who consider them to be plain murderers who have nothing to do with the ideals of the resistance. In between the two extreme points a third view stands (supported, for instance, by Petr Zídek and Tomáš Zahradníček): it reflects the activities of the Mašíň group within the context of anti-communist resistance as “failure.”<sup>110</sup> The proponents of this view argue that the Mašíňs were led by pure intentions, yet, with their deeds, they committed evil that in no way weakened the regime. They had killed innocent people, destroyed their own family and they themselves survived.<sup>111</sup> “It is one of the duties of a warrior who takes justice into his own hands, to properly assess the situation, choose the enemy and the fighting means. In all of this they failed entirely,” historian Tomáš Zahradníček comments the Mašíň actions.<sup>112</sup>

Josef Švéda, the author of the monograph *Mašíňovský mýtus* [The Mašíň Myth] argues that the three positions correspond with the anti-communist myth and/or the communist anti-myth (in negative, though by no means dismissive sense) in respect to the so called consensual positions (which does not label the Mašíňs as murderers and thus stands more on the side of the myth). The Mašíň myth, along with the “consensual positions” are, within the framework of the “struggle for collective memory in Czech post-communism” part of the liberal ideological structure. The entire “struggle for the Mašíňs” is an expression of an attempt to “conquer the

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[online]. 2012-10-06 [quoted 2017-06-09]. Accessed at: [http://www.denik.cz/z\\_domova/protikomunisticky-odbojar-paumer-ma-pametni-desku-v-podebradech-20121006.html](http://www.denik.cz/z_domova/protikomunisticky-odbojar-paumer-ma-pametni-desku-v-podebradech-20121006.html).

109 See the chapter dedicated to Ctibor Novák in the monograph by Jan Němeček entitled *Mašíňové*, pp. 193–212.

110 See TICHÝ, Martin: Česká společnost ve světle mašíňovské diskuse: Co zaznělo po smrti Milana Paumera o skupině bratří Mašíňů [Czech society against the backdrop of the Mašíň debate: What was said after the death of Milan Paumer about the group of the Mašíň brothers]. In: *Paměť a dějiny*, Vol. 3, No. 3 (2010), pp. 120–124.

111 See: Historik Zídek k Mašíňům: Třetí odboj není odboj [Historian Zídek on the Mašíňs: The third resistance is no resistance]. In: *ČT24* [online]. Před půlnocí, 2011-08-18 [quoted 2017-06-09]. Accessed at: [www.ceskatelevize.cz/ct24/domaci/1247191-historik-zidek-k-masinum-treti-odboj-neni-odboj](http://www.ceskatelevize.cz/ct24/domaci/1247191-historik-zidek-k-masinum-treti-odboj-neni-odboj).

112 ZAHRADNÍČEK, Tomáš: Tragický omyl třetího odboje [The tragic error of the third resistance]. In: *MF Dnes* (28 July 2010), p. 8. Accessed at: [www.ceskasisir.cz/dok/d705.php](http://www.ceskasisir.cz/dok/d705.php).



past, to give it some concrete and firm meaning that would advocate and defend [the ideological] *status quo*.” That concerns the communist anti-myth as well as the current Mašín hero legend. Švédá notes an obvious development from anti-myth to myth (judging by the change in discussion from whether they ought to be fully rehabilitated to whether they deserve to be given awards). He predicts two possible directions of further development. The Mašíns are either to be fully included in the post-communist pantheon (where, as Švédá argues, they belong in part) or (in the case of a sudden regime change) they will fall in the abyss of memory.<sup>113</sup> In this respect one can equally interpret the tendency to the Mašín commemoration. It is interesting to note that the Confederation of Political Prisoners did not take part in any commemoration even though its president, Naděžda Kavalírová, stated that “the position of the Confederation on the Mašín brothers is absolutely clear: we faithfully stand by them.”<sup>114</sup>

### The Third Resistance and Memory

When Zdena Mašínová Jr. spoke of Václav Havel as of “just a spoiled mamma’s boy,”<sup>115</sup> she identified with the idiosyncratic Mašín straightforwardness the core of the distant attitude that developed shortly after November 1989 between the anti-communist resistance of the 1950s (primarily represented by the Confederation

113 With his semiotic analysis of the Mašín-related texts, Švédá wishes to counter the view about post-ideological literary works after November 1989. He comes to the conclusion that the “representation of the Mašín brothers as warriors for liberal democracy is no ‘less ideological’ than the stories about them from the times of communism.” He argues that the first to significantly contribute to the construction of the Mašín myth is the “official’ historical discourse,” whilst the so-called consensual positions (reflecting the attitude of the Mašíns not to reward and “let be” that was upheld by the Presidency of both Václav Havel and Václav Klaus) do not construct any original representations in connection with the discussions surrounding the Mašíns. (ŠVÉDA, J.: *Mašínovský mýtus*, pp. 188–198, 220–241, quoted from p. 235 and 240.) Françoise Mayer points out the controversial identification of narratives about the Mašíns with the Mašíns myth in her review: Doktorát jako nástroj ideologického boje: Nad knihou Josefa Švédy o “mašínovském mýtu” [A doctoral degree as an instrument of ideological struggle: A review of Josef Švédá’s monograph on the “Mašíns myth”]. In: *Babylon*, Vol. 12, No. 4 (2013), p. 6.

114 A record of 16 June 2004 from the public hearing of the Senate Committee for Education, Science, Culture, and Human Rights and petition concerning the resistance activities of the Mašín brothers is available online at: [http://www.senat.cz/xqw/xervlet/pssenat/dokumenty?cid=pssenat\\_dokumenty.pVisitor.f\\_folders&id=949&event-name=move](http://www.senat.cz/xqw/xervlet/pssenat/dokumenty?cid=pssenat_dokumenty.pVisitor.f_folders&id=949&event-name=move). Nonetheless, by 2008 at the latest, the relationship suffers as a result of controversy between the Confederation chairwoman Naděžda Kavalírová (1923–2017) and Zdena Mašínová Jr. (\*1933). See RAUŠOVÁ, Zuzana: Mašínová odmítla kvůli Kavalírové převzít vyznamenání pro otce [Because of Kavalírová, Mašínová refused to accept the award for her father]. In: *iDNES.cz* [online]. 2008-10-27 [quoted 2017-06-09]. Accessed at: [http://zpravy.idnes.cz/masinova-odmitla-kvuli-kavalirove-prevzit-vyznamenani-pro-otce-pxn/domaci.aspx?c=A081027\\_144517\\_domaci\\_if](http://zpravy.idnes.cz/masinova-odmitla-kvuli-kavalirove-prevzit-vyznamenani-pro-otce-pxn/domaci.aspx?c=A081027_144517_domaci_if).

115 Charta 77 nebyl pravý odboj: Rozhovor Jana Geberta se Zdenou Mašínovou mladší [Charter 77 was not genuine resistance: Jan Gebert’s interview with Zdena Mašínová Jr.]. In: *Týden*, Vol. 21, No. 47 (18 November 2014), pp. 34–39.

of Political Prisoners) and the “intellectual” dissident resistance after 1968 (personified by Havel). The anti-regime resistance between 1948 and 1989 falls under the umbrella of the “third resistance.” It is to give an impression that homogenous positions of its protagonists are merely an illusion used largely within the political discourse. This desired image of the homogeneity of society that generates “members of the third resistance” gives rise to many misunderstandings: the society of 1950 and (say) 1975 is divided by a quarter of a century, a timespan that brought fundamental societal changes. The reserved attitude between both groups also includes painting a mutually critical image. On the one hand, one can note disregard to dissidents who are portrayed virtually as loafers and promiscuous drug addicts, who had never been confronted with actual repressions by the communist regime and, after the Velvet Revolution, were raised (by Havel) to politics and public posts. The other group shows a condescending attitude to the officials and “deserving” political prisoners allied in the Confederation as those who are mentally stranded in the 1950s and fail to understand that times have changed.

The discourse within the Confederation of Political Prisoners in the early 1990s was on the part of the political prisoners of the 1950s a reaction to the fact that during both of the post-February 1948 milestones, i.e. the Prague Spring and the time after November 1989, they received no social satisfaction. In the first period, they were overshadowed by reform Communists and in the latter by dissidents (including those from among the former reform Communists). Against the “winning” discourse of the dissent (with the fall of communism at its core, along with those who had participated in its dismantlement) the Confederation emphasizes the need to view the communist regime from its inception. From the perspective of its first victims the group appeals for the need to carry out genuine de-communization, the ideas of which have been strongly influenced by the specific prison experience. Political prisoners put the concept of the third resistance against the majority consensus about legal continuity of the post-November constitution and the thick line behind the past. There they represent the first warriors against communism. The constructed image of the third resistance that highlights historical continuity with resistance during both World Wars was a means used by political prisoners to demand its recognition (*inter alia* by referring to Act No. 255/1946 Coll., that recognizes anti-Nazi resistance during the Second World War). It was also related to the legitimization of its armed actions.<sup>116</sup>

Even though the *de facto* and/or *de iure* recognition of the third resistance remained unheeded in the 1990s, the image of the three resistance waves gradually filled public space. The Confederation of Political Prisoners is without precedent the most active association in promoting and opening memorial sites in the Czech Republic. It is the commemorative activities where its social influence is most powerful. In the cases of memorial sites dedicated to the theme of resistance, traditionally there is still slight prevalence of the connection of the second and third resistance that is identified as commemorations “related to the period of “totalitarianism,” “lack

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116 See MAYER, F.: *Češi a jejich komunismus*, pp. 166–187.

of freedom” or “lawlessness.” The dedications are getting notably emancipated: whilst in the 1990s the landscape of memorial sites was dominated by those who saw political prisoners as victims, the more recent commemorations increasingly depict them as acting forces of the resistance. Apart from the new post-November 1989 memorials to the three waves of resistance (for instance in Brno, Olomouc or Opava) most cases involve memorials (usually memorial plaques) placed on earlier memorials – being from interwar Czechoslovakia or from the period that immediately followed the Second World War. That creates a repeated layering of memories that climax in the “third resistance re-dedication”: most hitherto memorials were not related to the resistance, but commemorated wartime victims (in Česká Lípa, Hradec Králové, Suchdol nad Lužnicí and elsewhere). Thus the category of re-commemoration includes a handful of memorials erected during the communist era that were revitalized after 1989 (such as the memorial site in Brandýs nad Labem originally dedicated to anti-Nazi fighters; a memorial to the Red Army in Nový Bydžov).<sup>117</sup> As Françoise Mayer points out, the third resistance enables to put different experiences under a single identity, even though most political prisoners of the 1950s were not actual members of the resistance and some resistance activists who managed to leave for exile were not political prisoners.<sup>118</sup>

A question arises what memory is thus (jointly) created by memorial sites commemorating violent acts that accompanied civic resistance to the communist regime. Additionally, one might ask whether such a memory means anti-communist resistance or struggle or not.

First and foremost, commemoration explored in this study presents merely a part of the overall documentation of memorial sites related to the communist regime.<sup>119</sup> The presented material does not cover all the memorial sites related to events connected to armed violence,<sup>120</sup> that was not characteristic for anti-communist resistance in the 1950s. Yet it was not a unique phenomenon either (i.e. it was not merely about symptomatic “excesses”). In connection with the ever-vibrant discussion surrounding the Mašín brothers a question keeps arising whether members of the resistance had the moral right to kill those who served as power pillars of the regime or not. Yet, further knowledge and understanding would benefit more

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117 See [www.pametnimista.usd.cas.cz](http://www.pametnimista.usd.cas.cz).

118 MAYER, F.: *Češi a jejich komunismus*, p. 187.

119 A significant portion (over 150) of a total of ca. 600 are memorial sites identified in the project as symbolic which, without concrete dedication, represent general commemoration of (virtually without exception) victims of communist repression. The initiative largely comes from the Confederation of Political Prisoners.

120 These should also include the commemorations of the killing of an SNB constable in a bombing attack at the Secretariat of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia (Milevsko, Obděnice), shooting of SNB constables during an arrest attempt (Uherské Hradiště, Vsetín), killing of a member of the guardian battalion during a raid (Prague 7), killing of an alleged provocateur of the State Security in Hodonín (Dolní Bojanovice) and of an informer of the State Security (Svatý Hostýn) or the cases of killing persons suspected of acting as provocateurs as part of the anti-regime groups (Tišnov, Ostrava) and some others.

from asking whether one side indeed represented members of the resistance and the other the pillars of the regime.

Petr Zídek replied to the first part of the question quite brusquely: the third resistance never existed.<sup>121</sup> He identified anti-communist resistance in light of historical knowledge as an “unsustainable construct” and its codification to be a component of political proclamations enforced by part of the political establishment as mistaken (Zídek is by no means alone to uphold such an argument).<sup>122</sup> He argues that the activity of the handful and isolated anti-communist groups does not meet the attributes of resistance as we understand it in connection with the two World Wars. He further points out that critical analyses of documents of the repressive units as *de facto* the only sources available (at the time when virtually no witnesses are still alive) makes it difficult to reliably reconstruct past events and credibly separate authentic anti-regime activities (or their extent) from initiatives that had been provoked. Zídek considers armed resistance to be “an altogether marginal phenomenon that involved a couple of hundred individuals.”<sup>123</sup> Such an approach gives rise to additional questions. Is denial of the third resistance necessarily an expression of overall scepticism about anti-communist resistance and struggle after February 1948? Is the authenticity of anti-regime manifestations met by the “unarmed” faction within the anti-communist structures that worked with political or intelligence instruments (such as appeals, leaflets, information channels to the West, etc.)? Alternatively, is it represented by the principal ethical and civic positions upheld in direct confrontation with violence exerted by the regime (General Heliodor Píka, Milada Horáková, Father Josef Toufar)?

Let us return to the other part of the aforementioned question: whether the victims of armed resistance in the 1950s were power pillars of the regime. In this context, a major difference arises between the *de facto* accidental victims of the Mašín group and the victims of other “political murders.” In the latter case the victims came from a clearly identifiable circle of people identified by membership in the power structure of the regime. No matter how insignificant their status was within the power hierarchy, for the residents in small villages the local Communist Party officials serving the national committees were the carriers of actual power. Their pressure on individuals (no matter what were the motives at the individual level) was able to acquire a wholly existential scale. It is thus equally possible to clearly identify members of the Border Guard with the regime and its power structure and, consequently, as enemies of the armed traffickers and couriers.

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121 ZÍDEK, Petr: Chiméra třetího odboje [The pipedream of the third resistance]. In: *Lidové noviny*, insert “Orientace” (18–19 September 2010), p. 24.

122 See also Historik Zídek k Mašínům ([www.ceskatelevize.cz/ct24/domaci/1247191-historik-zidek-k-masinum-treti-odboj-neni-odboj](http://www.ceskatelevize.cz/ct24/domaci/1247191-historik-zidek-k-masinum-treti-odboj-neni-odboj)). See, e.g., ZÁHRADNÍČEK, T.: Tragický omyl třetího odboje ([www.ceskasibir.cz/dok/d705.php](http://www.ceskasibir.cz/dok/d705.php)); IDEM: Žádný zákon o odboji [No law on the resistance]. In: *MF Dnes* (25 August 2010), p. 8. Accessed at: [www.ceskasibir.cz/dok/d709.php](http://www.ceskasibir.cz/dok/d709.php).

123 Historik Zídek k Mašínům ([www.ceskatelevize.cz/ct24/domaci/1247191-historik-zidek-k-masinum-treti-odboj-neni-odboj](http://www.ceskatelevize.cz/ct24/domaci/1247191-historik-zidek-k-masinum-treti-odboj-neni-odboj)).

When, in 2010, a group of historians published their critical position on the draft legislation on the third resistance and the Senate withdrew the bill, the Confederation of Political Prisoners did not welcome the initiative with an understanding. It was not indeed an astonishing response, considering how long political prisoners endeavoured to achieve recognition (plus when it seemed that the case was again put *ad acta*). That was despite the fact that the position was not against the meaning of the planned legislation, quite on the contrary.<sup>124</sup> The tone of the public debate that accompanied political enforcement of the act on the third resistance heightened along with the growing tendency to appropriate the memory of resistance along with the interpretation of the resistance history, along with their political instrumentalization.<sup>125</sup> Politicians from the Civic Democratic Party (ODS) that were in the Cabinet compared the critical voices raised about the concept of the third resistance to communist propaganda.<sup>126</sup> They kept excluding the critics from the public debate.<sup>127</sup> Voices came from the clearly anti-communist ranks of “deniers.”<sup>128</sup> The adoption of the bill in July 2011 was accompanied by the yet largest (and most media-covered) “protest” commemorative events in Babice and Čelákovice that were jointly organized by the Communist Party and the Club of the Czech Borderlands.

The narrative presented by the Confederation of Political Prisoners to address the public since the 1990s was largely constructed on the testimonies of political prisoners of the 1950s and their documentation (particularly during the period of the Prague Spring and in exile) and continues to be reproduced essentially unchanged through oral transmission by politicians and the media on a whole range

124 The position largely pointed out at the questionable categorization of the resistance, particularly in connection with the future practical challenge of a fair solution to such a distinction. See, e.g., ČT24: Historikové kritizují zákon o třetím odboji, pravice jej hájí [Historians criticize the law on the third resistance; the right advocates it]. In: ČT24 [online]. 2010-12-2 [quoted 2017-06-09]. Accessed at: <http://www.ceskatelesee.cz/ct24/domaci/1300327-historikove-kritizuji-zakon-o-tretim-odboji-pravice-jej-haji>.

125 For the genesis see: TRUSINA, Šimon: *Analýza přijetí zákona o protikomunistickém odboji a odporu pomocí teorie více proudů* [An analysis of the adoption of the law on the anti-communist struggle and resistance using multiple stream theory]. A master's thesis submitted at the Faculty of Social Studies at Masaryk University in Brno in 2013. Accessed at: [www.is.muni.cz/th/144210/fss\\_m/DP\\_Trusina.pdf](http://www.is.muni.cz/th/144210/fss_m/DP_Trusina.pdf).

126 Such a statement came from, for instance, Prime Minister Petr Nečas at a meeting with representatives of the Confederation of Political prisoners. See ZÍDEK, P.: Chiméra třetího odboje.

127 Response by Minister of Defence Alexandr Vondra to the position of historians on the law on the third resistance. See: SPURNÝ, Matěj: Proč se historikům nelíbí zákon o třetím odboji? [Why do historians not like the law on the third resistance?]. In: *Aktuálně.cz* [online]. 2010-12-10 [quoted 2017-06-09]. Accessed at: <http://blog.aktualne.cz/blogy/matej-spurny.php?itemid=11531>.

128 Documentarist Martin Vadas in conversation with Josef Mašín includes Petr Zídek and Tomáš Zahradníček among historians “who make their reputation as the so-called denier of the third resistance.” See: Jsou tři kategorie – odboj, odpor a disent ([http://www.totalita.cz/odbsk/odbsk\\_masin\\_rozh\\_mj\\_01\\_01.pdf](http://www.totalita.cz/odbsk/odbsk_masin_rozh_mj_01_01.pdf)).

of anniversaries and official occasions.<sup>129</sup> It receives negligible reflection by new research, even though many of the traditional interpretations have been inevitably surpassed by later findings. It is difficult to keep a blind eye to parallels to the manner with which the Club of the Czech Borderlands operates with memory and the narrative of safeguarding the national borders. Whist coming from different positions, they have established themselves in the public space as two normative memories that are characterized by closeness within their own constructed narratives (those of the border guards and those of political prisoners). It is the memory of the experienced past and the non-transferrable experience, “their” memory – of both associations (the Club of the Czech Borderlands and the Confederation of Political Prisoners) – that allows it to be used by political organizations of either a similar or comparable ideology. Yet they find it uneasy to open “everything” – alternative historiographic accounts and societal reflections.<sup>130</sup> Both narratives (about the “trespassers” of the borders as enemies of communism and/or the agents of anti-communist resistance) endeavour to offer a distinct image of the past and a clear message about who is the victim and who holds the right to historical truth.

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*Translated by Lucia Faltinova*

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129 See, e.g., RAMBOUSEK, Ota – GRUBER, Ladislav: *Zpráva dokumentační komise K 231* [A Report by the Documentation Commission K 231] [Toronto], Členové dokumentační komise K 231 v exilu 1973.

130 The current news of the support by President Miloš Zeman to the Club of the Czech Borderlands also triggered controversial reactions See, e.g., ZELENKA, Jakub: Zeman poděkoval “za vlastenectví” Klubu českého pohraničí. Ten přitom vnitro a tajné služby řadí k extremistům [Zeman thanked the Club of the Czech Borderlands for “patriotism.” Yet the Ministry of Interior and the intelligence services rank the club among extremists]. In: *ihned.cz* [online]. 2017-06-09. Accessed at: <https://domaci.ihned.cz/c1-65761580-zeman-podekoval-za-vlastenectvi-klubu-ceskeho-pohranici-ten-pritom-vnitro-a-tajne-sluzby-radi-k-extremistum>.