

Visegrad scholarship final report  
**Child welfare discourses and practices in the Czech lands:  
the segregation of Roma and disabled children during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries**

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***Introduction to the research and further plans:*** My post-doctoral project focuses on the epistemic communities (special educators, physicians, helping professionals, scholars) and their impact on developing the practices around the Roma and disabled children during the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries in the Czech lands. In line with the recognition of epistemic communities according to their ideological platforms, I trace the eugenic discourse, which seems me a key driving force for the Czech case of special education and social care for the Roma and disabled children. Two specific traits regarding this discourse in the Czech lands should be taken into account: first, the priority of assimilative eugenics and health mode of life as the grounds for selecting procedures, second – the turbulent formation of institutions targeted to intervening with the Roma and disabled people.

The methodological framework recognises two main domains, the connection between ideas (discourses) and procedures (institutions), and the mutual stipulation of public rhetoric and professional approaches towards the Roma and disability. Juxtaposing these domains provides more complete insight into exploring the continuity between the past and the contemporary practices, which obviously can be marked as segregation. The general timeline of the research covers the pre-eugenic period (1850-1900), the prosperity of eugenics (1900-1948), the latent operation of eugenics (1948-??). At OSA I was focused on the socialist period, precisely 1948-1975. Because of transforming my primarily task, I am going to spend at the archive more two weeks this year later in order to complete gathering the materials related to the late socialist period.

***Primary aims and its modifying*** While submitting my application I was going to focus on the Western influence on the socialist policy towards the Roma and disabled children, during my stay here, I built this aim into the set of following wider objects:

(1) to recognize the realms of public and social policy where the eugenic discourse was reproduced, and to indicate the functions of this discourse in terms of legitimizing policy making and delegitimizing particular social groups;

(2) to connect the narrative of public discourses around the Roma and disabled children with the coordinative discourses applied by professionals.

I had revised my targets due to the outcomes of my search in the National archive in Prague, and the archive of Brno in February-April, 2014.

My **search strategy** was made up of two dimensions, which I tried to juxtapose: (1) to gather materials consistently in terms of timeline regarding the major changes in the political situation during the socialist period (In June I worked with the first decade of the socialist period, and in July I focused on the 1960s and 1970s) and (2) to arrange the search from exploring wider contexts (youth organization, social sciences, political enemies) to more particular realms (special education, policy towards Gypsies, family policy). The major part of materials was derived from the collection *Records of Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty Research Institute, subfonds 30: Czechoslovak unit* (see Attachment 1). Alongside I analysed professional periodicals in order to refine the arguments in favour of the continuity between the socialist and earlier periods.

**Outcomes yet interlocutory** I am writing a book about the history of eugenics in the Czech lands, and during my stay at the OSA, I revised the structure of the part regarding the socialist period. In order to recognise the role of eugenics in public policy, three functions, legitimizing the power of authorities, delegitimizing the enemies of regime, disseminating new practices in labour and family life, would be traced over the socialist period. Exploring the system of institutions and professional approaches would be divided into the three interconnected chapters too: the special education for disabled children, the reeducation for young offenders, and the education for the Roma children. Before the beginning of my investigation at the OSA, I completed to explore the coordinative discourses around the Roma and disabled children, and worked out the consistent concept regarding the formation of institutions and discourses among professionals. But some of my findings here (publications in professional periodicals and some reports of the abroad stays of the Czechoslovakian helping and health professionals at the Western universities) have supplemented this part of my research especially in terms of the continuity with the previous periods (the Protectorate and the Third Rep.) and the role of Western influence.

Working out the hypothesis that the several waves of campaigns against the enemies of regime permeated reproducing the eugenic rhetoric, I examined four campaigns: against former people (the early 1950s), bureaucracy (the early 1960s), mid-class (maloměšťané in the late 1960s) and revisionists (after the Warsaw pact invasion). All campaigns exploited the image of degenerate in performing the enemies and simultaneously argued their threat for the healthy nation. For instance, in the article *Formy* published in the newspaper *Zemědělské noviny* (November 29 1964, p.4, the source *Records of Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty Research Institute, subfonds 30-3 box 75*), the bullhorn of the campaign against bureaucracy (according to the internal report about the Staff of this newspaper prepared in 1965, the source *Records of Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty Research Institute, subfonds 30-3 box56a, Item 2188*), the approach of bureaucrats was equalized with pretending of disabled people to behave in order to the public expectations:

The principal of the boarding school, which is comprehensively described by the concept defectology (studies mental disorders) and where he as an educator has to work with the mentally limited parents and the children kin to them, told me about one letter written by one of these poors (does not matter whom but somebody very important...): starting: "Dear comrade", and continued: "Long live peace! I kindly ask you to give Pepik "F" in school. Long live Five Years. Pepek is Good-will. Glory to Labour". It gave me the shudders...Deepening my

shock, the principal told me: "Even in this backward brain there is the idea that if you wish to advance yourself you should learn particular phrases and forms..."

It is remarkable that the campaign against revisionists (1968-1974) directly cited the previous campaigns and posed itself as a successor of earlier debates which were developed in right direction but did not achieve the success. Thus, I am going to develop this domain of my research especially in order to recognize the compatibility of public discourse around the enemies of nation and professional discourse around the Roma and disabled people. Building "the Roma question" into wider contexts should overcome the current trend of positive discrimination regarding the Roma people typical of many approaches aimed at integrating them.

In my interlocutory presentation, I mentioned the other realm of tracing the eugenic discourse in public policy: the changes in the position of officials towards the Roma question. I consider that sliding contingency of the official approach and the traditional intolerant view on the Roma operated in favour of legitimizing of authorities, especially after such events as replacing Zapotocky by Novotny in 1958 and the invasion in 1968. Constructing the Roma issues in terms of backwardness and special measures legitimised not only the authorities making them more affiliated with people but the policy towards educating the Roma children as well.

I am going to complete the part of my book dedicated to the socialist period by the end of this year, discuss it with the OSA people in December and would be glad to continue my cooperation with the OSA in my further studies.

Attachment 1 Materials collected during the stay at the OSA

Date	The Source: fonds, subfonds, series, box	Number of images
2.6	Planning search and training to use equipment	
3.6	RFE/RL 300/30/2 42	28
4.6	RFE/RL 300/30/2 18 56	1 29
5.6	RFE/RL 300/30/2 55	24
	Časopis českých lékařů	53
6.6	RFE/RL 300/30/2 180	18
10.6	Časopis českých lékařů	168
11.6	Časopis českých lékařů	43
12.6	RFE/RL 300/30/2 53 57	30 70
	Časopis českých lékařů	14
13.6	RFE/RL 300/30/2 72 120	25 51
16.6	RFE/RL 300/30/2 21	71
17.6	RFE/RL 300/30/2 181	15
18.6	RFE/RL 300/30/2 180 185 215	8 10 13
	Časopis českých lékařů	218
19.6	RFE/RL 300/30/2 9	31
20.6	RFE/RL 300/30/2 132	49
23.6	Hygiena práce	236
24.6	Časopis českých lékařů	92
25.6	Hygiena práce	70
26.6	Hygiena práce	70
27.6	Hygiena práce	71
30.6	RFE/RL 300/30/2 67a	88
1.7.	RFE/RL 300/30/2 136 137	45 40
2.7.	RFE/RL 300/30/2 170	34
3.7.	RFE/RL 300/30/2 69 70 71	33 31 14
4.7.	RFE/RL 300/30/2 37a	179
7.7.	RFE/RL 300/30/2 35 a	91
8.7.	RFE/RL 300/30/2 36a	17
9.7.	RFE/RL 300/30/2 4a 6a 7a	4 6 2
10.7.	RFE/RL 300/30/2 25a	18
11.7.	RFE/RL 300/30/2 73	38
14.7.	RFE/RL 300/30/2 66 67	3 61
15.7.	RFE/RL 300/30/2 68 76a	69 147
16.7.	RFE/RL 300/30/2 1a 56a	29 54
17.7.	RFE/RL 300/30/2 45a	57
18.7.	RFE/RL 300/30/2 75a	69
21.7.	RFE/RL 300/30/2 46 76	19 37
22.7.	RFE/RL 300/30/5 50 51 56	29 107 130
23.7	RFE/RL 300/30/5 27 29 35	84 3 40 40
24.7	RFE/RL 300/30/5 9 10 30 31 101	45 41 86 88 54
25.7	RFE/RL 300/30/5 64	94
28.7.	RFE/RL 300/30/5 44 45 46 66 98	177 25 63 58 70
29.7.	RFE/RL 300/30/5 33 36 97 99	211 105 31 35
30.7.	RFE/RL 300/30/5 1 2	30 40
31.7.	Časopis českých lékařů	35

images from journals 1070 microfilms 1658 boxes 1686 totally 4414

