

Martina Benčuríková, PhD. candidate, Department of Modern History, Slovak Academy of Sciences

Final report : Open Society Archives Visegrad Scholarship
Czechoslovakia and support for international terrorism

June – July 2017

Research aims

The aims of proposed project for the Visegrad Scholarship was to broaden and complement the reference body of primary and secondary sources I refer to in the PhD thesis in progress on topic Czechoslovakia and support for international terrorism with emphasis to West German terrorist groups.

1970s terrorism is very different from contemporary political violence: whereas radical Islamic terrorists today form a web of decentralized local actors without clear hierarchies, who are linked together by the internet, the „old terrorism“ of the Cold War era was a group phenomenon, with clear structures, and primarily secular by nature. The main sponsors, Soviet satellites in the Middle East and the Eastern Bloc, not only tolerated the presence of terrorist on their soil, but provided them with training, weapons, explosives, and safe passage. Long-term relationship between terrorist groups and Czechoslovakia, as well as other Soviet satellites, can be briefly defined as a constant balancing between control and support their activities, ergo an attempt to take use of their terrorist activities behind the "iron curtain" in their favor. Czechoslovak Intelligence Service (StB) had well-researched compendium of activities of Arab terrorists groups, but in relation to support of West European terrorism is the situation not that clear.

The attitude of West European terrorist groups to the Eastern bloc was rather ambiguous. As anti-imperialists, they were critics of Soviet-style orthodox Communism but as the principal antagonist of the detested United States, the Soviets were never subjects to more than academic critique and the liberating aspirations behind the Iron Curtain to less than indifference. For example, Red Army Faction, West German far-left militant group,

regularly received the low-key support from Communist East Germany and largely used transit possibilities and weaponry from Soviet Union and its satellites.

Though, many aspects and mechanisms of 1970s and 1980s terrorism are still largely unknown to the greater public, since the media and historical research tend to personalize political violence, while neglecting vital structural aspects such as financing, training and sheltering. Given the current state of the research, there is an approach that links German and global perspectives more closely. Basic assumption of my research is that the genesis and the longevity of social revolutionary terrorism can not be explained in terms of national logic alone. A transnational approach not only allows us to see “more” and “differently,” it fundamentally changes the view of the whole. In this case too, the transnational field actually has its own particular logic.

The proposed research project conducted at the OSA Archives, is addressing Czechoslovakia as the subject of international relations according to existing terrorist networks in the 1970s. In that respect during the research period at the OSA Archives conducted in June and July 2016, I analysed documentation referring to czechoslovak and East German foreign policy, its media coverage and diplomatic challenges related to that.

Sources used

To examine the relationship of Czechoslovakia to both West and East Germany further, my research focused on the Records of Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty Research Institute, precisely on Czechoslovak unit (300-30-7) and East German Subject Files (HU OSA 300-3-1) and the main objective lied within the years 1968-1972. Czechoslovak Intelligence Service sent agents to infiltrate RFE's headquarters and was provided with a good deal of information about the activities of communist espionage. Therefore I focused on so-called RFE/RL background research reports and situation reports concerning various historical controversies. Among the most valuable documents are those dealing with Czechoslovak arms deliveries. Czechoslovakia, one of the greatest exporter of gun machinery in the world, held predominant position on international scene related to Palestinian terrorist agenda. Since machine gun Scorpio vz. 61 was part of the armament of almost every far-left militant fighter, it is rather difficult to trace up direct links to Czechoslovak ammunition factories. Newspaper clippings in HU OSA 300-30-4 : 15 provides very valuable contemporary investigative journalism dealing with Czechoslovakia as an international player in arms trading. Extensive coverage of diplomatic split between United Kingdom and CSSR due to

arms found at the disposition of the Irish terrorist group IRA (Irish Republican Army) in 1972 represented CSSR as one of the main supporter of international terrorism. The series includes daily press releases, newspaper clippings from German and British periodicals, transcripts of the monitoring of the Czechoslovak Radio and Television broadcasts, Background Reports Situation Reports and RFE Research Reports.

Apart from the archival research per se consultations and conversations with experts at OSA were very useful during my stay, particularly those with prof. István Rév, Dr. András Mink, and Zsuzsa Zádori. I would also like to thank to the OSA staff for helping me organize my stay. I highly appreciate the possibility to study secondary literature at CEU Library and the creative environment thanks to other OSA grantees from various research backgrounds.

OSA Archival Collections:

HU OSA 300 Records of Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty Research Institute

HU OSA East German Subject Files 300-3-1

HU OSA 300-3-1 : 8 (Communist Party: Criticism, 1961-1971)

HU OSA 300-3-1 : 9 (Communist Party: Deviations, 1956-1972)

HU OSA 300-3-1 : 33 (Labor: Control and Disciplinary Measures, 1957-1972)

HU OSA 300-3-1 : 38 (Resistance and Criticism of regime, 1958-1968)

HU OSA 300-30- Czechoslovak Unit – Old Code Subject Files II.

HU OSA 300-30-3 : 7 (Arm Deliveries, 1962-1966)

HU OSA 300-30-3 : 40 (CSSR Diplomatic Service, 1962-1966)

HU OSA 300-30-3 : 69 (Criticism, 1962-1966)

HU OSA 300-30- Czechoslovak Unit – Old Code Subject Files III.

HU OSA 300-30-4 : 88 (Various, 1967-1971)

HU OSA 300-30-4 : 98 (Various, 1967-1971)

HU OSA 300-30-4 : 15 (Arms Deliveries, 1967-1971)

HU OSA 300-30 Czechoslovak Unit – Old Code Subject Files VI.

HU OSA 300-30-7 : 316 – 321 (Foreign Relations, 1972-1991)

HU OSA 300-30-7 : 52 (Arm Deliveries, 1972-1991)

**HU OSA 300-2-3 East European Research and Analysis Department - Subject
Files Relating to Czechoslovakia**

HU OSA 300-2-3 : 71 (Western Cooperation, 1974-1976)