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The Rehabilitation Process in Czechoslovakia: Party and Popular Responses

Kevin McDermott and Klára Pinerová

The release and rehabilitation of political prisoners in Czechoslovakia occurred in a staggered and long drawn-out process beginning in the mid-1950s and culminating only after the collapse of the communist state in 1989-90. Following Stalin's death and the first tentative steps towards de-Stalinisation in the USSR, a few high-ranking Czechoslovak communist prisoners were released and several official party commissions were established to examine the trials and purges of the years 1948-54, but only the last, operating in the liberalised atmosphere of 1968, gave a reasonably comprehensive and accurate account of Stalinist repression. Following the crushing of the Prague Spring reforms in 1968, rehabilitation became a victim of the pro-Soviet 'normalisation' regime. In addition to the party reviews, general amnesties were passed in 1953, 1955, 1957, 1960, 1962 and 1965, the main one of which was the 9 May 1960 presidential decree which freed, albeit conditionally, over 5,000 political prisoners. Our chapter, which is based primarily on materials in the Communist Party and Security Services archives, has two broad aims. First, to analyse how and why the Czechoslovak party leaders sought to limit and control the challenges of de-Stalinisation and political rehabilitation via party commissions and amnesties; and second, to explore a crucial issue which has been largely overlooked in existing historiography - the reaction of the party rank-and-file membership and citizenry to the release of political internees, the attitudes of the returnees themselves and the implications of these responses for state-society relations. To what extent was party discipline undermined by the revelations of Stalinist crimes? How far did the reactions of 'ordinary' citizens and the returnees pose a threat to the regime? What were the repercussions of rehabilitation for the

fraught Czech-Slovak relationship? Or, conversely, is there evidence that Czechs and Slovaks were broadly supportive of the amnesties? Was the state-society nexus in any way strengthened by the rehabilitation process?

Historical Context

The Communist Party of Czechoslovakia (*Komunistická strana Československa* - KSČ) seized power in a bloodless semi-constitutional coup in late February 1948. Thereafter, the immediate political goal for the communists was to consolidate and extend their monopoly of power and state-sponsored terror was a prime method in this quest. In the following months and years, persecution affected all classes and strata of society: communists, non-communists and anti-communists, Czechs and Slovaks, young and old, men and women, blue and white-collar workers, farmers, intellectuals, students, religious orders and the military. Numerically, it is still impossible to arrive at precise overall figures of victims as the term 'repression' covers a wide variety of meanings and measures: non-judicial murder, judicial execution, detention in labour camps or prison, enforced military service, expulsion from the party, loss of employment and status, and a host of other social and material restrictions including evictions from dwellings, exclusions from schools and universities, arbitrary reduction or cessation of pension payments and confiscation of personal property. Regardless of these perennial uncertainties, archival findings indicate that just under 90,000 citizens were prosecuted for 'political crimes' in the years 1948-54, over 22,000 were incarcerated in 107 labour camps or 'units' (*pracovní útvary*), around 60,000 suspect soldiers, conscripts and others were condemned to back-breaking work in special construction battalions, and as many as 1,157 people perished in detention.¹

It is also widely agreed that between October 1948 and December 1952, 233 death penalties were pronounced, of which 178 were carried out. More death penalties were approved in 1953 and 1954, a total of 181 being passed between 1953 and 1960, although this number includes 'ordinary' criminals. Tens of others were shot while trying to escape from prison or attempting to flee the borders. Among the communist elite, 278 high-ranking party functionaries were convicted, but it must be noted that communist victims represented a tiny fraction of the total sentenced (some have estimated a mere 0.1 per cent). The most notorious show trial was that of the former KSČ General Secretary, Rudolf Slánský, and thirteen co-defendants most of whom were Jewish. Eleven were sentenced to death and

three received life in prison. In addition, purges and expulsions reduced the size of the party by several hundred thousand in the years 1949-54.²

The legacy of Stalinist terror in Czechoslovakia was far-reaching. At a very profound level, the political trials 'were a manifestation of inhumanity that shook socialism to its foundations both in Czechoslovakia and abroad. The effects were felt in all areas: economic, political and cultural, in the minds of the people, in relations between citizens and in the country's international standing.'³ To take just one example: in political and everyday life, the numerous violations of the law and the constant search for the 'enemy within' bred mistrust and suspicion, engendered widespread feelings of fear and legal insecurity in the population, and undermined public faith in the constitution and politics in general. In many ways, then, the persecutions and purges of the period 1948-54 lay at the root of the social crises that culminated in the Prague Spring of 1968. But even the cataclysmic and painful re-evaluations of the past associated with Alexander Dubček's 'socialism with a human face' did not adequately fulfil the demands for rehabilitation and justice on the part of the unjustly condemned. Indeed, the wounds are still apparent to this day, an ugly and unwanted reminder of a dark past which implicated and tainted too many people.

The Party Elite and Rehabilitation

The complex rehabilitation process in communist Czechoslovakia unfolded in three interlinked phases. The initial phase occurred in the mid-1950s following Stalin's death in March 1953. The KSČ belatedly responded to this cataclysmic event by establishing a party commission to review the cases against leading communists. This investigation was boosted by Nikita Khrushchev's famous 'secret speech' in February 1956 at the 20th congress of the Soviet party in which he audaciously attacked Stalin's 'cult of personality'. The second phase began in the early 1960s after Khrushchev's renewed 'de-Stalinisation' drive in 1961-62 and culminated in two other inconclusive party revisions of the trials. The final and most dramatic phase is closely associated with the reforms of the Prague Spring, which were curtailed by the Warsaw Pact invasion of August 1968. These official party reviews were punctuated by a series of presidential amnesties which cumulatively saw the release of many thousands of people, 'ordinary' criminals as well as communist and non-communist political prisoners. We will discuss these three waves of rehabilitation before assessing popular reactions to the liberation and return of Stalinist victims.

Stalin's demise and Khrushchev's sensational 'secret speech' ushered in an uneven rehabilitation process in the USSR and across communist Eastern Europe. It is fair to say that the Czechoslovak party was not at the forefront of these momentous revisions. The main reason for this stubborn recalcitrance was the fact that the incumbent leaders in the mid-1950s - men such as party boss Antonín Novotný, President Antonín Zápotocký, Prime Minister Viliam Široký and Slovak party leader Karol Bacílek - were intimately connected with the Stalinist repressions. They were fully cognisant of the illegal methods used by the security services to extract confessions from the accused and, thus, were fearful that their own positions, and that of the regime as a whole, would be seriously threatened by unearthing the crimes of the recent past. Nevertheless, under pressure from Moscow and events in neighbouring Hungary and Poland and in response to internal complaints and demands for redress, they reluctantly decided to inaugurate a partial review of the trials and to release a number of prisoners, initially several fairly high-ranking communist victims. The first concrete step in this process was the presidential amnesty of 4 May 1953, under the terms of which 13,674 persons were pardoned and released from prison, most of whom were judicially convicted criminals. This substantially reduced the total number of prisoners, from 46,021 in 1953 to 31,840 in 1954.⁴

The 1953 amnesty was followed by the establishment on 10 January 1955 of the first of the party committees into the political trials, euphemistically known in official parlance as 'distortions of socialist legality'. The commission took the name of its chair, Rudolf Barák, the Minister of the Interior. According to Novotný, its specific and strictly limited task was to examine 'some of the post-1948 court cases with reference to the sentences' of certain leading communists: the mass repression of non-communists was expressly excluded from its purview, as was, at first, the incendiary Slánský trial. Hence, the Barák Commission, which operated until autumn 1957, was 'not concerned with rehabilitation, or with endeavouring....to probe the violations of the law and their causes; [their] chief consideration was to salve the conscience of the Politburo by putting a political full stop to the matter.'⁵ Given the immense sensitivity of the issue, the whole undertaking was carried out *in camera*, perpetuating the custom of working behind closed doors, and even eminent party functionaries, let alone the Czechoslovak public, were unaware of the commission's existence. The main problem was that the inquiry remained at all times under the tight political subordination of the Stalinised KSČ Politburo and all results were subject to its approval. Neither did the composition of the commission

inspire confidence - the majority of members, including Barák, were heavily involved in the depredations of the Stalinist era.

For all these reasons the commission's reports and recommendations were tentative in the extreme. Of the 300 cases examined, only in fifty two were the original sentences reduced. In addition, in 1955 and 1956 a few individuals were conditionally released for good behaviour, the most noteworthy being Artur London and Vavro Hajdů, who were defendants in the Slánský trial, and Josef Smrkovský, who was to play a highly influential role in the Prague Spring. However, thesefortunates were not politically or socially rehabilitated.⁶ Other prominent victims like Gustáv Husák, a leading Slovak communist tried and sentenced in 1954, and Evžen Löbl, another of the Slánský 'conspirators', were left languishing in jail until 1960. Rather than implicate the current party leaders in the illegalities, the Barák Commission transferred the blame to the State Security apparatus. Notoriously thuggish investigators, such as Bohumil Doubek and Vladimír Kohoutek, were arrested, though given very lenient sentences and soon reprieved. Crucially, Slánský was construed as the 'Czechoslovak Beria', Stalin's secret police henchman, and held accountable for creating the entire security machine that had mushroomed out of control in the early 1950s. In this crass manner, the party executives attempted to reassign responsibility for the lawlessness and wash their hands of the matter.

Partial revision and official obfuscation, however, could not erase the history of the political purges from public consciousness. It was a veritable Pandora's box which party leaders ignored at their peril. In the mid-to-late 1950s more and more people sentenced in the show trials demanded a re-examination of their cases as the first step to full judicial and party rehabilitation.⁷ Many lower-level KSČ activists and rank-and-file members also pushed for meaningful explanations and actions from their superiors. This up-swell of disquiet 'from below' placed the party elite in a profound quandary and as a preventive measure they decided to resort to amnesties as the preferred method of redress. For the victims this represented a compromise 'solution', because although they may be released under the terms of any amnesty, they were not legally exonerated of their 'crimes'. Amnesty definitely did not equal rehabilitation, and this was precisely its attraction for the party leadership. Hence, the election of Novotný as the new President of the republic served as the occasion for the November 1957 amnesty as a result of which 4,811 people, mainly 'ordinary' criminals, were released from prison.⁸ This was followed by a more expansive presidential amnesty on 9 May 1960, which was

announced as part of the celebrations of the fifteenth anniversary of the country's liberation by the Red Army and as a marker of the 'triumph of socialism' in Czechoslovakia. This amnesty was particularly important for political prisoners.

Pressure for action did not just come from within. Novotný may have been able to partly circumvent domestic opinion and the accumulation of new evidence about the 'inconsistencies' of the Barák Commissions, but he found it harder to ignore Moscow. Khrushchev's renewed drive to expose the excesses of Stalinism at the 22nd party congress in October 1961 placed the Czechoslovak leaders in yet another dilemma. Despite initial prevarication and insistence on the guilt of most of the leading communist victims, Novotný was eventually compelled to return to the explosive issue of the Stalinist trials and repressions. In September 1962, the Kolder Commission, named after its chair Presidium member Drahomír Kolder, was established. Its task was to reinvestigate the main trials of 1948-54 and to make 'recommendations' to the party's Central Committee. This time, importantly, the Slánský case was to be reviewed, but again, as in the Barák Commission, revision of the trials of non-communists was omitted from Kolder's brief. His report and recommendations, ratified by the Presidium in April 1963, were more forthright and far-reaching than those of 1955-57, no doubt reflecting the perceived need for accelerated 'de-Stalinisation' and indicative of Novotný's relatively secure power position having removed his prime rival, Barák, from the leadership the previous year.

Thus, Kolder's report 'described the main trials as fabrications and completed the judicial rehabilitation of all the condemned', Slánský included.⁹ These individuals, if alive, were to be compensated for the harm suffered and party, police and judicial officials involved in the illegalities were subject to party penalties and punishment. In the event, by 1964 this affected 47 persons in State Security and 58 in the Ministry of the Interior. Breaches of 'socialist legality' were blamed on Gottwald and other party leaders, a few of whom were forced to leave their positions to be replaced by younger reform-oriented and less dogmatic politicians, such as Dubček, who succeeded the Stalinist Bacílek as Slovak party boss. Moreover, between April 1963 and the end of 1967, over 380 members were reinstated in the party and all received financial compensation and reasonable accommodation. However, regardless of these hopeful signs the Kolder Commission's report, which was not revealed to the public, still left many stones unturned. Full party rehabilitation was not extended to Slánský and five other prominent trial victims, whose expulsion from the party was reconfirmed. They were still treated as guilty of serious political and ideological 'crimes'. Those

released and exonerated were not permitted to take up responsible posts and many remained uncompensated and deeply resentful. Neither did the report point any fingers at Novotný for his role in the repressions, which is hardly surprising given his personal interventions in the Commission's activities.¹⁰

Specific conditions existed in Slovakia. The strained relations between Czechs and Slovaks, going back to the interwar First Republic, the Munich agreement and wartime territorial division, had their corollary in the KSČ. Novotný was well known for his less than positive attitude towards Slovakia and for many Slovaks, communists included, his personal stance epitomised a more general Czech condescension and arrogance. Nationalist sentiment was further exacerbated by the asymmetrical power arrangements in the state which Slovaks justifiably regarded as 'Pragocentric' and overly centralised. These embedded tensions and conflicts were made potentially dangerous by the trial and conviction of several leading Slovak communists in April 1954 on the spurious, ideologically loaded and inflammatory charge of 'bourgeois nationalism'. Husák, a trained lawyer and respected figure, was the prime defendant and was sentenced to life imprisonment. Despite his unlawful incarceration, Husák remained a committed communist - indeed he was to be the party's First Secretary from April 1969 to December 1987. Throughout the 1950s and early 1960s, Husák steadfastly maintained his innocence, bombarding the authorities with letters and petitions demanding his release and rehabilitation. The former was granted in the presidential amnesty of May 1960, but the Novotný leadership studiously refused to consider the latter until June 1963 when, in the wake of the Kolder report and with the Husák case becoming a burning and emotional national issue in Slovakia, the party set up the so-called 'Barnabite Commission' to investigate the accusation of 'bourgeois nationalism'. Its conclusions were unexpected. The charge of 'bourgeois nationalism' was found to have no justification, full party rehabilitation was bestowed on Husák and his co-defendants in December 1963 and partly as a consequence of the commission's fact-finding efforts the despised Slovak 'centralist', Široký, was removed as Prime Minister. The report remained silent, however, on pressing broader problems such as Slovakia's perceived second-class economic, political and constitutional status.¹¹

Ultimately, the three party review committees in 1955-57 (Barák) and 1962-63 (Kolder and 'Barnabite') were all unsatisfactory compromise affairs designed to limit the impact of rehabilitation on the reputation of the incumbent leaders, notably Novotný, and of the KSČ and regime as a whole. But

in our opinion, cynical opportunism, careerism, guilt and deep-rooted fear were not the only factors that constrained the commissions' work. It would appear that many communists, particularly in the elite, genuinely believed in the guilt, or at least complicity, of some of the main victims of Stalinist terror. It was almost impossible for diehard militants to admit that the party - the repository of 'historical truth', progress and enlightenment - had *got things wrong*. This ideologically conditioned, essentially 'Stalinist', mentality played a crucial role in hindering a full and open post-mortem on the crimes of the 1948-54 period. Hence, it was precisely during the reformist and democratising, though short-lived, Prague Spring from January to August 1968 that the rehabilitation process entered a qualitatively different, more civilised, stage. The party Action Programme, ratified in early April 1968, gave the public a clear foretaste of the new spirit:

The Party realizes that people unlawfully condemned and persecuted cannot regain the lost years of their life. It will, however, do its best to remove any shadow of the mistrust and humiliation to which families and relatives of those affected were often subjected, and will resolutely ensure that such persecuted people have every opportunity of showing their worth in work, in public life, and in political activities.¹²

To this end, a law on judicial rehabilitation (No. 82/1968) was passed almost unanimously by the National Assembly on 25 June 1968. It has been described as 'a humane step, rare in history, and *unique in the communist world*, to restore justice to the victims of illegalities of an entire historical period'. It was proposed to re-examine the cases of up to 100,000 individuals unjustly sentenced in the years 1948 to 1965, to offer financial compensation to *bona fide* victims to a maximum of 20,000 crowns per annum, and to permit, in certain circumstances, the criminal punishment of those guilty of illegal actions in the security and judicial services and in the relevant ministries.¹³ For the first time, judicial and social rehabilitation was to be extended to tens of thousands of non-communists, not just leading communists. However, the law did not fully satisfy everyone. Some organisations, like the newly-formed K-231, a large grouping of vocal ex-political prisoners, and the Union of Anti-Fascist Fighters, forcefully promoted the idea of a *universal* rehabilitation to include all those convicted of politically motivated 'crimes', to annul all sentences of the political trials and to compensate all victims.¹⁴ Communist bosses, even the most reformist, could not accept this sweeping demand and in the event the law exempted from rehabilitation those individuals who had been justly convicted of violating valid laws, such as those who distributed anti-communist leaflets or helped people to flee the

state borders into West Germany or Austria. It was considered that these and other prosecutions were 'derived from the historically justified class character of the legislation of the socialist revolution.'¹⁵

In tandem with the rehabilitation law, in April 1968 the Dubček leadership created a fourth party review committee - the Piller Commission - to re-investigate the major political trials of the early 1950s, including that of Slánský and his accomplices, who were finally declared innocent victims and granted full party rehabilitation and exoneration. The commission's exhaustive findings never saw the light of day in communist Czechoslovakia as they fell foul of the Soviet-led military invasion in August 1968, but an abbreviated version did appear in English translation in 1971. Unlike its predecessors, the Piller report provided a comprehensive interpretation of the causes of Stalinist repression. It assigned prime responsibility to Klement Gottwald, KSČ chairman throughout the years of terror, and other high-ranking party officials, mentioning the now disgraced Novotný by name, and controversially discussed the often determining role played by Soviet advisers. The report concluded that 'an instrument of power had come into being, accountable to no one, beyond all control and outside the law; it had placed itself above society and usurped a power to which it had no right. Its very existence was unconstitutional.'¹⁶ The tragedy is that such fine words were doubtless fifteen years too late for the victims of this monopolistic 'instrument of power'.

Given the corrosive nature of the revitalised rehabilitation process in 1968, it is surprising that it was not immediately derailed by the Warsaw Pact invasion. In the year following the occupation, 23,306 proposals for review were submitted by citizen-victims and the General Prosecutor's Office (GPO) received approximately 7,000 complaints about violations of the law under the Stalinist regime. However, over the coming months the situation gradually hardened: K-231 was effectively banned, 'reformist' leaders in the GPO, Supreme Court and the Ministries of Justice and Interior were purged, and the new 'normalising' party authorities, paradoxically soon to be headed by one of the main Stalinist victims, Husák, began to reject rehabilitation requests.¹⁷ But worse was to come. In July 1970, the law on judicial rehabilitation (No. 70/1970) was passed which seriously complicated rehabilitation procedures: some former political prisoners were compelled to withdraw their applications, and those who insisted on taking their cases to court had virtually no chance of the decision going in their favour. To add insult to injury, the applicant often had to pay full court costs. What is more, several citizens who had been rehabilitated in 1968-69 had their decisions rescinded

and were forced to return the compensation they had been granted.¹⁸ In a few instances, such as that of Oto Mádr, a Roman Catholic priest whose conviction as a 'Vatican spy' in 1951 had been judicially annulled in 1969, cases were reopened. He and his original co-defendants were retried in 1973 and sentenced to prison once again!¹⁹ The fifth, and final, party review committee was established in April 1971 chaired by the arch-'normaliser', Josef Kempný. It flatly rejected the conclusions of the Piller report and basically turned the clock back to the conceptions of the Kolder Commission of 1963.²⁰

Ultimate closure for ex-political prisoners had to wait until the collapse of the communist regime in late 1989. In April 1990, the Federal Assembly ratified Act No. 119/1990 under which judicial sentences from the Stalinist period and beyond were cancelled across the board and virtually all political prisoners were fully rehabilitated. The Czechoslovak state also agreed to compensate victims for time spent in detention and prison and to facilitate the return of confiscated properties.²¹ Most interesting, however, is the recent reconfiguration in the Czech Republic of the historical role of political prisoners. There has been an evident shift in their public and self-image from 'victims' to that of 'anti-communist fighters',²² and this politicisation of history and search for 'heroes' who opposed the 'totalitarian' behemoth was reflected in Law No. 262/2011 from July 2011 which awarded proven 'participants' in the resistance against communism a one-off payment of 100,000 Czech crowns (about £3,300).

The May 1960 Amnesty: Party and Popular Opinion

The question of how the party and public responded to the various investigations, partial rehabilitations and amnesties from the mid-1950s onwards is highly significant. The rehabilitation process as a whole represented a distinct double-edged sword for the communist authorities. On the one hand, it was a palpable risk for the conservative Novotný party leadership, creating turmoil, doubt and heretical ideas in the heads of lower-level functionaries and members. Indeed, the partial exposure of the brutalities of the not-so-distant Stalinist past played a crucial role in galvanising the search among party liberalisers and intellectuals for a more humane form of socialism which culminated in Novotný's ouster and the subsequent reforms of the Prague Spring. The longing for the return of legal norms and an end to arbitrary rule did much to bind the majority of citizens to the largely intellectual reformist movement. But on the other, there is evidence that sections of the rank-and-file and, more importantly, non-party citizenry at times identified with the goals and ideological suppositions of the regime. This dichotomy is confirmed by documents in the KSČ and Security

Service archives on party moods and social attitudes. We start from the premise that popular sentiment towards the Czechoslovak state in the post-1948 period was rarely based on mega-narratives such as 'democracy versus totalitarianism', 'capitalism versus communism' or 'freedom versus oppression', though these concepts and binaries are not absent in the sources we have consulted.²³ Popular views were more often formed and re-formed in response to a plethora of daily events, decrees and actions, some of which were not directly political and on which there was a measure of common ground between state and society. The presidential amnesty of May 1960 is a case in point. Although the party and police archives contain many examples of 'opposition' to the regime, they also demonstrate that citizens shared certain values and beliefs with the authorities, sometimes based on class perspectives, localised issues and personality clashes, and sometimes on illiberal, even authoritarian impulses.

Ostensibly, top secret KSČ reports on responses to the piecemeal revisions and selective release of prisoners reflected the disciplined and supportive stance of party functionaries and activists. But a closer reading reveals that an ideological and political can of worms had been opened. Already in spring 1956 in the wake of Khrushchev's 'secret speech' a whirlpool of doubts, vacillations and anger was undermining the credibility of the KSČ hierarchy. Lower-level party officials and rank-and-file members began asking many highly sensitive questions: 'how should party members explain the violently forced confessions of the Slánský band' and 'what will happen to those who broke socialist legality' in Czechoslovakia by carrying out 'Gestapo methods'?²⁴ One reply was that they 'should be publicly exposed and punished'. Others demanded: 'who is culpable for the tyranny' and seemed to point the finger at Novotný and Bacílek, 'who were the main accusers in the Slánský trial'.²⁵ One party stalwart intoned: 'today I cannot trust the CC [Central Committee]....there is chaos in the heads of communists'.²⁶ Similar remarks were even made by employees and researchers in the KSČ's Institute of History, a showcase propaganda organisation.²⁷ The new requirement for an objective 'truth' struck at the very heart of the party's claim to a monopoly of knowledge and doctrinal purity and hence must have been considered a dangerous heresy.

The 'answers' provided by the leadership to these unwelcome queries were clearly inadequate as seven years later, in April 1963 at the time of the Kolder report, the same issues were again troubling district officials and the rank-and-file: 'How was it possible to commit such gross errors and breaches of socialist legality....Did the party leaders really not know of the incorrect investigation methods of

the security organs'? What role did the present members of the Central Committee play in the early 1950s and have they performed real self-criticism? Some speakers linked the 'cult of personality' and lack of inner-party democracy with contemporary economic problems in the country and called for broader improvements in KSC policy.²⁸ Among many party activists, especially veterans, their long-standing commitment to Marxism-Leninism was shaken and they were forced to question the integrity of the security services, the 'shield of the revolution'. All in all, party reactions in 1956 and 1963, especially at the district and municipal levels, were often critical of the bosses and the 'cult of personality' that surrounded them. Some even contended that 'a class struggle exists today in the party. On the one side are the ordinary [*prostí*] workers, and on the other the top functionaries, the so-called red aristocracy.'²⁹ In this atmosphere, the KSC elite had a tough time ensuring Leninist discipline in its ranks, which, together with other evidence from the 1950s and 1960s, suggests that the party was far from a monolithically united body. The plurality of views and relative breakdown of authority in the party challenges the still influential concept of 'totalitarianism', with its explicit emphasis on effective control 'from above' and fierce centralisation and implicit assumptions of a passive and cowed membership.

Indicative of the subterranean turmoil in the KSC, especially among the cultural intelligentsia, was the on-going Czech-Slovak imbroglio. In 1964, the Security Services drew up a top secret 'Information Report on the Situation in Slovakia', which surveyed reactions to the rehabilitation of Husák and the other so-called 'Slovak bourgeois nationalists'. The document painted an alarming picture of Slovak political life. Like all official files, great care is required in assessing its provenance and content, but the report strikes a chord in its depiction of Slovak nationalist sentiment. It stated that the Slovak intelligentsia, writers and other 'cultural workers' positively evaluated the rehabilitation of Husák and the 'bourgeois nationalists', supported their activities in the 1940s and 1950s and viewed their rehabilitation as a starting point for broader political changes. There were also demands for Husák's return to responsible political functions in the Slovak Communist Party. But more disconcerting for the leadership in Prague were the suggestions that the entire Czech-Slovak relationship needed to be re-examined, that there was 'broad support' for Slovak national emancipation and that Slovakia faced a renewal of religious life and church activity.³⁰

Indeed, a federal solution was a long-standing goal of many Slovaks and was forcefully reiterated by the prominent historian Miloš Gosiorovský, whose pro-federalism memorandum of March 1963

heavily influenced leading Slovak political and intellectual circles.³¹ Profoundly angered, Novotný responded by delivering an offensive anti-Slovak speech in the city of Košice in June which did much to inflame passions. What is more, it appears some Czechs equated Slovak proposals for a democratisation of mutual relations as a form of separatism - 'the Slovaks wanted to break away' (*'Slováci se chtěli odtrhnout'*).³² The point is that these 'nationalist' aspirations did not remain confined to a small band of educated Slovak intellectuals in and outside the party - they resonated with many 'ordinary' KSČ members and citizens. To this extent, the fear of the central authorities was that the release and full rehabilitation of the 'bourgeois nationalists' would boost notions of federalism, strain Czech-Slovak relations and represent, no less, a potential threat to the integrity and unity of the state. Certainly, the Czechoslovak secret police (*Státní bezpečnost* - StB) went to great lengths to monitor the activities of the former members of the wartime Slovak nationalist party and the perceived remnants of its armed wing, the Hlinka Guard.

A case study of the presidential amnesty of May 1960 also reveals that the regime had good cause for concern over the release of so many internees. Under the terms of the amnesty, 7,168 inmates were freed from detention, of whom 5,677 were political prisoners.³³ According to the Deputy Minister of the Interior, over 3,800 were workers, farmers and 'working members' of the bourgeoisie, 2,620 were *kulaks* and other 'bourgeois', and around 650 were 'anti-social parasitic elements'.³⁴ Returnees were effectively on probation, were debarred from public life and often denied appropriate employment, most being assigned menial jobs. When they were liberated they had to sign a document saying they would never speak about their experiences in prison or camp, although some did. Hence, in the opinion of one Czech specialist, the presidential decree created 'a new category of "former persons" - the so-called "amnestants"'.³⁵ The bulky security service reports on these amnestants clearly indicate that although the communist leaders had decided to set free several thousand Stalinist victims they still regarded them as 'enemies' whose activities had to be closely followed.³⁶ Indeed, 'the amnesty was officially considered a mere "interruption" of sentence, which was suspended provided that, usually for ten years, no other conviction for a "premeditated criminal act" came up'.³⁷ The StB motto appeared to be: 'once an enemy, always an enemy', a tacit recognition that the years of detention had failed to 're-educate' the prisoner.

In particular, the security services were highly suspicious of the attempts by returnees to restore their social and political relationships, both at home and abroad, acts which were perceived as

attempts to organise 'anti-state' cabals. Police files are replete with reports that ex-prisoners were engaged in 'hostile activities', especially former priests in Slovakia, stigmatised as 'reactionary Catholic fanatics', banned sectarians such as Jehovah's Witnesses, and ex-members of non-communist opposition parties.³⁸ These 'enemy groups', it can be assumed, were more often than not a few individuals reminiscing over a couple of beers, but according to one expert released prisoners did organise 'regular secret meetings' in order to maintain friendships and express their political solidarity.³⁹ StB apprehensions, perhaps, were not entirely imaginary, although it should be noted that far from all returnees voiced undying opposition to the regime. Some intimated that they would work hard after release and would never again get involved in 'anti-state activity'. Others remarked on the social and economic achievements made in the country since their arrest and incarceration. Remarkably, several ex-prisoners spoke positively about their experiences in the camps, saying they had been well treated and fed. One allegedly commented on his 'carefree life' in prison, and several others, who had office jobs in the camps, wished to return there to avoid hard manual or agricultural work. It was even reported that some earned more in the terrible Jáchymov uranium mines than in free labour after release. Many, on the other hand, were ill and broken and just wished to be left in peace with their families showing no interest in political affairs whatsoever.⁴⁰

Nevertheless, the police found plenty of reasons to be vigilant. They were concerned about the returnees' negative attitudes towards the work placements they had been assigned, which were generally unskilled manual or agricultural labour, were fearful that ex-prisoners would disseminate information about the dire conditions in the labour camps and, ultimately, that their anti-regime sentiments might infect local communities and even provoke a political 'reversal' (*zvrát*). For example, it was reported that one 'amnestant', Josef Maršálek, 'hates the present regime and will hate it till he dies', while another insisted that 'it is an authoritarian regime in which people cannot decide their own fate.' Imrich Karvaš complained that he had 'lost his sight in a concentration camp' after being 'beaten about the head' and sustaining 'a broken skull'.⁴¹ The security services were likewise extremely anxious that ex-prisoners would flee the borders illegally and fifty had been re-arrested by 20 July for such attempts or for 'incitement against the republic'.⁴² An official police report into the popular reception of the May 1960 amnesty summed up the authorities' concerns: 'vacillating elements' among the released believe a 'reversal' is possible in the near future not only in Czechoslovakia, but also in other socialist states including the USSR. They point to 'imaginary disagreements in the

highest ranks of the [Soviet] party and government' and the 'supposed military superiority of the West' and thus aim to break the 'moral unity of the workers and their faith in the government'. They spread the 'slandorous broadcasts of foreign radio stations', like Voice of America and Radio Free Europe, and 'operate a system of passive resistance', assisted by 'reactionary' sectors of society.⁴³ 'The typical view of the amnestied was distrust and an overwhelmingly hostile attitude towards our [socialist] order.'⁴⁴

Popular perceptions of the amnesty, as depicted in the Security Services archive, also gave the authorities cause for disquiet. Most citizens were made aware of the amnesty by announcements in the party daily *Rudé právo* ('Red Right') and the trade union newspaper *Práce* ('Labour'), which represented it as a manifestation of 'socialist humanism', a sign of the moral strength and political vitality of the system.⁴⁵ Although some seem to have regarded it in this official light, people of 'bourgeois origin' were said to 'trivialise' the guilt of the returnees, churches provocatively offered thanksgiving services and believers considered the amnesty 'an act influenced by God' and saw no positive part played by the state. The remnant Sudeten-German minority took advantage of the concession to push for improvements in their conditions and there were several reports of 'reactionary doctors' writing supposedly false certificates for amnestied prisoners freeing them from unsuitable work.⁴⁶ In some communities, especially in the rural areas of south Moravia, returnees were 'heartily greeted by persons with negative attitudes' to the regime.⁴⁷ There were many acts of individual kindness and understanding shown to destitute amnestants, one female returnee, Květoslava Moravečková, recalling how a sympathetic shopkeeper would occasionally give her food for free, which made a real difference to a poor family, while others in her village behaved towards her as if she were still a criminal.⁴⁸ It was not uncommon for citizens to write to relatives and friends abroad saying they should 'come home' under the terms of the amnesty. The result was that a total of 127 people returned to Czechoslovakia from capitalist states, raising suspicions among the ever-vigilant secret police that former émigré 'spies' had found their way back into the country.⁴⁹ To this extent, the amnesty had potentially dangerous implications and citizens' responses to it were unpredictable and uncontrollable.

However, despite the problematic unintended outcomes of the amnesty the archival sources do not permit us to conclude, as convention would have it, that the majority of Czechoslovaks were unequivocally opposed to the regime, or were budding 'dissidents'. The contours of popular opinion

were far more complex than the stark binary opposites of 'for' or 'against' the system. Our research on social responses to the Czechoslovak communist regime in the 1950s and early 1960s strongly suggests that there existed certain common bonds, or 'bridges', linking state and society, and that the boundaries between 'us' and 'them' were not always as sharp as some scholars have insisted.⁵⁰ We contend that the best way of conceiving of citizens' reactions to the regime is one of 'critical loyalty'. It is a notion closely related to that of 'grudging loyalty' or 'loyal reluctance' (*loyale Widerwilligkeit*) put forward by East German and Third Reich specialists, but which seem to us to be rather restrictive in their assumption of a basic unwillingness or reticence on the part of citizens, as if their 'loyalty' was wrung out of them.⁵¹ 'Critical loyalty', by comparison, offers the perspective of both positive and negative criticism, constructive, subversive and intermediate stances, and hence denotes more open-ended social attitudes towards the political authorities.

We have identified two main overlapping 'bridges' of 'tacit consensus' between the party-state and society in the wake of the May 1960 amnesty: first, a shared 'class' or 'workerist' perspective, which was at times directed against named 'class' antagonists at the local or even residential level, and, second, what might be termed a populist illiberal sentiment.⁵² The Security Services archive is full of examples of class tensions and suspicions, which, although appearing as ostensible criticism of the amnesty, are better construed as sources of underlying affinity between diverse sectors of society and the communist regime. To be sure, the police documentation is exaggerated, over-ideologised and self-aggrandising, but it does impart a revealing, and we think largely persuasive, glimpse into the social resentments and cleavages that bubbled away below the surface of daily life. For instance, in a Prague paper mill employees openly grumbled that workers remain in prison while the 'gentlemen factory owners' (*páni fabrikanti*) and their supporters are released.⁵³ Similarly, citizens in Ústí nad Orlicí disagreed with the amnesty, saying a worker who steals 2,000 crowns of property from the socialist state has to serve his entire sentence, while 'enemies' are released for 'anti-state crimes'. They intended to seek an explanation for this from the party's District Committee.⁵⁴ In the Kolín chemical works, it was stated that 'mainly workers should be released....not members of anti-state groups' while at the Tatra factory in Česká Lípa there was 'sharp criticism' about the fact that 'workers remained in prison, while class enemies were set free.'⁵⁵ A worker in Klatovy posed the rhetorical question: if the amnestants came to power in Czechoslovakia would they release the communists?⁵⁶ A Slovak editor said it was a pity that 'out-and-out fascists, bloody [Hlinka] guardists, people who have

blood on their hands, people who have murdered and killed' have been included in the amnesty. 'They will now poison our political life.'⁵⁷

Individual 'class aliens' were also targeted. In Beroun district, local people opposed the reappointment of a Catholic priest to 'spiritual service' as 'he belongs down the mines.'⁵⁸ 'Progressive citizens' in Prague demanded that the amnestant Antonín Švehla, son of the pre-war Agrarian Prime Minister, should be 'moved out of his country estate'.⁵⁹ In the Moravian city of Olomouc, one returnee, Jaroslav Talášek, was 'not popular' in his community because of his 'haughty behaviour and manner' as an ex-general in the Czechoslovak army.⁶⁰ Citizens in Třeboň criticised the release of a notary who had 'robbed the people' and in Prague a released prisoner, who had been given a post in his former research institute, was reallocated a manual job in a building components factory after his co-employees and co-residents complained to the party District Committee.⁶¹ The 'majority of inhabitants' of Nořice were discontent about an anti-communist teacher getting his old job back in the local school, presumably because he would influence their children.⁶² In the Česká Lípa district, 'citizens were seriously agitated by the return of Josef Kulháněk, a down-right agent of CIC [the US Army's Counter Intelligence Corps] and leader of an anti-state group.'⁶³

There was almost a biological reaction on the part of some citizens. Residents in Havlíčkův Brod, doubting that prison was fulfilling its 're-educative mission', proposed that all returnees should be removed to another housing estate as if they were blighted by disease. One local family had four amnestants, one of whom was 'well known as a foreign intelligence agent', and their return 'would mean nothing good for the community', especially as they had many relatives on the estate.⁶⁴ In eastern Bohemia, there were 'disturbances' among local workers against a certain Dočekal, a former band-master who had been imprisoned for eight years for hiding two 'anti-state criminals' in his home. Citizens disagreed 'on principle' with his amnesty and 'workers want to submit a protest to the central organs'. Likewise, an amnestied former manufacturer said that he had come back from a 'concentration camp', a contentious term which aroused disdain among local workers, who insisted that only those who had been 're-educated' in prison should be released.⁶⁵

Much of the archival record is also permeated by a distinct illiberalism often linked to a palpable sense of social injustice, even a measure of irrational envy. This very human sentiment, however, was generally couched in officially sanctioned rhetoric in order to provide an ideological alibi for the speaker or complainant. For example, citizens in Prague's 11th district 'protested' about the fact that

some amnestants had been provided with accommodation without having to take their turn on the housing list, and a similar grumble occurred in Křivoklát.⁶⁶ Workers in central Bohemia lamented that returnees were being re-awarded their academic titles, civil and voting rights, and were even granted paid holidays. Inhabitants of the 'entire Chrudim district' were concerned that the crimes of the returnees were 'forgiven' and that they could lay claim to pensions. In addition, in one local community 'citizens disagreed with the release of the majority of amnestied persons', saying their time in prison was too short to re-educate them. They were 'outright enemies of the system', who immediately after their discharge 'walked provocatively around' the village. In the Beroun area, one resident complained that the 'amnesty had released all the scum (*lumpové*)' and in the Mělník district citizens bemoaned the release of one prisoner because he had been given a twelve year sentence, but had only served two. A Slovak editor intimated that many of his fellow citizens may not have shared his positive attitude to the amnesty: 'At last they've released completely innocent people. But only those who they haven't killed. And many would have preferred it if they had killed them.'⁶⁷ In the north Bohemian region, it was even reported that in general 'ordinary workers' were of the 'firm opinion' that the 'scale of the amnesty was too democratic' and the liberation of 'hardened anti-state elements' would not 'pay off', as seen in Hungary and Poland in 1956.⁶⁸

What do the tortuous rehabilitation process and the multifarious reactions to it tell us about the Czechoslovak party and state-society relations in the 1950s and 1960s? The problematic and fragmentary nature of party and secret police archives do not permit any sweeping generalisations and thus all conclusions must be circumspect. That said, three broad assessments can be put forward. First, the release of political prisoners and the exposure of Stalinist crimes threatened a deep-seated fracture in party discipline, which potentially struck at the heart of communist authority and to a certain extent laid bare the fragilities of the regime as a whole. This was particularly so in regard to Slovak nationalism and the highly sensitive issue of Czech-Slovak mutual relations. This must at least in part explain why KSČ dignitaries throughout the 1950s and 1960s were so reluctant to judicially and politically rehabilitate Stalinist victims. It wasn't simply the case that incumbent leaders feared for their own positions - they feared, implicitly if not explicitly, for the regime and state *per se*.

Second, the multidimensional popular responses to the 1960 amnesty suggest that the axiomatic Cold War stereotype of a presumed gulf between 'us' and 'them' - the 'good' people versus the 'evil' state - is overly simplistic. While many citizens did indeed use the occasion of the amnesty to vent

their opposition to the existing order, many others adopted a position of 'critical loyalty' to the goals and visions of the communist regime and appropriated and reformulated aspects of the official ideology in line with their daily experiences and personal views. This intermediate and constantly shifting nexus was based on a set of shared values and perceptions, or 'bridges' as we described them, some of which were short-term and provisional, others longer-term and more permanent, some ideological, others practical, some more embedded, others contingent on rapidly changing circumstances. To the extent that popular opinion showed distinct strains of illiberalism, authoritarianism, even forms of neo-Stalinism, the much-vaunted notion of Czech 'humanist democratic' political culture needs to be contested. In this sense, the varying shades of public reaction to rehabilitation force us to re-examine our preconceived notions of social norms and beliefs. Just as important, they reveal that fundamental communist ideological assumptions on class divisions, hostility towards 'enemies' and the 'superiority' of the working class appear to have influenced fairly broad social strata. However, one vital issue - the differing attitudes of Czechs and Slovaks - must await its researcher. Conventional wisdom would have it that 'pro-socialist' sentiment was stronger among the former than the latter, but opinion polls in post-communist Slovakia reveal that surprisingly high numbers of Slovaks looked back positively on the achievements of the period 1948-89.⁶⁹

Finally, and more tentatively, the experience of amnesty and rehabilitation may tell us something new about the Prague Spring. Hitherto, the origins of 1968 are routinely interpreted as essentially an inner-party power struggle between the 'reformers' and the 'hard-liners': Dubček versus Novotný. But there was also a very direct input 'from below' that had been rumbling away under the surface for many years: rank-and-file party members and lower-level functionaries, ex-prisoners and their families, members of the intelligentsia, and we suspect many 'ordinary' citizens had been pushing for redress and political reform since at least 1956 and the revelations of Stalinist illegalities and the release of prisoners by the amnesty of 1960 seem to have given a significant boost to this process.

Notes

¹ Statistics from M. Hauner, 'Crime and Punishment in Communist Czechoslovakia: The Case of General Heliodor Píka and his Prosecutor Karel Vaš', *Totalitarian Movements and Political Religions*, vol. 9, no. 2-3 (2008), pp. 343-4; J. Bílek, *Pétépáci aneb Černí baroni úplně jinak* (Plzeň, 1996), p. 117. According to the Rehabilitation Law (No. 119/1990), in the entire period of communist rule in Czechoslovakia - 1948 to 1989 - 257,864 people were prosecuted for political 'crimes'. For an overview, see K. McDermott, 'Stalinist Terror in Czechoslovakia: Origins, Processes, Responses', in K. McDermott and M. Stibbe, (eds), *Stalinist Terror in Eastern Europe: Elite Purges and Mass Repression* (Manchester, 2010), pp. 98-118.

² Statistics from J. Pelikán (ed.), *The Czechoslovak Political Trials, 1950-1954: The Suppressed Report of the Dubček Government's Commission of Inquiry, 1968* (London, 1971), pp. 56-7; J. Foitzik, 'Souvislosti politických procesů ve střední a východní Evropě', in J. Pernes and J. Foitzik (eds), *Politické procesy v Československu po roce 1945 a 'případ Slánský'* (Brno, 2005), pp. 11, 13, 15-16; K. Kaplan and J. Váchová (eds), *Zemřelí ve věznicích a tresty smrti, 1948-1956: Seznamy* (Prague, 1992) pp. 53-60 and non-paginated addendum. For judicial executions, see O. Liška et al., *Tresty smrti vykonané v Československu v letech 1918-1989* (Prague, 2006).

³ Pelikán (ed.), *The Czechoslovak Political Trials*, p. 140.

⁴ A. Kýr, 'Některé sociologické aspekty zacházení s vězni v ČSR v letech 1945-1955', in D. Janák (ed.), *Vězeňské systémy v Československu a ve střední Evropě 1945-1955* (Opava, 2001), p. 33.

⁵ Pelikán (ed.), *The Czechoslovak Political Trials*, pp. 148, 150.

⁶ R. Slabotínský, *Amnestie prezidenta republiky v letech 1960 a 1962 a rehabilitace politických vězňů v 60. letech*, PhD thesis, Masaryk University (Brno, 2010), p. 148; H. G. Skilling, *Czechoslovakia's Interrupted Revolution* (Princeton, 1976), pp. 400-1.

⁷ For examples of citizens' petitions, see the Archive of the President's Office (AKPR), sign. 01533/68: 'Rehabilitace'.

⁸ Pelikán (ed.), *The Czechoslovak Political Trials*, p. 207.

⁹ Skilling, *Czechoslovakia's Interrupted Revolution*, p. 401.

¹⁰ Skilling, *Czechoslovakia's Interrupted Revolution*, pp. 48-9; Pelikán (ed.), *The Czechoslovak Political Trials*, pp. 224-40; K. Kaplan, *Druhý proces. Milada Horáková a spol. - rehabilitační řízení 1968-1990* (Prague, 2008), pp. 40-76.

¹¹ For details, see H. Grisová, *'Barnabitská' komise. Její činnost a výsledky*, MA thesis, Palacký University (Olomouc, 2011); Pelikán (ed.), *The Czechoslovak Political Trials*, pp. 241-3.

¹² Cited in R. A. Remington (ed.), *Winter in Prague: Documents on Czechoslovak Communism in Crisis* (Cambridge: MA, 1969), p. 106.

¹³ Skilling, *Czechoslovakia's Interrupted Revolution*, pp. 391-5 (our emphasis).

¹⁴ For details on K-231, see J. Hoppe, *Opozice '68. Sociální demokracie, KAN a K 231 v období pražského jara* (Prague, 2009), pp. 265-72.

¹⁵ Cited in Skilling, *Czechoslovakia's Interrupted Revolution*, p. 393.

¹⁶ Pelikán (ed.), *The Czechoslovak Political Trials*, p. 131.

¹⁷ Kaplan, *Druhý proces*, pp. 91-102; Slabotínský, *Amnestie prezidenta*, pp. 225-9.

¹⁸ Interview with Pavel Levý in T. Bouška, K. Pinerová and M. Louč (eds), *Českoslovenští političtí vězni. Životní příběhy* (Prague, 2009), p. 230 fn. 33.

¹⁹ Slabotínský, *Amnestie prezidenta*, pp. 217-20.

²⁰ Kaplan, *Druhý proces*, pp. 121-4.

²¹ F. Gebauer, 'Základní zásady zákona o soudní rehabilitaci č. 119/1990 Sb.', in F. Gebauer et al., *Soudní perzekuce politické povahy v Československu 1948-1989* (Prague, 1993), pp. 53-68.

²² F. Mayer, 'Vězení jako minulost, odboj jako paměť. Konfederace politických vězňů', *Soudobé dějiny*, vol. 9, no. 1 (2002), pp. 41-64.

²³ Security Services Archive (ABS), f. H-186 'Ohlasy 1960', I. 120; ABS, f. H-186/3 'Amnestie 1960', II. 253-4.

²⁴ National Archive of the Czech Republic (NA), f. 014/12, sv. 21, a.j. 732, ll. 6, 10; NA, f. 014/12, sv. 22, a.j. 754, l. 4.

²⁵ NA, f. 014/12, sv. 21, a.j. 733, ll. 4, 6.

²⁶ NA, f. 05/1, sv. 391, a.j. 2331, l. 36.

²⁷ V. Sommer, *Angažované dějepisectví. Stranická historiografie mezi stalinismem a reformním komunismem (1950-1970)* (Prague, 2011), pp. 153-83.

²⁸ NA, f. Předsednictvo 1962-1966, sv. 17, a.j. 18, ll. 7, 11, 15.

²⁹ NA, f. 05/1, sv. 391, a.j. 2331, l. 35.

³⁰ ABS, f. A34, inv. jedn. 2487 (non-paginated).

³¹ For details, see S. Brown, 'Prelude to a Divorce? The Prague Spring as Dress Rehearsal for Czechoslovakia's "Velvet Divorce"', *Europe-Asia Studies*, vol. 60, no. 10 (2008), p. 1788.

³² ABS, f. A34, inv. jedn. 1840, report from 28 June 1963 (non-paginated).

³³ ABS, f. A34, inv. jedn. 1807, l. 1.

³⁴ ABS, f. A5-81 microfiche 2 (non-paginated).

³⁵ J. Cuhra, 'In the Shadow of Liberalization: Repressions in Czechoslovakia in the 1960s', *Cahiers du monde Russe*, vol. 47, no. 1-2 (2006), p. 423.

³⁶ One amnestant, František Klápště, was assiduously followed for over four years after his release even though his attitude to the communist regime was 'indifferent and absolutely passive'. See ABS, f. B4_4, inv. jedn. 23, ll. 1-23.

³⁷ Cuhra, 'In the Shadow of Liberalization', p. 424.

³⁸ ABS, f. A 34, inv. jedn. 1807, ll. 1-4; ABS, f. H-186, ll. 90, 91, 106; ABS, f. H-186/2 'Amnestie 1960', ll. 35, 36, 52, 134-5; ABS, f. H-186/3, ll. 228, 234, 251, 254, 271, 294, 400; NA, f. 014/12, sv. 37, a.j. 1438, l. 5.

³⁹ J. Kopelentova Rehak, *Czech Political Prisoners: Recovering Face* (Lexington, 2012), p. 119.

⁴⁰ See ABS, f. H-186, ll. 68, 99, 111, 116; ABS, f. H-186/2, ll. 50, 95, 96, 105, 115, 117, 120, 122, 130, 139; ABS, f. H-186/3, ll. 63, 82, 85, 87, 178, 263, 267, 322, 329, 367, 378, 391-4, 400, 420; ABS, f. A5-81 microfiche 2 (non-paginated); and T. Bouška and K. Pinerová (eds), *Czechoslovak Political Prisoners: Life Stories of 5 Male and 5 Female Victims of Stalinism* (Prague, 2009), pp. 25, 95.

⁴¹ ABS, f. H-186/2, ll. 34-5, 77.

⁴² ABS, f. H-186/3, ll. 223, 229-31, 234, 280, 307, 408-9; ABS, f. H-186/2, l. 138; NA, f. 02/2, sv. 273, a.j. 355, bod 15.

⁴³ ABS, f. H-186/3, l. 2; see also ABS, f. A 34, inv. jedn. 1807, ll. 2-4.

⁴⁴ ABS, f. H-186/2, l. 47.

⁴⁵ *Rudé právo* and *Práce*, 9 May 1960. The amnesty was never mentioned thereafter in these two organs, perhaps an implicit recognition of its de-stabilising potential.

⁴⁶ ABS, f. H-186/2, ll. 46, 51; ABS, f. H-186/3, ll. 1, 14, 22, 69, 204; NA, f. 014/12, sv. 35, a.j. 1378, l. 6.

⁴⁷ ABS, f. H-186/3, l. 281.

⁴⁸ Bouška and Pinerová (eds), *Czechoslovak Political Prisoners*, pp. 69-70. Importantly, Moravečková's memoirs, among others, suggest that state security reports were largely accurate reflections of the diverse popular responses to returnees.

⁴⁹ ABS, f. H-186/3, ll. 183-4, 284; ABS, f. A2/2, inv. č. 681 (non-paginated); NA, f. 02/2, sv. 321, a.j. 408, bod 13.

⁵⁰ For details, see K. McDermott and V. Sommer, *The 'Club of Politically Engaged Conformists'? The Communist Party of Czechoslovakia, Popular Opinion and the Crisis of Communism, 1956*, Cold War International History Project, Working Paper No. 66 (Washington D.C., 2013).

⁵¹ The first term is used by A. Port, *Conflict and Stability in the German Democratic Republic* (Cambridge, 2007), p. 275; and the second by K-M. Mallmann and G. Paul, 'Resistenz oder loyale Widerwilligkeit? Anmerkungen zu einem umstrittenen Begriff', *Zeitschrift für Geschichtswissenschaft*, no. 2 (1993), pp. 99-116.

⁵² The concept of 'tacit consensus' is adapted from T. Lindenberger, 'Tacit Minimal Consensus: The Always Precarious East German Dictatorship', in P. Corner (ed.), *Popular Opinion in Totalitarian Regimes: Fascism, Nazism, Communism* (Oxford, 2009), pp. 208-22.

⁵³ ABS, f. A5-81 microfiche 3 (non-paginated).

⁵⁴ ABS, f. H-186/3, l. 26.

⁵⁵ ABS, f. H-186/3, ll. 36, 385; ABS, f. H-186/2, ll. 46-7.

⁵⁶ ABS, f. A5-81 microfiche 2 (non-paginated).

⁵⁷ ABS, f. H-186/2, l. 41.

⁵⁸ ABS, f. H-186/3, l. 77.

⁵⁹ ABS, f. H-186/2, l. 34.

⁶⁰ ABS, f. H-186/2, l. 68.

⁶¹ ABS, f. H-186/3, ll. 43, 54.

⁶² ABS, f. H-186/3, l. 107.

⁶³ ABS, f. H-186/2, ll. 47; see also NA, f. 014/12, sv. 35, a.j. 1378, Information Bulletin, 19 May 1960.

⁶⁴ ABS, f. H-186/3, ll. 26-7.

⁶⁵ ABS, f. H-186/3, l. 25.

⁶⁶ ABS, f. H-186/2, l. 38; ABS, f. H-186/3, l. 37.

⁶⁷ ABS, f. H-186/3, ll. 13, 25, 27, 36, 78, 94.

⁶⁸ ABS, f. H-186/2, l. 46. Similar views were voiced in the Břeclav district in south Moravia. See ABS, f. H-186/3, l. 367.

⁶⁹ J. Marušiak, 'The Normalisation Regime and its Impact on Slovak Domestic Policy after 1970', in *Europe-Asia Studies*, vol. 60, no. 10 (2008), pp. 1815, 1822.