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## INSTRUCTIONAL AND PROMOTIONAL FILMS OF THE MINISTRY OF THE INTERIOR OF THE CZECHOSLOVAK REPUBLIC IN THE COLLECTIONS OF THE SECURITY SERVICES ARCHIVE

The Security Services Archive was founded on 1<sup>st</sup> February 2008 alongside the Institute for the Study of Totalitarian Regime under the same Act. There is about 17 km of archival materials stored in authorized depositories in three sites in Prague and one site in Kanice, near Brno. The majority of the archival materials were transferred from the previous institution – the Archive of the Ministry of the Interior. Pursuant to Act No. 181/2007 Coll., the Archive holds documents created by the security services, the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia and the organizations of the so-called National Front during the period from 4<sup>th</sup> April 1945 to 15<sup>th</sup> February 1990. The greatest volume of archival materials was acquired from the Department of Security Services of the Ministry of the Interior, while other papers were held until 2008 by various authorities: other departments of the Ministry of the Interior of the Czech Republic (including Military Intelligence), the Ministry of Justice, the Security Information Service (BIS) and the Office for Foreign Relations and Information (ÚZSI).

The Czech Republic has a very liberal legislative approach in regard to access of the archival materials created by the Communist security services. The research of these documents<sup>1</sup> is permitted to anybody under Act No. 499/2004 Coll. on Archival Science and Record Services.

<sup>1</sup> Archival materials created until 1<sup>st</sup> January 1990 by state authorities, the security services or various organizations and political parties consolidated in the so-called National Front.

These approximately 17 km of documents include several audiovisual films created by the Communist Security Services. They are lodged in various archival funds, often as attachments to the StB files.<sup>2</sup> As an example, there are several audio tapes with recordings of phone calls. A total of 221 reels were produced by the Intelligence Technology Directorate (Directorate VI of the National Security Corps). The record group, *General Staff Intelligence Directorate*, contains a collection of 26 films entitled Military Equipment, in which specific types of weapons used by NATO are described. A similar military topic is elaborated on in 10 films collected under the record group *Military Counterintelligence*. One of the oldest films lodged with the Security Services Archive is a documentary about the American Army's arrival in Czechoslovakia in 1945.<sup>3</sup>

Otherwise, the majority of films are gathered in one fund, named *The Collection of Films Lodged with the Security Services Archive*. This collection is a complete set of film materials which relate to the activities of the security services. It comprises of mostly short films in the 16mm and 35mm format which the Security Services Archive acquired upon its establishment as per Act 181/2007 Coll. The collection currently consists of 307 pieces of film material, some of which in two copies. The Archive acquired them from the Security Department of the Ministry of the Interior of the Czech Republic (106 items), the Museum of the Police of the Czech Republic (119 items) and the Institute of Criminalistics of the Police of the Czech Republic in Prague (82 items) in 2008–2009.

To facilitate their use, and primarily to protect and preserve them, since 2009 the archive has closely collaborated with an external company<sup>4</sup> to convert the film reels into removable media, namely DVD, all in HD format. The best copy the Archive holds is selected for digitisation in cases where there are multiple copies. The digitisation process includes image correction (oscillation, a colour grading) and sound correction (noise removal). The above process is also necessary because of the natural ageing of the film reels and damage to some materials, and also to provide researchers with high quality access.

The short films in this complete collection were created between 1949 and 1989 and most of them were shot under the direct orders of the Ministry of the Interior of the Czechoslovak Republic. After 1969 they were ordered by the Department of Political Education, Culture and Promotion of the Federal Ministry of the Interior for specific departments of the security corps. Almost all the short films lodged with the Archive today were produced by the Czechoslovak Army Film in direct collaboration with the National Security Corps and its units, such as the Border Patrol, Internal Patrol, Military Forces of the Ministry of the Interior, Crime Investigation Service, State Security units, Public Security units<sup>5</sup> and others.

The films these units ordered for their own purposes were used as instructional, educational and field exercise materials, especially for members of the State Security and Public Security departments. Some also documented the history and 'tradition' of the

<sup>2</sup> StB is an abbreviation for the name of Communist secret police – the State Security (in Czech *Státní bezpečnost*).

<sup>3</sup> Security Services Archive, record group Domažlice District, Ministry of the Interior Department (B 3\_1), inv. no. 1.

<sup>4</sup> Its name is Video-Foto Studio Láryšov, near Krnov.

<sup>5</sup> Public Security (in Czech *Veřejná bezpečnost*, abbreviation VB) was the uniformed unit of the National Security Corps (in Czech *Sbor národní bezpečnosti*, abbreviation SNB).

Communist secret police and security services of the Communist regime, such as films on the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the National Security Corps, Czechoslovak Counterintelligence during the war, the 5<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Border Patrol department, etc. Especially interesting for historians are films which offer evidence of the close links between the security services and the regime in power, such as *Security Corps Prepare for the National Exercise Day*, *National Conference of National Security Assistants*, *15<sup>th</sup> Party Conference and the National Security Corps*, or films which were used for the ideological indoctrination of members of the security services, such as *The Armed Fist of the Working Class* or *The Winning People*.

As regards motifs, these short films held by the Archive can be divided up as follows:

1. Purely propagandist and ideological films which follow the then ideology, such as *Code Name Hawk*, *The War Still Threatens*, *This Is What America Is Like*, *It Was Easy for Mr. Werner*, *Foreigners from Non-Socialist Countries*, etc. They are also designed for public viewing. This type also includes short films on the activities of the Border Patrol Department, such as *This did not Happen in the Border Zone*, *I Swear I Will*, *Prohibited Zone*, *Border Guard*, etc.

2. Short films designed for internal use by the National Security Corps and their units which, beside the ideological and propagandist aspect, also include some profession-related content, such as *Investigating at the Crime Scene*, *Traffic Patrol Guys*, *Identity Card Checks*, *Internal Patrol Journal*, *The Occupation of the Law Protector*, *Protective Supervision*, etc. This group justifiably includes short films with professional content which were used for the continuous education of members of the National Security Corps who were professionals in some areas of crime investigation, expert laboratories, explosives specialists or dog-handlers. The following film names are typical examples of these specialised instructional films: *Criminalistics*, *Methods of Crime Scene Investigation*, *Crime Investigation Laboratory*, *Crime Forensics*, *Dactyloscopy*, *Ballistics*, *Radiology*, *Microscopes*, *Graphic Forensics*, *Pyrotechnology*, *Learning Explosives*, *Phonoscopy*, *Employment of Police Dogs*, *Smell Cans*, *Police Kynology*, *Using Weapons*, etc. This group also includes films designed for educational purposes for the Border Patrol Department, such as *Border Patrol Squads*, *Border Patrol Action*, *Maintenance of the U-70 Signalling Facility*, *Employment of Police Dogs*, or for the purposes of the Public Security Corps, such as *Tasks and Activity of the Operative Units of Public Security Corps in Apartment Burglary Investigation*, *District Departments of the Public Security Corps*, *Supervision over Criminal Individuals*, *Operative Control Units of the Public Security Corps*, and others.

3. Another group of films comprises short films designed for public awareness, free of ideological content, which were created irrespective of the political situation. They include *Alcohol and Juveniles*, *Driving in the Town*, *Be Careful and Self-contained*, *Children on Public Transport*, *Dangers on the Road*, *Skoda 105*, *120 and 130 Automobiles*, etc.

These films include materials which are of great interest to historians as they concern various important events in Czechoslovak history in the latter half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, for instance films on the events of August 1968 and 1969. They not only cover events in

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<sup>6</sup> Burning DVD copies of the films is subject to charge and subject to the Archive director's prior approval.

Prague, but also from other places in Czechoslovakia, especially Northern Bohemia. They include films such as *21 August 1968, Usti nad Labem in 1968 – Transfer of the Soviet Army, Wenceslaus' Square in Prague in 1969, Prague Free of Demonstrations and Interventions – Wounded Police Officers, 21 August 1968 – Public Poll, Films by the Ministry of the Interior – Prague 1969, Liberec 1969, Barricades in 1969, 21 August 1969 – Prague Echoes, University Conference Delegates, Old Town Square Manifestations*.

Researchers are allowed to watch digitised copies of film in research centres of the Security Services Archive.<sup>6</sup> Films which have not yet been digitised are not accessible. The Security Services Archive is of course aware of the problem concerning the physical conditions needed to deposit the film reels. This is the task of our staff from the special department of the Archive (the Physical Care of Archival Materials group). They regularly check the temperature, humidity, light exposure etc. in the relevant depositories. Unfortunately, it was found that some film reels are in poor condition, and some of them have even been degraded by the so-called vinegar syndrome, which is a threat to other films as well. This is why the Security Services Archive got in touch with experts from the National Archives in Prague in order to preserve the damaged films and to discuss the possibility of depositing these films in this institution, which has better film storage facilities.

## STRESZCZENIE

Archiwum Służb Bezpieczeństwa Republiki Czeskiej zostało założone 1 lutego 2008 r. na podstawie tej samej ustawy co Instytut Badania Reżimów Totalitarnych. Posiada zasób liczący około 17 km materiałów archiwalnych, przechowywanych w specjalnych depozytach w trzech miejscach w Pradze oraz w miejscowości Kanice (pod Brnem). Większość materiałów archiwalnych została przejęta z poprzedniej instytucji – Archiwum Ministerstwa Spraw Wewnętrznych. Obecnie w Archiwum przechowywane są dokumenty wytworzone przez czechosłowackie służby bezpieczeństwa, Komunistyczną Partię Czechosłowacji i organizacje tzw. Frontu Narodowego w okresie od 4 kwietnia 1945 r. do 15 lutego 1990 r. Archiwalia te zawierają także ciekawe materiały audiowizualne wytworzone przez komunistyczną Służbę Bezpieczeństwa (StB). Znajdowały się one w różnych zespołach archiwalnych i często były załącznikami do spraw prowadzonych przez StB. Przykładowo po aktywności pionu techniki operacyjnej zachowało się 221 szpul różnych nagrań. Z kolei zbiór „Oddział Wywiadu Sztabu Generalnego” zawiera kolekcję 26 filmów dotyczących sprzętu wojskowego używanego przez NATO. Podobnej problematyki dotyczy 10 filmów zgromadzonych w zbiorze „Kontrwywiad Wojskowy”. Obecnie większość filmów została opracowana w ramach zbioru archiwalnego o nazwie „Kolekcja filmów z zasobu Archiwum Służb Bezpieczeństwa”.

**Słowa kluczowe:** Archiwum Służb Bezpieczeństwa Republiki Czeskiej, Archiwum Ministerstwa Spraw Wewnętrznych, Komunistyczna Partia Czechosłowacji, Służba Bezpieczeństwa (StB), wywiad wojskowy, kontrwywiad wojskowy, materiały audiowizualne, Praga.

## SUMMARY

On 1<sup>st</sup> February 2008, an archive from the Security Service of the Czech Republic was created under the same statute as the Institute for the Study of Totalitarian Regimes. Its collection contains approx. 17 km of archival material kept in special deposits in three locations in Prague and the village of Kanice (in the vicinity of Brno). The majority of archival material was taken from the former institution – the Archive of the Ministry of the Interior. The Archive now stores documents produced by the Czechoslovak Security Service, the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia and organizations of the so-called National Front from 4<sup>th</sup> April 1945 until 15<sup>th</sup> February 1990. The archives also comprise interesting audio-visual material produced by the Communist Security Service (StB). They were dispersed in different archives and often served as annexes under the proceedings conducted by the Security Service. For instance, the Operational Technique Division left behind 221 reels of various recordings. On the other hand, the collection of the Branch Office of the Intelligence Service of the General Staff of the Armed Forces comprises a series of 26 films on military equipment used by NATO. Similar issues are raised in 10 films gathered in the collection of the Military Counterintelligence Service. The majority of files have now been included in an archival collection called “Collection of films of the Security Service Archives”.

**Key words:** Archive of the Security Service of the Czech Republic, Archive of the Ministry of the Interior, Communist Party of Czechoslovakia, Security Service (StB), Military Intelligence Service, Military Counterintelligence Service, audiovisual materials, Prague.