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AUDIOVISUAL COLLECTIONS BY THE COMMUNIST SECRET SERVICES IN THE NATION'S MEMORY INSTITUTE IN SLOVAKIA

Today we can make public and share what was considered a national secret in the past. The same is true for audiovisual collections, which the secret service left here. Therefore, Slovakia shares the considerable part of all these collections with the Czech Republic. I would like to provide some special examples and previews of movies made by the secret service.

Firstly, I would like to briefly recall the story about the Nation's Memory Institute in Slovakia, the sources of its archival movies, the methods of the secret service in making the movies. In the next part of the article I would like to focus attention on the categorisation of movies and on the commented previews.

The Nation's Memory Institute (NMI) was established in 2003 with an aim to chart the crimes of communism and fascism in Slovakia and to analyse the oppression period and, additionally, to be the voice of unfairly persecuted people.

Since its establishment, the NMI has also striven to gather various audiovisual materials made by the secret service. The main sources of the movies are:

- Slovak Information Service, which got the movies from the State Security,
- Police Academy,
- various archives such as district ones etc.,
- private owners.

It is necessary to say that many movies were destroyed. After the revolution in 1989, the so-called exceptional shredding of the secret service's materials started. Then, a lot of movies were destroyed. However, the movies by the secret service, which were preserved, are sufficient for analysing the way the State Security used the medium of film.

Criminal police used the various operational methods of the police proceeding against criminals. On the other side, the State Security also used operational methods of the criminal police work, but these were aimed at their own people having different attitudes (often only a small suspicion or the religious belief or just a different attitude was enough). The State Security often worked under the pretence of crime prevention. They assumed that if such citizens hadn't been detained, he would surely have committed a crime.

The Federal Ministry of Interior had its own film studio, where a wide range of movies were produced during the 1970s and 1980s. Studio was placed in the premises of the University of the National Security Corps in Prague. We presume that there were not only instructional and educational movies made, but also movies made to order for the Krátky film Praha and Československý armádní film production companies – propaganda documentaries.

The collections of movies from the secret service can be divided into five basic categories:

1. Operational (evidence, interrogation, monitoring).
2. Instructional and educational movies (training of young agents and police officers).
3. Propaganda movies (made for public use).
4. Seized movie material.

1. Operational (evidence, interrogation, monitoring)

Operational materials were made mainly on the basis of the secret pursuit of people. This kind of material could later be used in investigations and as evidence at trial. As we have already stated, just a minor suspicion was enough for the State Security to invade the privacy of citizens.

Secret photographing and filming were the typical methods of investigation of the State Security from the time of its establishment. The division of powers for their production was known from the end of the year 1951, when the same went for wiretapping.

The stocktaking from December 1950 showed that the State Security had more than 25 different types of cameras, actually 809 pieces, for the purposes of photographing and filming. Moreover, they had 12 studio movie cameras and 5 portable movie cameras. As the size of movie cameras was not convenient in the 1950s, filming techniques for the purposes of espionage fully developed few years later.

Here we can demonstrate the way as well as the reason for making such movies in the case of the State Security. The problem was that the employees of the secret service had a serious suspicion of information leaks to the capitalist states even though they were not able to prove it.

“Action Egon” (1976) – a creative application of new documentary forms during pursuit actions. Monitoring was aimed to reveal the channel of unwanted information and written material leaks from the right-wing groups to the capitalist states with the use of operational devices. By monitoring it was proved that the way of unwanted information leak led through an employee of a capitalist embassy, who was in touch with a rightward oriented member of the Prague culture stage. The pursuit was aimed to monitor the course of meetings and the way of delivering materials with the assistance of movie cameras.

Near the embassy there was a park, where such meetings were usually held. Many candid cameras had been placed around to monitor the area. The only problem was that the meetings were always held in different places in the park, and thus it was rather complicated to make a quality record. It was required to record the whole course of the meeting, not just its part.

Secret service employees thus tried to find a suitable solution. They finally decided to place the camera inside a pram and at the particular time a woman pretending that she was walking with her child was sent to the park.

The role of the mother with child was played by an employee of the secret service who had been on the maternity leave at that time. She was willing to participate in the action with her own child.

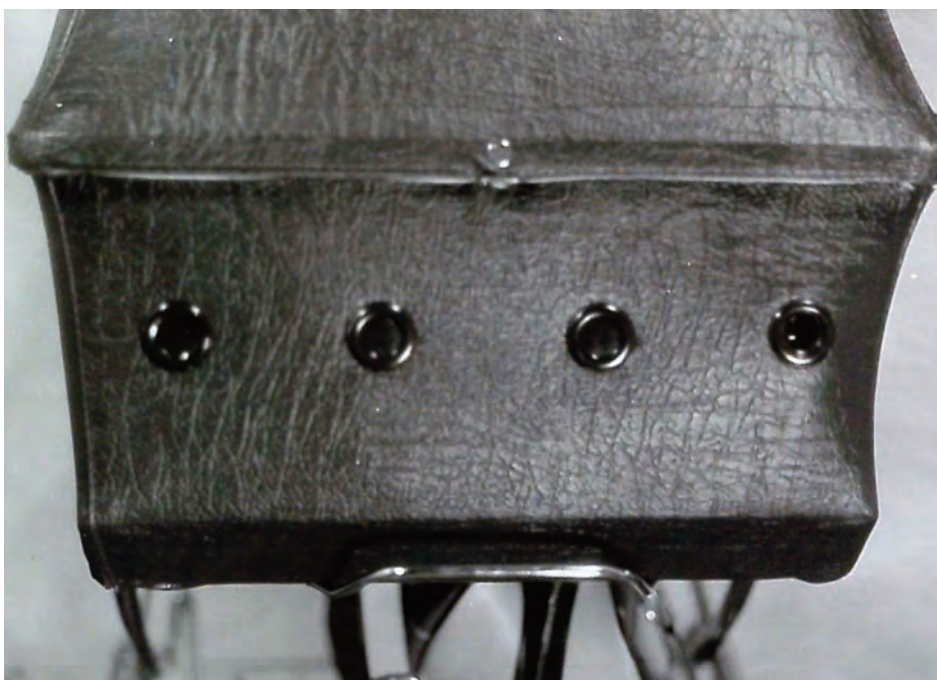
Another problem was of technical character as it was needed to create a sort of “television pram”. Since the record was supposed to be quite long, a movie camera was not suitable for its production, so they had to use a television camera instead. It was placed inside the pram (photo 1). The camera objective was filming the scene through one of the holes in the pram, on the right side (photos 2–3). The device recording the picture was placed in a shopping bag (photo 4). Camera control was on the side of the pram, so an agent could start and stop the recording anytime (photo 5).



Photo 1

This way of filming was successful and secret service employees also offered this solution for other cases.

Another example of “camouflage” in use was an adjustment of the television receiver CASTELLO made in 1977. “Camouflage” consisted of a hidden movie camera



Photos 2 and 3



Photo 4

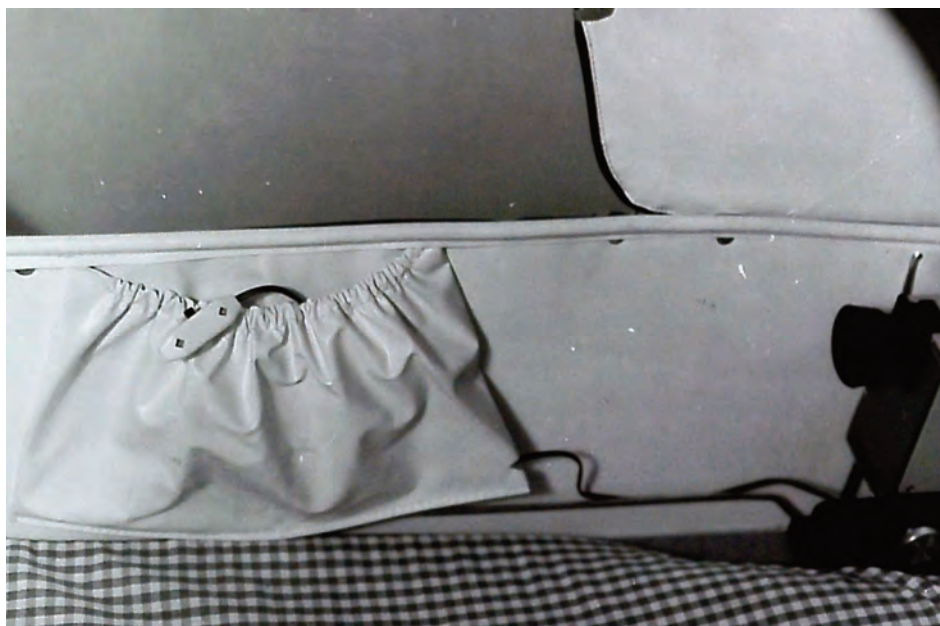


Photo 5

P-1 and hidden camera OKO-II. They both were hidden behind the decorative lattice of the television speaker. Right inside the TV there were electric lines connected to the mains and picture was transmitted via coaxial cable to the distance of about 100 metres. The movie camera and camera were controlled in the same way.

State Security also used cameras to make records from demonstrations and manifestations. For example, records of intervention of the State Security against the participants of Candle Manifestation (peaceful gathering of believers in 1988 was attended by thousands of people and it was one of the biggest demonstrations against the communist regime before 1989). This peaceful demonstration was brutally dispersed by State Security with truncheons and water cannons, many demonstrators were cruelly beaten.

The recorded material could be used for the exact identification of the participating people, who were interrogated and blackmailed afterwards. Being present at such gathering was regarded by the State Security as an anti-state activity.

2. Instructional and educational movies (training of young agents and police officers)

Nation's Memory Institute also has a great number of instructional films which were prepared for new employees of the State Security. For example, movies focused on process of home inspection, state border protection, inspection of baggage at the airport, etc. Objectives:

- 1) To teach new employees various methods of work.
- 2) To present citizens with different attitude as criminals, while the reason for placing wiretapping technology in their flat could be to monitor the gatherings of terrorist groups preparing an attack as well as illegal philosophical lectures by a forbidden professor. In a suitcase at an airport there could be automatic or some other gun as well as forbidden literary works and religious items. Another movie "*Skrytá hliadka*" ("Hidden Guard") shows citizens who were looking for freedom in democratic countries and thus tried to cross the state border. This movie makes an impression that only people who had committed a crime at the territory of former Czechoslovakia and wanted to avoid being punished tried to escape across the Iron Curtain.
- 3) To use, or rather misuse, operational methods of police work in order to frighten citizens having a different opinion. Placing wiretaps in buildings and telephones, house searches, opening correspondence, or open monitoring of people could definitely frighten another person who was not trained to be resistant to such methods.

This way, the State Security reinforced the fear in society, which we could call a sort of "big brother effect", the feeling that everything was monitored back then.

"House Search", an instructional movie made by the Československý armádný film production company for the Federal Ministry of Interior in the year 1982. It is a very detailed legal as well as psychological instruction on the reasons, objectives, forms, and methods of house searching. The movie instructs on preparation, process, strategy, means, and methods of the house search. It emphasizes that to make this investigation activity successful it was necessary to monitor interests and hobbies as well as professional orientation of the subject to have the house searched. It also wants to point

out the need to proceed systematically and to be consistent in doing the house search. However, watching the manners of people to have the house searched was important, too.

Lastly, it warns viewers – students to be precise – in the evaluation of the search and to choose their next steps correctly.

It was well-known that educational movies by KGB were used for instructional purposes. They describe and show how to detect secret writings with optic equipment and how to place wiretaps in flats (the so-called area wiretapping). There is also a demonstration of how to do preparatory house search with placing the wiretapping devices under the pretence of gas or electric line inspection. The movie shows how to monitor certain items with the use of radioactive substance, while its presence was detected from an appropriate distance. Moreover, in this short footage there is an example of the so-called operational house search. We can see State Security members (in this particular footage there are KGB members) who are about to break into the flat and do the house search without leaving any traces or at least covering them. There is also an illustration of a secret baggage search; an unsuccessful one. It demonstrates the possible failure in case of insufficient and careless preparation.

3. Propaganda movies

Propaganda movies were made to persuade viewers that the National Security Corps used operational methods of work to fight against criminals. Such movies were meant for State Security and some of them for the public. This way the State Security tried to excite reliance and trust in the public.

The film “Hidden Guard” shows visual control of the Iron Curtain from a fixed checkpoint, consisting of border guards in the case of the so-called violation of the state border, procedure of inspection of technical security systems on the border as well as search for a violator.

As the technical equipment was placed in terrain – in forests (border with the Federal Republic of Germany) – the signal for violation of borders could be caused by wild animals, which actually happened very often. However, each violation signal had to be verified and the “violator” identified by the border guard.

The movie shows that in the case of a human violator – a person searching for freedom in democratic countries – the border guard as well as the search group, which was sent to the location from the border guard’s base, were supposed to put in enormous effort in order to detain the “violator” and were also authorised to use a gun as well as “a dog without leash”. It is necessary to emphasize that this instructional movie belongs to the period ones, so the later devices and other technical equipment in the border area as well as procedures of detaining “violators” became more sophisticated. However, some procedures such as the use of guns against the “violator” didn’t change until the fall of the Iron Curtain.

The movie “Instructions for use of operational technology” was produced as a montage of educational and propaganda movies. In the first part of the movie there are some illustrations from former Czechoslovakia showing how espionage could be performed by “the enemy”. There is a demonstration of communication via radio

frequency transmitter, camouflage for transport of material through the border and customs controls as well as an example of secret writing with the use of multi-component inks.

4. Seized material

The secret service confiscated various items in investigations and house searches etc. – for instance various pictures and movies from the occupation in 1968. State Security was instructed to confiscate all existing recordings.

“August 1968” (Rožňava) is stored in the Archive of the Nation’s Memory Institute in Bratislava. It was made by an employee of Osvetový dom (cultural house) in Rožňava with the work movie camera on 21 August 1968 in Rožňava square. The movie was seized by State Security most likely at the beginning of July 1970. State Security started investigating the production of this documentary on the denunciation by one of the workmates. According to the recordings from the interrogation, the movie had been made on the instruction of the director of the cultural house in Rožňava, who authorised filming of the Soviet and allied troops’ arrival in Rožňava, while his employee made it willingly. Today we can only guess the purpose of this kind of movie. However, we surely know that in the early normalisation period, State Security confiscated any documentation on the allied troops’ arrival in the Czechoslovak Socialist Republic in 1968. Either photographic or movie one.

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Our effort is to continue gathering and digitising of audiovisual collection made by the State Security. We store them in the NMI archive in a digitised form on HDD disks and DVCAM magnetic tapes. They are at the researchers’ disposal on DVDs. These movies are gradually processed by the audiovisual department and used for instance in making new movies from the oppression period. They illustrate the witnesses of people, who were persecuted by the regime. This way our movie Candle Manifestation was made. The State Security bequeathed a rich picture and video material to us. I regard these movies as a valuable source of information in this audiovisual era. It is a form, which can be accepted by the masses. Thanks to their authenticity they usually provide a clear evidence of the crimes by the communist regime.

STRESZCZENIE

Słowacki Instytut Pamięci Narodu powstał w 2003 r. Do jego ustawowych zadań należy ewidencja, gromadzenie, administrowanie i udostępnianie dokumentów aparatu represji III Rzeszy, ZSRS i organów bezpieczeństwa państwa, które wytworzono i zgromadzono od 18 kwietnia 1939 r. do 31 grudnia 1989 r., i które dotyczyły zbrodni popełnionych na osobach narodowości słowackiej lub obywatelach słowackich innych narodowości. Instytut gromadzi m.in. materiały audiowizualne wytworzone przez komunistyczne służby bezpieczeństwa. Przejmowano je z różnych instytucji, m.in. ze Słowackiej Służby Informacyjnej, Akademii Policijnej, archiwów państwowych, a tak-

że od osób prywatnych. Zgromadzone zbiory filmowe to przede wszystkim materiały operacyjne (różnorodne dowody, nagrane przesłuchania, monitoring), filmy instruktażowe i edukacyjne dla agentów i funkcjonariuszy, materiały propagandowe oraz wiele filmów zarekwirowanych przez „bezpiekę” osobom prywatnym. W artykule zostały scharakteryzowane najciekawsze przykłady tego rodzaju materiałów, przechowywanych obecnie w zbiorach Słowackiego Instytutu Pamięci Narodu.

Słowa kluczowe: Słowacki Instytut Pamięci Narodu, Słowacka Służba Informacyjna, Służba Bezpieczeństwa, Ministerstwo Spraw Wewnętrznych, Czechosłowacja, komunistyczna propaganda, materiały audiowizualne.

SUMMARY

The Slovak Nation's Memory Institute was founded in 2003. Its statutory tasks comprise of: evidencing, collecting, administrating and making available documents of the repression apparatus of the Third Reich, the USSR and state security authorities, which were produced and collected from 18th April 1939 until 31st December 1989, and referred to crimes committed on Slovak nationals or Slovak citizens of other nationalities. The Institute collects, inter alia, audio-visual material produced by the Security Service of the Communist regime. It was taken over from various institutions, inter alia, the Slovak Information Service, the Police Academy, state archives, and individuals. Above all, the film collections comprise of operational material (different types of evidence, recorded interviews, or monitoring), instructional and educational films for agents and officers, propaganda material, as well as many films confiscated by the Security Service from individuals. The article defines the most interesting examples of such material, currently stored in the collection of the Slovak Nation's Memory Institute.

Key words: Slovak Nation's Memory Institute, Slovak Information Service, Security Service, Ministry of the Interior, Czechoslovakia, Communist propaganda, audio-visual material.