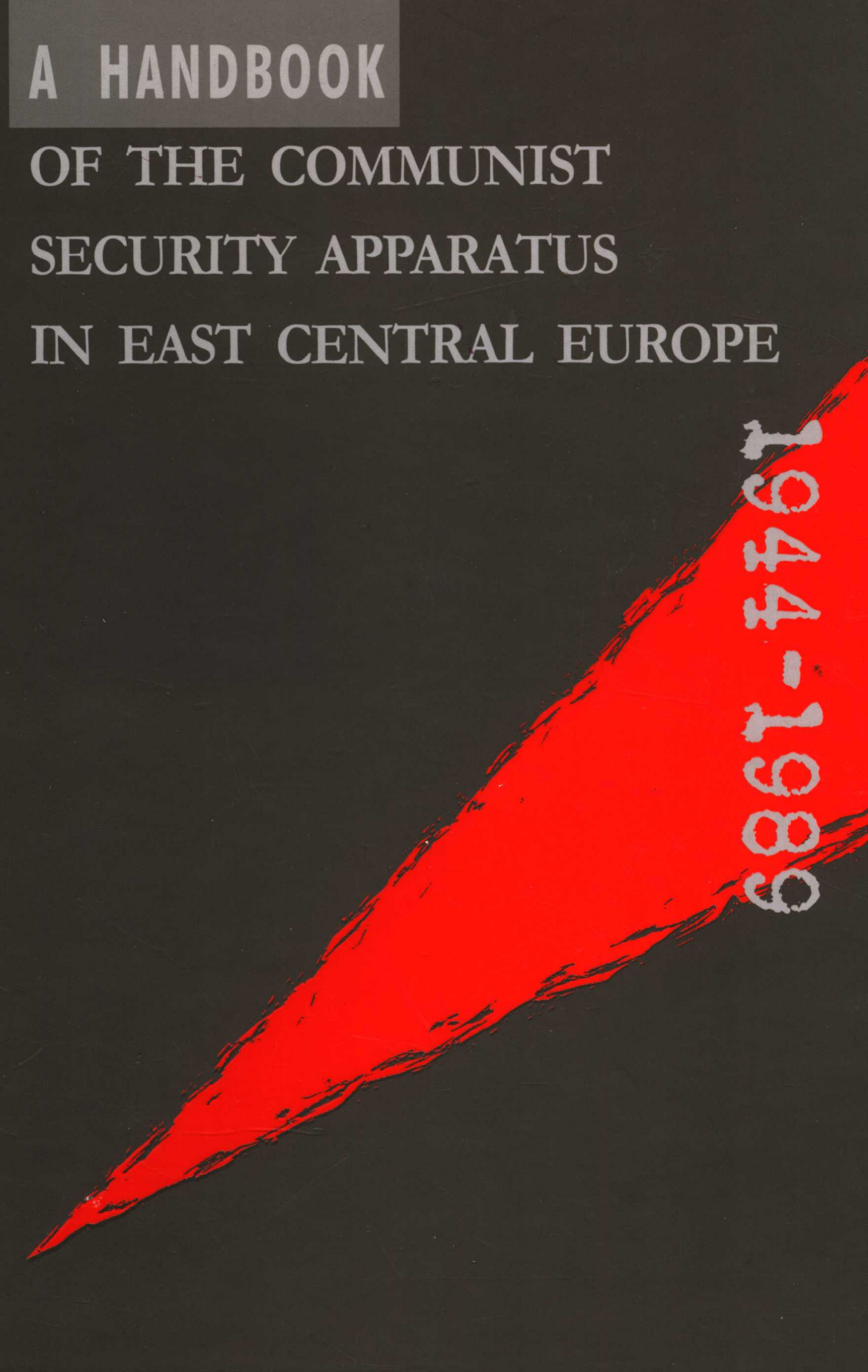
A HANDBOOK

OF THE COMMUNIST SECURITY APPARATUS IN EAST CENTRAL EUROPE



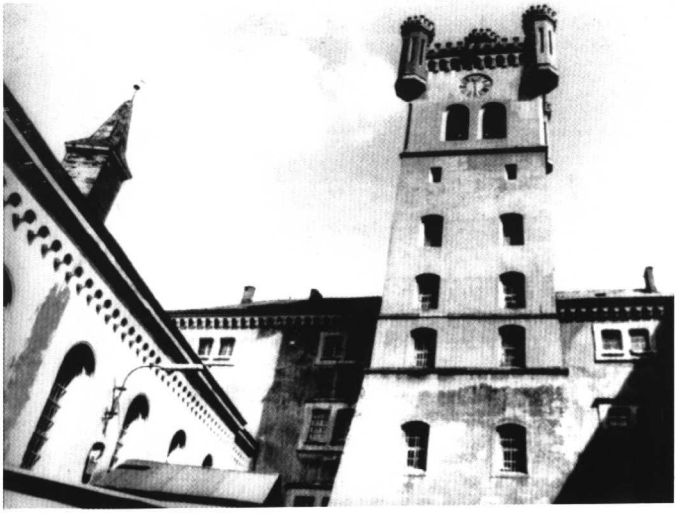
The communist security apparatus in East Central Europe was based on the Soviet model. Soviet advisers of various ranks played an important part in its development. General Ivan Serov, chief adviser to the Polish Ministry of Public Security; 1954–1958 head of the KGB. *Private collection.*

In Poland and Lithuania, long after the Second World War ended, one of the main tasks of the security apparatus was to fight against the armed underground. Partisans from Wacław Grabowski's ("Puszczyk") unit, who died on 5 July 1953 in a battle with around 1,500 soldiers of the Internal Security Corps and Security Service functionaries. *IPN Archive.*

The security apparatus played a key part in the communist takeover of power in East Central Europe during 1944–1948. Klement Gottwald announcing on 25 February 1948 in Prague Communists' victorious *coup d'etat.* Václav Nosek, Minister of the Interior, right. *ÚSD Archive.*

The communist *coup d'etat* in Czechoslovakia was followed by a bloody crackdown on the political opponents. Milada Horáková, a Czechoslovak MP, speaks at her trial. Horáková was the only woman executed in communist Czechoslovakia (27 June 1950). *ÚSD Archive.*

Even members of the communist establishment were victims of the security apparatus. Traicho Kostov's trial, Deputy Prime Minister and Secretary of the Bulgarian Communist Party. At the end of 1949 he was sentenced to death on false charges and executed. Similar trials took place in nearly all Soviet bloc countries. *Rabotnichesko Delo*, 12 December 1949.



Victims of the security apparatus were detained in ill-famed prisons, whose very names sounded menacing. One of the harshest prisons in Czechoslovakia, in the medieval castle of Mírov. *Pavel Žáček's collection.*

Functionaries were supposed to form a community outside the world of work. This was to be attained by employing entire families, organised free time and leisure. A group of Rostock MfS functionaries at a party in 1950. The banner reads: "State security is the fundamental duty, thus [we declare] war on spies, agents and saboteurs – for peace, freedom and German unity." *BStU Archive.*

The security apparatus inspired general fear. When the regime was weaker, fear turned into hatred. Security Office building in Poznań, Poland, after assault on 28 July 1956 by protesters. Assaults and lynches on *Bezpieka's* functionaries took place in Hungary that October, too. *IPN Archive.*

One of the few publicised tasks of the security apparatus was catching spies working for Western intelligence services. This is Ivan-Assen Georgiev, a high-ranking activist of the Bulgarian Communist Party, whose exposure in 1963 was the first major success of Bulgarian counter-intelligence. *MVR Archive.*

The shield and the sword, emblems of the KGB. Similar symbols were used throughout the Soviet bloc. The shield stood for the protection of the communist system, the sword for the destruction of its enemies. *Private collection.*

The patron and idol of all security services in the Soviet bloc was Feliks Dzerzhinskii, the founder of the *Cheka*. Here a ceremony commemorating his name to a guards regiment of the MfS, 15 December 1967. *BStU Archive.*

The files of the communist security apparatus document heroism and fight against totalitarianism. MfS surveillance photograph of graffiti against the Warsaw Pact invasion of Czechoslovakia in August 1968. *BStU Archive.*

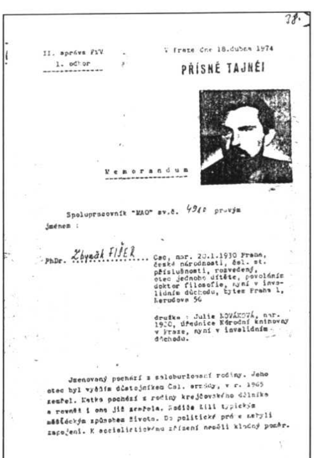
Communist secret services were also engaged in operations in Western countries. Willy Brandt with his secretary Günter Guillaume in September 1973. Soon afterwards Guillaume was exposed as a *Stasi* agent. *Deutsche Presseagentur (DPA), Frankfurt/Main.*

The communist security apparatus had highly-qualified specialists in various fields. This is an expert of the Lithuanian KGB preparing false stamps. *Genocide and Resistance Centre of Lithuania.*

The security apparatus was often referred to as "a state within a state." The seats of ministries tended to resemble "a town within a town." This is the MfS complex in Berlin-Lichtenberg. *BStU Archive.*

Correspondence control was routine activity of the security apparatus. It was carried out by both security personnel and trained agents among postal workers. These photographs were taken by *Stasi* functionaries during observation of a selected post-office box. *BStU Archive.*

Eavesdropping devices, planted in flats, offices and on telephone lines belong to routine operational methods. *BStU Archive.*



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II. správa FMV
1. odbor

V Praze dne 18.dubna 1974

PŘÍSNĚ TAJNÉ!

Memorandum

Spolupracovník "MAO" ev.č. 4910 prvým jménem :

PhDr. Zbyněk FIŠER ...... Čsc, nar. 20.1.1930 Praha, české národnosti, čsl. st. příslušnosti, rozvedený, otec jednoho dítěte, povolání doktor filosofie, nyní v invalidním důchodu, bytem Praha 1, Nerudova 56

družka : Julie NOVÁKOVÁ, nar. 1920, úřednice Národní knihovny v Praze, nyní v invalidním důchodu.

Jmenovaný pochází z maloburžoasní rodiny. Jeho otec byl vyšším důstojníkem Čsl. armády, v r. 1965 zemřel. Matka pochází z rodiny krejčovského dělníka a rovněž i ona již zemřela. Rodiče žili typickým měšťáckým způsobem života. Do politické práce nebyli zapojeni. K socialistickému zřízení neměli kladný poměr.

Even the best technical devices could not replace an extensive agent network. This is a fragment of a file of a secret collaborator of the Czechoslovak StB. *AMV Archive.*

A Handbook of the Communist Security Apparatus in East Central Europe 1944–1989

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PREFACE

Fifteen years ago, in May 1990, Poland's communist Security Service was dissolved. At the time similar changes were taking place in all former Soviet bloc countries. Former structures of the communist security apparatus were either completely dissolved or transformed into new ones, changing their political goals, methods of work and, at least in part, replacing their staff.

This was made possible by the democratic changes of 1989, with a succession of collapsing communist regimes in East Central Europe. This "autumn of peoples" brought the ultimate defeat of the security apparatus, even though in a few countries at least, it tried to play an active part in the changes. Security services were meant to be "the shield and sword" of the Communist Party, to protect it from every threat and destroy its real or imagined enemies. However, it turned out that the human desire of freedom and justice, in the long run, is stronger than even the most extensive security apparatus, with virtually unlimited budget, technical means, and tens of thousands of functionaries and secrete collaborators.

The early days of the security apparatus were closely related to the process of taking over power by Communists. The functionaries of the repression apparatus, modelled on the Soviet security services and often aided by Soviet advisers, played a paramount role in the events of 1944/1945–1948 in East Central Europe. Its goal was to identify and destroy, often literally, any opponents of the "new order." The consolidation of the communist system, however, did not involve a decline in the activity of the security apparatus. To the contrary, in accordance with Stalin's doctrine that class struggle intensifies with the progress of Communism, the scope of political repression expanded. Security structures were developed accordingly in order to exercise control over an increasing number of areas of social life. The number of functionaries grew constantly, with the agent network expanding as well. Eventually, more and more advanced technical means – eavesdropping and filming devices – were introduced. Methods were improved, new staff received better training. As a result, the security apparatus easily detected all symptoms of hostile activity – not only setting up independent organisations, but also distribution of leaflets, graffiti or even telling political jokes. As a rule, the perpetrators of these "crimes" were found out or such activities were often nipped in the bud.

The communist security apparatus, however, was far from omnipotent, as it could function only in an atmosphere of terror. It proved to be helpless, when societies

breached the barrier of fear, as it was the case in the GDR in 1953, in Poland and Hungary in 1956, in Czechoslovakia 1968, or again in Poland in 1980. Security functionaries were able to control individual attitudes and individual behaviour, but could not prevent mass upheaval. Therefore a great deal of effort was channelled into the suppression of the slightest symptoms of resistance for fear they would turn into mass protest.

The history of the communist security apparatus can be perceived from two points of view. On the one hand it is a history of crime, terror, betrayal and human meanness. State security archives are full of detailed accounts of human downfall. By means of most advanced methods, the political police repeatedly succeeded in persuading a brother to inform on his brother, a father on his son, a wife on her husband. As a result, the scum made a career while honest people were sidelined in society. On the other hand, state security files document cases of consummate heroism; they contain history of ordinary people, who in the name of fundamental values were ready to sacrifice a great deal, sometimes even their lives.

Whatever our approach, there is no denying that it is impossible to understand the history of Communism without a knowledge of the security apparatus. That is why the Institute of National Remembrance decided to prepare and publish this volume. An international panel of authors was requested to write reports on the history of the security apparatus in the individual countries of the Soviet bloc.[1] Professor Nicolas Werth kindly agreed to write the introductory essay on the formation of the Soviet security apparatus during 1917–1945. Its practices and methods of work and the specific mentality of political police were transplanted into security services of the countries of the Soviet "external empire." Their functionaries referred to the Soviet prototype of political police, often taking pride in calling themselves "chekists."

The co-authors of this book were asked to prepare their chapters on the basis of a pre-set list of issues. It comprised the following aspects: organisation and changes of structure of the security apparatus,[2] staff (number of functionaries and their social composition) methods of operational work, main operational areas, secret collaborators (their number, recruitment methods, etc.), attempts to estimate the number of victims. This scheme also covered an overview of the existing publications on this

[1] The reader will no doubt notice the missing chapter on Hungary. Unfortunately, the author did not submit his text before this volume went to press. The publishers hope that this will be amended in the future editions of this handbook.

[2] It should be stressed that the communist security apparatus was merely part of a larger system of repression of the Communist state. It also comprised militias, special military units, a system of prisons and camps, public prosecutors' offices and courts obedient to the party, and various extra-judicial organs of repression. If needed and by order of the party virtually all state organs could get involved in the repression of certain individuals. The authors of this volume, however, are primarily interested in communist security services *sensu stricto*.

subject and a brief analysis of access to archives of the Communist security apparatus. For this reason and in order to attract broader readership, we have in principle decided not to include source references. The individual texts are supplemented by short biographical entries of the most important functionaries of the communist security apparatus, which constitute a collective picture of the "chekist elite."

Naturally, not all the questions have been fully answered, which is due to uneven access to security services' archives and the level of advancement of research in the individual countries. No doubt, the studies of the East German *Stasi* are most advanced, due to the existence of the office of the Federal Commissioner for the Records of the National Security Service of the Former German Democratic Republic (*Bundesbeauftragte für die Unterlagen des Staatssicherheitsdienstes der ehemaligen DDR*, BStU). It might be easily forgotten that it was the GDR citizens themselves that had won such unrestricted access to *Stasi* archives by storming State Security headquarters in January 1990, thus salvaging them from substantial destruction (which, unfortunately, was the case in a number of Eastern European countries); this also compelled political leaders to adopt legal regulations that would guarantee the citizens general access to their files. After German reunification these efforts resulted in passing a law on the establishment of the BStU in 1991.

In other Soviet bloc countries, the German solution was treated as a model for a few years, which does not mean that it was initiated. Archival material produced by the communist security apparatus was accessible on a limited basis, and in some cases not even to the victims, researchers or journalists. In Poland, it had not been until 2000 that the Institute of National Remembrance was set up to take over the archives of the communist security apparatus from the then security services. Its Slovak counterpart – the Nation's Memory Institute – was set up three years later. Debate is in progress whether to establish similar institutions in the Czech Republic and Hungary.

This situation stems from a number of causes. Significantly, in many countries the post-communist parties still exert substantial influence, which, naturally, are not interested in revealing the truth about the recent past. A great deal of activists of pre-1989 political opposition decided that the archives, if opened, would reveal that many of them had collaborated with the security apparatus and thus destroy the myth of anti-communist movement. Others gave priority to economic, political or social transformation and thought that settling accounts with the past might create a toxic atmosphere and thus poison the development of a young democracy – hence proposals to destroy or seal these archives for a number of decades. But, as it turns out, there is no escaping from the past. Despite restricted access to archival materials, the past kept returning both in the form of political and business scandals with the participation of former functionaries or secret collaborators of the communist security apparatus, and as recurrent attacks on famous people by accusing them of having been agents of the security services, i.e. statements which were difficult

to prove. Therefore, it seems, the prevalent opinion is that it is necessary to establish special institutions which will both study and promulgate knowledge of the communist security services.

Another matter is the question of bringing to justice the perpetrators of crimes of the communist security apparatus. They left thousands dead, tens of thousands physically and mentally tortured, hundreds of thousands detained, kept under surveillance and persecuted in a variety of ways. The perpetrators of these crimes, for the most part, remained unpunished. Bringing the perpetrators to justice meets with greater difficulty than punishing Nazi criminals, which was far from swift and easy. A number of legal issues arise, e.g. can the functionaries of the former regime be punished if they followed their superiors' orders or, even, under the then effective law? Are these crimes classified as crimes against humanity? Should the perpetrators be punished under the then or the contemporary law? One possible solution is to create a *lex specialis* such as the Polish law on the Institute of National Remembrance, which introduced a new category of "communist crime." Whatever the result of this search, the chances of punishing the perpetrators are becoming thinner. One should not expect that the sense of justice among the public would be completely satisfied through judicial procedures. The more important, it appears, are in-depth studies of the history of the communist repression apparatus. This will make it possible not only to get acquainted with the mechanisms of the communists system but to properly honour its victims.

In May 2004, the first group of former communist countries became members of the European Union. Others hope to follow in 2007. Thus the traces of the "Iron Curtain," which had divided Europe for fifty years, are being erased. Despite difficulties, economic integration gradually progresses, legal systems undergo unification, political integration deepens. What might appear surprising at first glance, the most durable are mental barriers, a product of the last fifty years. That is why such a great astonishment or even fear among citizens of the former communist countries was caused by the debate on *The Black Book of Communism*, in which influential intellectual circles of the West either diminished communist crimes or even justified them. On the other hand, many Western European countries resonated with indignation at the words of Sandra Kalniete, Latvian Minister of Foreign Affairs. In March 2004, in Leipzig, she said these words and expressed not only her own personal opinion: "After the Second World War, Europe was cut in half by the Iron Curtain, which not only enslaved the people of Eastern Europe, but also erased the history of these people from the overall history of the Continent. Europe had just rid itself of the plague of Nazism, and it was quite understandable that after the bloodbath of the war, few people had the strength to look bitter truth in the eyes, they could not deal with the fact that the terror was continuing in half of Europe, that behind the Iron Curtain the Soviet regime continued to commit genocide against the peoples of Eastern Europe and, indeed, against its own people. For fifty years the history of Europe was written without of our participation.