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WOMEN POLITICAL PRISONERS
AND PRISON CULTURE
IN CZECHOSLOVAKIA
1948–1968

MARIE MRVOVÁ

A thesis submitted to the University of Huddersfield
in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Masters by Research

The University of Huddersfield

January 2019

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Abstract

The experiences of women political prisoners in Communist Czechoslovakia between 1948 and 1968 are still considerably under-represented in existing historiography. Moreover, researching on women's narratives of political repression reveals phenomena of culture in prison which have not been thoroughly investigated so far. Prison culture involves not only prison relationships, values and lifestyle, but also culture in a more specific meaning. In prison, women secretly organised lectures and discussions, wrote poems and made various objects. Exploring women's perspectives of political imprisonment including gendered violence and culture of the body, shows the differences and attitudes specific to women, who created a unique space to share, support each other and collectively resist brutality and the authorities. The methodology of this thesis is based on qualitative analysis of personal narratives obtained by both written and oral testimonies of incarcerated women, including memoirs, prison correspondence and particularly oral history interviews, which are compared with archival materials and secondary literature. During my oral history interviews I conducted with former political prisoners, I collected photos of the objects women created and had the opportunity to discuss the meaning of culture in prison. Such objects are strongly connected to our cultural memory and identity. This study will argue that prison culture helped women to cope, unite and resist the cruel environment of imprisonment. Women's ways of coping and resistance are investigated, such as the process of beautification, reclaiming embodiment, education and the creation of art and objects. Uncovering hidden histories of women's experiences of political persecution can provide a better understanding of human behaviour under repressive regimes and allow us to reflect on the role of community, culture, knowledge and education in such circumstances.

Key words: female political prisoners, gender history, women's history, oral history, prison narratives, prison culture, material culture, Czechoslovakia 1948-1968, Cold War, Communism, women's political repression, persecution

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Dedicated to my mother Eva and my great-grandparents Marie and Josef

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List of abbreviations

ABS (Archiv bezpečnostních složek)	State Security Archive in Prague
JZD (Jednotné zemědělské družstvo)	United Agricultural Cooperative
MUKL	'Man determined to liquidation', a political prisoner meant to not return from prison
NA (Národní archiv)	National Archive in Prague
StB (Státní bezpečnost)	State Secret Service

Academic Biography of Marie Mrvová

As a current student of Masters by Research in Public History, Oral History and Community Heritage at the University of Huddersfield, I research female political prisoners in Czechoslovakia 1948-1968, and particularly on prison culture and production of objects. During my studies, I have lectured about my project at various conferences in York, Cardiff and Huddersfield. I also work as an editor and collector for a historical project *Memory of Nations* (Paměť národa) documenting oral testimonies of the important historical events of the 20th century. This project is run by Post-Bellum, Czech Radio (Český rozhlas) and the Institute for the Study of Totalitarian Regimes (ÚSTR) in Prague. As a part of my Masters studies, I have travelled to different cities in Czech Republic and interviewed mainly former women political prisoners, but also people who were close to them. I intend to develop my research further into a PhD project in future.

Introduction

Political persecution has been studied for many years. However, in the satellite countries of the former Soviet Union, it could not be studied fully until the fall of Communism in 1989. Since then, the topic of political repression in Communist Czechoslovakia has been widely investigated by many historians, sociologists and psychologists. Former political prisoners finally could break the silence order they had to sign before their release thus allowing them to speak publicly and publish their memoirs or private correspondence during their imprisonment. Clearly, one of the most important steps towards the freedom of information and resources was opening of the archives of the former State Security Service (StB), which allowed both the public and academics to access the documentation. Although political persecution and lives of political prisoners in former Czechoslovakia has been studied, so far, however, there has been little discussion about female political prisoners. Therefore, by bringing ‘recognition to substantial groups of people who had been ignored’ and marginalized in history¹, this work explores stories of women political prisoners and prison culture in Czechoslovakia 1948–1968. Importantly, this study seeks to answer the question of how prison culture helped women to cope, unite and resist.

If Czechoslovakian women political prisoners are still under-represented in historical studies dealing with Cold War repression, then women’s prison culture is almost entirely overlooked.² However, a close scrutiny of life writings and prison objects reveals a whole range of cultural activities taking place in prison which deserve to be examined for evidence of the means of prisoners’ survival across this period. This study draws on observations and information gained from oral history interviews conducted with former women political prisoners, combined with personal testimonies, memoirs, prison records, and material culture itself, for example objects and handicrafts women made in prison. Prison culture is discussed both broadly and specifically: their way of life, their relationships as well as cultural production in particular, culture of the

¹ Thomson, P. (1998). The Voice of the Past. In: Perks, R., Thomson, A. (Eds.). (2016). *The Oral History Reader*. London: Routledge, pp. 33-39, p. 37

² Mrvova M. (2018). Culture Behind Bars: Women Political Prisoners and Prison Culture in Czechoslovakia 1948-1968, *Postgraduate perspectives on the past*. 3(1). doi: <https://doi.org/10.5920/ppp.545>

body and the meaning of embodiment in actions and practices. I argue that prison culture helped women to cope, unite and resist. I will first contextualise the situation in Czechoslovakia to establish what was gendered about women's imprisonment, and then introduce the women whose stories form the core of this analysis. Finally, I will analyse their prison culture, with specific reference to how it enabled them to resist, unite and survive.

This research aims first, to increase understanding of women's experiences of political persecution, then to contextualise the political situation and political persecution in Czechoslovakia between 1948 and 1968, and also to explore the fate of selected women political prisoners. More specifically, it strives to understand women's experiences of repression and their ways of coping through personal testimonies, archival sources and secondary literature. Moreover, this study aims to draw attention to and explore prison culture, prison lectures and production of objects in prison, thus explaining the ways in which prison culture helped women to cope, unite and resist.

Personal testimonies are powerful sources for understanding experiences and emotion. They give access to information unavailable in archives. They rely on memory and, although memory is an unstable source, it can provide insight into both personal and collective identity, as Michael Frisch noted, 'memory is living history, the remembered past that exists in the present.'³ Throughout this study I will utilize both personal oral and written testimonies, archival sources and secondary literature in order to understand the women's experiences of repression and their ways of coping. Personal testimonies and memories of political persecution are extremely important in helping us understand the impact of repressive regime on individuals, families and communities, in the past, over time, and into the present. It allows to understand and explore what the life of individuals looked like, how the regime influenced the ability to study, work, travel, express their identity and culture, or have a relationship. Moreover, prison culture proves that women's prison life was creative and productive: 'The stories of these women reveal that a space of extreme repression became simultaneously a space of extreme creativity.'⁴ Hidden stories of culture behind bars give a powerful insight into the private lives of political prisoners,

³ Frisch, M. (1990). *A Shared Authority: Essays on the Craft and Meaning of Oral and Public History*. Albany: State University of New York Press, p. xxiii

⁴ Müller, A. (2018). *If the Walls Could Speak. Inside a Women's Prison in Communist Poland*. Oxford University Press, p. 5

their emotions and ways of coping with their imprisonments. I will focus particularly on women who were politically persecuted and imprisoned and how their lives looked before, during and after the imprisonment.

This study is organised into two parts and is presented in three chapters. The first part includes historiography and methodology used in this work. The second part contains three chapters, of which the first chapter is dedicated to short biographies and personal stories of eleven women chosen for this research. The second chapter is divided into three subchapters: the first section explores the issue of identity and gender in prison, while the second discusses the gendered world of prisons by illustrating various examples of prison violence obtained from personal narratives. The third subchapter shortly analyses social structure in prison. The last chapter focuses on women's prison culture presented in five subchapters discussing coping through community and culture, communication, poetry, prison university and material culture, including drama, music, art and objects made in prison.

Historiography

This historiography chapter is divided into the five sub-chapters: the first part briefly summarises political repression in Czechoslovakia, while the second section explores political repression of women in the Soviet Union. The third part focuses on literature on female political prisoners in Czechoslovakia. Fourth section is dedicated to prison culture and making objects, and the final part reflects on memory, women's identity and their coping strategies.

Political Repression in Czechoslovakia

Political repression appeared in various forms in Czechoslovakia between the years 1948 and 1968. The absolute power gained by Communist party led to the political trials, imprisonment in forced labour camps [Figures 1 and 2] and executions of the 'enemies of state' in the 1950s. The whole society was exposed to coercive means. In order to understand the origins of Stalinist terror in Czechoslovakia, according to Kevin McDermott traumatic events of prewar, interwar and postwar period need to be taken into account, such as the 'humiliation of Munich'⁵, the Nazi occupation, the Holocaust and the expulsion of the Sudeten Germans which influenced the development of the political and social situation in Czechoslovakia.⁶

After the Second World War, the Czechoslovak Republic was re-established and it was supposed to become a 'bridge between East and West'.⁷ However, Czechoslovakia fell under the Soviet influence. Between 1945 and 1948 no political opposition existed because prewar right-wing political parties were prohibited, including The Czech Agrarian Party, which had won the majority of votes in the last prewar election.⁸ As a result, a half of the voting population was

⁵ See also: Jůn, D. (2008). *The Long Shadow of The Munich Agreement*. Czech Radio Prague. Retrieved from <http://www.radio.cz/en/section/talking/the-long-shadow-of-the-munich-agreement>; Rokyta, H. (2004). A glance at the history and present of the Bohemian countries. *H. Maier. Totalitarianism and Political Religions, 1*, 86-98

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Bouška, T., Pinerová, K. (2016). *Czechoslovak Political Prisoners. Life Stories of 5 Male and 5 Female Victims of Stalinism*. Second amended edition, www.politicalprisoners.eu, p. 9

⁸ Kaplan, K., Paleček P. (2008). *Komunistický režim a politické procesy v Československu [The Communist Regime and Political Trials in Czechoslovakia]*. Barrister & Principal, Brno, p. 11

eliminated.⁹ The other six political parties were united in a coalition called The National Front. The National Front consisted of four Czech parties: The Czechoslovak Communist Party, The Czechoslovak People's Party, The Czech National Social Party and The Czech Social Democratic Party; and two Slovak parties: The Democratic Party and the Communist Party of Slovakia. In May 1946, The Communist Party won the election with 38 percent of the votes. After a *coup d'état* in February 1948, the Communists reached absolute power and mass persecution and political trials began. It is impossible to know the precise numbers of political trials; however, 264,429 people were rehabilitated between 1948 and 1989.¹⁰ The estimated number of political prisoners imprisoned between 1948 and 1954 is at least 90,000. Only 5,000–9,000 (5–10 per cent) of these political prisoners were women.¹¹ My research comprises of the period between 1948 and 1968, Czechoslovak historical milestones, when it is even more difficult to know the exact number of political prisoners.¹²

The well-known Czech historians Karel Kaplan and Pavel Paleček divide the period of the Communist regime into two phases of political trials: the first phase, known as a 'Stalinist period' between 1948 and 1954, was characterized by 'more cruel sentences, almost provocative cases of illegality and use of brutal psychological and physical violence on a large scale'¹³, and the second 'milder' wave began after 1968. During this second wave, the State Secret Service did not use the same brutal practices, nonetheless physical violence and bullying by no means disappeared. The years 1954-1968 not mentioned by Kaplan and Paleček in this division, could be described as a time of a 'political thaw', when the political prisoners were provided with certain improvements of the conditions in prison, such as access to literature, better quality of food or a wider selection of items available in a prison canteen. Despite these few positive changes, political prisoners were still treated worse than criminals.

⁹ Hejl, V. (1990). *Zpráva o organizovaném násilí*. Univerzum, Praha, p. 10

¹⁰ Kaplan, K., Paleček P. (2008). *Komunistický režim a politické procesy v Československu [The Communist Regime and Political Trials in Czechoslovakia]*. Barrister & Principal, Brno, p. 237

¹¹ Hignett, K., Ilic, M., Leinarte, D., & Snitar, C. (2017). *Women's Experiences of Repression in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe*. Routledge, p. 87

¹² Mrvova M. (2018). Culture Behind Bars: Women Political Prisoners and Prison Culture in Czechoslovakia 1948-1968, *Postgraduate perspectives on the past*. 3(1). doi: <https://doi.org/10.5920/ppp.545>

¹³ Kaplan, & Paleček, *Komunistický režim a politické procesy v Československu*, p. 237

Political persecution and violence was a common practice during the Communist regime. Political trials came to be known as *Monster Trials*¹⁴ and they were run by the State Secret Service (StB) against political and class enemies, such as the ‘intelligentsia’, the ‘bourgeoisie’, peasants labeled as ‘kulaks’, clergymen and church members, as well as Communist officials and everyone who became suspicious for not agreeing with the regime or who became denounced as a spy or state enemy, for example by their neighbours. Political trials were fabricated and had the ‘character of a theatre performance’:¹⁵ victims were coerced both physically and psychologically to confess constructed charges. Scenarios were forcibly memorized as a text of a script with a predetermined end¹⁶ and supervised by the Soviet consultants.¹⁷ Political prisoners were further stigmatised and ostracised after their release.

Women’s political repression in the Soviet Union

Similar stories of political repression can be found across the whole of Europe, especially in the former parts and satellites of the Soviet Union. Due to the limited space, I have chosen only two most recent publications which offer new perspectives on women’s experiences under the Communist regime.

In her newly published book *If the Walls Could Speak*, historian Anna Müller gives a deep insight into the experiences of women political prisoners during Communism in Poland.¹⁸ Müller analyses women’s experiences in regards to their both physicality and intellectual capacity. She offers a fresh perspective on women’s bodies, on the one hand exploring feelings of shame and, on the other hand, using their bodies as ‘sites of resistance’. She explains that women transformed their bodies by either rejecting them through disembodiment, or by fighting and resisting the cruelty and authorities in prison through a strict self-control.¹⁹ Müller’s approach on

¹⁴ In Czech called 'Monstrprocesy', these artificially fabricated and publicised show trials did not respect the rules of a fair trial in order to convict the political enemies of the crimes they did not commit. The word monster probably refers to its massive and fabricated character. The well-known examples of the Monster Trials include cases of Milada Horáková et al. in 1950 and with Rudolf Slánek et al. in 1952.

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ Bouška, T., & Pinerová, K. (2009). *Czechoslovak political prisoners: Life stories of 5 male and 5 female victims of Stalinism*. p. 13

¹⁷ Kaplan, & Paleček, *Komunistický režim a politické procesy v Československu*, p. 238

¹⁸ Müller, A. (2018). *If the Walls Could Speak. Inside a Women's Prison in Communist Poland*. Oxford University Press.

¹⁹ Müller, A. (2018). *If the Walls Could Speak. Inside a Women's Prison in Communist Poland*. Oxford University Press, p. 128

the gendered world of prisons, the embodiment and culture of the body, which has not been applied in depth in any Czech literature so far. Therefore, her work is highly relevant for my research and I will draw on her findings. Furthermore, I will develop the idea of women's strategies of resistance and survival by analysing women's culture in prison.

Recent scholars have extended the term 'repression' to refer to a broader context; specifically, they consider the communist regime's practices, such as the sustained police surveillance, the inability to study, the loss of jobs, the confiscation of property and the forced relocation.²⁰ The authors of *Women's Experiences of Repression in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe* also include wider social and cultural issues of the ruination of lives, through damaged relationships, separation of families, humiliation, and 'moral and spiritual degradation of entire societies'²¹. This work also emphasises the often neglected issue of secondary repression. Scholars here interconnect the women's experiences across Eastern Europe, mainly in the Soviet Union, Lithuania, Poland, Czechoslovakia and Romania. Yet in the women's narratives it is evident that they describe not only their suffering, but also aspects of resistance and resilience.²²

In her chapter on women's experiences of repression in Czechoslovakia (1948–1968), Hignett explores forced labour, health and hygiene, violence and women's resistance. By using oral history testimonies available online from the Czech project www.politictivezni.cz and a few women's memoirs alongside archival materials, Hignett is able to explore not only women's experience of repression, but also the 'indirect' repression referred to as a 'punishment through kinship' repeatedly applied to family members of political prisoners. Notably, she concludes that there were gendered aspects of imprisonment. Women usually developed unique survival strategies and different mechanisms in comparison to men prisoners²³, as we can read in Dagmar Šimková's remarkable personal testimony *Byly jsme tam taky*. Her work, based on different historical methods, is the important step towards the increasing of awareness about neglected stories of women political prisoners who were silenced for a long time. Hignett's chapter is

²⁰ Hignett, K., Ilic, M., Leinarte, D., & Snitar, C. (2017). *Women's Experiences of Repression in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe*. Routledge, p. 3

²¹ McDermott and Stibbe, *Stalinist Terror*, p. 14

²² Hignett, K., Ilic, M., Leinarte, D., & Snitar, C. (2017). *Women's Experiences of Repression in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe*. Routledge, p. 9

²³ Hignett, K. (2017) Women's experience of repression in Czechoslovakia 1948–1968. In Hignett, K., Ilic, M., Leinarte, D., & Snitar, C. (2017). *Women's Experiences of Repression in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe*. Routledge, p. 129

relevant to my research, but I will mainly offer new perspectives from different women's narratives I have collected and on analysis of the phenomenon of culture in Communist prisons.

Women political prisoners in Czechoslovakia

Political persecution in Czechoslovakia could only be studied and researched after the fall of Communist regime in 1989. Since then, many authors have published a great number of memoirs and autobiographies (e.g. Hejda 1991, Zemek 1991, Vaško 2001, Ondok 2005, Šavřda 1985 as *samizdat*²⁴, officially 2009, Dobiáš 2014, Michálka 2015, Hrubý 2017 etc.). Many important academic publications including archival materials and personal testimonies have been also published (e.g. Kaplan & Paleček 2001, Bartošek 2001, Havlíčková 2002, Vaško 2004, 2007, Bursík 2006, Vrkočová 2007, Bouška, Louč, Pinerová 2009, Synek 2013, Kopelentova Rehak 2013, Pinerová 2017).

In the context of Czechoslovakia, however, the exploration of women's experiences with political persecution is still relatively new. In contrast to many memoirs written by male political prisoners, there were only seven officially published by women (Šimková 1980 in exile, 1991 officially, Hofmanová 1991, Wiesenbergerová-Palkosková 1991, Zábranová 1994, Janovská 1994, Kuklová-Jíšová 2002, Reinerová 2002). Research in women's political persecution in the 1950s and the 1960s in Czechoslovakia began in fact with the year 2006 when the book called *Ztratily jsme mnoho času... ale ne sebe!* [*We lost a lot of time... But not ourselves!*] was published by historian Tomáš Bursík. In his work, Bursík mentions that a term 'political prisoner' was not formally recognised.²⁵ The existence of political prisoners was systematically and officially denied, as for example in the Prime Minister Viliam Široký's speech from May 24 in 1956: 'There are no political prisoners in our prisons; there are only criminals.'²⁶ Bursík also emphasises that male and female prisoners were not treated much differently in prisons: 'poor living conditions, heavy physical labor, constant humiliation, a sense of inferiority, and often disproportionate punishments for the slightest misdemeanor.'²⁷ His work, based mainly on the

²⁴ A term commonly used to refer to secretly self-published literature.

²⁵ Bursík, T. (2006). *Ztratily jsme mnoho času... Ale ne sebe!* [*We lost a lot of time... But not ourselves!*] Úřad dokumentace a vyšetřování zločinů komunismu, Prague, p. 192.

²⁶ Cit. In: Kubičková, D. et al. (2003-2007). *Lidé věznění v 50. letech komunistickým režimem*. Retrieved from <http://www.photon.cz/gabriela/index.php/?lide-vezneni-v-50-letech-komunisticky-m-rezimem/>

²⁷ Bursík, T. (2006). *Ztratily jsme mnoho času... Ale ne sebe!* [*We lost a lot of time... But not ourselves!*] Úřad dokumentace a vyšetřování zločinů komunismu, Prague, p. 192.

archival materials (and also on personal testimonies, such as well-known Šimková's *Byly jsme tam taky*), is important for understanding everyday life within the Communist prison. In fact, he was the first academic who emphasised the importance and specificity of women's experience and who let their voices be heard mainly from the archival sources, interrogation reports and memoirs.

A second essential work on life experiences of Czechoslovak political prisoners is a recent publication *Until the End of Life. Political Prisoners of the 1950s - Trauma, Adaptation, Identity* (2017) by historian Klára Pinerová.²⁸ This book with its four hundred pages, represents the first in-depth comprehensive research on prison experiences, trauma, identity and ways of adaptation and coping mechanisms of political prisoners in Czechoslovakia. Pinerová focuses on both men and women's experiences while masterfully incorporating historical and archival materials as well as personal testimonies. She is also the first academic to include a broader discussion on gender history on this topic, emphasising that experiences of male and female prisoners may be very different in terms of coping strategies, which is also worthy of attention.²⁹ Pinerová concludes that in personal narratives women, rather than mentioning their own troubles and humiliation, focus more on relationships and friendships newly created in prison. Which means that prison subculture is a platform for sharing emotions and it may paradoxically function as a space providing the opportunities to keep women's identities within a group.³⁰

Müller's, Bursík's, Hignett's and Pinerová's works are probably the most relevant academic sources on which is my work drawn. Importantly, I further explore the 'non-working time' and develop the theme of resistance and culture of Czechoslovak female prisoners, which is still under-researched in existing historiography.

Prison culture and testimonial objects

A phenomenon of prison culture present within both Nazi concentration camps and Soviet prisons is the objects fabricated by women. Women created various memorable 'objects' which

²⁸ Pinerová, K. (2017). *Do konce života. Političtí vězni padesátých let – trauma, adaptace, identita*. The Institute for the Study of Totalitarian Regimes.

²⁹ Gender perspective chapter in: Pinerová, K. (2017). *Do konce života. Političtí vězni padesátých let – trauma, adaptace, identita*. The Institute for the Study of Totalitarian Regimes, pp. 266-277

³⁰ Pinerová, K. (2017). *Do konce života. Političtí vězni padesátých let – trauma, adaptace, identita*. The Institute for the Study of Totalitarian Regimes, pp. 266-267

testify to a remarkable creative process happening secretly during their ‘free time’. Extraordinarily, some of these objects were smuggled from the prisons and preserved until now. These objects were fashioned from different and very limited materials they had, such as a toothpaste tube, soap case, cuttings from clothing, pieces of bread, leftovers of beads, threads et cetera, saved from the factories in which women worked. These unique ‘symbols of memory’ can be traced to different countries, including Russia, Lithuania, or Poland.³¹ Some objects, such as photographs of Soviet prisons, camps and trains to these places in Siberia or rosaries made from bread pieces by prisoners ‘have become parts of the memory aesthetic and related discourses associated with trauma and displacement’.³²

Unfortunately, not many authors have written about these fascinating objects which are part of collective memory and cultural identity of the nations suffered under repressive regimes. However, Lithuanian academic Dovilė Budrytė’s 2006 study explores the phenomenon of human memory associated with these objects. Budrytė calls objects made by Lithuanian women in prison camps and places of deportation *relikvijos* (relics), and she particularly investigates the *vizitėlės* (pieces of embroidery). These objects are currently archived in the Lithuanian museums of deportation and resistance.³³ She argues that such objects are ‘capable of eliciting strong emotions and an immediate connection with the traumatic past among those who are familiar with everyday life in prisons and forced exile.’³⁴ My work on prison culture will further develop the idea of ‘objects of memory’, in other words, that such objects, made secretly under extreme circumstances and in places, such as Nazi concentration camps or Communist prisons and labour camps, are connected to human memory through the strong emotions prisoners experienced in the past. Therefore, these objects trigger the memories and serve as an evidence of everyday life of prisoners.³⁵ They enable us to remember the signs of resistance and strength of those people who went through such traumatic events.

³¹ Müller, A. (2018). *If the Walls Could Speak. Inside a Women's Prison in Communist Poland*. Oxford University Press, p. 1; p. 163

³² Budrytė, D. (2016) Points of memory in the narrative of a ‘Mnemonic Warrior’: gender, displacement, and the anti-Soviet war of resistance. In: *Lithuania, Journal of Baltic Studies*, 47:4, 473-496, DOI: 10.1080/01629778.2016.1248671, p. 474

³³ Budrytė, D. (2016) Points of memory in the narrative of a ‘Mnemonic Warrior’: gender, displacement, and the anti-Soviet war of resistance. In: *Lithuania, Journal of Baltic Studies*, 47:4, 473-496, DOI: 10.1080/01629778.2016.1248671, p. 478

³⁴ Ibid.

³⁵ Mrvova M. (2018). *Culture Behind Bars: Women Political Prisoners and Prison Culture in Czechoslovakia 1948-1968, Postgraduate perspectives on the past*. 3(1). doi: <https://doi.org/10.5920/ppp.545>

Budrytė draws on Marianne Hirsch's concept of postmemory³⁶ based on the idea that objects are connected to personal memories and trigger the emotions related to the stories of survivors. Hirsch argues that postmemory 'is not an identity position but a generational structure of transmission embedded in multiple forms of mediation'.³⁷ For example, testimonial objects such as photographs, objects made in camps and prisons, drawings and pieces of writing, 'embody memory and thus trigger affect shared across generations.'³⁸ From Hirsch's research it is clear, that cultural production is 'connective' element among prisoners, their families, but also in addition to that, it is a part of a cultural history and heritage reflecting important historical events in the past.

Memory, women's identity and coping strategies

In order to understand the contexts and connections of women's experiences of their everyday reality in prison and their ability to survive, it is necessary to explore coping mechanisms which women developed during the years of their imprisonment.

Women's prison experience has been studied for many years. Memory work as a method of feminist approach according to Jansson, Wendt and Åse (2008) can contribute to understanding 'naturalized power structures such as gender, nation and sexuality'.³⁹ Their study ventures towards the study of women's experiences, identity and memory, therefore, it is related to my subject of research. These authors focus on writing memory stories, analyzing and interpreting them. In their view, 'gender is political and that the social order of gender is intertwined with other social structures and practices'.⁴⁰ They emphasise the importance of studying women's experiences of everyday life. These experiences are 'lived, close, tangible and concrete'⁴¹, so they can help us understand the lives of real women under specific circumstances, and it is

³⁶ See also: Hirsch, M. (2012). *The Generation of Postmemory: Writing and Visual Culture After the Holocaust*. Columbia University Press; Hirsch, M. (1997). *Family frames: Photography, narrative, and postmemory*. Harvard University Press.

³⁷ Hirsch, M. (2012). *The Generation of Postmemory: Writing and Visual Culture After the Holocaust*. Columbia University Press, p. 35

³⁸ Hirsch, M. (2012). *The Generation of Postmemory: Writing and Visual Culture After the Holocaust*. Columbia University Press, p. 206

³⁹ Jansson, M., Wendt, M., & Åse, C. (2008). Memory Work Reconsidered. *NORA—Nordic Journal of Feminist and Gender Research*, 16(4), 228-240, p. 228

⁴⁰ Jansson, M., Wendt, M., & Åse, C. (2008). Memory Work Reconsidered. *NORA—Nordic Journal of Feminist and Gender Research*, 16(4), 228-240, p. 230

⁴¹ Ibid.

important to realize that who tells the story and who listens reflects the way the story is being told.

During the process of working with memories, ‘all participants contribute’ and interpret the story, therefore, memory work is based on collectivity and equality.⁴² This process is well-known in public and oral history practice, for example in Michael Frisch’s concept of shared authority or Paul Ward’s and Elizabeth Pente’s idea of ‘the co-production of historical knowledge’⁴³. Frisch notes, that historical engagement is not only about distribution of knowledge by professionals, but the crucial part is in sharing of a ‘more profound’ information and the dialogue between both sides.⁴⁴ Alessandro Portelli emphasises that there is a mutual relationship between a narrator and a historian and that they both produce the interview through personal involvement ‘instead of discovering sources, oral historians partly create them’ and therefore become a part of a story.⁴⁵ This process of mutual participation is also based on open communication which allows trust and depending on time the researcher is able and willing to invest in the process.⁴⁶

Experiences and coping strategies of women political prisoners in Czechoslovakia were studied in two important works by historian Klára Pinerová⁴⁷ and psychologist Kristýna Bušková⁴⁸. In prison, women had to face completely new circumstances for which they were not prepared. First, they lost contact with their partners, their family, relatives and friends, thus becoming emotionally frustrated. Secondly, their status in society had been severely marginalised, they did not fit anywhere, because they were branded as criminals, and often treated worse than them.

⁴² Jansson, M., Wendt, M., & Åse, C. (2008). Memory Work Reconsidered. *NORA—Nordic Journal of Feminist and Gender Research*, 16(4), 228-240, p. 231

⁴³ Pente, E., Ward, P., Brown, M. & Sahota, H. (2015) The co-production of historical knowledge: implications for the history of identities. *Identity papers: A journal of British and Irish studies*, 1 (1). pp. 32-53. ISSN 2058-6205

⁴⁴ Frisch, M. (1990). *A Shared Authority: Essays on the Craft and Meaning of Oral and Public History*. Albany: State University of New York Press, p. xxii

⁴⁵ Portelli, A. (2016), What Makes Oral History different? In: Perks, R., Thomson, A. (Eds.) *The Oral History Reader*. London: Routledge, pp. 63-74, p. 56

⁴⁶ Gluck, S. (1977). What's so Special about Women? Women's Oral History. *Frontiers: A Journal of Women Studies*, 2(2), 3-17. doi:10.2307/3346006, p. 8

⁴⁷ Pinerová, K. (2012). *Women and her identity in the prison subculture in the 1950s*. Politicalprisoners.eu. Retrieved from <http://www.politicalprisoners.eu/women-and-her-identity-in-prison-ioha-paper.html>

⁴⁸ Bušková, K. (2012). *Women in communist prisons in the 1950s in Czechoslovakia: Understanding psychological effects of political imprisonment and ways of coping using oral history*. Politicalprisoners.eu. Retrieved from <http://www.politicalprisoners.eu/women-in-communist-prisons-in-the-1950s-in-czechoslovakia-understanding-psychological-effects-of-political-imprisonment-and-ways-of-coping-using-oral-history.html>

Adapting to new and unfamiliar surroundings presented immense challenges. Everyday life activities such as eating, washing, working and so on were below their former life standards as well as being victim of violence, and prone to disease through a weakened immune system.⁴⁹

Pinerová's socio-historical research is based on interviews obtained using the oral history method. She analyses the gender aspects of imprisonment, such as the problem of one's own identity. Pinerová suggests that men 'did not lose their sexual identity in prison'⁵⁰ in comparison to women. She argues that women tend to describe not only their life stories, wishes and harsh conditions, but frequently also share the stories and destinies of their friends in full detail, understanding and empathy⁵¹. Women seem to prefer to write about and value friendship and relationships, while men mostly describe their everyday lives in labour camps, their work and hard conditions as well. According to the Pinerová's results, women usually knew more about the situation and established more relations of their fellow prisoners than men. Therefore, women seem to prefer write about and value friendship and relationships, while men mostly describe their everyday lives in labour camps, including working conditions. These findings suggest that the gender of the inmate affects not only the experience of being imprisoned, but also the experience of recounting the memories. In comparison to men's more individualistic approaches, women emphasise in their narratives the sense of community and interconnectedness, even while using the plural 'we'. Male prisoners mention their co-inmates only while introducing comic, tragic or adventurous stories and their memories are stories of life as an individuals contrasting to women's recounting on family, relationships and togetherness.⁵²

Kristýna Bušková attempts to understand psychological effects of political imprisonment and coping strategies of women in Communist prisons in the 1950s in Czechoslovakia using oral history. Bušková's study became an important work to fill the gap in psychological research in this field. She mentions that the post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) and other psychiatric disorders can transfer up to three generations⁵³. She focuses on the consequences of these

⁴⁹ Ibid.

⁵⁰ Pinerová, K. (2012). *Women and her identity in the prison subculture in the 1950s*. Politicalprisoners.eu. Retrieved from <http://www.politicalprisoners.eu/women-and-her-identity-in-prison-ioha-paper.html>

⁵¹ Ibid.

⁵² Pinerová, K. (2017). *Do konce života. Političtí vězni padesátých let – trauma, adaptace, identita*. The Institute for the Study of Totalitarian Regimes, p. 268

⁵³ Bušková, K. (2012). *Women in communist prisons in the 1950s in Czechoslovakia: Understanding psychological effects of political imprisonment and ways of coping using oral history*. Politicalprisoners.eu. Retrieved from <http://www.politicalprisoners.eu/women-in-communist-prisons-in-the-1950s-in-czechoslovakia-understanding-psychological-effects-of-political-imprisonment-and-ways-of-coping-using-oral-history.html>

existentially extreme situations on their lives and mental health. According to the Bušková's analysis of the interviews, there were a number of common factors which helped women survive in prison, and also after their release, such as happy but adventurous childhood, patriotic upbringing, continuation of life values among female political prisoners, solidarity and mutual support. Another factor included low intelligence of the so-called 'bastard' (how prisoners called their guards) that served as a way to increase a self-confidence of political prisoners.⁵⁴ Bušková's findings are similar to my own analysis of women's testimonies, especially regarding the importance of friendships which enabled women to cope better with their imprisonment. However, Bušková neglects the meaning of culture which served for women as a way of coping, uniting and resistance, which is fundamental aspect of this study.

⁵⁴ Ibid.

Methodology

My research methodology is based on a qualitative analysis of both subjective and official institutional sources. An important set of primary sources used in this research are oral histories: interviews I have conducted and recorded, and also oral testimonies recorded and collected by *Memory of Nations*⁵⁵. Information gained from the oral history interviews has been highly valuable for my research, as the main focus of my dissertation is on microhistory, personal stories and narratives, including the prison culture. The other set of primary sources used are written: memoirs, autobiographies, prison correspondence and period archival materials. Comparison and verification of information is based on official period documentation of the State Security Service (StB) as well as on biographical and historical works that describe the political and social context.

I have been actively using oral history as a method since June 2017 when I started to work as an editor and collector for the Memory of Nations; this research also draws on oral history interviews I have conducted with four former women political prisoners and three women who were either relatives or in a direct contact with the women I chose for my project. As Alessandro Portelli emphasises, oral history reveals ‘less about events than about their meaning’ and it also tells us ‘not just what people did, but what they wanted to do, what they believed they were doing, and what they now think they did.’⁵⁶ To work with survivors, listen to their recordings and read their memories allows one to have a first-hand experience which illustrates not only the situations and historical events of a particular time, but also to understand people’s psychological states, emotions and the way they coped with difficult situations. These invaluable details are thus provided to the historian in a way it would not be possible to find in the official archives. Moreover, interviewing witnesses can reveal more than what is said; even the pauses, unfinished sentences and silence can be eloquent. Such first-hand experiences help us to understand better people’s everyday lives, human memory, emotions and behaviour under repressive regimes.⁵⁷

⁵⁵ Czech historical project run by Post-Bellum, Czech Radio (Český rozhlas) and The Institute for the Study of Totalitarian Regimes (ÚSTR).

⁵⁶ Portelli, A. (2003), What Makes Oral History different? In: Perks, R., Thomson, A. (Eds.) *The Oral History Reader*. London: Routledge, pp. 63-74, p. 52

⁵⁷ Mrvova M. (2018). Culture Behind Bars: Women Political Prisoners and Prison Culture in Czechoslovakia 1948-1968, *Postgraduate perspectives on the past*. 3(1). doi: <https://doi.org/10.5920/ppp.545>

Bearing in mind that most of the direct women witnesses already passed away or have poor health, I was hoping to find at least a few women to whom I could speak. I also intended to interview women's relatives or people who were in direct contact. Luckily, *The Enemy's Daughters*⁵⁸ founder Jana Švehlová was very interested in my research and sent me a contact for Marie Janalíková (from the same association) who provided me four contacts to former female political prisoners who would be able to speak to me. I contacted them by phone and email. All of them agreed and were willing to save the dates, despite my very limited time in Czech Republic between December 2017 and mid-January 2018 while I was travelling from the UK. Interviews lasted between one and four hours and four were conducted in the interviewees homes, and two were conducted in public settings in Prague.⁵⁹

In total, I have conducted six semi-structured oral history interviews. Three of the former women political prisoners were contacted only once due to the limited time, their health conditions and the distance to their homes. One former political prisoner was interviewed twice: in December 2017 and April 2018, when I was able to travel to the Czech Republic again. In addition, I interviewed two more women who were relatives or close to some of the female political prisoners, in December 2017 and January 2018. Otherwise, as a part of the Memory of Nations project in late August 2017, I conducted three interviews with a woman who was very close to one women political prisoner. Furthermore, I kept in touch with three of the women in person or by email. Interviews were semi-structured and I followed the interviewees' narrative approaches and posed further questions and encouraged them to develop the ideas and topics they raised. All the interviews were conducted in the Czech language. Afterwards, I transcribed the recordings and consequently translated only the parts pertinent to this research into English. Probably the most challenging part of translation was prison poetry.

Considered as an 'insider' (in a broader meaning of this term) due to my family experience – both my great-grandparents were political prisoners – I believe that women felt safe and therefore, they have shared their stories very openly. This atmosphere of mutual trust and respect

⁵⁸ Association of daughters of Czechoslovak political prisoners of the 1950s and the 1960s. See also: <http://www.enemysdaughters.com/>

⁵⁹ Mrvova M. (2018). Culture Behind Bars: Women Political Prisoners and Prison Culture in Czechoslovakia 1948-1968, *Postgraduate perspectives on the past*. 3(1). doi: <https://doi.org/10.5920/ppp.545>

was important because as Portelli argues ‘the final result of the interview is the product of both the narrator and the researcher’ due to its character of dialogical exchange.⁶⁰ In addition to four survivors interviewed for this study, I chose five more personal narratives of female prisoners who had already passed away, including the story of my great-grandmother, to illustrate the variety of women’s experiences of imprisonment. The main reason for choice of these four women was the fact that they wrote prison memoirs and their prison correspondence have been published. Therefore, information about their prison experiences is more accessible and also reflected in secondary literature. My great-grandmother’s story is included in the total of eleven narratives, because it has not been so far academically investigated. Importantly, I have documented and gathered many photographs of various objects women made in prison, asked about their origin, process of creating, and meaning. A selection of the photographs is attached in the appendices of this thesis.

Apart from oral testimonies, I have gathered published prison correspondence and all the publicly available memoirs written by Czechoslovak female political prisoners of the 1950s and the 1960s, and important academic publications related to this topic. In order to study period archival documentation, I have repeatedly visited three archives in Czech Republic between August 2017 and July 2018: the National Archive (NA), the Security Service Archive (ABS) and the Literary Archive of the Museum of Czech Literature⁶¹ in Prague. Besides the literature on oral history and life writing, this work draws from gender history and women’s experiences of political repression and resistance, Holocaust studies, memory studies, research on trauma and identity, history of material culture and also history of everyday life focusing on individual stories adopting the ‘bottom-up’ approach.⁶²

⁶⁰ Portelli, A. (2003). What Makes Oral History Different? In: Perks, R., & Thomson, A. (Eds.). (2016). *The Oral History Reader*. Routledge, Third Edition, pp. 48-58, p. 55

⁶¹ Památník národního písemnictví

⁶² See for example: Blaive, M. (2017). “‘The Cold War? I Have it at Home with my Family’. Memories of the 1948-1989 Period Beyond the Iron Curtain”, In: Jarausch, K., Ostermann, Ch. & Etges, A. (Eds.). (2017). *The Cold War: Historiography, Memory, Representation*. Mouton, De Gruyter, p. 203-223.; Corner, P. (Ed.). (2009). *Popular opinion in totalitarian regimes: Fascism, Nazism, Communism* (Vol. 199566526). Oxford University Press; Fitzpatrick, S. (2017). *Everyday Stalinism: Ordinary Life in Extraordinary Times: Soviet Russia in the 1930s*. Macat Library, London; Geyer, M., & Fitzpatrick, S. (2009). *Beyond Totalitarianism: Stalinism and Nazism compared*. Cambridge University Press; Lütke, A. (Ed.). (1995). *The history of everyday life: Reconstructing historical experiences and ways of life*. Princeton University Press.

Women's Stories

In my research, I chose eleven women's narratives which represent a wide range of personalities, coming from different background and professions, of a different age and experiences. Some of these women were intellectuals, others, less known to public, either stayed at home with children or worked in agriculture. However, the unifying elements for all of them is first, their active resistance, which was the reason for which they became incarcerated, secondly the long-term sentences they received, and finally the fact that most of these women met in the same prisons and continued to visit each other later after they release. Brief biographies for each woman follow here chronologically, beginning with the oldest woman born in 1901, ending with the youngest of the selected female prisoners born in 1936.

In addition to the years of imprisonment, women were sentenced to financial penalties, confiscation of all their property, and to deprivation of their civic rights. Although they were rehabilitated during their release on presidential amnesties, soon they were de-rehabilitated again. Moreover, prisoners were not only left with the psychological consequences of their imprisonment and exposed to social exclusion due to the stigma of being prisoners, but also unable to find professional jobs or suitable accommodation. Importantly, all the political prisoners were released only conditionally, which meant permanent control and surveillance by the State Secret Service. Only after fall of Communist regime in Czechoslovakia in 1989, those prisoners who were still alive, were fully rehabilitated and some of them rewarded for their bravery and resistance.

The chosen political prisoners represent a varied group of women coming from different locations in former Czechoslovakia, from Prague, south and north Bohemia and also from Moravia and Silesia. Ten of eleven women considered themselves as Christians, nine Catholics and one Hussite; while one woman was without confession though relating to values of her co-prisoners. It is worth mentioning that women mentioned in this work come from various religious background, Christian (Catholic, Evangelical, Hussite etc.), Jewish, but also those who did not identify with any religion. Interestingly, nine of eleven women agreed that they have forgiven those who were unjust and cruel to them but they have not forgotten, except one still living survivor who explicitly said that she is not able to forgive. No evidence regarding a

statement about forgiveness of the last woman has been found. Six of eleven women got married, of which four had children. Five women remained unmarried, of which one was a nun.

Ranging from two to nearly fifteen years spent behind bars, all women agreed in their narratives that faith and strong bonds between one other in particular helped them to cope and survive their imprisonment. Women often speak collectively, in plural form representing all female political prisoners and emphasise their deep understanding, mutual help and friendships which last until today. By providing biographies of these women, this work hopes to reveal and demonstrate diverse perspective on life under the repressive regime, which adds more robust evidence to the subjectivity scrutinized in this study.

Růžena Vacková (1901-1982)⁶³

‘Light must prevail over the dark. And the greatest force is a strong sacrifice.’⁶⁴

Růžena Vacková was an art historian, archaeologist, theatre critic and pedagogue, and the second female professor in history of Czechoslovakia. She was born on 24 April 1901 in Velké Meziříčí. She was sentenced to death for her illegal activities in anti-Nazi resistance movement during the Second World War, but was not executed because the war ended before the sentence could be carried out. In February 1948, she was the only professor of Charles University, who joined the student protest procession heading to the Prague Castle in support of president Edvard Beneš.⁶⁵ As a result, Růžena was removed from her post at Charles University. However, she organised informal meetings and discussions about art history, philosophy and religion including collective prayer in her flat.⁶⁶ She was also a member of Catholic Action, with aim to encourage laypeople to church activities.

⁶³ Figure 4

⁶⁴ Vacková, R. (1994). *Ticho s ozvěnami. Dopisy z vězení z let 1952-1967*. [Silence with the Echoes. Prison letters from 1952 to 1967]. Česká křesťanská akademie, p. 54

⁶⁵ Interestingly, Albína Palkosková-Wiesenbergerová participated in this protest as well. Palkosková-Wiesenbergerová, A. (1998). *Tři životy. Osudy žen staropražského rodu*. Nakladatelství B. Just, Prague, p. 283

⁶⁶ Testimony of Jiřina Krejčíková-Hošková in: Vrkočová, L. (Ed.). (2007). *Svědectví [A Testimony]. The fates of political prisoners 1947-1976*. Ludmila Vrkočová, Prague, pp. 26-28

Růžena was arrested in her flat on 7 February 1952 and sentenced by the State Court in Prague to twenty-two years of prison for ‘the crime of espionage and treason’.⁶⁷ Her co-prisoner, Irena Šimonová-Vlachová, remembers:

Ms. Professor Růžena Vacková was brave, rare and beautiful woman. (...) She was Carmelite⁶⁸ and she had such a noble and inner beauty in her eyes. In Pardubice, she encouraged us, she wasn’t skeptical at all even though she was probably the oldest of us. She lectured wherever she could, at the toilets, in the bathroom, according to how we agreed. For us young it was terrible desirable! We’ve learnt a lot. But they often scattered us when someone had denounced it. That’s what happened in the prisons! And Růženka was punished for that by being sent herself into the isolation [korekce].⁶⁹

In the end, she spent fourteen years in prison, conditionally released on 27 April 1967. After her release, in 1968, Růžena became an active member of the Association of Former Political Prisoners K231 and one of the first signatories of the Chart 77. She also continued to hold illegal seminars and discussions her flat, which were very popular among students.⁷⁰ She died on 14 December 1982 in Prague. For this study, Růžena’s experiences was accessed through oral testimony given by fellow inmate, Irena Šimonová-Vlachová, by her god-daughter Dominika Bohušová, interviewed for this purpose, and by testimonies from memoirs of her other co-prisoners⁷¹. Furthermore, secondary literature by Andrej Gjurič Adéla Gjuričová or Zdeněk Pousta, along with Růžena’s prison correspondence and personal prison file has been used for comparison and verification.⁷² In 1992, she was awarded the Order of Tomáš Garrigue Masaryk in memoriam. An extraordinary collection of her prison lectures was published in 1999 by Charles University thanks to her co-prisoners Dagmar Šimková and Dagmar Skálová, who have collected the secret notes made in prison and smuggled them out.⁷³

⁶⁷ Figure 6; National Archive Prague [Národní archiv Praha, NA], *Investigation Directorate of the StB – Investigation Files*, Personal prison file of Růžena Vacková;

⁶⁸ A member of the Third Order of Carmelites as a laic.

⁶⁹ Testimony of Irena Šimonová-Vlachová in: Vrkočová, L. (Ed.). (2007). *Svědectví [A Testimony]. The fates of political prisoners 1947-1976*. Ludmila Vrkočová, Prague, p. 96

⁷⁰ Figure 5; Interview with SM Dominika Bohušová, OP, 24.8.2017

⁷¹ For example, Dagmar Šimková, Božena Kuklová-Jišová, Jiřina Zábranová, or Albína Palkosková-Wiesenbergerová.

⁷² Gjurič, A. (1994). Auntie in: Vacková, R. (1994). *Ticho s ozvěnami. Dopisy z vězení z let 1952-1967*. [Silence with the Echoes. Prison letters from 1952 to 1967]. Česká křesťanská akademie; Gjuričová, A. (2005). Uvědomělé kichotíady: politické myšlení Růženy Vackové. In: *Soudobé dějiny*, 12(2), pp. 285-308, ISSN 1210-7050; Pousta, Z. Introduction in: Vacková, R. (1999). *Vězeňské přednášky [Prison Lectures]*. Charles University in Prague; Pousta, Z. (1996). Pražské ženy jako oběť poúnorových soudních represí. In: Pešek, J. (1996). *Žena v dějinách Prahy: sborník příspěvků z konference Archivu hl. m. Prahy a Nadace pro gender studies 1993*. Scriptorium, pp. 349-353

⁷³ Gjurič, A. (1994). Auntie in: Vacková, R. (1994). *Ticho s ozvěnami. Dopisy z vězení z let 1952-1967*. [Silence with the Echoes. Prison letters from 1952 to 1967]. Česká křesťanská akademie, p. 11

Nina Svobodová (1902–1988)

Nina Svobodová, a politician, journalist and the longest imprisoned Czech woman author, was born as Antonie Malvína Svobodová on 16 June 1902 in Prague. Her writings included historical and biographical novels, plays and theatre critics. She was a member of The People's Party and since 1945, she was a deputy of the Czech National Committee. From 1946 to February 1948, she held a position of a Vice-Chairman of the Regional Committee of Prague. After February 1948, when the so-called Action Committee expelled Nina from her post, she was engaged with the Czech Catholic Charity and became the editor of their journal *Charita*.

Nina was arrested on 23 December 1949, and because her political and religious involvement considered as 'treason', she received a proposal for the death penalty.⁷⁴ In the end, she was sentenced to fifteen years in prison.⁷⁵ In prison, she taught other women English, French, Italian, and literature. After some time in prison, she was allowed to write, but all her manuscripts were confiscated and destroyed.⁷⁶

After the writers' congress in 1956, I was allowed to write in my spare time. Before that there was no paper and pencil. I wrote verses, radio plays, bands, short stories, and translating poems from all the languages I knew. And almost all [...] of my work was destroyed, regardless of the permission given by the Chief. Unfortunately, the fictional Dickens's biography, designed for the youth, has succumbed to this destruction...⁷⁷

In 1960, she was released on the first presidential amnesty for political prisoners on a ten years conditional sentence. However, by June 1961, she was arrested again and sentenced to two and a half years in a fabricated process with the Christian Democratic Party. However, together with four and half years of conditional release which were added to the verdict, she was given a seven-year prison sentence.⁷⁸ She was released for the second time on 6 July 1967, two months later than Růžena Vacková. Nina died on 4 September 1988 in Prague. With her sixteen and half years spent in prison, she became the longest imprisoned Czech female writer who fought for

⁷⁴ Figure 7

⁷⁵ National Archive Prague [Národní archiv Praha, NA], *Investigation Directorate of the StB – Investigation Files*, Personal prison file of Antonie Svobodová

⁷⁶ Sedmidubský, J. (2011). *Nina Svobodová, nejdéle vězněná česká spisovatelka*. Český rozhlas. Retrieved from <http://www.rozhlas.cz/cro6/tipy/zprava/nina-svobodova-nejdele-veznena-ceska-spisovatelka--1055375>

⁷⁷ Interview with Nina Svobodová in: *Lidová demokracie*, 18. 7. 1968, reprinted in N.g. (2011): *Zamřížovaný čas Niny Svobodové*, Masarykův lid, XVIII, 2, p. 14. Retrieved from http://www.miladahorakova.cz/files/ml/KMH_ML_2_2011.pdf

⁷⁸ Figure 8

freedom of speech, press and religion. Nina's narrative has been accessed by comparing her personal testimony published in *People's Democracy* newspaper in 1968, and her personal prison file in the National Archive in Prague with Sedmidubský's article and radio podcast about her life by Czech Radio.

Albína Palkosková-Glücksmannová-Wiesenbergerová (1908–2002)

To cruel injustice, there is the united response of resistance and repetition that our thing is right, that everything happening to the prisoners is artificially made to tyrannize the victims and to the destruction of human dignity.⁷⁹

A journalist, author, pedagogue and aesthetician Albína Palkosková was born on 27 June 1908 in Prague. She did not like the name given to her after her godmother, therefore, she used a shorter version Alča throughout her life. Alča studied aesthetics and politics in Paris and in 1937 she got married with a bank clerk Theodor Glücksmann. She became pregnant soon after, but due to the stress of the political climate, she lost her child and never had any other. After 1945, she started to lecture social education at the newly established Academy of Political and Social Sciences in Prague.⁸⁰ Alča published several novels and academic publications and started to work as an editor of the women's section in *People's Democracy* newspaper.⁸¹ In the meantime, both Alča and Theodor were engaged in illegal activities and a resistance group, helping students to escape the Czechoslovak border into the West. Later, their group was infiltrated with a confidant, their activities were revealed and on 6 October 1949, both Alča and Theodor were arrested.⁸² Alča was sentenced to fifteen years and her husband to twelve years of imprisonment.⁸³ However, three years after that, in 1952, Theodor died in prison. Alča was determined to survive and participated in *Prison University* teaching other women English and German. Finally, on 10 May 1960, Alča was released, but the fact she was a former prisoner was highly stigmatised. She had to work as a cleaner, then in a candy factory, and later she got a position as a sales assistant in a second hand bookshop. In 1962, Alča met her old friend and lawyer Zdeněk Wiesenberg, with whom she got married in 1967. Between 1994 and 1995 she lectured aesthetics at the Charles

⁷⁹ Palkosková-Wiesenbergerová, A. (1998). *Tři životy. Osudy žen staropražského rodu*. Nakladatelství B. Just, Prague, p. 304

⁸⁰ Figure 9

⁸¹ Figure 10

⁸² Figure 11

⁸³ National Archive Prague [Národní archiv Praha, NA], *Investigation Directorate of the StB – Investigation Files* (unprocessed), Personal prison file of Albína Glücksmannová.

University in Prague. She died on 27 December 2002. Information used in this biography comes mainly from her two memoirs *Nebyl to jen sen* (1991) and *Tři životy* (1998) which are further compared with her personal prison file and also Černá's work at Charles University in Prague.⁸⁴

Marie Kovalová, née Vlčková (1911–1999)⁸⁵

My great-grandmother Marie Kovalová was born on 4 August 1911 in Olešná village near Příbyslav in the Vysočina region. In 1936, Marie married a lawyer Josef Koval, and since 1946, they lived in Litoměřice in the northern Bohemia, where they had two sons, Vladimír and Miroslav. Marie was an active organiser of secret seminars and gatherings in their flat and she and her husband were close friends with cardinal Štěpán Trochta.⁸⁶ Marie was arrested on 25 August 1952 and sentenced for 'espionage and treason' to fourteen years in prison.⁸⁷ Josef was arrested soon after on 23 March 1953, and sentenced to seven years in prison.⁸⁸ By that time, Vladimír was thirteen and Miroslav eight years old, when they were sent to the state orphanages being told that their parents are criminals.⁸⁹ Among Marie's closest friends in prison were Marie Horníková⁹⁰, Růžena Vacková, Vojtěcha Hasmandová, Nina Svobodová, Jiřina Štěpničková⁹¹ and Dagmar Šimková, who mentions Marie's regular punishments for her unwillingness to succumb:

⁸⁴ Černá, K. (2010). *Životní příběh Albíny Palkoskové-Wiesenbergerové, politické vězeňkyně padesátých let*. Masters dissertation. Charles University, Prague

⁸⁵ Figure 12

⁸⁶ Mons. Štěpán Trochta (1906-1974), a Catholic cardinal, a member of the Salesians of Don Bosco, 1942-1945 imprisoned in Terezín, Mauthausen and Dachau. In a fabricated process in 1953, Trochta was arrested and sentenced to twenty five years in prison. After his release on presidential amnesty in 1960, he was permanently followed and brutally interrogated.

⁸⁷ Figure 14; National Archive Prague [Národní archiv Praha, NA], *Investigation Directorate of the StB – Investigation Files*, Personal prison file of Marie Kovalová; The Security Service Archive [Archiv bezpečnostních složek, ABS, Prague], *Prison Corps Directorate – Internal Security Department – Operative File*, Operative file of Marie Kovalová.

⁸⁸ National Archive Prague [Národní archiv Praha, NA], *Investigation Directorate of the StB – Investigation Files*, Personal prison file of Josef Koval.

⁸⁹ Testimony of my great-uncle and artist Miroslav Koval in: Drda, A. (2017). *Umíte si to představit? Máte rodinu, domov – a najednou jste v děčáku*. [Can you imagine that? You have family, home – and suddenly, you are at the orphanage.] Český rozhlas, The Stories of the 20th Century. Retrieved from <https://plus.rozhlas.cz/umite-si-predstavit-mate-rodinu-domov-a-najednou-jste-v-decaku-pribeh-mirolava-6507147>; See also: Interview with Miroslav Koval in: Horník, J., Zamora J. (2016). Miroslav Koval. *Osudy umělců v komunistickém Československu, Paměť národa*. [Memory of Nations] Retrieved from <https://www.pametnaroda.cz/en/mirolav-koval#biography>

⁹⁰ Marie Horníková (1913-2001), a teacher of mathematics at Litoměřice school, sentenced to ten years of imprisonment for copying and distributing of flyers criticising the regime, a neighbour and friend of Marie Kovalová in Litoměřice.

⁹¹ Jiřina Štěpničková (1912-1985), a famous theatre and film actress, living in London in the second half of the 1940s and sentenced to fifteen years in prison for an attempt to emigrate back to the West in 1951.

One of the means of the State Security was ‘temnice’ [dark room].⁹² Maruška had been sent there by a guard many times because she was so dangerous that she organized spiritual retreat and religious meetings of Catholics with Bishop Trochta. She even dared to organize a trip to a pilgrimage site. In a cell without a window, four feet long, she had to walk day and night, hitting the wall in darkness and falling to the floor.⁹³

Marie was repeatedly punished by sending her to *korekce*⁹⁴, because she resisted the authorities also by knowing and naming contemporary laws from her husband, a lawyer and a judge.⁹⁵ After her release on 12 May 1960 (Josef Koval was released two months earlier)⁹⁶, she regularly met with her co-prisoners, especially Růžena Vacková, Vojtěcha Hasmandová and Nina Svobodová either in Marie’s flat in Litoměřice, or when she travelled to Prague for a doctor’s appointments, she visited them in their places.⁹⁷ Few times, she also participated in the meetings of the Federation of former political prisoners in Prague. Marie continued in her activities and organised religious meetings, discussions and helped with secret priesthood ordinations in their flat in Litoměřice.⁹⁸ She died on her 88th birthday on 4 August 1999.

Vojtěcha Hasmandová (1914–1988)⁹⁹

Do not be afraid of any difficulties, but as brave women find a positive in everything and may your property be the art of a good and joyful life so you may be the support and angels of good to all and especially to your family.¹⁰⁰

SM Antonie Vojtěcha Hasmandová was a nun and General Superior of The Sisters of Mercy of Saint Borromeo congregation. She was born on 25 March 1914 in Huštěnovice near Uherské Hradiště in the southwest Moravia. She served as a nurse and teacher and worked as a school director in Brno after WWII. On 10 September 1952, she was arrested for sheltering a priest hiding from the StB, and also falsely accused of having taken a secret letter from the

⁹² Solitary confinement, referred also as *korekce*, see p. 18

⁹³ Šimková, D. (2015). *Byly jsme tam taky*. Nakladatelství Monika Le Fay, p. 115

⁹⁴ Marie’s frequent punishments serve as a proof that not all the information is available in the archival materials. None of her punishments are evidenced in her documentation. Hana Truncová also confirms that she was repeatedly punished which was not mentioned in the archive.

⁹⁵ Chaloupský, P. (2007). *Kdo nás odloučí od lásky Kristovy? Život Marie Kovalové*. Krystal OP s.r.o., p. 19; Eva Chaloupská, née Kovalová, personal communication to author.

⁹⁶ Figure 15

⁹⁷ Eva Chaloupská, née Kovalová, personal communication to author.

⁹⁸ Figure 13

⁹⁹ Figure 16

¹⁰⁰ Letters from prison, Archive MV and SCB, 13/55, addressed to her siblings. In: Češíková (Ed.), S.M. Remigie SCB. (2013). *Jsem v dlani Boží. Dopisy z vězení Matky Vojtěchy Hasmandové SCB*. Cesta, Brno, p. 51

convicted Žofie Langrová to the French Embassy and sent it to Vatican.¹⁰¹ As a result, Vojtěcha was sentenced to eight years of prison for ‘treason’.¹⁰² According to Václav Vaško, she was among about 102 of nuns sentenced to 354 years in total during the 1950s and the beginning of the 1960s.¹⁰³ One of Vojtěcha’s co-inmates remembers:

I see her as if it was today; she was waiting for us on the day we were released from the ‘hole’ [korekce] with a large pot of hot tea, and firstly she hugged each of us, and then gave us a cup of sweet hot tea. We were frozen and starved. She showed us great solidarity, and yet so much humbleness.¹⁰⁴

Vojtěcha was released on 11 May 1960 and in 1970, she became the General Superior of her congregation dedicating her life to God and helping others.¹⁰⁵ She passed away on 21 January 1988 in Znojmo-Hradiště and since 1996, her beatification process began.¹⁰⁶

Hana Truncová, née Johnová (b. 1924)¹⁰⁷

‘I would say that a woman dares more.’¹⁰⁸

Hana Johnová was born on 23 August 1928 in Teplice-Šanov in the north of Bohemia. Fluent in Czech, German and English, she graduated at Business Academy and worked as an accountant. In 1948, Hana got engaged to Otakar Trunec, an expelled student of the Academy of political and social sciences in Prague due to political reasons, and together they printed and distributed anti-Communist leaflets to mailboxes or under the thresholds:¹⁰⁹

I wrote flyers according to what my fiancé and other expelled students dictated to me. The text was against the Communists, kolkhoze¹¹⁰, nationalization, against Czechoslovakia’s association with the USSR, against censorship of the press, against new laws, the state, people’s courts, executions; but in support of protection of human rights etc. StB agents did

¹⁰¹ Figures 18 and 19

¹⁰² National Archive Prague [Národní archiv Praha, NA], *Investigation Directorate of the StB – Investigation Files*, Personal prison file of Antonie Hasmandová.

¹⁰³ Vaško, V. (2007). *Dům na skále II. Církev bojující*. Kostelní Vydří, p. 412, cited in: Synek, J. (2013). *Svobodni v nesvobodě. Náboženský život ve věznicích v období komunistického režimu*. The Institute for the Study of Totalitarian Regimes, Vyšehrad, p. 65

¹⁰⁴ Krupková, I. (Ed.). (2013). *Láska smrti nekončí. Život Matky Vojtěchy Hasmandové*. Karmelitánské nakladatelství Kostelní Vydří, p. 44

¹⁰⁵ Figure 17

¹⁰⁶ Interview with SM. Remigie Češíková, 28.12.2017

¹⁰⁷ Figure 20

¹⁰⁸ Interview with Hana Truncová, 29.12.2017

¹⁰⁹ Ibid.

¹¹⁰ A forcible form of collective farming in the Soviet Union.

not find a single flyer with us, the remnants I managed to destroy after the arrest of my fiancé on 19 May 1951.¹¹¹

Their illegal activities were revealed and Hana was arrested on 6 June 1951 and was sentenced to thirteen years in prison for a crime of ‘treason and espionage’.¹¹² Her father Jan John was arrested two weeks later. Hana went through brutal interrogations in Ústí nad Labem, where she was beaten so harshly, that she considered suicide, but an instinct for self-preservation prevailed.¹¹³ Among her co-prisoners and the closest friends were Žofie Slováčková¹¹⁴, Jiřina Fárková¹¹⁵, Jindřiška Havrlantová¹¹⁶ or Květoslava Moravečková¹¹⁷. ‘In prison, we became a big fictional family!’¹¹⁸ During her imprisonment, Hana exchanged plenty of letters with her fiancé and later, she managed to smuggle some of them out. Hana’s love story did not end behind the bars. She was released in 21 January 1960, and finally in May 1960, her fiancé was also released and a month later, they got married. Hana firstly worked in healthcare, and later in a travel agency. Today, living in Hořice, she still actively lectures about her experiences at schools and other events. She is one of my interviewees, of which she is the only one to whom I had a chance to interview twice, alongside with an active exchange of personal correspondence.¹¹⁹

¹¹¹ Stojaník, F. (2014). *Příběh Hany Truncové, statečné ženy a politické vězeňkyně*. In: Sborník Archivu bezpečnostních složek, 12/2014, pp. 283-315; p. 297 Retrieved from

<https://www.abscr.cz/data/pdf/sbornik/sbornik12.pdf>

¹¹² Figure 22; The Security Service Archive [Archiv bezpečnostních složek, ABS, Prague], *Prison Corps Directorate – Internal Security Department – Operative File*, Operative file of Hana Johnová

¹¹³ Interview with Hana Truncová, 29.12.2017; See also: Stojaník, F. (2014). *Příběh Hany Truncové, statečné ženy a politické vězeňkyně*. In: Sborník Archivu bezpečnostních složek, 12/2014, pp. 283-315; p. 299 Retrieved from

<https://www.abscr.cz/data/pdf/sbornik/sbornik12.pdf>

¹¹⁴ Žofie Slováčková-Zlámalová, according to Hana Truncová: ‘a religious woman with a beautiful alto’ coming from Otrokovice, married to a former political prisoner Josef Zlámal.

¹¹⁵ Jiřina Fárková (1928-1987), according to Hana Truncová a talented artist and soprano coming from Horní Bečva.

¹¹⁶ Jindřiška Havrlantová (1929-2017), née Růčková, from Rybí near Nový Jičín, sentenced to eighteen years of imprisonment for her engagement with the anti-Communist resistance group Libuše 23, released in 1964. See: Bouška, T., Pinerová, K. (2016). *Czechoslovak Political Prisoners. Life Stories of 5 Male and 5 Female Victims of Stalinism*. Second amended edition, pp. 30-46 <http://www.politictivezni.cz/rozhovor-s-jindriskou-havrlantovou.html>

¹¹⁷ Květoslava Moravečková (1924-2015), a nursery teacher coming from Malín near Kutná Hora, sentenced to ten years in prison for hiding a member of anti-Communist resistance group. See: Bouška, T., Pinerová, K. (2016). *Czechoslovak Political Prisoners. Life Stories of 5 Male and 5 Female Victims of Stalinism*. Second amended edition, pp. 66-79

¹¹⁸ Interview with Hana Truncová, 29.12.2017

¹¹⁹ Figure 21

Dagmar Šimková (1929–1995)¹²⁰

Dagmar Šimková was born on 23 May 1929 in Písek in the South Bohemia. She wanted to study art history and English at Charles University in Prague, but due to her bourgeois origin (her father was a banker), she was not allowed.¹²¹ When the Communists took power, her sister Marta emigrated to Australia. First, Dagmar worked in a textile factory, then as a designer and later as a nurse. She also distributed leaflets satirizing the Communist Party and its politicians. Moreover, she provided shelter for two military deserters trying to escape to the West.¹²² On 11 October 1952, she was arrested and sentenced to fifteen years in prison.¹²³ In 1955, she attempted to escape from prison in Želiezovce, however, the prison officials spread the news that a ‘dangerous murderer’ escaped. After two days, when she fell asleep by exhaustion in a straw bundle, she was found and recaptured. Three more years were added to her sentence. In her memoir, she claims that women responded differently to the prison life and created various survival mechanisms:

The fact, that most of us survived with keeping sanity was primarily conditioned by being women. Not because women have lighter conditions (...) A man in prison is a tragic, humiliated lion crying deep inside. A woman becomes a small angry rod, a stoat or a marten, who immediately starts to bite and undermine and even calls the other stoats and martens to bite and undermine with her.¹²⁴

After spending fourteen and half years in prison, she was eventually released on 28 April 1966. After the Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia in 1968, she emigrated to Australia¹²⁵ and published her memories in a book called *Byly jsme tam taky* [We were there too].¹²⁶ She worked as an art historian, artist, stunt woman, fashion model, social worker, and even as a prison therapist cooperating with Amnesty International.¹²⁷ She died on 24 February 1996 in Perth.

¹²⁰ Figure 23

¹²¹ Růžička, D. (n.d.). *Dagmar Šimková, politická vězeňkyně*. Totalita.cz. Retrieved from http://totalita.cz/vysvetlivky/o_simkovad.php

¹²² Bláhová, I., Blažek, L., Kuklík, J., Šouša, J. et al. (2013). *Oběti komunistické spravedlnosti. Právní aspekty politických procesů 50. let 20. století*. Auditorium, Prague, p. 246

¹²³ Figure 25; National Archive Prague [Národní archiv Praha, NA], *Investigation Directorate of the StB – Investigation Files*, Personal prison file of Dagmar Šimková.

¹²⁴ Šimková, D. (2015). *Byly jsme tam taky*. Nakladatelství Monika Le Fay, p. 25

¹²⁵ Figure 24

¹²⁶ First edition was published by '68 Publishers in 1980 in Toronto, while first edition in Czechoslovakia was released in 1991 by Orbis. Further reprints include: Monika Le Fay (2003, 2007, 2010, 2011, 2015)

¹²⁷ Frajtová, M. (2016). *Pohnuté osudy: Dagmar Šimková zažila 14 let v lágru. V Austrálii našla domov*. Lidovky.cz. Retrieved from https://www.lidovky.cz/lide/pohnute-osudy-dagmar-simkova-zazila-14-let-v-lagru-v-australii-nasla-domov.A160114_175441_lide_ELE; Elšíková, M. (2008). „Měla jsem se stydět, že jsem žena...“ *Osudový příběh Dagmar Šimkové*. Revue Politika, 12/2008, Centrum pro studium demokracie a kultury. Retrieved from <https://www.cdk.cz/mela-jsem-se-stydet-ze-jsem-zena>

Božena Kuklová-Jíšová (1929–2014)

A poet and author Božena Kuklová-Jíšová was born on 8 December 1929 in České Budějovice in the south Bohemia. She left Business Academy in Prague in 1949 and worked as a correspondent for foreign languages. In 1953, Božena married Josef Jiša. Within a year, they were both arrested for their ‘anti-state’ activities and contacts with British Intelligence Secret Service.¹²⁸ Božena was arrested on 3 May 1954 and sentenced to ten years and her husband to twelve years of prison.¹²⁹ Božena’s passion in poetry comes from her early age and she continued writing poems even in prison reflecting her and her co-inmates’ experiences:

And then they sang the fate despite (...)
Even though I’ve been losing my heart piece by piece,
I will not cry, I will not,
I do not want to be cowardly!¹³⁰

Her collection *Verše psané za mřížemi* (Poems behind bars) was published in 1996 and a book of her memories, focusing on her friends and co-prisoners, titled *Krásná němá paní. Příběhy vězňených žen z 50. let* (A Beautiful Mute Lady. Stories of incarcerated women in the 1950s.) was published for the first time in 2002. After Božena’s release on 12 May 1960, she worked as a cleaner, a factory worker at Tesla, and later, as a social worker in childcare. She had two children, daughter Božena and son Jiří.

Miluška Havlůjová, née Pomplová (b. 1929)¹³¹

‘Books...it was a dew on a dry soul.’¹³²

Miluška Havlůjová, born on 13 May 1929 in Dušníky, today’s Rudná near Prague, dreamt about studying history at university, but because her father and grandfather run a family sawmill business, she was declared as ‘inappropriate for further studies’ due to her ‘capitalistic and bourgeois origin’.¹³³ Miluška’s parents were actively engaged during the anti-Nazi resistance movement during the Second World War, helping to hide and feed people escaping from the

¹²⁸ Lazarov, A. (2016). *Dáma české kultury, Božena Kuklová-Jíšová* [A Lady of Czech Culture, Božena Kuklová-Jíšová.], Křesťanský magazín, Česká televize. Retrieved from <https://www.ceskatelevize.cz/porady/1098528273-krestansky-magazin/21656221560003>

¹²⁹ Figures 26 and 27; National Archive Prague [Národní archiv Praha, NA], *Investigation Directorate of the StB – Investigation Files*, Personal prison file of Božena Kuklová-Jíšová.

¹³⁰ Kuklová-Jíšová, B. (1996). *Verše psané za mřížemi*. ARSCI, p. 12

¹³¹ Figures 28 and 29

¹³² Interview with Miluška Havlůjová, 20.12.2017, Rudná near Prague.

¹³³ Ibid.

Gestapo. Her mother was imprisoned in Terezín (Theresienstadt) Small Fortress, while her father managed to hide until the end of war. Miluška's mother survived. However, after Communist takeover in 1948, the Pompl's sawmill was confiscated and nationalised, and Miluška's father was arrested due to an anonymous false denouncement that he reported his employees for non-payment of health insurance.¹³⁴ Consequently, he was sentenced to a year of forced labour in uranium mines according to retribitional decrees which were assigned to Nazi collaborators.¹³⁵ Miluška worked briefly as a fashion model, but because of her open disagreement against her father's imprisonment and also for her involvement in a local resistance movement *Železo* distributing illegal leaflets, she was brought by the StB agents to Bartolomějská street to interrogation while holding her fourteen months old son Tomáš in her arms.

[During the interrogation] they pushed Tomáš behind a door. I did not know about any door when they were interrogating... Tomáš was crying for a while and then suddenly, there was silence... I did not know where he was. I said, no, I will not testify, give me my boy, I will not. 'Well, we'll make you testify!' (...) Then Tomáš woke up and started crying. For how long it was, I don't know, he really wept. I said, please, no, I will not say anything more, give me my baby! Or I would commit suicide here... [long pause]... it was stupid, I didn't have anything there... Well, but after a while he [the guard] went to the door, I turned around and saw that it was a storage room. My child was lying on the ground soiled. Though wet, tearful and terrified, he had fallen asleep... so I grabbed him and said: please, let me go home, I gotta get this baby home. And they said: 'This time we will let you go...'¹³⁶

This traumatic incident has influenced Miluška's son wellbeing and their relationship until today.¹³⁷ Soon after, on 26 May 1953, Miluška was arrested. A young mother at the time, she was brutally separated from her child and sentenced to five years of prison.¹³⁸ Due to her various serious illnesses, she was released earlier on 1 March 1955.¹³⁹ After her release, she worked as a

¹³⁴ Ibid.

¹³⁵ Later in December 1953, Miluška's father was arrested for the second time and sentenced to ten years of prison while her brother was called to PTP, Military camps of forced labour aiming to intern and re-educate people disloyal to the regime.

¹³⁶ Interview with Miluška Havlůjová, 20.12.2017; See Miluška's story in the animated short film in English: Paměť národa (2011). *The Story of Miluska Havlujova*. Paměť národa Youtube channel. Retrieved from

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MHny2DgKYGI>; See also: N.g. (N.d.) *Miluška Havlůjová*. My jsme to nevzdali. Retrieved from <https://www.myjsmetonevzdali.cz/pametnici/havlujova-miluska/>; Horník, J. (2008). *Miluška Havlůjová*. Paměť národa. Retrieved from <https://www.pametnaroda.cz/en/miluska-havlujova>

¹³⁷ Ibid. See also: USTR (n.d.). *Milena (Miluška) Havlůjová (*1929)*. The Institute for the Study of Totalitarian Regimes (USTR). Retrieved from <https://www.ustrcr.cz/uvod/vzdelavaci-projekt-pamet-a-dejiny-totalitnich-rezimu/pametnici-protikomunistickeho-odboje-a-odporu/milena-miluska-havlujova/>

¹³⁸ Figure 30

¹³⁹ Figure 31; The Security Service Archive [Archiv bezpečnostních složek, ABS, Prague], *Prison Corps Directorate – Internal Security Department – Operative Files*, Operative file of Miluška Havlůjová.

clerk and accountant. In 1989, she was also involved in the *Civic Forum*¹⁴⁰ and between 1992 and 1998 she worked as a Mayor of Rudná. The reason why she did not cooperate with the regime, Miluška explains, was due to her strong feeling of God's presence and help and also because 'conscience is the principle of humankind.'¹⁴¹

Drahomíra Strouhalová (b. 1930)¹⁴²

Drahomíra Strouhalová was born on 2 August 1930 in Modřice near Brno in Moravia.

'I always wanted to be a nurse, then I wanted to be a kindergarten teacher. Nothing has become true. I went to jail and became a cattlemaid.'¹⁴³ During the Second World War, Drahomíra experienced bombing of Brno, which left her with a traumatic experience.¹⁴⁴ Few years later, after 1948, she became involved in a large resistance group along with Božena Majerová, her daughter Věra Majerová, Jiřina Slámová et al.¹⁴⁵ Their group was cooperating with British Field Security Service and with the Central Intelligence Service, providing information and shelter to messengers.¹⁴⁶ Their activities were revealed and on 25 October 1950, twenty-year-old Drahomíra was arrested. Moreover, during the house search, a hidden radio station and guns were found in her sofa and Drahomíra was proposed a death penalty. In the end, the sentence was reduced to fifteen years of prison.¹⁴⁷

Among other women, she was also imprisoned with Dagmar Šimková in Železovce prison which was known for the cruel treatments of prisoners. While commenting on the conditions in

¹⁴⁰ *Civic Forum*, known as *Občanské fórum* in Czech (OF), a political movement uniting former dissidents against the Communist power was established during the Velvet Revolution in 1989.

¹⁴¹ Výborná, L., Havel P. (2016). *Svědění je princip člověčenství říká bojovnice proti totalitě Miluška Havlůjová*. Český rozhlas. Retrieved from <https://radiozurnal.rozhlas.cz/svedomi-je-princip-clovecenstvi-rika-bojovnice-proti-totalite-miluska-havlujova-6210686>

¹⁴² Figure 32

¹⁴³ Interview with Drahomíra Strouhalová, 27.12.2017

¹⁴⁴ Ibid.

¹⁴⁵ See: Pejčoch, I. (2014). Božena Majerová In: *Ženy v třetím odboji. Kurárky zpravodajských služeb, převaděčky a příslušnice protikomunistických odbojových skupin*. Svět kříděl, Cheb, pp. 83-94; Vrkočová, L. (Ed.). (2007). Jiřina Minaříková-Slámová In: *Svědectví. Osudy politických vězňů 1947-1976* [Testimony. The fates of political prisoners 1947-1976]. Ludmila Vrkočová, Prague, pp. 199-204

¹⁴⁶ Pejčoch, I. (2014). *Ženy v třetím odboji. Kurárky zpravodajských služeb, převaděčky a příslušnice protikomunistických odbojových skupin*. Svět kříděl, Cheb, p. 83; Vrkočová, L. (Ed.). (2007). Jiřina Minaříková-Slámová In: *Svědectví. Osudy politických vězňů 1947-1976* [Testimony. The fates of political prisoners 1947-1976]. Ludmila Vrkočová, Prague, p. 204

¹⁴⁷ Figure 33; Interview with Drahomíra Strouhalová, 27.12.2017; See also: Pejčoch, I. (2014). *Ženy v třetím odboji. Kurárky zpravodajských služeb, převaděčky a příslušnice protikomunistických odbojových skupin*. Svět kříděl, Cheb, pp. 89-90; 93; The Security Service Archive [Archiv bezpečnostních složek, ABS, Prague], *Prison Corps Directorate – Internal Security Department – Operative File*, Operative file of Drahomíra Strouhalová.

various interrogations cells and prisons she experienced, Drahomíra emphasised the importance of friendship: ‘When you find your family, you don’t care.’¹⁴⁸ However, Drahomíra’s love story was not as lucky as Hana’s. Before her imprisonment, she dated with a young man who after a short imprisonment, managed to escape and emigrated to Australia. After Drahomíra’s arrest, they regularly exchanged letters, got engaged and promised each other to wait for freedom to spent their lives together. But her mother-in-law was against their love, she set up various obstacles and spread false accusations and slander after Drahomíra’s release on 26 September 1958. As a result, the engagement was cancelled and they never met again.¹⁴⁹ Later, Drahomíra found out that her lover died during an airplane accident and she has never since married. She stayed with her parents working in agriculture and isolated from the outside world, except regular trips and visits of her friends and former co-prisoners.

Ludmila Hermanová, née Olšaníková (b. 1936)¹⁵⁰

‘Nearly all of our family ended up in prison’¹⁵¹

Ludmila Hermanová (née Olšaníková) was born on 3 August 1936 in Štěpánov near Olomouc. Her family worked in agriculture, owning a farm, land and cattle. Their property was twice confiscated, first by Nazis in 1943 in Moravská Huzová along with a forced relocation, and secondly by the Communists during collectivization process in the early 1950s in Mladějovice, when Ludmila’s parents refused to enter the United Agricultural Cooperative (JZD).¹⁵² Moreover, since 1956, Olšaník’s family helped to hide a Czech agent of the American Intelligence Service and provided him information he needed. Consequently, in 1958, nearly all family was arrested; Ludmila’s eighteen-year-old brother Josef was sentenced to eleven years of prison, twenty-year-old Ludmila to six years, and both her father and mother to five years of prison. Furthermore, two her uncles and two cousins were arrested. In total, eight members of the family ended up in prison.¹⁵³

¹⁴⁸ Interview with Drahomíra Strouhalová, 27.12.2017

¹⁴⁹ Ibid.

¹⁵⁰ Figure 34

¹⁵¹ Interview with Ludmila Hermanová in: Lucuk, V. (2014). *Ludmila Hermanová*. Paměť národa. Retrieved from <https://www.pametnaroda.cz/en/ludmila-hermanova>

¹⁵² Interview with Ludmila Hermanová, 3.1.2018

¹⁵³ Unfortunately, a personal prison file of Ludmila Olšaníková was not found in the archives.

Ludmila was a talented piano and harmonium player wishing to learn to play organ. Since her childhood, she wanted to become a teacher. However, due to a lack of finances and ‘inappropriate political profile’, she worked in a savings bank. Although as a young prisoner, Ludmila was chosen for hard work in prison, it did not stop her from participating in musical activities. ‘We sang a lot, especially during the work in the fields. And one of my friends used to sing various opera arias, she sang beautifully. When I had birthday, they all sang to me.’¹⁵⁴ Ludmila describes how inventive women were in prison: ‘We covered the heating with slices of bread and toast them and brewed coffee in a tin. We had to burn sanitary towels because we didn’t have anything else.’¹⁵⁵ Ludmila also remembers the celebration of Christmas: ‘The girls who wire feathers brought the feathers and they found a wire and green ink somewhere. They colored the feathers and we made a Christmas tree. Cigarettes served as candles.’¹⁵⁶ After her release in 1960, she studied economy, got married in 1963, had two children. Currently, Ludmila lives in Ostrava in the Moravian-Silesian Region in the north-east of Czech Republic.

¹⁵⁴ Interview with Ludmila Hermanová, 3.1.2018

¹⁵⁵ Ibid.

¹⁵⁶ Interview with Ludmila Hermanová in: Lucuk, V. (2014). *Ludmila Hermanová*. Paměť národa. Retrieved from <https://www.pametnaroda.cz/en/ludmila-hermanova>

The Gendered World of the Prison

This chapter first explores the prisoner's identity and role of gender, how women coped and resisted the authorities and hostile environment in order to preserve their integrity and humanity, identifying as women and what it meant to keep their femininity. Secondly, the methods of interrogations and intimidations, and gender-based violence will be examined. The third part focuses on prison social structure, including the tensions between political prisoners and criminals.

1.1 Identity and Gender

‘One is not born a woman, but rather becomes one.’¹⁵⁷

In prison, people lose their control over personal spaces and control over time,¹⁵⁸ which means that ‘the prisoner's sense of agency, how much control or choice she has to act in the world - is greatly inhibited.’¹⁵⁹ The difficulty or impossibility of one's own agency leads into the sense of loss of identity which is largely common among prisoners. Identity is defined as ‘the fact of being who a person is’¹⁶⁰ or ‘the qualities of a person or group that make them different from others.’¹⁶¹ However, the person's sense of identity, representation of self in the world, varies across time, location, class, gender, sexuality, ethnicity, age and subjective experience.¹⁶²

If we understand society as a mirror in which people see themselves,¹⁶³ then with a constant process of changing of society, peoples' perception of themselves become different as well. Therefore, as Jerome Bruner noted, through our actions, language and narratives, ‘we constantly

¹⁵⁷ De Beauvoir, S. (2011) *The Second Sex*. Vintage Books, New York. Retrieved from https://uberty.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/09/1949_simone-de-beauvoir-the-second-sex.pdf, p. 330

¹⁵⁸ Carlen, P. (1998). *Sledgehammer: Women's Imprisonment at the Millennium*. Springer, p. 13

¹⁵⁹ Richmond, K. T. (2010). *Re-capturing the Self: Narratives of Self and Captivity by Women Political Prisoners in Germany 1915-1991*. PhD Studies, University of Edinburgh. Retrieved from

<https://www.era.lib.ed.ac.uk/bitstream/handle/1842/5493/Richmond2010.pdf?sequence=2&isAllowed=y>, p. 13;

based on Mary Bosworth work: Bosworth, M. (1999). *Engendering Resistance Agency and Power in Women's Prison*. Aldershot: Dartmouth, p. 131

¹⁶⁰ The English Oxford Living Dictionaries, Retrieved from <https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/identity>

¹⁶¹ The Cambridge Dictionary, Retrieved from <https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/identity>

¹⁶² Richmond, K. T. (2010), p. 11

¹⁶³ Serpe, R. T., & Stryker, S. (2011). *The Symbolic Interactionist Perspective and Identity Theory*. In *Handbook of Identity Theory and Research* (pp. 225-248). Springer, New York, NY. Retrieved from <https://www.researchgate.net/publication/227038933>, p. 226

construct and reconstruct ourselves.’¹⁶⁴ It is generally agreed that gender is culturally constructed. Judith Butler adds to this premise that ‘gender is an identity tenuously constituted in time.’¹⁶⁵ Therefore, gender identity is fluid as well as one’s identity and perception of self in the world. But also, importantly, according to Butler’s theory, gender is performative. Humans perform their gender and through this performance, gender is given meaning. Butler explains that gender is ‘the repeated stylization of the body, a set of repeated acts within a highly rigid regulatory frame that congeal over time to produce the appearance of substance of a natural sort of being’.¹⁶⁶ The performance of gender is a key identity marker. Consequently, if the ability to perform one’s gender is oppressed, then it means that a person sees their own gender identity also subverted.

Becoming ill, was one of the most difficult issues both male and female had to deal with in prison due to the lack of health care and abjectly unsanitary conditions. However, imprisoned women had to cope with menstruation, which is clearly a female issue. As Pinerová emphasised, therefore, the identity of a woman became very fragile and was repeatedly attacked by prison guards.¹⁶⁷ They were humiliated due to their period or their naked bodies especially during interrogations¹⁶⁸. Due to a lack of education of prison guards, women’s periods also caused a humorous moment when one woman asked why she is lying on a bed, replied: ‘I have menses.’ A commander got upset and said to her: ‘I will not tolerate any religious rites in here!’¹⁶⁹ Such lack of knowledge, guards ordinarily covered by hardness and zero compassion. Women were also humiliated by the lack of sanitary supplies offered to them. However, on one occasion, the frustration and deprivation of hygienic essentials was transformed into collective resistance in a form of hunger strike.¹⁷⁰

¹⁶⁴ Richmond, K. T. (2010), p. 12

¹⁶⁵ Butler, J. (1990). *Gender Trouble. The Subversion of Identity*. New York and London: Routledge. Retrieved from: <https://www-dawsonera-com.libaccess.hud.ac.uk/readonline/9780203824979/startPage/38/1>, p. 191

¹⁶⁶ Butler, J. (1990), p. 45

¹⁶⁷ Pinerová, K. (2006). *Woman and Her Identity in the Prison Subculture in the 1950s Introduction*. Political Prisoners. Retrieved from <http://www.politicalprisoners.eu/women-and-her-identity-in-prison-ioha-paper.html>; About the loss of femininity see also: Presiado, M. (2016) A New Perspective on Holocaust Art: Women’s Artistic Expression of the Female Holocaust Experience (1939–49), *Holocaust Studies*, 22:4, 417-446

¹⁶⁸ Šimková, D. (2015). *Byly jsme tam taky*. Nakladatelství Monika Le Fay, p. 33. All translations of interviews, archival materials and published works from Czech are my own unless otherwise stated.

¹⁶⁹ Palkosková-Wiesenbergerová, A. (1998). *Tři životy. Osudy žen staropražského rodu*. Nakladatelství B. Just, Prague, p. 315

¹⁷⁰ See pp. 24-25

The fact, that women were denied certain “feminine” objects and rituals, such as sanitary products, female clothing which would fit them, beauty products or freedom of expression meant that they were losing their identity. For women who grew up in the prewar and interwar period, femininity was connected with Christianity and patriotism: with the ideal image of a woman as a mother, tradition-bearer and unifying element of family. However, following progressive opinions of first Czechoslovak president Tomáš Garrigue Masaryk and feminist politicians such as Františka Plamínková, a solid education and more opportunities for women in various professions were publicly discussed and became an inspiration for the generation of young women.

In the article about women’s identity in the prisons in the 1950s, historian Klára Pinerová noted that male political prisoners tended to write mostly about their everyday lives, labour and harsh conditions, while women frequently emphasised their relationships, fates and experiences of their co-prisoners, friends and families with a great deal of empathy and understanding.¹⁷¹ In comparison to men who describe torturing techniques in a great detail, women are more reluctant to share the details of their traumatic experiences, humiliation and sexual violence.¹⁷² While loss of professional identity was perceived significant for men, loss of partnerships or family was considered as essential for female prisoners.¹⁷³ Despite these findings, it is clear from women’s testimonies that women also longed for their lost careers and possibilities to study. However, female political prisoners have rarely written about their experience. Only a few memoirs have been published by women on their experience of political persecution in Czechoslovakia.¹⁷⁴ Božena Kuklová-Jíšová explains:

¹⁷¹ Pinerová, K. (2006). *Woman and Her Identity in the Prison Subculture in the 1950s Introduction*. Political Prisoners. Retrieved from <http://www.politicalprisoners.eu/women-and-her-identity-in-prison-ioha-paper.html>

¹⁷² Pinerová, K. (2017). *Do konce života. Političtí vězni padesátých let – trauma, adaptace, identita*. The Institute for the Study of Totalitarian Regimes, pp. 267-268

¹⁷³ Nedbálková, K. (2003). *Má vězení střední rod? aneb Maskulinita a femininita ve vězeňských subkulturách*. *Sociologický Časopis*, pp. 469–486, p. 471. Retrieved from http://sreview.soc.cas.cz/uploads/064e5dc4372ccad31cc27ec2054ac3ba1a2597ba_495_43ne33_6.pdf

¹⁷⁴ Hofmanová, A. (1998). *Žijeme jen jednou. Životní příběh statečné ženy*. Nové město, Praha; Janovská, J. (1994) *Velikánky*. PRIMUS, Praha; Kuklová-Jíšová, B. (2007). *Krásná nemá paní. Příběhy vězňů z padesátých let*. ARSCI, Prague; Palkosková-Wiesenbergerová, A. (1991). *Nebyl to jen sen*, LUXPRESS Praha; Palkosková-Wiesenbergerová, A. (1998). *Tři životy – osudy žen staropražského rodu*. Nakladatelství B. Just Praha, Pluto, Pražské nakladatelství Jiřího Poláčka; Reinerová, L. (2002). *Všechny barvy slunce a noci*. Labyrinth, Praha; Šimková, D. (2015). *Byly jsme tam taky*. Seventh edition. Nakladatelství Monika Le Fay, Praha; Zábranová, J. (1994) *Ohlédnutí*. TORST, Praha

We women who make up the female part of the ‘mukls’¹⁷⁵ are often criticised for having published so little about ourselves. Perhaps it is because certain moments were too humiliating for us, or do we find ours acts trivial in comparison to the various brave acts of imprisoned men? But most of all, we have usually faced to various barriers to somehow ‘become visible’.

Women’s reluctance to speak about their experiences was often conditioned due to a sensitive character of sexual abuse and gendered-based violence. Moreover, women struggled to be visible and heard, not only because of the considerably smaller amount of female political prisoners compared to male, but because of the often neglected issue of women’s experiences and women history in general.

1.1.1 Process of visibility and beautifying

Incarcerated women were constantly negotiating and re-interpreting their own identities by a process of visibility through which they tried to combat the ubiquitous attacks on their identity and dignity as human beings. For instance, prisoners were dehumanised by assigning numbers, by which they were exclusively addressed, not by their names:

The smaller a human-number is, the higher their goals are aiming for the stars. When we overcame the first agony of dehumanization and stop paying attention to the fact that we are scorned for our rags and our ugliness, we have begun to search for the meaning of our lives elsewhere. Everyday they told us us: “You are dregs of human society. Forgotten, no one knows you, no one cares, no one wants you back. You’re nothing. You have ceased to exist.”¹⁷⁶

Referred only as numbers and treated worse than criminals, political prisoners were struggling to keep a sense of personality, dignity, self-esteem, and hope for future. Moreover, they had to cope with sordid conditions that were perilously unsanitary in prison. Many women mentioned that maintaining safe levels of hygiene was one of the most difficult issues in prison. In prison, inmates encountered bed-bugs which were falling on them from the ceiling during the night, lice, mice, rats, brown rats, and even worms surfacing from the toilets.¹⁷⁷ Moreover, prisoners faced hunger, lack of water, cold due to lack of heating in the winter, various illnesses, heavy labour and lack of space and privacy. Prisons did not have a capacity for so high number of prisoners.

¹⁷⁵ MUKL is an acronym for four Czech words meaning ‘a man determined to liquidation’ (muž určený k likvidaci). The word comes from a prison slang commonly referred to political prisoners who meant to die in prison, their return was considered as unwanted.

¹⁷⁶ Šimková, D. (2015). *Byly jsme tam taky*. Nakladatelství Monika Le Fay, p. 99

¹⁷⁷ Zábranová, J. (1994). *Ohlédnutí*. TORST, p. 269

Therefore, personal hygiene was very difficult and limited. ‘Two months do not bathe, do not wash and do not change a dress, be only in that one and sleep in dress... it was... I will tell you, it was worse, than if they would slap you in the face.’¹⁷⁸ Women political prisoners attempted to do as much as possible to keep themselves clean and feel like humans. They chose to take at a bit of control over their own bodies. Therefore, the maintenance of hygiene meant for women an important way to overcome the harsh reality in prison and resist the authorities. Moreover, it became a ‘distinctive sign distinguishing them from criminal prisoners’ and while helping each other, they built a sense of unity.¹⁷⁹ As Anna Müller notes, women’s bodies manifested as sites of resistance.¹⁸⁰ This ‘repeated stylization of acts’ and women’s performance of gender by maintenance of personal hygiene helped women to keep their identity and cope with their imprisonment.

Women had to face unfamiliar circumstances, such as bad hygiene conditions, hard labour, violence and cruelty, lack of privacy or having to wear male clothing, which did not offer an opportunity to express themselves as women because they all looked identical in prison clothes [Figure 3].¹⁸¹ The frustration of being deprived the freedom of expressing one’s own identity was certainly not only case for women prisoners. In fact, dirty unfitting male clothing with a low neck top uncovering women’s bodies meant ‘an act of humiliation’ as Pinerová argues in her chapter about gender perspective.¹⁸² She also mentions that the clothing sometimes was ‘inherited’ after the Wehrmacht soldiers, which gave the clothes a new level of meaning especially for those who fought against the Nazis during the war. Such women felt not only humiliated but frustrated and full of disgust.¹⁸³

Although men also experienced various forms of humiliation, lack of privacy or bad hygiene, women held a different attitude towards hygiene. They attentively cared about themselves, they tried to look nicer, washed and ‘ironed’ their clothes, tied their hair with a piece of string or toilet

¹⁷⁸ Interview with Drahomíra Strouhalová 27.12.2017.

¹⁷⁹ Pinerová, K. (2006). *Woman and Her Identity in the Prison Subculture in the 1950s Introduction*. Political Prisoners. Retrieved from <http://www.politicalprisoners.eu/women-and-her-identity-in-prison-ioha-paper.html>

¹⁸⁰ Müller, A. (2018). *If the Walls Could Speak. Inside a Women's Prison in Communist Poland*. Oxford University Press, pp. 126–136

¹⁸¹ Pinerová, K. (2006). *Woman and Her Identity in the Prison Subculture in the 1950s Introduction*. Political Prisoners. Retrieved from <http://www.politicalprisoners.eu/women-and-her-identity-in-prison-ioha-paper.html>

¹⁸² Pinerová, K. (2017). *Do konce života. Političtí vězni padesátých let – trauma, adaptace, identita*. The Institute for the Study of Totalitarian Regimes, po. 271-272

¹⁸³ Ibid.

paper, or curled their hair even in the poorest condition.¹⁸⁴ ‘We made at least a one curl even with the smallest paper we found somewhere.’¹⁸⁵ The ironing process was described by one of the women: ‘We sprinkled [the piece of clothing, with water], folded it nicely and then sat on it - even the summer blouses.’¹⁸⁶ The fact that some prisoners could not keep their natural hair, women described as very humiliating:

When I was young, I had a very curly hair, dark and curly. There was a guard, whom we called ‘Hopka’. She looked at me and said: ‘Do you know that hair must not be curled?’ I said to her: ‘But I haven’t curled hair.’ She cut my hair. She cut my hair to my ears and I had to wet my hair. So I wet it, but when it dried out, it got even more curly.¹⁸⁷

The collective frustration of being deprived methods of maintaining safe levels of personal hygiene and hair kept was instrumental in spurring a resistance, and remain dignified. Moreover, hairstyling became a means of performing their gender identity.¹⁸⁸

What about hair? We’re not permitted to have any hair-grips, or lace for tying our hair up. The curling ceremony begins before the evening. We divide our hair into small braids, binding the knot after knot. We no longer have hair like stringy noodles. It’s a fantastic hairstyle, something between "Femme Fatale" by Gustav Klimt and an afro. We care about our curls.¹⁸⁹

One day in Bartolomějská Street, a prisoner defied the guards, and escaped; there was a shout, a shot and broken windows. All the inmates in the cells were waiting to see what was going to happen. Some chanted prayers for their quick and happy death, because they did not know if such sounds meant their final liquidation or something else.

Suddenly, I was afraid that we would see other prisoners, men¹⁹⁰, before death. I want to be a woman in death, not a scarecrow in men's underwear and a dirty shirt without a collar. I quickly pull on my prison trousers and coat. I want to die in a dignified way, my fingers are digging and ruffling up my long, neglected hair to give it a charm.¹⁹¹

The struggle with personal hygiene and of looking identical to other prisoners, was solved by a group of women in a very cunning way: they dyed their hair by a beetroot infusion in order to get

¹⁸⁴ Ibid.; See also: Reinerová, L. (2002). *Všechny barvy slunce a noci*. Labyrint, Prague, p. 70

¹⁸⁵ Interview with Hana Truncová, 29.12.2017

¹⁸⁶ Zábranová, J. (1994). *Ohlédnutí*. TORST, p. 269

¹⁸⁷ Interview with Drahomíra Strouhalová, 27.12.2017

¹⁸⁸ Müller, A. (2018). *If the Walls Could Speak. Inside a Women's Prison in Communist Poland*. Oxford University Press, p. 123

¹⁸⁹ Šimková, D. (2015). *Byly jsme tam taky*. Nakladatelství Monika Le Fay, p. 34

¹⁹⁰ Women were in contact with men in custody prisons, for example in Bartolomějská Street, Pankrác prison in Prague, or Cejl in Brno.

¹⁹¹ Šimková, D. (2015). *Byly jsme tam taky*. Nakladatelství Monika Le Fay, p. 20

a fashionable red-gingery colour called ‘tizian’ at that time. Their hair was shining among the unified pale prison clothes, therefore, they were immediately recognized by guards who punished them. However, among these women, there was also one informant, so the punishment was called off.¹⁹² Similarly, women cut their hair short, dyed it by a dissolved crepe paper and got a trendy ginger tint.¹⁹³ Božena Kuklová-Jíšová explains why their strategy of beautifying and hairstyling was so important for female prisoners:

‘Of course, our behavior differed from men's behavior. Would one of them risk ‘korekce’ [solitary confinement] simply because he cut a piece of a prison shirt and used it as a hair-curler? Or would a man be able to buy a bottle of cheap perfume¹⁹⁴ in a canteen for the only hard-earned cash? Is it ridiculous and typically feminine? Sure, but it was our way to survive for years in prison and keep our sanity.’¹⁹⁵

While looking for and making beauty in a space which denied any personal agency, and expressing one’s own identity, women were able to implement their own creativity and imagination to develop various activities through which they were able to cope with a cruel and depressing environment and resist the injustice and authorities in prison. As a group, they built a strong sense of solidarity and unity in the hostile atmosphere of Communist prisons. Small gestures, such as dying and curling their hair, or ‘ironing clothes’, help to illustrate how the women coped, resisted, and gained solidarity in their shared experience. It was matter of survival. On the on hand, women followed their gender stereotypes through beautifying themselves, but this meant they regained a sense of control over their bodies and agency. According to Christine M. Korsgaard, ‘whenever you choose an action - whenever you take control of your own movements - you are constituting yourself as the author of the action, and so you are deciding who to be.’¹⁹⁶ For having the slightest bit of control of their own actions, female prisoners took courage and risk punishment for various ways of expressing themselves as they wanted. As Mary Bosworth argues, ‘the capacity to define oneself as an agent is crucial to surviving imprisonment.’¹⁹⁷ The women decided to become rather active agents, rather than

¹⁹² Zábranová, J. (1994). *Ohlédnutí*. TORST, p. 334

¹⁹³ Kuklová-Jíšová, B. (2009). *Krásná nemá paní. Příběhy vězňených žen z 50. let*. ARSCI, Prague, p. 60

¹⁹⁴ Even outside of prison, women did not have an access to proper clothing or beauty products during Communism. See also: Drakulić, Slavenka (1991). *How We Survived Communism and Even Laughed*. Hutchinson, London; Augustine Nora (2003) *Slavenka Drakulić*. Women in European History. Retrieved from http://womenineuropeanhistory.org/index.php?title=Slavenka_Drakuli%C4%87

¹⁹⁵ Kuklová-Jíšová, B. (2009). *Krásná nemá paní. Příběhy vězňených žen z 50. let*. ARSCI, Prague, p. 6

¹⁹⁶ Richmond, K. T. (2010), p. 14

¹⁹⁷ Richmond, K. T. (2010), p. 17

passive objects.¹⁹⁸ They decided to not only survive, but to also resist. Their resistance helped them to negotiate and re-create their own identity as humans and as women. But most importantly, these modes of resistance made them visible. On the other hand, from the citation above, it is clear that in time, women prisoners were conscious about their idealized ‘feminine’ behaviour and the ‘world’ they created in prison. Furthermore, they were able to make fun of themselves by following the cultural concepts of gender identity. This provided a degree of relief and a distance over the overwhelming situation in prison. Anna Müller reflects:

This awareness of who they become in prison, the openness and distance that allowed of laughing at one’s own femininity, suggests that gender is something people do in their social interactions (...). The various roles the women performed in their cells (...), gave them social visibility.¹⁹⁹

Social visibility was also performed in various ways of coping and resistance which will be further discussed in the chapter about culture in prison.

1.2 Violence in prisons

In order to understand prison culture in the Communist era, it must be made clear that women were imprisoned within a system that was on absolute control of the inmates the aim to destroy ‘old’ individuals in order to re-educate and re-create new people devoted to the regime. To achieve this goal, various extreme methods of violence and torture were implemented. According to the United Nations’ *Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment* adopted in 1984, which entered into force in 1987, torture is defined as:

any act by which severe pain or suffering, whether physical or mental, is intentionally inflicted on a person for such purposes as obtaining from him/her or a third person information or a confession, punishing him/her for an act he/she or a third person has committed or is suspected of having committed, or intimidating or coercing him/her or a third person, or for any reason based on discrimination of any kind, when such pain or suffering is inflicted by or at the instigation of or with the consent or acquiescence of a public official or other person acting in an official capacity. It does not include pain or suffering arising only from, inherent in or incidental to lawful sanctions.²⁰⁰

¹⁹⁸ Mrvova M. (2018). Culture Behind Bars: Women Political Prisoners and Prison Culture in Czechoslovakia 1948-1968, *Postgraduate perspectives on the past*. 3(1). doi: <https://doi.org/10.5920/ppp.545>

¹⁹⁹ Müller, A. (2018). *If the Walls Could Speak. Inside a Women's Prison in Communist Poland*. Oxford University Press, p. 207

²⁰⁰ United Nations Human Rights Council (1984). *Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment*. Retrieved from <http://www.ohchr.org/EN/ProfessionalInterest/Pages/CAT.aspx>

Prisoners experienced various types of both physical and psychological torture. For example, they were given false hope that they would be released and then were instead returned to their cells. Moreover, they were treated with pure cruelty and malice.

The nineteen-year-old J. M. became a victim of an atrocious jest of the guards. One day they brought her to the ground in front of the prison, deactivated the machine guns and pretended that she would be executed. Her legs were paralyzed and since then, she could never move without a wheelchair.²⁰¹

Prisoners have been repeatedly subjected to violence and cruel methods employed by guards, with the sole aim of disempowering inmates. Clearly, the psychological torture used in Communist prisons was a common practice which left traumatic experiences on those who were not in power. Women were not treated any better than male prisoners, on the contrary they should feel ashamed of their femininity:

It would be an illusion to think that the Communist power behaved more humanely towards women. On the contrary, [women had to deal with] ubiquitous hunger, beating, 'korekce', psychological torture, humiliation, hard physical work, and creating the feeling that a woman must be ashamed of her femininity²⁰² on a daily basis in female prisons at that time. In prison there are no differences in terms of violence.²⁰³

In prison, women faced violence by aggressive guards, especially during brutal interrogations. They were chained and variously tortured.²⁰⁴ Irena Šimonová, neé Vlachová, testifies to the way in which she was treated during the interrogations in Bartolomějská Street in Prague:

They yelled at me to take the clothes off, but I didn't want to do it. I didn't do that. So they came to me, so they ripped everything I was wearing off me. And they had such a heavy blanket there. It was soaked with water. It was a wet blanket, and they packed me into it and threw me on a bench like this, and they started to beat me... til I fainted.²⁰⁵

²⁰¹ Šimková, D. (2015). *Byly jsme tam taky*. Nakladatelství Monika Le Fay, p. 19.

²⁰² Dagmar Šimková proclaims: 'A woman has to be ashamed of her femininity.' Šimková, D. (2015). *Byly jsme tam taky*. Nakladatelství Monika Le Fay, p. 33; See also Božena Kuklová-Jišová's poems written in prison: 'Human dignity, woman dignity was humiliated forever.' Kuklová-Jišová, B. (1996). *Verše psané za mřížemi*. ARSCI, p.13

²⁰³ Bursík, T. (n.d.). *Vězeňství. Ženy v čs. vězeňských zařízeních v 50. a 60. letech 20. století*. Retrieved from: http://www.totalita.cz/vez/vez_hist_zeny.php

²⁰⁴ Šiklová, J. (2007). *Zapomenuté vězeňkyně. Jak vypadal život žen odsouzených z politických důvodů do komunistických cel*. Book Review. Respekt. Retrieved from <https://www.respekt.cz/tydenik/2007/20/zapomenute-vezenkyne>

²⁰⁵ Interview with Irena Vlachová-Šimonová: *Irena Vlachová-Šimonová (1929-2017)*. (n.d.) Institute for Study of Totalitarian Regimes. Retrieved from <https://www.ustrcr.cz/uvod/vzdelavaci-projekt-pamet-a-dejiny-totalitnich-rezimu/pametnici-protikomunistickeho-odboje-a-odporu/irena-vlachova-simonova-1929/>

Irena was also beaten about her face with a rubber strap with lead balls attached to it while being interrogated. Later, she was taken to the window and encouraged to ‘commit suicide’: ‘He told me: “Jump! It will still be better than what awaits you.”’²⁰⁶ The prison warden pushed her towards the window, but Irena was only nineteen years old at the time and wanted to survive. After, he took her back to the office and she was beaten on her feet. Then they put music on and ordered her to dance. She was not able to stay on her feet, but was forced to keep dancing until she fell down. They laughed at her and humiliated her again. Then she was given a coffee ‘with a strange taste’, after which she collapsed and does not remember the following few days.²⁰⁷ Both physical and psychological torture was used to break prisoners’ spirit and will. Encouraging Irena to commit suicide, and humiliating her until she fainted, is a cruel example of how political prisoners were treated. These punishments left prisoners feeling unworthy, and as though any attempt if their resistance was utterly futile.

Another example of violence was when twenty-year-old student Jitka Malíková was arrested while swimming in a swimming pool in Prague. She was taken to be interrogated firstly to Bartolomějská street and then to Ruzyně detention cell, from where Jitka did not come out without her eyes blindfolded for the whole year. ‘Sixteen hours a day I went five steps back and forth. One thinks about everything...’²⁰⁸ Some prisoners were severely injured due to hard work and exhaustion. For example one student called Helenka slipped on the thresher surface and the machine cut her leg down her knee.²⁰⁹ Other women committed suicide²¹⁰ or died in prisons due to health problems or during surgery.²¹¹

²⁰⁶ Ibid.

²⁰⁷ Interview with Irena Vlachová-Šimonová: Faltýnek, V. (2014). *Irena Šimonová, roz. Vlachová (1929 - 2017)*. Paměť národa (Memory of Nations), Stories of the 20th Century. Retrieved from <http://www.pametnaroda.cz/story/simonova-roz-vlachova-irena-1929-2643>; Mrázová, K. (2014). *Politická vězeňkyně: Bili mě do nohou, nemohla jsem chodit*. Plzeňský deník. Retrieved from https://plzensky.denik.cz/zpravy_region/bili-me-do-nohou-nemohla-jsem-chodit-20140725.html

²⁰⁸ Interview with Jitka Malíková: Kroupa, M., Palivodová, E. (2006) *Jitka Malíková*. Paměť národa (Memory of Nations). Stories of the 20th Century. Retrieved from http://www.pametnaroda.cz/witness/index/id/2180?locale=cs_CZ; See also: Kroupa, M., Palivodová, E. (2016) *Rok nevyšla z cely bez zavazanych oci*. Český rozhlas Plus. Retrieved from <https://plus.rozhlas.cz/rok-nevysla-z-cely-bez-zavazanych-oci-6511892>

²⁰⁹ Šimková, D. (2015). *Byly jsme tam taky*. Nakladatelství Monika Le Fay, p. 52

²¹⁰ Testimony of Hana Truncová 4.5.2011 In: Doubová, V. (2011). *Politické procesy 50. let - Ženy odsouzené krajským soudem v Liberci v letech 1953 a 1954*. Masters dissertation. Technical University, Liberec, p. 42

²¹¹ Interview with Drahomíra Strouhalová, 27.12.2017

Another group of women who were very vulnerable and abused in prison were nuns. Nuns of all ages, including very old women, were beaten on their genitals²¹² and had to undergo a savage and traumatic ‘gynecological examination’, during which nuns were deflowered by a female StB doctor.²¹³ Similarly, women mention in their narratives that they were subjected to so-called ‘physical *filcunk*’²¹⁴, a humiliating personal inspection:

It meant getting naked. In the designated cell, one supervisor looked, the other assisted. Women entered individually. The process was very humiliating, when the guard touched the prisoners not only with her eyes but also with hands, in the places where only doctors are allowed... The first *filcunk* meant a breakdown for almost all the women, especially young, single girls. For a long time, they could not cope with the humiliation they had been subjected to. (...) Each woman was psychologically and emotionally drained.²¹⁵

During such abusive procedures women felt powerless and violated in their intimacy. Moreover, sexual abuse may lead to a variety of effects on victims’ physical, mental health and wellbeing; often resulting in anxiety and depressions, Post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), suicidal thoughts, or potentially in increased isolation and fear of intimacy in future.²¹⁶

Therefore, it is clear that women experienced violence on a daily basis in prisons, some of which was gendered and sexualized. Sexualization and objectification of the women bodies occurred in many forms and certain women were vulnerable in different ways. For instance, nuns, young women and mothers were physically and psychologically terrorised due to their faith, values, ‘beauty’ or motherhood and relationships. For example, one prisoner wrote in her memoirs that some, especially younger women, had an even harder time ‘due to their beauty’.²¹⁷ Such women were more likely to be attacked both verbally and physically by guards. Finally, women’s bodies were not only weakened by violence perpetrated against them by the guards, but also by the dangers they faced in their work, by their inmates, such as murderers or former Nazi

²¹² Šimková, D. (2015). *Byly jsme tam taky*. Nakladatelství Monika Le Fay, p. 111

²¹³ See: Češíková, S.M. Remigie SCB (Ed.). (2013). *Jsem v dlani Boží. Dopisy z vězení Matky Vojtěchy Hasmandové SCB*. Cesta, Brno, p. 239

²¹⁴ In prison slang, ‘*filcunk*’ means an unexpected inspection by guards, which resulted in confiscation of prisoners’ personal belongings in the cells, leaving chaos and disorder behind.

²¹⁵ Palkosková-Wiesenbergerová, A. (1998). *Tři životy. Osudy žen staropražského rodu*. Nakladatelství B. Just, Prague, p. 334

²¹⁶ See: N.g. (n.d.). *Effects of Sexual Violence*, RAINN. Retrieved from <https://www.rainn.org/effects-sexual-violence>; Institut National de Santé Publique Quebec. (n.d.). *Consequences of Adult Sexual Assault*. Retrieved from <https://www.inspq.qc.ca/en/sexual-assault/understanding-sexual-assault/consequences#ref>

²¹⁷ Zábranová, J. (1994). *Ohlédnutí*. TORST, p. 267

collaborators, health issues, or psychological and social pressure due to disintegration of families and relationships.

1.2.1 Motherhood

As a result of political repression, thousands of families were separated and a number of relationships and marriages broke down.²¹⁸ Many prisoners were forced into divorce by threats to their partners who were not imprisoned; in other cases, during the interrogation process, prisoners were presented with a false divorce application with a false signature of their partner. Those women, who were mothers or expectant mother, were severely stigmatised; motherhood was used as a way of torture.

Julie Hrušková was imprisoned while being pregnant and also taken to the interrogation:

There they weren't playing around. I experienced one really rough questioning when they banged my head against a table, dragged me across the room, hammered me against a closet and used whatever they could get hold of. I tried not to fall down. A phone call saved me in the end. They had to get ready for new arrests quickly. A guard took me to Orlí²¹⁹, where they put me in solitary confinement. In the early hours of the morning I realized I was bleeding. I was sent to a doctor, but the secret police officers had no time to take me to the hospital like the doctor ordered them to do. I was pregnant with the child of my American soldier. I was in my third month and I miscarried. They left me bleeding there for three days until I was totally drained. Eventually the whole ward of the prison revolted and requested help for me. There was an old jailor who eventually helped me and took responsibility for my transport to the Brno maternity hospital. They saved my life there, but they couldn't save the baby.²²⁰

Women were not only beaten and miscarried while being pregnant, there was also a case when Karla Charvátová was raped by a prison guard.

It happened on Sunday. Not a living soul was on the whole floor, because he intentionally sent the other guard away, so he had to prepare it. But fight, when he aims a gun with you.

²¹⁸ See also Božena Kulková-Jišová's poems written in prison: 'A husband's letter can move one forward like a whip: / Come back now, / understand that I can not live with a little child alone! / If you do not come back, I'll marry. / Needless to look at the stars, / you will not find a way out! / The year goes by the year, / and the child misses its mother.' Kuklová-Jišová, B. (1996). *Verše psané za mřížemi*. ARSCI, p. 23

²¹⁹ Prison located in Brno.

²²⁰ Interview with Julie Hrušková in: Bouška, T., Pinerová, K. (2016). *Czechoslovak Political Prisoners. Life Stories of 5 Male and 5 Female Victims of Stalinism*. Second amended edition, pp. 54–55. See also www.politicalprisoners.eu

It's not possible. I was still young, I wanted to live. Often they did so in a way that they beat you and then they said that you attacked them.²²¹

Consequently, Karla realized that she was pregnant and requested an abortion; however, the administrative process lasted for so long, that it was too late. After giving birth, she gave her daughter up for adoption. Karla later suffered from various health problems and was unable to have more children, as was the case for many other former prisoners, either because of the violence they experienced, or illnesses, heavy labour and poor hygiene conditions in prisons. Although it is impossible to know any number or statistics, the cases of sexual violence, rape and abuse repeatedly appears among women's testimonies which means that it was not an uncommon issue.²²² On the other hand, due to the psychological sensitivity of being debased in this way, survivors of sexual violence have been reluctant to share this information. Moreover, in prison, women had a zero possibility to share it with their family members due to the censorship and permanent control of prison guards during the visits.

Persecution fundamentally affected family members and relatives of prisoners, who were invariably left in a vulnerable state, often struggling for their basic needs, such as food or clothing. Fear was not extinguished upon seeing relatives release. The State Security Service (StB) followed and sometimes interrogated family members. However, this uncertainty continued even after the release of their relative. The whole family was constantly followed (also often by the neighbours who collaborated with the regime) and as Eva Chaloupská said: 'We were living in a state of permanent fear. They could have arrested someone again.'²²³ Family members of political prisoners were considered as 'the enemies of state' and often lost their jobs and struggled to find a new one. The children and grandchildren of political prisoners had problems at school, were bullied by both classmates and teachers, and very often they could not study what they wished to, as they were not accepted to the universities because of their

²²¹ Interview with Karla Charvátová: Jelínková, A. (2016). *Karla Charvátová*. Paměť národa (Memory of Nations), Stories of the 20th Century. Retrieved from

http://www.pametnaroda.cz/witness/index/id/5713/page/6?locale=en_GB. See also: Bouška, T. (2011) *K. Ch. - Documentary Portrait of a Female Political Prisoner*. <http://www.politicalprisoners.eu/k-ch-documentary.html>

²²² Irena Vlachová-Šimonová's co-prisoner committed herself to Irena and testified that she was raped by prison officer Pešek. *Irena Vlachová-Šimonová (1929-2017)*. (n.d.) Institute for Study of Totalitarian Regimes. Retrieved from <https://www.ustrcr.cz/uvod/vzdelavaci-projekt-pamet-a-dejiny-totalitnich-rezimu/pametnici-protikomunistickeho-odboje-a-odporu/irena-vlachova-simonova-1929/>

²²³ Eva Chaloupská, née Kovalová, personal communication to author.

inappropriate 'cadre profile'²²⁴. Similarly, families were further complicated when some of the family members emigrated to the West, which caused many problems to those who remained at their homeland, such as being interrogated and treated as suspicious or even as potential spies. Moreover, separated families could not see each other for many years because they were not legally allowed to cross the borders. A number of women became separated from their children, some of them were sent to the state orphanages, as in the case of two sons of political prisoners Marie Kovalová and Josef Koval, who were sent to Pyšely children's home after the arrest of their parents.²²⁵

Disintegration of families continued within prisons due to the incarceration of pregnant women. In Pankrác prison, there was a maternity hospital overlooking gallows, where windows were painted white prior to each execution.²²⁶ In this place, 'prison babies' were brought into the world. For example, the of Dagmar Sadowska, neé Buryanová already began in the womb of her mother Helena Buryanová, neé Tolaszová, who was imprisoned whilst pregnant. She was arrested due to her resistance activities with American CIC agents and sentenced to nearly eleven and half years of prison:

To give birth, my mother was taken to a civil hospital in Český Těšín, of course under the strict supervision of female warders ['bachařky']. After three days she was released home from the hospital, where she spent one night in the morning, and StB's car arrived in the morning and took my mother back to the Ostrava prison and left me home. This approach drove my father into rage and he immediately went to protest to the Ostrava prison that they were behaving worse than the fascists. After this incident, they threatened him that he could end up [imprisoned] like my mother. But they obviously realized that their behaviour was unacceptable because they came and brought me to my mother in the afternoon. So I actually became the youngest prisoner.²²⁷

Little Dagmar spent half a year in Pardubice prison, after which she was then brought up by her mother's cousin. Dagmar met her biological mother when she was six years old:

²²⁴ Cadre profile (kádrový profil) was a recorded information about a job, education, opinions and attitudes of citizens during the Communist regime in Czechoslovakia. Such reports were run by Cadre Department of Communist Party, which kept records even on their own members. Due to inappropriate cadre profile, one could not find a job or be accepted to a university. It was a form of bureaucracy, monitoring and bullying.

²²⁵ Interview with Miroslav Koval: Horník, J. (2016). *Miroslav Koval. Paměť národa* (Memory of Nations), Osudy umělců v komunistickém Československu. Retrieved from <http://www.pametnaroda.cz/witness/clip/id/6912>;

Chaloupský, P. (2007). *Kdo nás odloučí od lásky Kristovy? Život Marie Kovalové*. Krystal OP s.r.o., p. 16

²²⁶ Ibid.

²²⁷ Sadowská, D. (2013). *Odsouzena už v matčině lůně*. Příběhy dcer 50. let. Retrieved from <http://www.dcery.cz/?nid=891&lang=cz>

When my mother was released in 1958, I had to move to a new family and attend a first grade at [elementary] school starting from September. It was a psychological trauma for me. Suddenly I stood facing my mother's face, a strange woman, feeling fear and anxiety from the new scene. I wanted to go back to the original family. I cried, did not want to eat, my aunt-mom visited me every week but the encounter was always painful and the farewell even worse. After half a year, my parents forbid visits between us. My aunt secretly visited me at school. When my aunt got sick, my grandmother convinced my mother to let me see my aunt. For a long time, me and my mother were looking for a way to reach each other. Of course, this family situation had a negative impact on my mother, who was psychologically stigmatised by her imprisonment.²²⁸

It was not only the women prisoners who were tortured and beaten; there are also cases of children being arrested with their mothers. 'Some children were also mutilated... I encountered various stories. In prison, the Communists were hanging children on their feet, beating them in front of their mothers in order to confess. It happened that they cracked the spine of a little girl who was thus disabled to death. They also beat the teeth of a fourteen-year-old girl out.'²²⁹ Arresting and torturing children in Czechoslovak Communist prisons is largely overlooked in existing historiography due to two reasons: first, perhaps due to lack of evidence, but certainly due to the fact that survivors have been reluctant to share such painful and traumatic memories. However, it is important to mention and research this topic because it was one of the cruel methods of gender based violence by StB members with the aim to force women to admit their 'crimes', and collaborate with them as informants.

A number of women who gave birth in prisons were subjected to insufficient health and hygiene. Newborn babies who died of malnutrition, lack of medical care or who were the results of miscarriages due to severe beating of their mothers, were buried in an unmarked mass grave in Ďáblice cemetery in Prague. In recent years, thanks to mainly former political prisoners and their families, some of the children's bodies have been exhumed and given a dignified burial, marked with forty-three gravestones bearing children's names.²³⁰ Today, there is a stone monument with a sign: *1950s, Children's Cemetery*.

²²⁸ Ibid.

²²⁹ Testimony of a documentary maker Dagmar Průchová (1937–2015), who was imprisoned as the twelve-year-old girl along with her mother: Lederer, B. (2015). *Dokumentaristka Dagmar Průchová: Nemohla bych milovat lidi, kdybych se provinila*. Deník.cz. Retrieved from: <https://www.denik.cz/film/dokumentaristka-dagmar-pruchova-nemohla-bych-milovat-lidi-kdybych-se-provinila-20150615-9eaz.html>

²³⁰ ČTK (2014). *Na hřbitově v Ďáblicích uctili 43 dětí, které jsou oběťmi komunismu*. Idnes.cz. Retrieved from https://www.idnes.cz/praha/zpravy/v-praze-pripominka-deti-obeti-kunismu.A140601_172036_praha-zpravy_skr

1.3 Prison social structure

Not exclusively, but mainly in Pardubice, women's prisons had a varied population: political prisoners, including nuns, scouts, criminals including murderers, prostitutes, 'retribitional'²³¹ women ('retribučky') and Roma women. Political prisoners were considered worse than criminals and were treated accordingly.²³² Drahomíra Strouhalová said to me: 'They told us that murderers killed only one person, but we wanted to destroy a whole nation.'²³³ Being a political prisoner with a murderer in the same cell was described by another woman as a nightmare. Božena Kuklová-Jišová developed insomnia, owing to her fears of being choked by her cell mate who had taunted her by complimenting her neck. It was known that this woman had strangled her child to death. Dagmar Šimková describes a very similar fear of a woman sentenced to prison for cutting her husband's throat.²³⁴ However, a number of Roma women and prostitutes adapted to the prison life and solidarity built among the inmates; they shared their food and held the political prisoners, especially nuns, in great respect:

'I was also friends with gipsy girls. They used to dance for us! They fought between each other a lot and guards were afraid of them. But I wasn't. They adapted to us. And when we had a visit, it was customary to put a small packet [usually of food] of those visitors on each bed [in the cell]. You gave a half, others even could not have visits, you know...'²³⁵

This act of solidarity is quite remarkable in an otherwise cruel and hostile environment. Another example of mutual help is when prostitutes did not only share their food and funny stories, but helped those who really needed it:

²³¹ Retributional prisoners, of either Czech or German origin, were those who had collaborated with Nazis, and who were consequently judged by the Extraordinary People's Court (Mimořádný lidový soud) according to the so-called retribitional decrees after the WWII between 1945 and 1948. See also: Pinerová, K. (2012) *Everyday Life of Prisoners and their Preservation of their Moral Integrity in the Czechoslovak and East German Prisons after Second World War*. In: Wakounig, M. (Ed.). (2012). *From Collective Memories to Intercultural Exchanges*. LIT Verlag Münster, Deutsche Nationalbibliothek, pp. 209–227, p. 212; See also: Staněk, T. (2012). *Retribuční vězni v českých zemích 1945-1955*. Slezský ústav Slezského zemského muzea, Opava. ISBN:80-86224-333-3

²³² Mrvova M. (2018). *Culture Behind Bars: Women Political Prisoners and Prison Culture in Czechoslovakia 1948-1968, Postgraduate perspectives on the past*. 3(1). doi: <https://doi.org/10.5920/ppp.545>

²³³ Interview with Drahomíra Strouhalová, 27.12.2017

²³⁴ Lazarov, A. (2016). *Dáma české kultury, Božena Kuklová-Jišová* [A Lady of Czech Culture, Božena Kuklová-Jišová.], *Křesťanský magazín*, Česká televize. Retrieved from <https://www.ceskatelevize.cz/porady/1098528273-krestansky-magazin/216562215600003>; Šimková, D. (2015). *Byly jsme tam taky*. Nakladatelství Monika Le Fay, p. 68; Similarly, Albína Palkosková-Wiesenbergerová could not sleep and was afraid to go to the toilet alone, because her inmate who killed her four-years-old step-daughter liked to tell this story before going to sleep. See: Zábranová, J. (1994) *Ohlédnutí*. TORST, Praha, p. 281

²³⁵ Interview with Drahomíra Strouhalová, 27.12.2017

The interrogations were not easy. Sometimes I was violently beaten and prostitutes cared about me. They put the tiles on my wounds. There were so many of us in the cell, so not everyone has her own straw mattress. Each of us had only a tiny space. Once I came so beaten up, so they left me the whole straw mattress. So I managed to fall asleep.²³⁶

The fact that women from a completely different backgrounds – some sentenced to prison for violent crimes – were helping political prisoners, was a remarkable act of solidarity and unity. On the other hand, prisoners also experienced difficult times and encounters with non-political prisoner inmates.

Among us were women who recognised Brigitta, who set the dogs on prisoners and selected them to the gas chambers in Ravensbrück.²³⁷ Lydie did not forget faces those, who tortured her in Auschwitz. A victim and a torturer under one roof... The only difference was that the torturers were released much earlier than their victims.²³⁸

Inequality created tension in the cells. For example, the political prisoners met with Nazi collaborators, as well as murderers, who were treated far better than those imprisoned due to the injustice of repressive authorities. Female political prisoners found themselves unprepared in these situations which caused them even more traumatic experiences. Drahomíra Strouhalová remembers similar case: ‘There was one retribitional woman, who said that they should pave the Wenceslas Square with our heads. She was evil’.²³⁹ Among retribitional prisoners, there was also a mistress of K. H. Frank²⁴⁰ or a woman who was found guilty for loss of Lidice children.²⁴¹

Political prisoners were also infiltrated with confidants (‘konfidentky’)²⁴², either women who collaborated with StB, dressed up in a prison clothing and pretending being political prisoners, or

²³⁶ Interview with Marie Chalupová: Verzichová, P. (2017). *Marie Chalupová. Paměť národa* (Memory of Nations), Stories of the 20th Century. Retrieved from http://www.pametnaroda.cz/witness/clip/id/2934/clip/18770/#cs_18770

²³⁷ The woman warder from Ravensbrück concentration camp occurred also in the testimony of Drahomíra Strouhalová. Interview with Drahomíra Strouhalová, 27.12.2017

²³⁸ Šimková, D. (2015). *Byly jsme tam taky*. Nakladatelství Monika Le Fay, p. 52

²³⁹ Interview with Drahomíra Strouhalová, 27.12.2017; See also Božena Kuklová-Jišová's poems written in prison: ‘Two old women of gestapo / whispered with hatred: / But it will come, our day will come. / The Führer will return, and our dream, / our world-wide dream will be fulfilled, / for which we have suffered so much sorrow, / violence, hunger, wounds, / ten years of prison! / And then the enthusiasm of Czech women will pass! / Those hard heads / will be good for our pavement!’ Kuklová-Jišová, B. (1996). *Verše psané za mřížemi*. ARSCI, p. 13

²⁴⁰ A prominent Nazi Sudeten German official executed after the WWII for being responsible for the massacres on people of Lidice and Ležáky, Czech villages which were burnt and completely destroyed in June 1942 on the orders of Adolf Hitler and Heinrich Himmler as a consequence of the assassination of Reinhard Heydrich. See also footnote 33. For more information about Lidice massacre see: Branik C., Carmelo L. (2008). *The Massacre of Lidice*. Holocaust Education & Archive Research Team. Retrieved from: <http://www.holocaustresearchproject.org/nazioccupation/lidice.html>.

²⁴¹ Zábránová, J. (1994) *Ohlédnutí*. TORST, Praha, p. 260

²⁴² Informants, cell spies and secret collaborators with StB.

political prisoners who were persuaded to give information on their co-inmates. Julie Hrušková, a female political prisoner, testifies: ‘One never knew who could be coerced into cooperation. They used promises with some, and threats place their children in foster homes with others. It was obvious that any mother would do anything to save her family.’²⁴³ Threatening and intimidating women through their motherhood was one of the reasons why some of them became informants within the prison cells. However, these women felt broken, because they felt that the values for which they had become imprisoned had been betrayed.²⁴⁴ Some of these women were also condemned for their cooperation by some of their inmates later on, even after the release.

Such problems within the prison cells caused confusion and chaos among the prisoners. Trust inside the community was threatened. The fact that women had to deal with both male and female prison guards contributed to their feelings of uncertainty and insecurity. Jiřina Zábranová said about one guard that ‘for her Communist consciousness she definitely refused to see humans in us’ and she caused many troubles to prisoners.²⁴⁵ Similarly, one male prison guard always opened the doors by kicking into them instead of reaching the handle (which had been touched by prisoners). Once after kicking the door as usual and entering the laundry room, one prisoner was so shocked, that a mangle cut her fingers and crushed her hand.²⁴⁶ The tensions between male guards and female inmates escalated in one instance into an unexpected love story: a female political prisoner and a male prison guard fell in love. As a result, he lost his job, because he ‘has fallen to the level of a political prisoner’, divorced, and later they married and moved away.²⁴⁷ Such behaviour was condemned not only by the guards colleagues and Communist authorities, but also by other women political prisoners who viewed it as a betrayal of the values for which they fought. Women experienced violence and brutality by both male and female guards who treated political prisoners worse than those sentenced for their criminal offenses.

Women of different backgrounds, origins, beliefs and social classes met in the same cells: noble women with peasant women, the well-educated with illiterate women, Nazi collaborators with

²⁴³ Interview with Julie Hrušková in: Bouška, T., Pinerová, K. (2016). *Czechoslovak Political Prisoners. Life Stories of 5 Male and 5 Female Victims of Stalinism*. Second amended edition, p. 60. See also www.politicalprisoners.eu

²⁴⁴ Palkosková-Wiesenbergerová, A. (1998). *Tři životy. Osudy žen staropražského rodu*. Nakladatelství B. Just, Prague, pp. 354-355

²⁴⁵ Zábranová, J. (1994) *Ohlédnutí*. TORST, Praha, p. 266

²⁴⁶ Zábranová, J. (1994) *Ohlédnutí*. TORST, Praha, p. 294

²⁴⁷ Interview with Drahomíra Strouhalová, 27.12.2017

concentration camp prisoners, Roma women from two different antagonistic clans, young with old, single women with mothers and daughters met in the same prisons. Further detailed testimonies and descriptions can be found in the women's memoirs mentioned below, for example, Jiřina Zábranová²⁴⁸ called one section of her book: *Years behind Bars, Gallery of Faces and Characters*.²⁴⁹ On the one hand, female political prisoners experienced acts of solidarity from their co-prisoners who were criminals, on the other hand political prisoners had to deal with insecurity, fear, humiliation and attacks not only by guards but also by all sort of prisoners who ended up in the same prisons. As a result, women political prisoners became more united, relied on each other and stood together against the oppressors.

Prison culture

The following chapter reflects on the ways and the meanings of the women's coping strategies through culture: friendship, a sense of community and a creation of culture behind bars. This chapter is divided into the three parts: in the first section, women's prison communication will be explored, such as how they corresponded with their families and the composition of poetry. The second section is dedicated to a phenomenon of so-called *Prison University* and prison lectures. The final part focuses on material culture, including drama, music, art and making objects.

The term prison culture is a broader concept usually used to refer to social relations between prisoners, and the sets of values²⁵⁰, norms and beliefs of prisoners²⁵¹, such as their understandings of hierarchy and respect. Alongside the relationships and values, this thesis focuses on culture and cultural activities conducted within the prisons. Both of these concepts are intertwined and complementary to each other. This work focuses on cultural activities and cultural production which were conducted under specific situations and circumstances with particular meaning and as a way of uniting, coping and resisting.

²⁴⁸ Jiřina Zábranová, neé Píchová (1903-1974), a teacher, author, member of the National Socialist Party and of the women's emancipation movement, sentenced to thirty years of imprisonment.

²⁴⁹ Zábranová, J. (1994) *Ohlédnutí*. TORST, Praha, p. 221

²⁵⁰ Dobbs, Rhonda R., and Courtney A. Waid. (2012). *Prison Culture*. Encyclopaedia of Prisons & Correctional Facilities. In: Ed. Thousand Oaks, CA (2004), pp. 720-24. SAGE Reference Online. Retrieved from <https://studysites.sagepub.com/hanserintro/study/materials/reference/ref2.2.pdf>

²⁵¹ Theerathitwong, S. (2017). *Prison Culture*. Wiley Online Library. Retrieved from <https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/pdf/10.1002/9781118845387.wbeoc284>

In prisons, there were ‘official’ propagandistic cultural activities, such as film screenings or singing and dance lessons²⁵²; all of them in line with only one aim: to re-educate and transform prisoners under the ideas and visions of the regime of that time. However, such activities were very unpopular among political prisoners, who repeatedly refused to participate. In contrast, the focal point of this thesis is in their secret cultural activities. Culture and art was often created under the most unexpected circumstances and within harsh environments, such as Nazi concentration camps²⁵³ or Communist prisons. Women prisoners organised various lectures, seminars and discussions. This whole phenomenon was called the Prison University and many of the women political prisoners remember it as the best opportunity for education while incarcerated. Women wrote poems and letters to their family members and some of them were later published. In prison, women also created many objects, sometimes referred to as handicrafts, drew pictures of their prison life and organised drama lessons. This rebellion even reached joyous peaks as they orchestrated a masquerade ball accompanied by music.

Culture, particularly prison lectures, occurred in various places. Women met during their very limited free time or, according to Hana Truncová, one of the former political prisoners, during their so-called ‘kroužení’, which meant walking around a prison courtyard. Women either congregated secretly in the foyer of the toilets while smoking smuggled cigarettes and drinking chicory coffee,²⁵⁴ or in their prison cells and sometimes while walking in a circle in the recreation yard and whispering prayers or having a lecture. From time to time, women also gathered during their knitting shift. To be caught practicing such hidden activities would result in immediate punishments, such as stopping their so-called ‘benefits’, such as writing, accessing letters and parcels from family, and receiving visits. Their rations of food were usually halved, or they were sent to isolation. Solitary confinement was called ‘korekce’ in prison slang. Marie

²⁵² See also: Zábránová, J. (1994). *Ohlédnutí*. TORST, p. 325

²⁵³ Ravensbrück concentration camp was the largest concentration camp for women in German Reich. Many artists, authors or journalist were imprisoned. For more information about cultural activities in women's camp in Ravensbrück see: Plachá, Pavla (2017): *Múzy v Ravensbrücku. Kulturní a umělecké aktivity českých vězeňkyň*. Paměť a dějiny, roč. 11, č. 2, pp. 3–17.; Helm, S. (2015). *If This Is A Woman: Inside Ravensbruck: Hitler's Concentration Camp for Women*. Hachette UK; In Czechoslovakia, Theresienstadt concentration camp became famous for its cultural activities. See also: *Theresienstadt*. Music and the Holocaust. <http://holocaustmusic.ort.org/places/theresienstadt/>; *Theresienstadt*. Yad Vashem. http://www.yadvashem.org/odot_pdf/Microsoft%20Word%20-%205875.pdf

²⁵⁴ ‘It was the simplest *melita* [chicory coffee]. You could get real coffee eventually only from a parcel from home, or in later years, you could buy a small amount in the prison canteen in Pardubice. Then there was no hot water. From time to time, fire was set in the toilets in case we would have something to light on.’ Personal correspondence with Hana Truncová, 1.6.2018.

Kovalová described it as a ‘hole in the ground’ where women would be put naked without food or light, being cold and facing the vulgar comments of prison guards.²⁵⁵ *Korekce* was a tiny dark, and cold room, located in the cellar area. It was so small, that an adult could not stand up straight.²⁵⁶ Both food and water were very limited, so women returned to their cells emaciated and exhausted.

2.1 Coping through community and culture

Mutual support and a sense of community was very important not only for coping with humiliation, loneliness and despair, but particularly for survival. Historian Judy Baumel Schwartz argues that ‘there is no doubt that mutual assistance played a crucial role in the lives of many prisoners of the ghettos and camps’.²⁵⁷ She develops the ideas of historian Terrence Des Pres, who claims that life under extreme circumstances depends on solidarity. Furthermore, ‘survivors’ testimonies prove that the desire to help is no less important than the need to be assisted.²⁵⁸ The ability to help the others gave women a sense of meaning of their imprisonment, and it also contributed in taking control of their actions. Women prisoners developed various survival and protective mechanisms in order to cope with everyday reality in prison:

Our defense survival tactics began with small things in custody. At first, we defended primitively with a bare chest and spears like the Abyssinians against Mussolini's tanks. In a slow process, from one shocking experience to another, we have managed to maintain the continuity of former life, culture, ideals. Later, we were dissatisfied with just bare survival, but we created our new world, a miniature kingdom firmly enclosed in our minds. It contained all the good and effective [things] from the old tradition, but also with new elements. We gave another meaning to our lives. We began to see life not as a branching tree, but from bare roots upwards.²⁵⁹

Women were able to transform their cultural capital, knowledge, abilities and imagination into a surprising range of creative hidden activities, which served as a shared experience strengthening their bonds and creating life-long friendships. Such little victories over the harsh and hostile

²⁵⁵ Eva Chaloupská, née Kovalová, personal communication to author. I have gathered intergenerational memories from my great-grandmother Marie Kovalová and my mother Eva Chaloupská, who was raised by her grandparents, the political prisoners Marie Kovalová and Josef Koval, from the age of two years old.

²⁵⁶ Zábřanová, J. (1994). *Ohlédnutí*. TORST, p. 248. See also: Šmelová, I. (2007). *Osudy politických vězeňkyň v letech 1948–1960*. Masters Dissertation. Masaryk University, Brno, p. 54. Retrieved from https://is.muni.cz/th/pquu5/Diplomova_prace.pdf

²⁵⁷ Presiado, M. (2016) A New Perspective on Holocaust Art: Women’s Artistic Expression of the Female Holocaust Experience (1939–49), *Holocaust Studies*, 22:4, 417-446, p. 421

²⁵⁸ Ibid.

²⁵⁹ Šimková, D. (2015). *Byly jsme tam taky*. Nakladatelství Monika Le Fay, p. 32

world of prison helped women to achieve a sense of beauty, a sense of self-realization, and a sense of community and family. Many parallels can be found across the world, for example Argentinian political prisoners related to these findings: ‘While the dictatorship aimed to isolate and destroy us by squashing any vestiges of solidarity, we resisted by holding on to the collective spirit.’²⁶⁰ Gradually, by building social network based on shared experience and trust, women created a collective identity which helped them to resist the injustice in a more powerful way than they would be able to achieve as individuals.

From the very first moment, women found themselves feeling uncertain. They did not know where they were being taken, when they would return, and if they would ever see their families again. Their relatives and friends were often uninformed for a long time about their whereabouts and what would happen to them. On the other hand, when women first arrived in prison, their cellmates took the newcomers in hand and explained the situation, shared food with them, or told them what to watch out for. Some women became very inventive in smuggling techniques; for example, they pinned a backup stocking under their skirt, which held butter, salami and other precious items, which they then delivered to their cells.²⁶¹ Sharing food and personal items was often an important way of surviving for those who were older, ill or not able to follow the norms of the work.

Women managed to build strong bonds, full of solidarity, care and empathy. Many women refer to their co-prisoners as family, sisters and the only ones who can truly understand them. Drahomíra Strouhalová emphasised the feelings among her inmates: ‘Like sisters we were.’²⁶² Similarly, in Nazi concentration camps female inmates called themselves camp sisters or camp mothers.²⁶³ Albína Palkosková-Wiesenbergerová agreed: ‘Prisoners have an absolute understanding for each other – they rejoice in other’s joy, they feel for other’s sorrow.’²⁶⁴ This sense of community, sisterhood and mutual solidarity gave women strength and helped them to

²⁶⁰ Partnoy, A. (2013). *Concealing God: How Argentine Women Political Prisoners Performed a Collective Identity*. Modern Languages and Literatures Faculty Works. 4. Retrieved from:

http://digitalcommons.lmu.edu/modernlang_fac/4, p. 216

²⁶¹ Zábřanová, J. (1994). *Ohlédnutí*. TORST, p. 268

²⁶² Interview with Drahomíra Strouhalová 27.12.2017

²⁶³ Parker, J. (2007). Camp Sisters: Women and the Holocaust. *VCU Menorah Review*. Retrieved from <https://www.menorahreview.org/article.aspx?id=57>

²⁶⁴ Palkosková-Wiesenbergerová, A. (1998). *Tři životy. Osudy žen staropražského rodu*. Nakladatelství B. Just, Prague, p. 340

survive the cruelty of prison. ‘For guards we are swines, stinking dung, whores, beasts. Our antidote is mutual tenderness and attention.’²⁶⁵ Women resisted together and called each other ‘holčičky’ [baby girls] in a gentle way by names²⁶⁶ and diminutives:

‘It was a nonsense to say *MUKL*²⁶⁷ in the women’s prison. I remember, shortly after I arrived in Pardubice, I understandably did not know the first names of the women political prisoners, we were using a T form²⁶⁸. Once I tried to find a certain name of one prisoner, and one scout girl advised me to call her just ‘holčičko’ [a ‘baby girl’] and that’s what she called me, a stranger woman...’²⁶⁹

Female inmates perceived each other as beautiful ladies trying to keep their own identity, dignity, and integrity by taking control over their own actions, gestures, voice and bodies even in the smallest forms. Dagmar Šimková called this way of women’s behaviour as ‘silk-rustling’.²⁷⁰ Women transformed their gentleness and putative fragility into a powerful way of resilience and resistance. Moreover, as Dagmar explains, keeping a strict discipline and self-control meant for women a way of keeping a moral integrity. Therefore, women transformed their gentleness and putative fragility into a powerful mode of resilience and resistance.²⁷¹

2.2 Communication

Women political prisoners became very inventive in various communication techniques. For example, they communicated through Morse code by knocking on the walls by hand or dust brushes, which was usually lead by scout girls, or they used so-called ‘broadcasting’ the news through the window.²⁷² A woman put a stool under the high window, stood on it and whispered the news from their window to the other, while cooperating with the inmates who were watching

²⁶⁵ Šimková, D. (2015). *Byly jsme tam taky*. Nakladatelství Monika Le Fay, p. 36

²⁶⁶ ‘Holčička’ is a diminutive meaning a baby girl or a little girl. Generally, women addressed each other ‘holčičky’, but often also ‘děvčata’ [gals] and especially ‘our gals’, meaning exclusively women political prisoners.

²⁶⁷ See footnote 16.

²⁶⁸ Sociolinguistics term ‘T-V form’ is derived from the Latin pronouns ‘tu’ and ‘vos’. In Czech, there are two levels of formality, two different ‘you’ words and ways of addressing conversation partners. It depends on the familiarity, social distance and politeness.

²⁶⁹ Personal correspondence with Hana Truncová, 20.11.2017

²⁷⁰ Šimková, D. (2015). *Byly jsme tam taky*. Nakladatelství Monika Le Fay, p. 36; p. 26. For excerpts in English see also: Hignett, K. (2016). *Dagmar Šimková. Branded a threat to communism*. Dangerous Women Project. Retrieved from: http://dangerouswomenproject.org/2016/05/20/dagmar_simkova/

²⁷¹ Šimková, D. (2015). *Byly jsme tam taky*. Nakladatelství Monika Le Fay, p. 99

²⁷² Interview with Hana Truncová, 29.12.2017; Zábránová, J. (1994) *Ohlédnutí*. TORST, p. 241; p. 250. See also: Palkosková-Wiesenbergerová, A. (1998). *Tři životy. Osudy žen staropražského rodu*. Nakladatelství B. Just, Prague, p. 295; Palkosková-Wiesenbergerová, A. (1991). *Nebyl to jen sen*. Luxpress, Prague, p. 14

out for the guards.²⁷³ Whispering was also a very common way of communication, often done by so-called ‘chodbařky’, women who served in the corridors between prison cells and had a better position to spread the news. Alternatively, prisoners used so-called ‘angelic post’ or ‘motáky’ (reels): ‘Moták’ was a ‘kind of paper slip, where we wrote the news, what he²⁷⁴ saw and what I saw. We rolled up the tiny papers and tied them on a string. He released the string, I untied it, rolled up another one and he pulled it up again.’²⁷⁵ According to Drahomíra's testimony, the angelic post (*motákování*) was possible while being in the laundry room in Cejl in Brno, because women had to leave a window open, so they could pull the paper slips up and down through the window. However, the participants were caught during this activity, and punished by transferring to a different prison in Jičín. Other prisoners scratched messages into mess tins²⁷⁶, for example Hana’s fiancé carved a message for his lover and hoped that she would find it. Nevertheless, Hana had no idea that she should look for any message among the mess tins, so she did not read it. In the end, this romantic communication was exposed and Hana’s fiancé was punished and had to clean all the mess tins in the prison.²⁷⁷

2.2.1 Correspondence

Prison correspondence served as an important role of connection with the outside world. In prison, letters became the only links, except occasional visits, between the incarcerated women and their families, ‘creating a sense of participation in each other's lives.’²⁷⁸ Women’s letters emphasize care, love and encouragement to their family members and community: ‘I inhale the unread lines and I know: there was a home atmosphere in them; your atmosphere of faith, hope and love, which believes in everything, endures everything, overcomes everything.’²⁷⁹ Marie Kovalová encouraged her imprisoned husband Josef Koval: ‘Look forward calmly to meet the

²⁷³ Černá, K. (2010). *Životní příběh Albíny Palkoskové-Wiesenbergerové, politické vězeňkyně padesátých let*. Masters dissertation. Charles University, Prague.

²⁷⁴ Drahomíra's friend Vaněk, who was imprisoned a floor above in the Cejl custody in Brno.

²⁷⁵ Interview with Drahomíra Strouhalová, 27.12.2017

²⁷⁶ In the corners of these tins were also scratched Stars of David: ‘It was a heritage after Germans, who served [food] to Jews in this way.’ Zábánová, J. (1994). *Ohlédnutí*. TORST, p. 240

²⁷⁷ It was probably in Pankrác prison. Interview with Hana Truncová, 29.12.2017

²⁷⁸ Müller, A. (2018). *If the Walls Could Speak. Inside a Women's Prison in Communist Poland*. Oxford University Press, p. 187

²⁷⁹ Letters from prison, Archive MV and SCB, 11/55, addressed to Vojtěcha's brother Augustin and all her siblings, In: Ed. Češíková, S.M. Remigie SCB. (2013). *Jsem v dlani Boží. Dopisy z vězení Matky Vojtěchy Hasmandové SCB*. Cesta, Brno, p. 49

future, we have someone to live for.²⁸⁰ She tried to cheer him up in a despair not being able to bring up their two sons. Writing and receiving letters from prisoners' loved ones served as a powerful tool of feeling to stay alive, being part of the world outside the prison. It gave prisoners the sense of being missed and loved, providing hope into their future.

However, women's letters were subjected to heavy censorship and many words were inked or cut out; little remained of the original message. Petra Čáslavová uses the term 'fragmentary letters' to describe them.²⁸¹ Prison correspondence was influenced by both censors' interventions and official regulations. For example, different groups of prisoners were divided into 'benefit' levels, each having a different mailing frequency allowance.²⁸² Many letters were never sent. Moreover, it was very difficult to formulate the letters as prisoners were aware of being not allowed to mention their true thoughts and reality of prison. Censorship was a constant frustration that resulted in collaborative work, inmates would fill in the blanks of the letters. But despite this incomplete and fragmented form of communication, and lack of privacy (envelopes were always delivered opened), letters were valued and shared among prisoners:

Here [in prison] we experience our joys of [receiving] letters and visits together. One person's interest becomes a shared matter and a sincere delight, which all of us are close to. Above all, a loving friendship permeates through each of us with all that we know only from letters and narratives. But they are so close to us because we are bound by one spiritual bond.²⁸³

The act of writing, sharing and reading letters aloud repeatedly increased strong emotional and spiritual connections between women in prison. Although letters were censored, they spoke 'through feelings, the expression of love and longing, or simply statements that indicated the need to remain strong.' The process of writing and sending letters became very important, because the letters spoke through this process and the form itself, not only through the limited

²⁸⁰ Marie Kovalová's Letters from prison, Personal Archive of Eva Chaloupská, née Kovalová. 27.1.1958, Pardubice, addressed to Marie's husband Josef Koval imprisoned in Rtyň v Podkrkonoší.

²⁸¹ Čáslavová, P. (2014) *Cenzura vězeňské korespondence v Československu v letech 1948–1955* Cenzura v literatuře a umění střední Evropy. Palacký University, Olomouc, pp. 186-204.

²⁸² 'Benefit' groups or classes were divided into four sections: I. asocial and counter-state, II. conflictless and obedient, III. active and initiative, IV. exemplary and cooperative. Čáslavová, P. (2014) *Cenzura vězeňské korespondence v Československu v letech 1948–1955* Cenzura v literatuře a umění střední Evropy. Palacký University, Olomouc, pp. 189-187, 192

²⁸³ Letters from prison, Archive MV, 2/56, Antonie Hasmandová, č. 141, addressed to Vojtěcha's sister Emilie Hasmandová, In: Ed. Češíková, S.M. Remigie SCB. (2013). *Jsem v dlani Boží. Dopisy z vězení Matky Vojtěchy Hasmandové SCB*. Cesta, Brno, p. 65

content.²⁸⁴ ‘In the letters we received, there were the fingerprints of our loved ones. We read these precious things repeatedly.’²⁸⁵ Prisoners often had to return the letters they had received, therefore, keeping them became a way of keeping the memories of love and hope alive. ‘A memory is like a magic artist who wipes away all harsh and cruel from reality, even if cry is the only thing left from happiness.’²⁸⁶ Sharing memories with their family members helped women to slightly re-connect with their life before their imprisonment. Such letters became very important, therefore, women resisted the prison rules by smuggling the letters even on their own bodies, hidden in their clothes.²⁸⁷ For instance, Hana Truncová carefully hid the love letters from her fiancé and put them into a small hole in the ceiling of her cell. Later, she was able to smuggle some of the letters out of prison; others remained hidden in the ceiling. Years after her release, she visited the prison and was curious to see if the letters were still in their location. However, the whole building had been completely rebuilt, thus she has never found them.²⁸⁸

Prison correspondence helped to pass the time of prison. Women used to think and formulate the sentences in their minds or even ‘write letters in the air’, as one of the prisoners I interviewed described me:

In Pardubice prison, I owned illicit a low stool made of three planks. During each ‘filcunk’²⁸⁹ it flew to the heap of confiscated things. Then I took the stool again. It served me as a chair at the desk. It was my lap where I wrote letters on my skirt only with my fingers... imaginary letters, mostly by stenography, in order to not forget this skill. Content of such letters, including love letters, no one could confiscate me. They flew in the air of a gloomy cell. These were my thoughts, my hopes, my desires... flowing in the air.²⁹⁰

Hana’s creative way of dealing with the fact that they had no access to the paper or pen and realizing that a number of letter would be lost and confiscated, became a brave act of resistance. She embodied her thoughts and feelings and memorized every single word, moreover, she practiced her stenography skill for future. Keeping and smuggling letters, writing letters in the

²⁸⁴ Müller, A. (2018). *If the Walls Could Speak. Inside a Women's Prison in Communist Poland*. Oxford University Press, p. 187

²⁸⁵ Personal correspondence with Hana Truncová, 18.2.2018; Mrvova M. (2018). Culture Behind Bars: Women Political Prisoners and Prison Culture in Czechoslovakia 1948-1968, *Postgraduate perspectives on the past*. 3(1). doi: <https://doi.org/10.5920/ppp.545>

²⁸⁶ Marie Kovalová’s Letters from prison, Personal Archive of Eva Chaloupská, née Kovalová. 27.1.1958, Pardubice, addressed to Marie’s husband Josef Koval imprisoned in Rtyň v Podkrkonoší

²⁸⁷ Interview with Hana Truncová, 29.12.2017

²⁸⁸ Ibid.

²⁸⁹ In prison slang, ‘filcunk’ means an unexpected inspection by guards, which resulted in confiscation of prisoners’ personal belongings in the cells, leaving chaos and disorder behind.

²⁹⁰ Personal correspondence with Hana Truncová, 31.12.2017

air or composing verses became a powerful tool of self-realization, coping and resistance, that, according to Gilfillan, could be described as:

the fruit of awareness and a profound sense of personal and social justice. It results from the perception of threat, a sense of frustration, as well as anger and outrage. More than anything, perhaps, it was the will to live, the refusal to capitulate, the assertion of the self, that cause these people to tackle, in their small ways, political and social systems that were at once foreign and frightening.²⁹¹

In Pardubice prison in June 1956, women made a unique effort to resist the injustice they faced. A group of twelve women²⁹² wrote protest letters to the United Nations Secretary General Dag Hammarskjöld written in Czech, English, French and German, these women described how they were being treated and deprived of basic human rights, because they chose to not only passively stand by.²⁹³ Although these letters were never sent due to the censorship, this act of collective resistance united women and strengthened them as a community. The very act of writing openly about the injustice they experienced provided almost a therapeutic effect on prisoners and enabled them to take control over their own actions, even for a short time. The inner need to be seen and heard, and being able of personal agency was perhaps the original motivation to write the letters including using their own knowledge of languages, law and political situation of that time. Women used words as a powerful weapon against the violation of their rights.²⁹⁴

Apart from letters, women used their own bodies as a tool of resistance: they conducted several hunger strikes against the brutality in prisons and for improving the hygienic conditions. A famous hunger strike took place in Pardubice prison in May 1954 when about sixty-five women started protests against the inhumane conditions, especially lack of sanitary products, soap, newspapers and appropriate food.²⁹⁵ Women were punished with solitary confinements for few days. The case was examined by Ministry of Interior which ordered to slightly improve these

²⁹¹ Gilfillan, L. (2004). *Fallen Walls*. New York: Routledge, p. 15

²⁹² Ludmila Balloušová, Libuše Bulínová, Antonie Vojtěcha Hasmandová, Vlasta Charvátová, Marie Jandová, Helena Kučerová, Markéta Pavlíčková, Dagmar Skálová, Helena Šellyová, Božena Tomášková, Dagmar Tůmová and Růžena Vacková.

²⁹³ Bursík, T. (2006). *Ztratily jsme mnoho času... Ale ne sebe!* [We lost a lot of time... But not ourselves!] Úřad dokumentace a vyšetřování zločinů komunismu, Prague, p. 46

²⁹⁴ After the fall of communism in 1989, a few collections of selected letters written by women in prison were published: *Letters of Milada Horáková* in 1990, *Ticho s ozvěnami* [Silence with echoes], letters of Růžena Vacková; and *Jsem v dlani Boží. Dopisy z vězení* [I am in the God's palm. Letters from prison] by M. Vojtěcha Hasmandová SCB in 2013. Other prison letters remain in the archives or in personal and family collections.

²⁹⁵ Pinerová, K. (2017). *Do konce života. Političtí vězni padesátých let – trauma, adaptace, identita*. The Institute for the Study of Totalitarian Regimes, p. 220

conditions, but regarding feminine sanitary products, women were able to get only three items for the whole period which was absolutely inadequate.²⁹⁶ Another extensive hunger strike was held in September 1955 against ‘arrogant and brutal’ prison guards, especially a female guard nicknamed *Elsa Koch*²⁹⁷, who consequently had to leave. Interestingly, the strike ‘spread like a game of telephone’ because women communicated through Morse code and a considerable number of women participated.²⁹⁸ The number of participants varies, between one and 500 women.²⁹⁹ In their testimonies, women described that they fasted for a week, some of them for nine days and the most determined for two weeks. Then prison guards decided to feed women using force. However, few of the women started to feel sick and had to start eating, so the other solidary stopped as well.³⁰⁰ According to Hana Truncová, all participants were punished by stopping their correspondence and visits for three months.³⁰¹ Collectively, women managed to create various communication techniques, devising ways to share information and transform their bodies into powerful tools of resistance. They organised hunger strikes and demanded improvements to the conditions in prison.

In Pardubice, women could borrow books from a prison library, but only those of a socialist character. Some women refused to read any of these books, however, others were ‘hungry’ for any pieces of literature which was denied for a very long time. Later, with gradual ‘thaw’ of political situation in the 1960s, a library collection was extended for surprising titles, such as Solzhenitsyn’s *One Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovich*.³⁰² The only available newspapers were

²⁹⁶ Pinerová, K. (2017). *Do konce života. Političtí vězni padesátých let – trauma, adaptace, identita*. The Institute for the Study of Totalitarian Regimes, p. 222

²⁹⁷ or Ilse Koch, called a Witch or Butcher of Buchenwald, was a Nazi commander of the concentration camps Buchenwald (1937-1941) and Majdanek (1941-1943), known for her extremely brutality.

²⁹⁸ Interview with Hana Truncová in: Bouška, T., Pinerová, K. (2016). *Czechoslovak Political Prisoners. Life Stories of 5 Male and 5 Female Victims of Stalinism*. Second amended edition, p. 103. See also www.politicalprisoners.eu

²⁹⁹ Palkosková-Wiesenbergerová, A. (1998). *Tři životy. Osudy žen staropražského rodu*. Nakladatelství B. Just, Prague, p. 350; Pinerová, K. (2017). *Do konce života. Političtí vězni padesátých let – trauma, adaptace, identita*. The Institute for the Study of Totalitarian Regimes, p. 222

³⁰⁰ Interview with Julie Hrušková in: Bouška, T., Pinerová, K. (2016). *Czechoslovak Political Prisoners. Life Stories of 5 Male and 5 Female Victims of Stalinism*. Second amended edition, p. 57. See also www.politicalprisoners.eu

³⁰¹ Interview with Hana Truncová in: Bouška, T., Pinerová, K. (2016). *Czechoslovak Political Prisoners. Life Stories of 5 Male and 5 Female Victims of Stalinism*. Second amended edition, p. 103. See also www.politicalprisoners.eu

³⁰² From the testimony of Dagmar Šimková. Cholínský, J. (2010). *Recenze: Dagmar Šimková, Byly jsme tam taky*. The Institute for the Study of Totalitarian Regimes. Retrieved from <https://www.ustrcr.cz/data/pdf/pamet-dejiny/pad1004/133-140.pdf>

Rudé Právo, a Communist propagandistic newspapers of the time.³⁰³ Some women were punished by being sent to ‘korekce’ for unpermitted reading of newspapers,³⁰⁴ which were variously smuggled during darkness by for example ‘lift’, rolling the newspapers into a string and pulling them up or down to different cells.³⁰⁵ Despite the risk of punishment, women continued to resist, educate themselves and use their knowledge and talents to survive their imprisonment.

2.3 Poetry

Women embodied their memories, experiences, difficulties, wishes and dreams into poems which became an ‘another method of escaping from despair of prison life’.³⁰⁶ As Božena Jíšová-Kuklová explains:

poems could be memorised and nobody could confiscate them. There were so many rhymes and songs, as though we had gone generations back to when people could express their desires and suffering only in folk songs. [...] I can say without exaggeration that each of us tried to write.³⁰⁷

Memory was an essential way of preserving the poems written in prison.³⁰⁸ Such poems were stored in memory not only by the authors themselves, but also by their co-inmates who then spread the verses to other cells and prisons.³⁰⁹ More rarely, poems were secretly written onto pieces of toilet paper, pieces of newspapers or cigarette papers. But materials were scarce, and they feared being punished, which was quite common.³¹⁰ A number of women agreed that they had no pencil or paper for notes allowed for many years. Although pencils, matches and

³⁰³ Interview with Květoslava Moravečková in: Bouška, T., Pinerová, K. (2016). *Czechoslovak Political Prisoners. Life Stories of 5 Male and 5 Female Victims of Stalinism*. Second amended edition, p. 76. See also www.politicalprisoners.eu

³⁰⁴ Šiklová, J. (2007). *Zapomenuté vězeňkyně. Jak vypadal život žen odsouzených z politických důvodů do komunistických cel*. Book Review. Respekt. Retrieved from <https://www.respekt.cz/tydenik/2007/20/zapomenute-vezenkyne>

³⁰⁵ Zábranová, J. (1994). *Ohlédnutí*. TORST, p. 250

³⁰⁶ Kuklová-Jíšová, B. (2009). *Krásná nemá paní. Příběhy vězňených žen z 50. let*. ARSCI, Prague, p. 89

³⁰⁷ Ibid.

³⁰⁸ Čáslavová, P. (2009). Vězeňská poezie: dokument a svědectví. In *Českoslovenští političtí vězni: Životní příběhy*. 1. ed. Prague: Česká asociace orální historie o.s. ve spolupráci s dobrovolnou iniciativou Političtí vězni.cz, pp. 63-77. ISBN 978-80-254-5825-9, p. 69

³⁰⁹ Čáslavová, P. (2009). Vězeňská poezie: dokument a svědectví. In *Českoslovenští političtí vězni: Životní příběhy*. 1. ed. Prague: Česká asociace orální historie o.s. ve spolupráci s dobrovolnou iniciativou Političtí vězni.cz, pp. 63-77. ISBN 978-80-254-5825-9, p. 70

³¹⁰ Ibid.

cigarettes were regularly smuggled in prison, they were often confiscated and women were punished for having such things illegally.³¹¹

Among the prisoners were authors and poets, such as Božena Kuklová-Jíšová or Nina Svobodová, who composed words in their memory and some of the works were later published.³¹² However, similarly, ‘ordinary’ women started to write verses in order to express their own needs, experiences and creativity. Other women used to memorise poems of their co-prisoners: ‘*In the section C, I got to know Nina Svobodová, a writer who wrote poems, which I used to “learn them by memory”.*’³¹³ Occasionally, women wrote rhyming letters to their families.³¹⁴ Prison writing provided a way of escaping the world of prison:

Words can knit together broken narratives, break through silence and create new worlds, new visions. Within the dehumanizing social practice of the jail, writing becomes an act of resistance, sometimes obvious, sometimes masked.³¹⁵

A strikingly common motif occurring in women’s prison poetry is nature. For prisoners who spent years behind bars, every little sign of fresh air, sunlight or something green and blooming meant almost a miracle. Women often emphasise in their testimonies little stories about flowers they found during their prison labour or smuggled during the visits. Seeing a flower symbolised a piece of beauty and a relief during the forced labour.³¹⁶ Or women, who were lucky enough to work in a garden, planted rosemary which was sold by the prison. However, women used the leftover stems to brew a herbal tea to heal flu and cough.³¹⁷ Since women were generally denied the access to adequate health care and because they were aware of healing properties of various herbs and plants, they cured an inflammation themselves. For instance, a calendula which Marie

³¹¹ Interview with Nina Svobodová in: Lidová demokracie, 18. 7. 1968, cited in: N.g. (2011). *Zamřížovaný čas Niny Svobodové*, Masarykův lid, XVIII, 2, pp. 13-14. Retrieved from

http://www.miladahorakova.cz/files/ml/KMH_ML_2_2011.pdf; Palkosková-Wiesenbergerová, A. (1991). *Nebyl to jen sen*. Luxpress, Prague, p. 14; Černá, K. (2010). *A Life Story of Albína Palkosková-Wiesenbergerová, a Political Prisoner of the 1950’s*, Dissertation, Charles University, Prague, p. 47; p. 49

³¹² Kuklová-Jíšová, B. (1996). *Verše psané za mřížemi*. ARSCI

³¹³ In the English translation, it appears: ‘which I used to know them by heart’, however, in Czech original version, it used the word ‘memory’. Interview with Julie Hrušková in: Bouška, T., Pinerová, K. (2016). *Czechoslovak Political Prisoners. Life Stories of 5 Male and 5 Female Victims of Stalinism*. Second amended edition, p. 58. See also www.politicalprisoners.eu

³¹⁴ Ibid.

³¹⁵ Adams, K. (2014). *Women, Writing, and Prison: Activists, Scholars, and Writers Speak Out*. Rowman & Littlefield., p. 8

³¹⁶ Zábranová, J. (1994). *Ohlédnutí*. TORST, p. 262; Letters from prison, Archive MV 20/57, addressed to her relatives, In: Ed. Češíková, S.M. Remigie SCB. (2013). *Jsem v dlani Boží. Dopisy z vězení Matky Vojtěchy Hasmandové SCB*. Cesta, Brno, p. 131

³¹⁷ Zábranová, J. (1994). *Ohlédnutí*. TORST, p 291

Kovalová miraculously grew, perhaps in a prison yard by either getting seeds from gardeners or by the wind, was used for healing a feminine infection and inflammation.³¹⁸

In the poems, women are longing for a lost time in freedom being able to go for a walk and explore nature. Forest themes were commonly used, as in Marie Kovalová's poem *Forest* [Figure 35]:

I love the forest,
that quiet, fragrant temple,
which sings like a chant into the organ,
and God plays the organ.

God is the closest to me in the forest,
He and the Holy Spirit have me among them,
they hold my hands and guide me.
And their hands are generous and smell of raspberries.

Trees whisper: stay here with us,
with us every pain will vanish.
Here everything is beautiful,
wherever you look.

For the eighth summer the heather is in bloom.
For the eighth summer I've had no forest,
only God is still with me
during this dark time.

He goes with me from prison to prison,
perhaps that's why he is not in forest anymore.
My God wears prison clothes,
protects me and will surely give me back
my hills full of heather again,
for my love for the forest,
which I like so much.

Perhaps at that time I did not know
for how long I lose it.
God, give me back my forest
and I will return there with you.³¹⁹

³¹⁸ Eva Chaloupská, née Kovalová, personal communication to author.

³¹⁹ Kovalová, M. (between 1954 and 1959) *Les*. Composed in Pardubice prison. Family archive of my mother Eva Chaloupská, née Kovalová. See also Czech version here: http://www.chaloupsky.op.cz/MK_BASEN.htm

This poem represents an intimate testimony of love and connection to nature and God. It is a moving illustration of a woman who although spends eight years in prison, she still hopes in freedom and having a chance to walk again in a forest she loved so dearly.

Similarly, Jiřina Fárková wrote the following poem as a part of a tiny handmade book with an embroidered cover with a note '23 August 1957 to Hana' sent as a gift to Hana Truncová in prison, after Jiřina had been released. Jiřina completed her pocket calendar with a poem for every month in 1960, when she sent it to Hana. However, a few months later Hana was also released.

Sublime silence of the forest temple,
may I greet you in July?
And on your soft pillow of moss
sit down for a moment?
I'm so tired of walking
over the last ten years,
that into the hot summer sun
I cannot look without tears!
I inhale the resin smell
and caress the trunks of pines.
Fly agarics - these beauties
stare at me like nothing
Leccinum³²⁰ smells, just find it
in that varied harvest of God.
Will I be lucky?
Or am I going into the path of
happy chance?³²¹

Although these poems were written in a different time, both are based on contemplation and observation using women's senses; hearing quietness of the forest, which 'sings' into the organ played by God, and trees whisper. In both poems, the forest is compared to a temple filled with either sacred silence, or quiet music. Women also use their smell; smell of raspberries and resins they remember from the time before their imprisonment. Sight involves blooming heather, sunlight, and poisonous or edible mushrooms which might symbolise evil and good in the world.

We learned to communicate with our lips closed during walks in the yard. Our senses have grown admirably. Hearing and smell have gained an extraordinary sensitivity. We responded to the slightest sound. When a fly got lost in a cell, we heard almost the movement of her wings, and we welcomed her as a fellow-girl.³²²

³²⁰ Edible mushroom species ('křemenáč' in Czech).

³²¹ Fárková, J. (1957-1960) *Kapesní kalendář* [A Pocket Calendar]. Given to Hana Truncová as a gift.

³²² Palkosková-Wiesenbergerová, A. (1991). *Nebyl to jen sen*. Luxpress, Prague, pp. 18-19

As Paula Hamilton mentions in her work about oral history and the senses, she emphasises that the senses have been crucial for a literary imagination, especially in poetry, and that they serve as ‘a mnemonic device and a trigger to remembering’.³²³ Heightened senses became a powerful tool not only for an imagination and writing poetry, but also for a bare survival in prison.³²⁴ It enabled women to transform their physicality into an efficient defending and fighting strategy. Both poems end with the prospect of a better future. Escaping into the beauty of nature, into dreaming while using their senses, sight, smells and hearing various sounds, helped women to cope with cruel conditions of their incarceration. Marie spent eight and Jiřina ten years behind bars, but they did not stop dreaming about sunlight, trees, flowers and beauty which they knew existed in the outside world.

Bořena Kuklová-Jišová's book of poetry, *Verše psané za mřížemi* [Verses written behind bars] published in 1996, became an extraordinary testimony of women's experiences of imprisonment:

She lifted the weight of her lashes:
Death itself is not so terrible,
worse is the humiliation!
And many of us have experienced this.
God, how terrible it is
to be delivered into the people's hands!
The memory bent her head
like the wind bent a crown.
Her eyes cooled with hatred.
The flames of meadow-saffron
burned with a sorrowful tinge of fasting
in withered leaves.
Frost often breathed harshly
into their growth.
They also defended their fragility with poison.
(...)
What a woman can lose and suffer,
all I have lost and suffered.³²⁵

³²³ Hamilton, P. (2016). Oral History and The Senses. In: Perks, R., & Thomson, A. (Eds.). (2016). *The Oral History Reader*. Routledge, Third Edition, Oxon and New York, pp. 104-105

³²⁴ Poustka, Z. Introduction in: Vacková, R. (1999). *Vězeňské přednášky* [Prison Lectures]. Charles University in Prague, p. 24

³²⁵ ‘Happy chance’ meaning a lucky opportunity. Poem called *Tajemství bolestného růžence* written in Želiezovce in 1957. Kuklová-Jišová, B. (1996). *Verše psané za mřížemi*. ARSCI, pp. 26–27; Similarly, an anonymous female prisoner wrote in her poem *Pláč svobody* [Cry of freedom]: ‘Everything sacred is trampled’. Anonymous (n.d.). *Pláč svobody*. A poem written by a female author in prison between 1948–1968; exhibited at the Museum of III. Resistance in Příbram, Czech Republic.

This poem is rare evidence of sexual abuse. It captures the humiliation experienced in Communist prisons. Women are generally reluctant to share this information due to its sensitive and humiliating character. Božena depicts a woman's feelings and gestures in detail which is permeated with natural metaphors. However, she transforms this character from a humiliated and fragile woman into a strong woman who is ready to fight back.

Another poem written by Božena depicts her time in a solitary confinement and was written in 1954. She skillfully uses an internal world of heightened senses, intensified by her confinement and loneliness. Through the poem we understand her reality: of being terrified of death. It is the existence of nature that provides reprieve through hope. Through her smell and taste she describes her everyday routines as a prisoner trying to survive. Her sense of hearing is connected to the monotony of the prison life, which has become unbearable. Although she is constantly exposed to the public gaze, lacking any privacy, she is able to 'see behind' such harsh reality using her imagination to cope with her fate:

Horizon of bars closed,
cigarettes, bread, salt.
Oh life, my precious,
do not recede, do not recede!

Water drops monotonously,
time runs slowly,
people have buried a person
here alive.
Every movement, every sigh is watched
by a spying eye without a face
I cannot sing, I cannot speak
I cannot lean my hot forehead
on the wall of the dungeon for a while,
to relieve the pain.

And out there is such a strange day!
The sky with rain strands
bounds helpless country
my country is barely breathing
under the weight of silence.

Behind the window
streams of water are pouring down
similar to the fate of people,
they merge, they split, they merge,
the piano of rain

gusts of wind softly play.

With the silver thread of hope
a black tulle of sadness I embroider
It feels sick for one to be alone,
so completely and terribly alone.³²⁶

Isolation and loneliness was a difficult companionship for women prisoners. However, some women learned to cope with the solitude in a very creative way. They created their own discipline by dividing the days into the time of prayer, singing and reciting poetry or composing letters for the relatives in their memory, which helped them to keep their minds busy.³²⁷ It was to resist and build endurance against the isolating and humiliating conditions, as Albína Palkosková-Wiesenbergerová confirms in her memories:

‘To be alone and alone, it requires strength. If one does not want to rot in here, she must defend her mind. She rehearses poems, tests whether she can speak in French or English, repeats historical data, examines geographic knowledge, recalls the first names of all family members, draws in mind where each of them live and whether she would still find these places. All her tortured “I” calls and begs: do not lose memory! Just do not ...!’³²⁸

Although Božena’s poem ends with a lament about unbearable loneliness, she did not give up hope in life. As Dagmar Šimková wrote in her memoir: ‘Prisoners do not live by bread but by hope.’³²⁹, it is apparent from women’s writings and testimonies that hope was an important motif. A similar belief in better time is represented in the poem written by Nataša Adamová:

All the future, all the thoughts
they will dress up as a spring fairy
it will be the whitish promise of the morning
it will be the promise of the future,
the future becomes the presence,
desiring to not end.³³⁰

³²⁶ Poem called *Solitary confinement* in Bartolomějská Street in 1954. Kuklová-Jíšová, B. (1996). *Verše psané za mřížemi*. ARSCI, p. 11

³²⁷ Interview with Jindřiška Havrlantová in: Bouška, T., Pinerová, K. (2016). *Czechoslovak Political Prisoners. Life Stories of 5 Male and 5 Female Victims of Stalinism*. Second amended edition, p. 22. See also www.politicalprisoners.eu

³²⁸ Palkosková-Wiesenbergerová, A. (1998). *Tři životy. Osudy žen staropražského rodu*. Nakladatelství B. Just, Prague, p. 303

³²⁹ Šimková, D. (2015). *Byly jsme tam taky*. Nakladatelství Monika Le Fay, p. 105

³³⁰ An excerpt from the poem by: Adamová, N. (1950). *Hra snů za mřížemi*. A poem written in Pankrác prison in Prague, exhibited at the Museum of III. Resistance in Příbram, Czech Republic.

Hope in future freedom follows another excerpt from a poem, by Anna Pokorná who is expressing the feelings and wishes of their community united in one spirit. 'I wrote not only on behalf of me, but only on behalf of the individuals and in the name of the all political prisoners.'³³¹ Togetherness and a sense of community is strongly emphasised in women's writings, for example in Anna's poem:

There are fourteen of us in the cell...
I wonder if the green uniform senses,
that we have a soul in our body,
that we have a feeling in our hearts,
that we want and we will live in freedom again?³³²

In her poem, Anna emphasises the humanity and dignity of prisoners, that they are not only numbers, but they are humans who have feelings and souls demanding a life in freedom and dignity. For being able to survive, strong bonds and life values were important coping strategies: 'So fourteen long/long years have passed/in which the only bright points/are friendship and faith.'³³³ Women built an inner strength based on their faith, beliefs, dreams, wishes and relationships they created under such extreme circumstances.

Life is double: what you want
for yourself and your neighbours
and what you agree inside yourself
is hard to break by anyone!³³⁴

The study of prison poetry illustrates women's remarkable imagination and ability to embody their memories into the writings which served not only as a sense of relief, but also as a tool of resistance and staying alive.

³³¹ Janková, A. (n.d.). *Anna Pokorná*. Osobnosti regionu. Retrieved from:

<https://www.osobnostiregionu.cz/component/osobnosti/474-anna-pokorna-1909?Itemid=266>

³³² From the poem called *Fourteen women* written by Anna Pokorná-Třísková in September 1948: Pokorná-Třísková, A. (1948). *Fourteen women*. A poem exhibited at the Museum of III. Resistance in Příbram, Czech Republic.

³³³ Korosová-Staňková, J. (n.d.). *Byl jednou jeden*. A poem written in prison and exhibited at the Museum of III. Resistance in Příbram, Czech Republic.

³³⁴ Fárková, J. (1959). *Kapesní kalendář*. Hana Truncová's personal archive

2.4 Prison University

Establishing the so-called Prison University became a way of maintaining prisoners' sanity, of working memory, and a means of resistance and hope.³³⁵ 'We did not sit in the corner we did not cry. We made up different games or ask each other various knowledge questions.'³³⁶ Particularly in Pardubice prison, women organised a number of lectures and classes on art history and archeology, history, drama, Czech, French, English, German, Italian, Latin or Greek languages, as well as discussions on politics, literature, art, fashion and travelling.³³⁷ In the evenings or during secret gatherings in a toilet foyer, women used to talk about literature:³³⁸

We were talking all the time: old movies and novels³³⁹, we used to tell poems over, test each other in multiplication, learn the French words from *Emička*, explain cooking recipes, and narrate everything from our lives that can be narrated.³⁴⁰

Women referred to these talks as 'spiritual ventilation', which enabled women to 'breathe the fresh air' of a different world keeping away the reality of prison.³⁴¹ Women shared their skills and knowledge, and by learning new things, memorising and listening to each other, they became stronger both as individuals and as a community. Together they resisted the prohibition of any intellectual and creative activities performing women's identities. When the cultural activities were exposed or, for example, if the guards were suspicious that prisoners had hidden foreign words or prayers hidden somewhere, women were immediately punished. Despite the risk of punishment, female prisoners continued their secret actions. One woman remembers that they regularly sat together during the knitting shifts and spent time the best as they could:

At our table, at about half past ten, the "school" started: what one of us knew about which country - one country was chosen and we tried to remember everything we know about it - mountains, rivers, climate... like at school. But we also added what we read about that particular state or what we knew about literature, music, painting, arts, and so on.³⁴²

³³⁵ Chaloupský, P. (2007). *Kdo nás odloučí od lásky Kristovy? Život Marie Kovalové*. Krystal OP s.r.o., p. 21

³³⁶ Interview with Vlasta Jakubová, Klára Pinerová, [politictivezni.cz](http://www.politictivezni.cz), Retrieved from:

<http://www.politictivezni.cz/vlasta-jakubova.html>

³³⁷ Poustka, Z. Introduction in: Vacková, R. (1999). *Vězeňské přednášky* [Prison Lectures]. Charles University in Prague, p. 29; p. 33

³³⁸ Interview with Drahomíra Strouhalová, 27.12.2017

³³⁹ Telling and sharing the content of various books, especially novels was very popular activity during women's gatherings. For example, women told the content of a Scandinavian sag *Beyond Sing the Woods* by Trygve Gulbrandsen, or *Babička* [The Grandmother] by Božena Němcová etc.

³⁴⁰ Šimková, D. (2015). *Byly jsme tam taky*. Nakladatelství Monika Le Fay, p. 33

³⁴¹ Reinerová, L. (2002). *Všechny barvy slunce a noci*. Labyrint, Prague, p. 79

³⁴² Zábranová, J. (1994). *Ohlédnutí*. TORST, p. 326

History lessons were lead either by Marie Járová, a history teacher from Šumava, by Jiřina Zábranová, or by author Nina Svobodová, who was called *Encyclopedia* by her inmates for her remarkable memory.³⁴³ But mainly, Nina focused on literature. Růžena Vacková lectured about art history and archaeology, Albína Palkosková-Wiesenbergerová taught German and English, Anna Slováčková, a former teacher of Latin and Greek explained the classical vocabulary, Františka Zemínová³⁴⁴ discussed politics, and Jiřina Štěpničková gave lessons on drama and theatre and analysed various plays. Fashion and travelling was discussed by women who had travelled a lot or were fashion designers, such as Lia Dvořáková who regularly contributed to fashion magazines³⁴⁵. Students-prisoners tried to memorise or later, if possible they wrote notes and new vocabulary they had learnt on pieces of paper, and carefully hid them from the guards.³⁴⁶

Various little notes on pieces of paper and other materials found by women in prison and collected and secretly smuggled out by Dagmar Skálová and Dagmar Šimková, gave birth to a remarkable book *Vězeňské přednášky* [Prison lectures].³⁴⁷ This collection containing the content of prison lectures on archaeology and art history given by professor Růžena Vacková, a founder of Prison University, were published by Charles University in Prague in memoriam in 1999. *Prison Lectures* serve as a comprehensive study of ‘Cultural Evolution of Humankind’ from a philosophical and art historical point of view, and it represents a testimony of women’s exceptional activities secretly conducted in prison. Moreover, it is a rare evidence of extensive scholarly questions and in-depth discussion occurred in Communist prisons.

³⁴³ Zábranová, J. (1994). *Ohlédnutí*. TORST, p. 327

³⁴⁴ Františka [called Fráňa] Zemínová (1882-1962), a politician of the National Socialist Party and a member of a women’s emancipation movement.

³⁴⁵ Ibid.

³⁴⁶ Vrkočová, L. (Ed.). (2007). *Svědectví* [A Testimony]. *The fates of political prisoners 1947-1976*. Ludmila Vrkočová, Prague, p. 96

³⁴⁷ Vacková, R. (1999). *Vězeňské přednášky*. Charles University in Prague, Archive of Charles University. ISBN 80-238-4327-3

2.5 Material Culture

Culture is embedded in the physical environment.³⁴⁸ Material culture refers to the physical objects and spaces produced by human beings who ‘encode metaphorical meanings into things’. In context of this chapter, material culture is represented by cultural production, art work, crafts, writings and various objects women made in prison. Such created things are able to ‘reproduce or transform the social contexts in which they are encountered and move’.³⁴⁹ This means that objects embody human experiences and memories, so they can speak to and for person who either own them, have similar experiences, or they can provide better understanding of the historical events and circumstances in which they were created.

2.5.1 Drama and Music

In the hostile and cruel environment full of pain and despair, women organised drama lessons and, in 1952, an extraordinary event took place: a masquerade ball accompanied by music. In Pardubice prison, women called this occasion ‘A First Representational Ball in a Marble Hall of Palace A’. Together, about sixty women participated in this special event.³⁵⁰ They ‘stole’ and smuggled various materials: copper wire, pieces of paper, threads and everything they found from which they could create costumes and accessories. They dressed up themselves as various historical, mythological, literary and fairytale characters, such as: Admiral Nelson, Lady Hamilton, Ophelia, Snow White and seven dwarfs, Sleeping Beauty, Hadrián from Římsy, The Princess with the Golden Star, Louis Armstrong with Dixieland, a Hawaiian dancer, Pierrot, a sultan with his haram, pirates, cowboys, clowns, heroines and many more.³⁵¹

I had thin underwear [something between tights and leggings] and a tunic decorated with pearls. I was dressed up as Ophelia. Well, I dressed up! [proudly] We had a ball... Oh my God, the guard, who served at that time, came first with a blanket... We had the whole music band there! And we had bows and ribbons hanging up everywhere. It was a big hall, and there were doors to the cells. We decorated it all, played on the hairbrushes... We stole

³⁴⁸ Grassby, R. (2005). Material Culture and Cultural History. *Journal of Interdisciplinary History*, xxxv:4 (Spring, 2005), 591-603, p. 591. Retrieved from <https://uni.edu/carrchl/wp/museumstudies/wp-content/uploads/sites/13/2015/02/Material-Culture-and-Cultural-History.pdf>

³⁴⁹ Tilley, C. (1999) *Metaphor and Material Culture*. Blackwell Publishers, p. 76. Cited in: University College London. (n.d.). *What Do Objects Do? A Material And Visual Culture Perspective*. Retrieved from: <https://www.ucl.ac.uk/museums-static/objectretrieval/node/266>

³⁵⁰ Interview with Vlasta Jakubová. Klára Pinerová, [politictivezni.cz](http://www.politictivezni.cz). Retrieved from: <http://www.politictivezni.cz/vlasta-jakubova.html>

³⁵¹ Šimková, D. (2015). *Byly jsme tam taky*. Nakladatelství Monika Le Fay, p. 40; Interview with Julie Hrušková in: Bouška, T., Pinerová, K. (2016). *Czechoslovak Political Prisoners. Life Stories of 5 Male and 5 Female Victims of Stalinism*. Second amended edition, p. 58. See also www.politicalprisoners.eu

and sewed so many things...! We sewed our blouses and everything... And Dana invented all the couples [costumes]. She was such an artist, so she invented it all.³⁵²

The choice of characters reflects a wide range of prisoners' interests and popular period film and music stars. By dressing up as various characters, women embodied their dreams and wishes into the new personalities who could breathe, speak, move, dance and sing freely and openly for a moment in time. During the ball, women played on hairbrushes, tin wash-boards and improvised little drums made of paper boxes vests stretched over. 'We used to play music in the bathroom. One girl would whistle on the comb, another would sing, I would play the drums, and the rest of the girls would danced.'³⁵³ The group of musicians dressed up as 'broučci' [the fireflies].³⁵⁴ However, the ball was discovered, and the women were severely punished, having their rights to letters, parcels and visits stopped. Those participants who wore masks on their faces were sent for fourteen days to *korekce*.³⁵⁵ Female prisoners were aware of the risk of punishment, but they wished to create a joyful and beautiful celebration to forget for a while the greyness and cruelty of prison. This spectacular event is well-remembered among women and even the guards who consequently punished the prisoners, were amazed of its originality and beauty created 'from nothing'.³⁵⁶

Women did not produce music only during the masquerade ball. Although musical instruments were generally forbidden, there is at least one case known when a prisoner was allowed to keep a guitar. Drahomíra Strouhalová borrowed this guitar from her co-inmate who taught her a lullaby³⁵⁷. From time to time, women sang various spiritual songs³⁵⁸, folk songs and patriotic pieces, for example *Čechy, krásné, Čechy mé* [Beautiful Bohemia, my Bohemia]³⁵⁹, lullabies and

³⁵² Interview with Drahomíra Strouhalová, 27.12.2017

³⁵³ Interview with Julie Hrušková in: Bouška, T., Pinerová, K. (2016). *Czechoslovak Political Prisoners. Life Stories of 5 Male and 5 Female Victims of Stalinism*. Second amended edition, p. 58. See also www.politicalprisoners.eu

³⁵⁴ Little beetles-like characters from a Czech fairytale written by Jan Karafiát in the early 1870s.

³⁵⁵ Ibid. For 'korekce' see p. 18

³⁵⁶ Interview with Julie Hrušková in: Bouška, T., Pinerová, K. (2016). *Czechoslovak Political Prisoners. Life Stories of 5 Male and 5 Female Victims of Stalinism*. Second amended edition, p. 59. See also www.politicalprisoners.eu

³⁵⁷ Interview with Drahomíra Strouhalová, 27.12.2017

³⁵⁸ Vojtěcha Hasmandová mentioned in her letters that in prison, women used to sing *Laudes Creaturarum* (Píseň bratra Slunce in Czech) composed by Saint Francis of Assisi (cc.1224). See: Letters from prison, Archive MV and SCB, 4/55, addressed to Vojtěcha's brother Augustin In: Ed. Češíková, S.M. Remigie SCB. (2013). *Jsem v dlani Boží. Dopisy z vězení Matky Vojtěchy Hasmandové SCB*. Cesta, Brno, p. 37

³⁵⁹ The Czechoslovak Television Prague (Producer) & Průchová, D. (Director). (1990). *Nesmíš plakat* [You Must Not Cry], (Documentary film). Retrieved from <https://www.ceskatelevize.cz/ivysilani/125474-nesmis-plakat/>

Christmas carols³⁶⁰. In Pankrác interrogation cell, women used to cheer the newcomers up by singing numerous popular songs of their youth:³⁶¹

I remember, that on the Holy Saturday [during the Easter] we tried to defend sorrow and nostalgia in various ways. So we counted how many songs we know - starting with A - the song was quietly sung and then followed another and another. We counted over two hundred and fifty.³⁶²

Among prisoners were also professional and proficient singers who remembered and sang various opera arias or classical songs, such as *Solveig's Song* from Edvard Grieg's *Peer Gynt*.³⁶³ Singing, playing the instruments and dancing enabled women to experience joyous moments as a community filled with spontaneity and creativity, implementing different skills of each person. Music helped to forget women's suffering and served as 'a means of psychological escape' similarly as for women in the Nazi concentration camps.³⁶⁴

2.5.2 Art and Objects

Prison artworks occurred in various forms, but one of the most eloquent pieces which depicted women's prison life in a detail, were tiny drawings and paintings. In the drawings, women reflected their everyday routines and feelings, work activities and gatherings, including short notes and verses written into the pictures. For example, a nun Miroslava Čermáková records in her drawings her years in prison chronologically, beginning with the first moment she was brought to an interrogation cell, sketching the space and beds [Figure 36] She depicts her inmates who welcomed her, the various cells she was consequently moved to, a prison courtyard [Figure 37] or a first family visit behind bars in 1949 [Figure 38]. Miroslava also draws scenes from various daily works women had to do, for instance gluing bags and flags, cooking and baking, distributing food into the cells created in 1950 in Pardubice prison; or special occasions such as celebrating Christmas. Furthermore, she captured women's faces, playing with different facial features, characters and emotions emerged from their expressions. Another example of

³⁶⁰ Personal communication with Hana Truncová, 1.6.2018

³⁶¹ Zábranová, J. (1994) *Ohlédnutí*. TORST, Praha, p. 238

³⁶² Ibid.

³⁶³ Zábranová, J. (1994) *Ohlédnutí*. TORST, Praha, p. 326

³⁶⁴ Langer, E. (2017). *Zuzana Ruzickova, Holocaust survivor who rediscovered life's beauty in Bach, dies at 90*. The Washington Post. Retrieved from https://www.washingtonpost.com/local/obituaries/zuzana-ruzickova-holocaust-survivor-who-rediscovered-lifes-beauty-in-bach-dies-at-90/2017/09/28/91147490-a459-11e7-ade1-76d061d56efa_story.html?noredirect=on&utm_term=.ce0643918967

drawings are pictures of a religious character, such as a figure of Virgin Mary with an excerpt from a prayer; or a heart with chains surrounded by light and an inscribed poem:

The dungeon is honor, not humiliation.
I'm in the dungeon for a good thing,
and the chains are not a shame
When I'm in jail
for my homeland.³⁶⁵

Faith played an important role in women's life in prison. For many women of various Christian denominations, faith symbolised hope and love, which helped women to cope and believe that their suffering is not meaningless and one day they will be given a justice. Miroslava's pictures serve as an informative and insightful tool of women's experiences and feelings during a daily life in prison. It serves as a diary and an evidence of the activities in Communist prisoners.

In comparison, artist Margita Cibulková specialised in floral motifs illustrating little books of prayer and poems, decorating cases for various tiny objects made in prison or simply painting bouquets of flowers.³⁶⁶ Depiction of nature and especially flowers was a very common practice among female political prisoners who longed for fresh air and living natural world full of trees, flowers and sunlight, which was deprived for women for many years. Professional or simply talented female artists use their everyday sketching and drawing in order to tell their stories, to become visible, tangible and not forgotten.

Objects have both practical and aesthetical meanings. They represent personal identity, because 'things create people as much as people make them.'³⁶⁷ It means that objects carry various personal and social information created and preserved under specific temporal and spatial context.³⁶⁸ Objects made by women are symbols of both negative and positive experience: They are symbols of suffering, evoking time in prison and painful memories, but at the same time, testify to the courage, effort and creativity invested in the often collective work which became a

³⁶⁵ Čermáková, M. (1950s). Drawing from prison. The Museum of Communist Resistance in Příbram, Czech Republic.

³⁶⁶ Interview with Drahomíra Strouhalová, 27.12.2017

³⁶⁷ Tilley, C. (1999) *Metaphor and Material Culture*. Blackwell Publishers, p. 76. Cited in: University College London. (n.d.). *What Do Objects Do? A Material And Visual Culture Perspective*. Retrieved from: <https://www.ucl.ac.uk/museums-static/objectretrieval/node/266>

³⁶⁸ Grassby, R. (2005). Material Culture and Cultural History. *Journal of Interdisciplinary History*, xxxv:4 (Spring, 2005), 591-603, pp. 592-593. Retrieved from: <https://uni.edu/carrchl/wp/museumstudies/wp-content/uploads/sites/13/2015/02/Material-Culture-and-Cultural-History.pdf>

means of resistance. Creating these objects became a reaction to the hostile and cruel environment full of violence, humiliation and dehumanization. These objects help fight against forgetting. Because, according to Lynda Gilfillan ‘memory is weapon against oppression’.³⁶⁹ Marianne Hirsch talks about the so-called ‘testimonial objects’ and explains that these objects are testaments to the ‘power of memory and continuity’.³⁷⁰ This work also uses Marianne Hirsch’s term ‘points of memory’ which include photographs, objects and personal belongings connected to the past. She defines points of memory as ‘points of intersection between past and present, memory and postmemory, remembrance and recall’.³⁷¹ The term ““point” is both spatial—such as a point on the map—and temporal—a moment in time—and it thus highlights the intersection of spatiality and temporality in the workings of personal and cultural memory.’³⁷²

Small prison memorabilia, as Anna Müller calls them,³⁷³ represent an extraordinarily diverse range of objects women made in prison. The objects include bookmarks carved of the toothpaste tube and a thin string, often with a little figure of a doll. The carved bookmarks occur predominantly with motifs of flowers [Figure 39] or of silhouettes of women’s bodies [Figure 40]. Bookmarks were also made of cloths, for example with a notation to a Czech national anthem *Kde domov můj* [Where my home is?]. Women were very creative in using various materials. They used both personal items and leftovers from textile factory in which they worked, such as toothpaste tube, toothbrush, flax, cuttings and threads, hairbrush, pieces of bread and various materials they found in kitchen, prison garden or on the fields during their agricultural work. Women created these objects in their extremely limited free time and they had to be keep their activities completely secret, therefore, some women kept watch and warned of approaching dangers, such as prison guards who would confiscate anything they would find.

They also carved or sewed little figures of women made by bread, threads and pieces of cloths; for instance, a lying woman reading a book, a violinist, a woman wearing an apron or a mother holding her baby. Motifs of motherhood was a very common, as many prisoners were mothers

³⁶⁹ Gilfillan, L. (Ed.). (2004). *Fallen Walls: Prisoners of Conscience in South Africa and Czechoslovakia*. Transaction Publishers, p. 7.

³⁷⁰ Ibid.

³⁷¹ Ibid.

³⁷¹ Hirsch, M. (2012). *The Generation of Postmemory: Writing and Visual Culture After the Holocaust*. Columbia University Press., p. 61

³⁷² Ibid.

³⁷³ Müller, A. (2018). *If the Walls Could Speak. Inside a Women's Prison in Communist Poland*. Oxford University Press, p. 1

themselves, and had been separated from their children, or have distant children living with extended family members, or simply longed to become mothers in future. Another example is a wooden pendant embroidered with a straw depicting a mother hugging her daughter made by an academic painter Olga Kaithová, probably in 1951 in Tišnov prison.³⁷⁴ Motherhood was also symbolized by pictures of Madonna with a child, for example engraved into a metal plate for an occasion of Mother's day. An exceptional piece of art is an embroidered alphabet with pictures and rhyme songs made by Libuše Balínová as a gift for her little son who was about to start going to school.³⁷⁵

Figures depict a snowperson, angels, clowns, and probably the most popular were dolls made of colourful threads, hemp and pieces of clothes with embroidered flowers and folklore motifs [Figures 41 and 42]. Animal figures are also featured, such as a donkey [Figure 43], dog, cat, fish [44], turtles, beetles, squirrel, sheep, birds and butterflies. Women created also 'typical feminine' objects such as little handbags, purses, vases and baskets with flowers, fruits and nuts, bouquets of flowers with colourful bows, embroidered hearts containing notes such as 'To my dear mum', tiny sewing set, jewel boxes painted with flowers or decorated with an engraved and cut glass beads, or little slippers and lady shoes. Some women made white crochet cloths and even blouse, or a canvas bag and embroidered book cover or handkerchief with initials, date and dedication [Figure 45]. Popular objects were those of a religious character, such as little songbooks and prayer books, symbols of cross, heart and anchor made of toothbrushes or rosaries made of either threads and beads, or pieces of bread. Notably, rosaries made of bread are also known among for example Polish and Lithuanian female political prisoners.³⁷⁶

Points of memory include both secular and religious objects, for example a lighter created by Růžena Krásná for women who used to smoke as a way of 'therapeutic' stress life and during social and cultural gatherings, jewellery, bracelets and rings; or little books with poems, notes

³⁷⁴ Kaithová, O. (1951). A wooden pendant embroidered with a straw. The Museum of Communist Resistance in Příbram, Czech Republic.

³⁷⁵ Balínová, L. (n.d.) An embroidered children's book with alphabet and rhyme songs. The Museum of Communist Resistance in Příbram, Czech Republic.

³⁷⁶ Müller, A. (2018). *If the Walls Could Speak. Inside a Women's Prison in Communist Poland*. Oxford University Press, p. 1; Budrytė, D. (2016) Points of memory in the narrative of a 'Mnemonic Warrior': gender, displacement, and the anti-Soviet war of resistance in Lithuania, *Journal of Baltic Studies*, 47:4, 473-496, DOI: 10.1080/01629778.2016.1248671, p. 474

and prayers [Figure 46].³⁷⁷ The remarkable skills of female prisoners, who created tiny books of a toothpaste tube and pieces of papers, involve miniature writings and pictures. Among prayers, there was *A Prayer for a strength* – for courage, trust, peace, ‘firmer hope’, more joy, more goodness to people, a strong love, more strength and truth, unselfishness and unshakeable faithfulness [Figure 47].³⁷⁸ Another remarkably inventive strategy was transforming a glasses case into a sanctuary for consecrated wafers [hostie]. The case was property of which Vojtěcha Hasmandová, a nun, and the wafers were smuggled into the prison by her sisters during visits.³⁷⁹

The smuggling of objects varied depending on prison. In some prisons, such as Jilemnice, women were able to transfer bigger objects, for example Hana’s doll mentioned above. Hana described the process of smuggling as follows: ‘If we were embroidering in Jilemnice prison, the moon shone on our work. We could not put the lights on at night. We smuggled our work out during the visits... Differently, skilfully... like enchantresses;’ such objects were ‘little treasures’.³⁸⁰ Although many of these objects have been lost forever due to confiscation by prison guards, they still live in a way in memories of women, or those who were preserved trigger a number of strong and mostly positive memories of solidarity, togetherness and friendship.

These objects are historical artefacts but also carry a deeper meaning. In fact, those former women political prisoners, who are still alive and participated in this study, attentively cared about their precious memorabilia. For example, Hana Truncová shared a story of a woman who helped her with something and she wanted to reward her kindness, so she gave her one of the bookmarks she made in prison. Other objects, she has exhibited in a glass wardrobe as a small personal museum.³⁸¹ Drahomíra Strouhalová, in contrast, has all of her objects carefully hidden and sorted in various decorative boxes. But when she starts speaking about them, her voice changes the intonation into a proud and exciting mode, and she is able to provide an admirable detailed testimony of where they come from, who made them and how they were smuggled.³⁸² Women are proud of these objects because they embody their ‘happy’ memories and the strength

³⁷⁷ Chaloupský, P. (2007). *Kdo nás odloučí od lásky Kristovy? Život Marie Kovalové*. Krystal OP s.r.o., p. 21

³⁷⁸ Kovalová, M. (1950s). A book of poems, prayers and notes. Personal Archive of Eva Kovalová-Chaloupská.

³⁷⁹ Interview with SM. Remigie Češíková, 28.12.2017

³⁸⁰ Personal correspondence with Hana Truncová, 2.1.2018

³⁸¹ Interview with Hana Truncová, 29.12.2017

³⁸² Interview with Drahomíra Strouhalová, 27.12.2017

they developed in prison. Therefore, these objects are ‘telling stories’ of women’s resilience and resistance.

Despite all of the brutality and difficulties women faced, they managed to create their own private safe space, a community full of understanding, care, tenderness, empathy, support and a shared identity. They created their own world where they could escape from the harsh reality of prison. Being involved in cultural activities and making objects enabled them to imprint their memories and carry them further, share them, give them as gifts to their co-prisoners or loved ones during the visits. These objects became eloquent witnesses to women’s stories and identities. They were symbols of courage, resistance, creativity and human solidarity full of emotions and memories. Such memories could not be confiscated even if the objects were taken away. They are concrete, tangible things which connect past and present, personal and political. These objects symbolize the sense of community, or prison family if you wish, the sense of safety and continuity.³⁸³ As Václav Havel said: ‘Without memory there is no continuity and without continuity there is no identity.’

³⁸³ Hirsch, M. (2012). *The Generation of Postmemory: Writing and Visual Culture After the Holocaust*. Columbia University Press., p. 37

Conclusion

This thesis addressed the gendered world of prisons and political persecution of Czechoslovak women between 1948 and 1968, especially the role of prison culture on women's ways of coping, uniting and resisting. A discussion on different individual life narratives has been provided, particularly based on oral history testimonies, as well as written memoirs and prison correspondence, archival materials and secondary literature.

The main focus of the thesis was on the role and meaning of prison culture in both broader and specific contexts. By discussing various examples from women's narratives, different survival mechanisms adopted by female prisoners have been presented. These include gender performance by process of beautifying, transformation prisoner's bodies into 'sites of resistance', building strong bonds or creating educational and cultural platform for self-realization. My contribution here is in comparing under-represented experiences of women political prisoners along with choosing eleven women's stories, of which some of them have not yet been investigated in detail. Moreover, I had the chance to conduct six oral history interviews, of which four were with former female political prisoners, and I have gained valuable information not presented in the archives. This includes details of circumstances under which cultural activities were conducted, the meaning of objects made in prison, or women's emotions and accounts on their inmates. Furthermore, I have demonstrated the phenomena of women's secret cultural activities, Prison University and production of objects; their role and meaning for women's survival which have not been extensively researched so far in the context of Czechoslovak female political prisoners in this period.

By analysing individual testimonies and comparing the information with archival materials and academic publications, conclusions on the role of prison culture have been drawn. Through prison culture, women were able to first cope with the brutality, injustice and the environment of immense cruelty of prison by creating a world of beauty. Memories were revoked and revitalized, some of which contained intellectual and cultural knowledge which, in a tangible form, would have most likely been destroyed. Secondly, prison culture helped women to unite, which meant creating a sense of community, collective identity and friendships based on mutual trust, help and solidarity which some of them have lasted until today. Finally, prison culture

united women and empowered them to resist authority. It helped them to cope with false accusations and abuse. Their own bodies became ‘sites of resistance’. They participated in hunger strikes, and wrote letters of protest as a collective. These every-day small victories – increasing their hygiene, beautifying themselves, finding ways to educate one another, dancing, acting, performing music or creating objects, as well as using a sense of humour³⁸⁴ or even physical confrontation – became a means to survive.³⁸⁵ Moreover, the space of solidarity and community provides a therapeutic platform for women’s traumatic experiences.³⁸⁶ Together, women wanted to keep their integrity, dignity, and through their acts of resistance and culture become visible and heard. They wanted to retain their humanity at all costs, because we need to tell stories ‘in order to elucidate what we mean by self’.³⁸⁷ Culture not only cultivates, but it also sets people to be free.³⁸⁸ Therefore, prison ‘not only crushed but also created identities.’³⁸⁹

This study is not without ethical and methodological challenges. First, this topic is very sensitive due to its nature of violence and abuse, and also very personal due to the experiences in my family. But oral historians value the subjectivity of the interviewee, because as Portelli emphasises, ‘what informants believe is indeed a historical *fact* (that is, the fact that they believe it), as much as what really happened’. In other words, oral sources explore and discover people’s psychological aspects of their lives, memory and history.³⁹⁰ Moreover, interviews often reveal ‘unknown events or unknown aspects of known events; they always cast new light on unexplored areas of the daily life of the nonhegemonic classes’.³⁹¹ I believe that by uncovering

³⁸⁴ Hofmanová, A. (1998). *Žijeme jen jednou*. Nové Město, Praha, p. 93

³⁸⁵ Memories on Božena’s co-prisoner Marie (Merina) Jandová In: Kuklová-Jíšová, B. (2007). *Krásná nemá paní. Příběhy vězňených žen z padesátých let*. ARSCL, Prague, pp. 56-64

³⁸⁶ Pinerová, K. (2017). *Do konce života. Političti vězni padesátých let – trauma, adaptace, identita*. The Institute for the Study of Totalitarian Regime, p. 267; Bušková, K. (2012). *Women in communist prisons in the 1950s in Czechoslovakia: Understanding psychological effects of political imprisonment and ways of coping using oral history*. Politicalprisoners.eu. Retrieved from <http://www.politicalprisoners.eu/women-in-communist-prisons-in-the-1950s-in-czechoslovakia-understanding-psychological-effects-of-political-imprisonment-and-ways-of-coping-using-oral-history.html>

³⁸⁷ Jerome Burner cited in: Richmond, K. T. (2010). *Re-capturing the Self: Narratives of Self and Captivity by Women Political Prisoners in Germany 1915-1991*. PhD Studies, University of Edinburgh, p. 12. Retrieved from <https://www.era.lib.ed.ac.uk/bitstream/handle/1842/5493/Richmond2010.pdf?sequence=2&isAllowed=y>

³⁸⁸ Plachá, P. in: Chmel Denčevová, I. (2018). *Kulturou proti beznaději. I v pekle koncentračního tábora Ravensbrück bujel tajný kulturní život*. Český rozhlas Plus. Retrieved from <https://plus.rozhlas.cz/kulturou-proti-beznadeji-i-v-pekle-koncentracniho-tabora-ravensbruck-bujel-tajny-7174046>

³⁸⁹ Müller, A. (2018). *If the Walls Could Speak. Inside a Women's Prison in Communist Poland*. Oxford University Press, p. 3; p. 212

³⁹⁰ Portelli, A. (2016), What Makes Oral History different? In: Perks, R., Thomson, A. (Eds.) *The Oral History Reader*. London: Routledge, pp. 63-74, p. 52

³⁹¹ Ibid.

such hidden histories³⁹² and giving these women their voices and allowing them to speak and to be heard is a key to understanding of life and experiences during repressive regimes and to reconcile the traumatic past which is a part of collective memory and identity. In regards to methodology, the most challenging issue in this research was the limited space for discussion within a Masters dissertation, because I have gathered an extensive number of historical materials, including oral history testimonies, memoirs, prison correspondence, archival materials, prison poetry or photographs of objects made in prison. On the other hand, it also demonstrates the abundant nature of this topic as a source of objective study which provides an opportunity to further develop this project into a PhD and potential publication, such as monograph, about women's prison culture.

Implications for Future Research

This study contributes first to both oral history and material culture exploring the under-researched area of women's prison culture. I was granted the extraordinary opportunity to interview the few remaining female eye-witnesses who are still alive, and ask them on their experiences of prison culture. These methods could be applied whilst exploring modern day prison culture, particularly those under repressive regimes. These include Bosnia, Rwanda, and modern day Syria. Studies of this nature might reveal ways in which women have coped, united and resisted within multiple geographies and historical periods. Secondly, this work contributes to gender studies by discussing the importance of gender performance, experiences of gendered violence and development of survival techniques unique to female prisoners through prison culture. Although some studies have been conducted about female inmates performing their gender (including Castro Madariaga, Gómez Garcés, Carrasco Parra & Foster, 2017), this approach could have far-reaching implications to better understand how women's identities are formed through a process of self-construction in various repressive settings. This thesis deals with several under-researched topics which could be further explored, for example deeper comparisons of women's prison culture across different countries and time periods could be made. Furthermore, it would be interesting to compare the prison culture of male and female political prisoners. Finally, during my research, I have encountered a number of poems written in prison that have not been investigated yet.

³⁹² Rowbotham, S. (1973). *Hidden from History: Three Hundred Years of Women's Oppression and the Fight against it*. Pluto, London.

Appendices

Appendix 1: Research Participant Information Sheet

University of Huddersfield

School of Music Humanities and Media

Ethical Review Procedure

for Research and Teaching and Learning

TITLE OF PROJECT

Women Political Prisoners and Prison Culture in Czechoslovakia 1948-1968.

Research Participant Information Sheet

The purpose of this Information Sheet is to tell you what the project is and to explain the arrangements for your participation.

Thank you very much for taking part in this project.

It is important for you to understand why the research is being done and what it will involve. Please read the following information and discuss it with others if you wish. If anything is unclear or if you would like further information, please contact me using the details above.

I am a student of history at the University of Huddersfield in the United Kingdom. My MA dissertation explores the topic of women political prisoners and prison culture in Czechoslovakia 1948-1968, which has been still under-researched and neglected. Personal testimonies and memories of political persecution are extremely important in helping us understand the impact of

Communist regime on individuals, families and communities, in the past, over time and into the present.

I am particularly interested in stories of seven women I selected for my project: Vojtěcha Hasmandová, Marie Kovalová (my great-grandmother), Božena Kuklová-Jišová, Albína Palkosková-Wiesenbergerová, Nina Svobodová, Dagmar Šimková and Růžena Vacková. As these individuals are now deceased, I am looking for other women political prisoners and people who knew them, who were in the same prisons as them, or who had similar experiences. Therefore, I would like to interview you for my research. I have done archival research in these areas in Prague.

Your participation in this project is entirely voluntary, and you may withdraw at any time without explanation. Interviews will take place either at participants' homes or at a location agreed by the interviewee and the researcher, and will be recorded. The recording will be kept secure and confidential at all times. The interview usually takes between 45 minutes and 90 minutes, maybe longer, depending on your wish. No payment of any kind will be made for your participation in this project.

Your memories matter. By signing the consent form you give permission for me to store securely the recording and certain basic data about you (your name, your contact details), and for the recording be used by me in my research. Your interview will be archived according to your wishes.

Besides the written part of my thesis, I will also create an online exhibition which will serve as an interactive educational tool. Extracts from this interview may be used in future publications, in print, digital or other form. You will not be contacted before such work is published. Please bear this in mind when making decisions regarding whether you choose to remain anonymous. Publications resulting from this interview may be in English or in Czech.

There are no foreseeable disadvantages to your participation. If you are unhappy or have further questions at any stage, please contact Marie Mrvová, or Dr Lindsey Dodd (l.dodd@hud.ac.uk),

who is my supervisor at the School of Music, Humanities and Media at the University of Huddersfield.

This project has been subject to ethical review by the Research Ethics Committee of the School of Music, Humanities and Media at the University of Huddersfield.

If you have any questions or would like to discuss the project, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Many thanks

Marie Mrvová

Contact for further information:

MARIE MRVOVÁ

MA by Research in Public History,
Oral History and Community Heritage

University of Huddersfield,
Queensgate,
Huddersfield, HD1 3DH,
West Yorkshire,
United Kingdom

Email: marenka.mrvova@gmail.com

marie.mrvova@hud.ac.uk

Mobile:

Czech: +420603329872

English: 07535294690

Appendix 2: Participant Consent Form

TITLE OF PROJECT

Women Political Prisoners and Prison Culture in Czechoslovakia 1948-1968.

NAME OF RESEARCHER

Marie Mrvová

Participant Consent Form

1. I have read and discussed the *Information Sheet* relating to this project about women political prisoners and prison culture in Czechoslovakia 1948-1968, including the part relevant to the storage and future usage of my personal data and the interview.

2. I have had explained to me the purposes of the project and what will be required of me. Any questions I have had have been answered to my satisfaction.

3. I agree to take part in this research and I give my permission for my interview to be recorded.

4. I agree that Marie Mrvová will store my interview securely for the duration of her research.

5. I give permission for Marie Mrvová to use my interview in her research, including publications (paper, online) arising from it.

6. I would like my interview to be archived in the following way:
.....

7. My participation is entirely voluntary and that I have the right to withdraw from the project at any time.

8. I have received a copy of this Consent Form and of the accompanying Information Sheet.

9. **Personal identification: Please tick ONE OPTION ONLY**

- My name **may** be used in publications (print and digital) resulting from this interview
- My name or other identifying descriptions may **not** be used
- My name or other identifying descriptions may be used with the following restrictions:

.....

Name of participant:

Signature:

Date:

Name of researcher: Marie Mrvová

Signature:

Date:

Two copies of this consent form should be completed: One copy to be retained by the participant and one copy to be retained by the researcher

Appendix 3: Signed Participant Consent Forms

Appendix 7

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School of Music Humanities and Media
Research Ethics Review

NÁZEV PROJEKTU

Návrat nežádoucí. Politické vězeňkyně a vězeňská kultura v Československu 1948-1968.

JMÉNO BADATELKY

Marie Mrvová

Formulář souhlasu dotazované/ho

1. Četla jsem a projednala *Informace pro dotazovaného* vztahující se k tomuto projektu o politických vězeňkyních a vězeňské kultuře v Československu 1948-1968, včetně části o uchování a použití mých osobních údajů a rozhovoru v budoucnu.
2. Byl mi vysvětlen účel a cíl projektu a co se po mě vyžaduje. Všechny otázky mi byly uspokojivě zodpovězeny.
3. Souhlasím s účastí na tomto projektu a dávám svolení k nahrávání rozhovoru.
4. Souhlasím s tím, aby byl můj rozhovor bezpečně uložen Marií Mrvovou během jejího výzkumu.
5. Dávám svolení Marii Mrvové k použití mého rozhovoru v jejím výzkumu, včetně dalších publikací (tištěných i digitálních), které mohou vzejít z tohoto projektu.
6. Přeji si, aby můj rozhovor byl archivován následujícím způsobem:
.....*v Marině počítači, osobním disku a CD*.....
7. Má účast je zcela dobrovolná a mám právo od projektu kdykoli odstoupit.
8. Obdržela jsem kopii tohoto *Formuláře souhlasu* a doprovodných *Informací pro dotazované*.

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Research Ethics Review

9. **Osobní identifikace:** Prosím zakroužkujte **POUZE JEDNU MOŽNOST**

- Mé jméno **může** být použito v publikacích (tištěných i digitálních) na základě rozhovoru
- Mé jméno nebo jiné identifikační popisy **nemohou** být použity
 - Mé jméno nebo jiné identifikační popisy mohou být použity s následujícím omezením:
.....

Jméno dotazované/ho: MILUŠKA HAVLŮJOVÁ – ROZ. POMPLOVÁ

Podpis: 

Datum: 20.12.2017

Jméno badatelky: Marie Mrvová

Podpis: 

Datum: 20.12.2017

Za přítomnosti dotazované/ho i badatelky budou zhotoveny dvě kopie tohoto formuláře. Jednu kopii si ponechá dotazovaný/á a druhou badatelka.

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School of Music Humanities and Media
Research Ethics Review

NÁZEV PROJEKTU

Návrat nežádoucím. Politické vězeňkyně a vězeňská kultura v Československu 1948-1968.

JMÉNO BADATELKY

Marie Mrvová

Formulář souhlasu dotazované/ho

1. Četla jsem a projednala *Informace pro dotazovaného* vztahující se k tomuto projektu o politických vězeňkyních a vězeňské kultuře v Československu 1948-1968, včetně části o uchování a použití mých osobních údajů a rozhovoru v budoucnu.
2. Byl mi vysvětlen účel a cíl projektu a co se po mě vyžaduje. Všechny otázky mi byly uspokojivě zodpovězeny.
3. Souhlasím s účastí na tomto projektu a dávám svolení k nahrávání rozhovoru.
4. Souhlasím s tím, aby byl můj rozhovor bezpečně uložen Marií Mrvovou během jejího výzkumu.
5. Dávám svolení Marii Mrvové k použití mého rozhovoru v jejím výzkumu, včetně dalších publikací (tištěných i digitálních), které mohou vzejít z tohoto projektu.
6. Přeji si, aby můj rozhovor byl archivován následujícím způsobem:
V Marině přes Lácu osobním listu C.D.
7. Má účast je zcela dobrovolná a mám právo od projektu kdykoli odstoupit.
8. Obdržela jsem kopii tohoto *Formuláře souhlasu* a doprovodných *Informací pro dotazované*.

University of Huddersfield
School of Music Humanities and Media
Research Ethics Review

9. **Osobní identifikace:** Prosím zakroužkujte **POUZE JEDNU MOŽNOST**

- Mé jméno **může** být použito v publikacích (tištěných i digitálních) na základě rozhovoru
- Mé jméno nebo jiné identifikační popisy **nemohou** být použity
 - Mé jméno nebo jiné identifikační popisy mohou být použity s následujícím omezením:
.....

Jméno dotazované/ho:

Podpis: *Shenkalová Dana Komhá*

Datum: 27.12.2017

Jméno badatelky: Marie Mrvová

Podpis: *MM*

Datum: 27.12.2017

Za přítomnosti dotazované/ho i badatelky budou zhotoveny dvě kopie tohoto formuláře. Jednu kopii si ponechá dotazovaný/á a druhou badatelka.

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NÁZEV PROJEKTU

Návrat nežádoucí. Politické vězeňkyně a vězeňská kultura v Československu 1948-1968.

JMÉNO BADATELKY

Marie Mrvová

Formulář souhlasu dotazované/ho

1. Četla jsem a projednala *Informace pro dotazovaného* vztahující se k tomuto projektu o politických vězeňkyních a vězeňské kultuře v Československu 1948-1968, včetně části o uchování a použití mých osobních údajů a rozhovoru v budoucnu.
2. Byl mi vysvětlen účel a cíl projektu a co se po mě vyžaduje. Všechny otázky mi byly uspokojivě zodpovězeny.
3. Souhlasím s účastí na tomto projektu a dávám svolení k nahrávání rozhovoru.
4. Souhlasím s tím, aby byl můj rozhovor bezpečně uložen Marií Mrvovou během jejího výzkumu.
5. Dávám svolení Marii Mrvové k použití mého rozhovoru v jejím výzkumu, včetně dalších publikací (tištěných i digitálních), které mohou vzejít z tohoto projektu.
6. Přeji si, aby můj rozhovor byl archivován následujícím způsobem:
..... v počítači Muvini, v obvodu disku a na CD
7. Má účast je zcela dobrovolná a mám právo od projektu kdykoli odstoupit.
8. Obdržela jsem kopii tohoto *Formuláře souhlasu* a doprovodných *Informací pro dotazované*.

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9. Osobní identifikace: Prosím zakroužkujte **POUZE JEDNU MOŽNOST**

- Mé jméno **může** být použito v publikacích (tištěných i digitálních) na základě rozhovoru
- Mé jméno nebo jiné identifikační popisy **nemohou** být použity
- Mé jméno nebo jiné identifikační popisy mohou být použity s následujícím omezením:
.....

Jméno dotazované/ho:

ANNA REMIGIE ČEŠÍKOVÁ, SCB
Anna Remigia

Podpis:

Datum:

28.12.2017

Jméno badatelky: Marie Mrvová

Podpis:

Datum:

MM

28.12.2017

Za přítomnosti dotazované/ho i badatelky budou zhotoveny dvě kopie tohoto formuláře. Jednu kopii si ponechá dotazovaný/á a druhou badatelka.

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School of Music Humanities and Media
Research Ethics Review

NÁZEV PROJEKTU

Návrat nežádoucí. Politické vězeňkyně a vězeňská kultura v Československu 1948-1968.

JMÉNO BADATELKY

Marie Mrvová

Formulář souhlasu dotazované/ho

1. Četla jsem a projednala *Informace pro dotazovaného* vztahující se k tomuto projektu o politických vězeňkyních a vězeňské kultuře v Československu 1948-1968, včetně části o uchování a použití mých osobních údajů a rozhovoru v budoucnu.
2. Byl mi vysvětlen účel a cíl projektu a co se po mě vyžaduje. Všechny otázky mi byly uspokojivě zodpovězeny.
3. Souhlasím s účastí na tomto projektu a dávám svolení k nahrávání rozhovoru.
4. Souhlasím s tím, aby byl můj rozhovor bezpečně uložen Marií Mrvovou během jejího výzkumu.
5. Dávám svolení Marii Mrvové k použití mého rozhovoru v jejím výzkumu, včetně dalších publikací (tištěných i digitálních), které mohou vzejít z tohoto projektu.
6. Přeji si, aby můj rozhovor byl archivován následujícím způsobem:
..... v manuálně psané počítači, osobním disku a na CD.
7. Má účast je zcela dobrovolná a mám právo od projektu kdykoli odstoupit.
8. Obdržela jsem kopii tohoto *Formuláře souhlasu* a doprovodných *Informací pro dotazované*.

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Research Ethics Review

9. Osobní identifikace: Prosím zakroužkujte **POUZE JEDNU MOŽNOST**

Mé jméno **může** být použito v publikacích (tištěných i digitálních) na základě rozhovoru

- Mé jméno nebo jiné identifikační popisy **nemohou** být použity
- Mé jméno nebo jiné identifikační popisy mohou být použity s následujícím omezením:

.....

Jméno dotazované/ho:

Podpis: 

Datum: 29.12.2017

Jméno badatelky: Marie Mrvová

Podpis: 

Datum: 29.12.2017

Za přítomnosti dotazované/ho i badatelky budou zhotoveny dvě kopie tohoto formuláře. Jednu kopii si ponechá dotazovaný/á a druhou badatelka.

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NÁZEV PROJEKTU

Návrat nežádoucí. Politické vězeňkyně a vězeňská kultura v Československu 1948-1968.

JMÉNO BADATELKY

Marie Mrvová

Formulář souhlasu dotazované/ho

1. Četla jsem a projednala *Informace pro dotazovaného* vztahující se k tomuto projektu o politických vězeňkyních a vězeňské kultuře v Československu 1948-1968, včetně části o uchování a použití mých osobních údajů a rozhovoru v budoucnu.
2. Byl mi vysvětlen účel a cíl projektu a co se po mě vyžaduje. Všechny otázky mi byly uspokojivě zodpovězeny.
3. Souhlasím s účastí na tomto projektu a dávám svolení k nahrávání rozhovoru.
4. Souhlasím s tím, aby byl můj rozhovor bezpečně uložen Marií Mrvovou během jejího výzkumu.
5. Dávám svolení Marii Mrvové k použití mého rozhovoru v jejím výzkumu, včetně dalších publikací (tištěných i digitálních), které mohou vzejít z tohoto projektu.
6. Přeji si, aby můj rozhovor byl archivován následujícím způsobem:
v Marině počítači, osobním disku a na CD
7. Má účast je zcela dobrovolná a mám právo od projektu kdykoli odstoupit.



Appendix 7

University of Huddersfield
School of Music Humanities and Media
Research Ethics Review

8. Obdržela jsem kopii tohoto *Formuláře souhlasu* a doprovodných *Informací pro dotazované*. X

9. **Osobní identifikace:** Prosím zakroužkujte **POUZE JEDNU MOŽNOST**

- Mé jméno **může** být použito v publikacích (tištěných i digitálních) na základě rozhovoru
- Mé jméno nebo jiné identifikační popisy **nemohou** být použity
 - Mé jméno nebo jiné identifikační popisy mohou být použity s následujícím omezením:

.....
 ...

Jméno dotazované/ho:

Podpis: *Chalvaynski'*

Datum: *29.12.2017*

Jméno badatelky: Marie Mrvová

Podpis: *MM*

Datum: *29.12.2017*

Za přítomnosti dotazované/ho i badatelky budou zhotoveny dvě kopie tohoto formuláře. Jednu kopii si ponechá dotazovaný/á a druhou badatelka.

Appendix 7

University of Huddersfield
School of Music Humanities and Media
Research Ethics Review

NÁZEV PROJEKTU

Návrat nežádoucí. Politické vězeňkyně a vězeňská kultura v Československu 1948-1968.

JMÉNO BADATELKY

Marie Mrvová

Formulář souhlasu dotazované/ho

1. Četla jsem a projednala *Informace pro dotazovaného* vztahující se k tomuto projektu o politických vězeňkyních a vězeňské kultuře v Československu 1948-1968, včetně části o uchování a použití mých osobních údajů a rozhovoru v budoucnu.
2. Byl mi vysvětlen účel a cíl projektu a co se po mě vyžaduje. Všechny otázky mi byly uspokojivě zodpovězeny.
3. Souhlasím s účastí na tomto projektu a dávám svolení k nahrávání rozhovoru.
4. Souhlasím s tím, aby byl můj rozhovor bezpečně uložen Marií Mrvovou během jejího výzkumu.
5. Dávám svolení Marii Mrvové k použití mého rozhovoru v jejím výzkumu, včetně dalších publikací (tištěných i digitálních), které mohou vzejít z tohoto projektu.
6. Přeji si, aby můj rozhovor byl archivován následujícím způsobem:
 v ~~os~~ *Marie* ~~půltači~~ *osobním disku a na CD*
7. Má účast je zcela dobrovolná a mám právo od projektu kdykoli odstoupit.



Appendix 7

University of Huddersfield
School of Music Humanities and Media
Research Ethics Review

8. Obdržela jsem kopii tohoto *Formuláře souhlasu* a doprovodných *Informací pro dotazované*. X

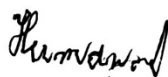
9. **Osobní identifikace:** Prosím zakroužkujte **POUZE JEDNU MOŽNOST**

- Mé jméno **může** být použito v publikacích (tištěných i digitálních) na základě rozhovoru
- Mé jméno nebo jiné identifikační popisy **nemohou** být použity
- Mé jméno nebo jiné identifikační popisy mohou být použity s následujícím omezením:

.....
...

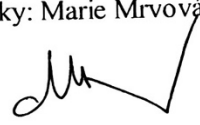
Jméno dotazované/ho: LUDMILA HERMANOVÁ

Podpis:

Datum: 3.1.2018 

Jméno badatelky: Marie Mrvová

Podpis:

Datum: 3.1.2018 

Za přítomnosti dotazované/ho i badatelky budou zhotoveny dvě kopie tohoto formuláře. Jednu kopii si ponechá dotazovaný/á a druhou badatelka.

Appendix 4: Visual materials

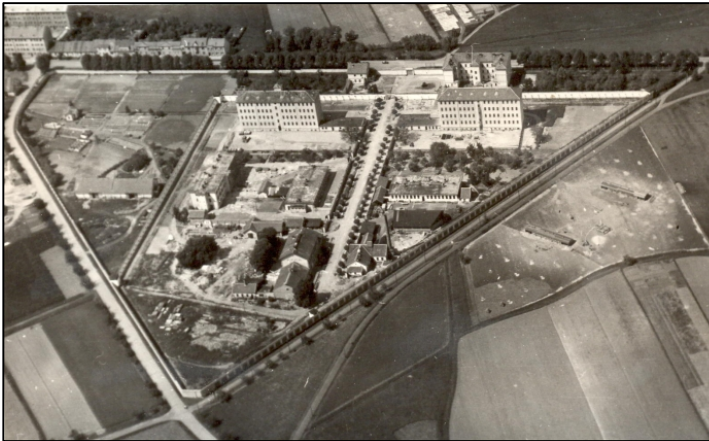


Figure 1 - Pardubice prison, beginning of the 1960s, aerial photograph, Archive of Pardubice prison



Figure 2 - Women political prisoners sewing shirts, 1950s, Archive of Pardubice prison



Figure 3 - Women political prisoners, the beginning of the 1960s, Archive of Pardubice prison



Figure 4 - Ružena Vacková in her late 20s, National Archive in Prague

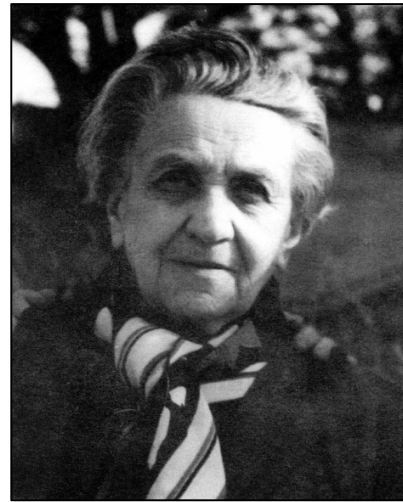


Figure 5 - Ružena Vacková in the 1980s, Archive of Gjurič's family, Memory of Nations.)



Figure 6 - Prison photo of Ružena Vacková, 1952, National Archive in Prague



Figure 7 - Prison photo of Nina Svobodová, 1949, National Archive in Prague



Figure 8 - Nina Svobodová while arrested again in 1961, National Archive in Prague



Figure 9 - Albína Glücksmannová, pedagogue at Academy of Political and Social Sciences in Prague, later 1940s, Literary Archive of the Museum of Czech Literature in Prague (PNP)



Figure 10 - Albína Palkosková-Wiesenbergerová, Archive of Tereza Wagnerová, Literary Archive of the Museum of Czech Literature in Prague (PNP)



Figure 11 - Prison photo of Albína Glücksmannová, 1949, National Archive in Prague



Figure 12 - 18 year old Marie Vlčková, Archive of Eva Chaloupská-Kovalová



Figure 13 - Marie Kovalová, 1991, Archive of Eva Chaloupská-Kovalová



Figure 14 - Prison photo of Marie Kovalová, 1952, National Archive in Prague



Figure 15 - Marie and Josef Koval with their two sons Miroslav (on the left) and Vladimír (on the right), after Marie's release in 1960, Archive of Eva Chaloupská-Kovalová



Figure 16 - Antonie (Vojtěcha) Hasmandová, 1933, Archive of The Sisters of Mercy of Saint Borromeo congregation



Figure 17 - SM Vojtěcha Hasmandová, General Superior of The Sisters of Mercy of Saint Borromeo congregation, Archive of The Sisters of Mercy of Saint Borromeo congregation



Figure 18 - Prison photo of Antonie Vojtěcha Hasmandová, 1953, Archive of The Sisters of Mercy of Saint Borromeo congregation



Figure 19 - Prison photo of Vojtěcha Hasmandová, Pardubice, National Archive in Prague



*Figure 20 - Hana Johnová (later Truncová),
Archive of Hana Truncová*



*Figure 21 - Hana Truncová, 2017, Archive of
Marie Mrvová*



Figure 22 - Prison photo of Hana Johnová, 1951, The Security Service Archive in Prague (ABS)



*Figure 23 - Dagmar Šimková, Archive of Jan
Hübner*



*Figure 24 - Dagmar Šimková in Australia,
Archive of Blažena Seifertová*



Figure 25 - Prison photo of Dagmar Šimková, 1952, National Archive in Prague



Figure 26 - Prison photo of Božena Kuklová-Jišová, 1954, National Archive in Prague

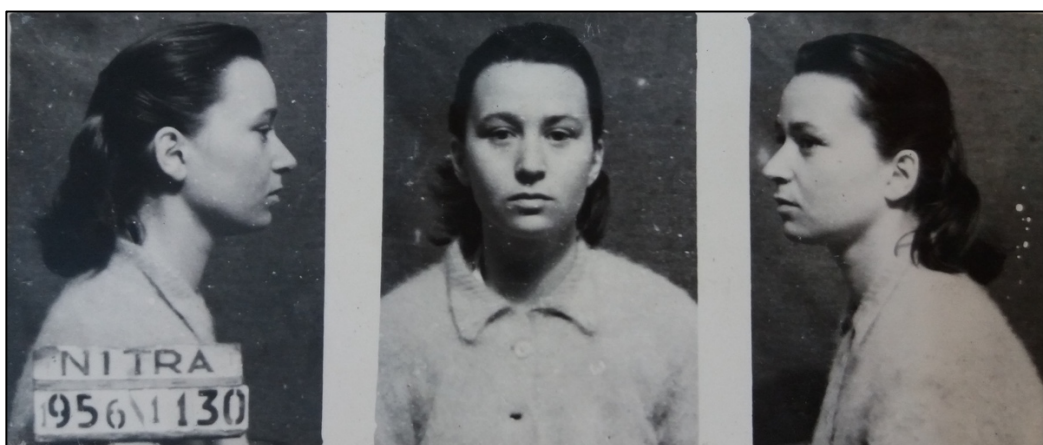


Figure 27 - Prison photo of Božena Jišová-Kuklová, n.d., National Archive in Prague



Figure 28 - Miluška Havlůjová, née Pomplová, Archive of Miluška Havlůjová



Figure 29 - Miluška Havlůjová, 2017, Archive of Marie Mrvová



Figure 30 - Prison photo of Miluška Havlůjová, National Archive in Prague



Figure 31 - Miluška with her son Tomáš, March 1955, Archive of Miluška Havlůjová



Figure 32 - Prison photo of Drahomíra Strouhalová, 1950, The State Security Archive (ABS) in Prague



Figure 33 - Drahomíra Strouhalová, Archive of Drahomíra Strouhalová



Figure 34 - Ludmila Olšaníková (later Hermanová), Archive of Ludmila Hermanová

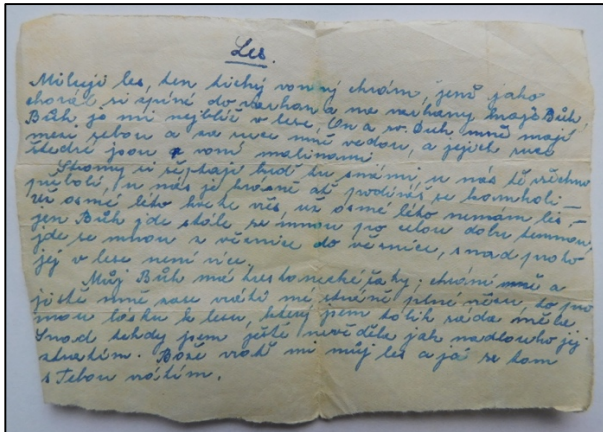


Figure 35 - Poem Forest by Marie Kovalová, composed between 1954 and 1959, Archive of Eva Chaloupská-Kovalová



Figure 36 - Drawing 'The cell no. 66, my entry 10/20/1949' by Miroslava Čermáková, Museum of Resistance, Příbram

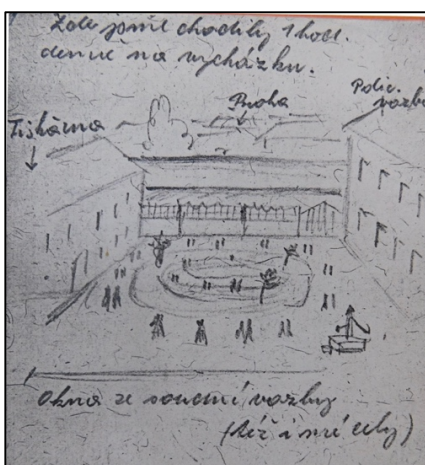


Figure 37 - Prison courtyard in Litoměřice, 1952 by MČ, Museum of Resistance, Příbram



Figure 38 - First visit of family in prison, 1949 by MČ, Museum of Resistance, Příbram

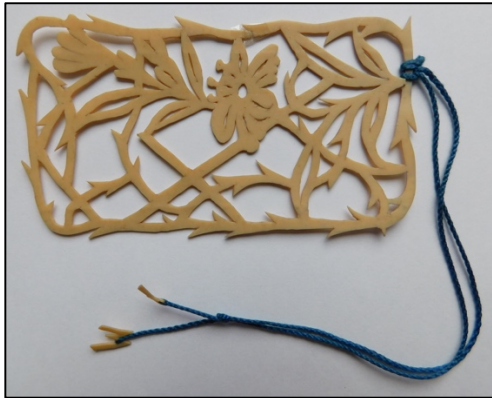


Figure 39 - Bookmark made of toothpaste tube by Marie Kovalová, Archive of Eva Chaloupská-Kovalová



Figure 40 - Nude Woman made of toothpaste tube by Drahomíra Strouhalová, Archive of Drahomíra Strouhalová



Figure 41 - Doll imitating the image of prisoner by unknown female author, n.d., Museum of Resistance, Příbram



Figure 42 - Doll made of flax, cannabis and threads by Hana Truncová in Jilemnice prison, 1952, Archive of Hana Truncová, photo: Archive of Marie Mrvová



Figure 43 - Donkey made of felt, artificial leather and threads by Hana Truncová, Archive of Hana Truncová



Figure 44 - Fish made of hairbrush, probably of resin material, by Marie Kovalová



Figure 45 - Handkerchief with an embroidery note "To my dear mum" by Drahomíra Strouhalová, 1952, Archive of Drahomíra Strouhalová



Figure 46 - Two tiny books of poems and excerpts from literature (on the left), and prayer (on the right) by Marie Kovalová, Archive of Eva Chaloupská-Kovalová

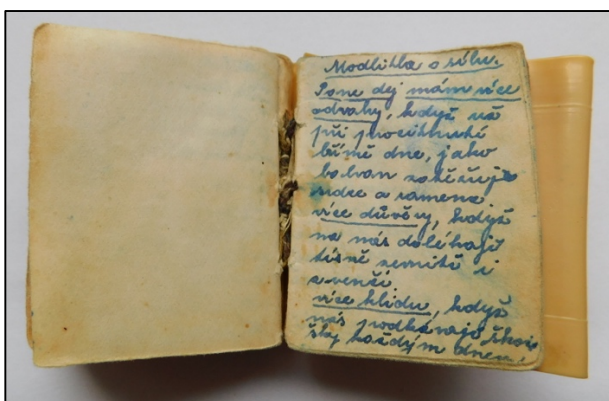


Figure 47 - Prayer for strength written in prison by Marie Kovalová, archive of Eva Chaloupská-Kovalová

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