

**Research Report for the Work Completed in the Open Society Archives in Budapest
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My research stay at OSA (Budapest) was part of a larger project dealing with the scientific institutions, policy of science and changing image of scientists in Czechoslovakia during the era of socialist dictatorship. I'm mostly interested in the 1950s and early 1960s. These first 15 years of the communist regime represent the era which was decisive for the creation of (in communist terminology) the "national scientific-research basis".

Fundamental part of this development was the declared break-up with the so called bourgeois science and subsequent program of creation of a new generation of socialist intelligentsia. In 1949, the leadership of Communist Party of Czechoslovakia declared the existence of loyal intelligentsia educated in the spirit of Marxism-Leninism among one of the ten crucial conditions for the successful building of socialism. In this sense, political elites considered the education of the future scientific elites an eminently political objective.

The process of sovietisation of science in the Eastern bloc had a form of adopting the institutional patterns existing in the USSR. Science became a "productive force" strictly subjected to the state plans and was also considered an important component of the contest between socialist and capitalist world. Science was under a close ideological scrutiny, and all scientific institutions were subjected to the state and Party authorities. On the other hand, the investments into science and especially the newly established scientific institutions in the Czechoslovakia at this time were unprecedented in the whole 20th century.

The question of relations between intellectual elites including scientists and the Communist Party is the crucial one. These connections were formed according to a mix of pragmatic decisions, ideological arguments and efforts to emulate external models. In a socialist dictatorship where everything was considered "political" the difference between scientist, politicians and ideologist could be particularly blurry. In this sense, the image of scientist could (and did) vary between celebrated pride of the regime, loyal apparatchik, indispensable expert, important Party ideologist or unreliable intellectual.

My research plan for my one month stay at OSA, was to learn how its archive holdings reflect this ambiguous image of scientist in the socialist dictatorship. The main research objective of my research project was to find out how the analyst departments, informants and reporters of Radio Free Europe perceived the role and status of the scientist in Czechoslovakia from 1948 till the beginning of the so called liberalization process in the late 1960s.

My research focused on the Records of Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty Research Institute, Czechoslovak unit. These were the Old subject files for the years 1951-1961 and 1962-1966 (300-30-2, 300-30-3) and the Czechoslovak subject files in the subfond US Office (300-7-7).

I surveyed the topics of science, intellectuals, universities, education but also purges, deviations and prosecutions. Very useful were also the themes of Czech-Slovaks relation, a highly political problem with equal high involvement of the intellectual elites. I used the on-line documents in Information Items dealing with the Polish and Hungarian cases in order to get materials for comparison regarding the general approaches towards my central research topic.

The most important aspect of RFE material regarding my research was the unique perspective of its documents, based on the very specific approach RFE analysts towards the acquiring the desired information. During my previous research, I went through the basic archive sources in Slovakia and Czech Republic. This means I have already obtained the overall knowledge of the general development regarding the science policy, institution and perception of scientists in the communist Czechoslovakia. During my research stay in OSA, I was looking for documents providing different perspectives on the known problems, events and personalities.

Among the most valuable documents are the personal and professional characterizations of members of Czechoslovak scientific elites acquired from émigrés in the 1950s and 1960s. The informants are usually students or young researchers, speaking about their superiors or professors. Despite the obvious subjectivity of such sources, this is a unique material; completely different from the official biographical information or contemporary cadre materials which can be found in domestic archives. Very useful are the newspaper clippings and especially transcripts of the Czechoslovak radio broadcasts dealing with the problem of science and policy of science in this country.

Regarding the image of scientist in Czechoslovakia, but also in the Eastern bloc in general, the RFE perception of this issue is visibly affected by its ideological stance in the Cold war. It often resulted in black and white type of approach towards the development in the socialist countries. The perception of scientists in the 1950s and 1960s is changing accordingly. During the first purges at the Universities right after 1948 when Communist Party seized power in Czechoslovakia, the affected scientific elites were perceived as the possible basis of the anti-communist opposition. On the other hand, the group of loyal Marxist scientists are generally described as less competent, “communist fanatics” or at least pure opportunists. The sources very often describe these people as communist puppets without free will of their own (typical are the accusations of alcoholism). In the analysis created by the RFE staff, the Party membership is seen as moral flaw e. g. “He is a communist, but still a nice man”. However, this clear, comfortable categorization starts to be highly problematic after the changes of the science policy in Czechoslovakia during the second half of the 1950s.

At this time, the informants started to admit that the position of scientists in Czechoslovakia (but also Poland and Hungary) changed profoundly. According to one report, successful scientists who “play according to the rules” have the best working conditions and high income. There are testimonies directly from scientists, saying that their living standard is very good, and they have no reasons to protest. The overall image of scientist in the eyes of RFE redaction changed accordingly, and the whole group started to be regarded as opportunists or as people more or less corrupted by the regime (contrary to the university students, still regarded as one of the main opposition groups).

In their rigid anticommunism, the RFE analysts failed (or did not want to) to grasp the positive modernization aspects of communism which were particularly visible especially in such undeveloped countries like Slovakia. According to this approach they refused to acknowledge the fact that the statements of the interviewed scientist such as “things are much better than before the war” are not results of indoctrination but a description of reality.

The main topics of RFE were, in fact, mostly “dictated” by communist mass media. In some cases, the analysts more or less blindly followed the general political discourse while omitting some decisive events. E. g. Czechoslovak unit involves a massive amount of documents dealing with the problem of Marxist revisionism among Czechoslovak philosophers.

However, the massive political purges, which were under way at Czechoslovak and Slovak Academies of Sciences, with less press coverage nearly completely eluded attention the RFE editorial office.

In conclusion, the RFE fonds regarding the scientists and policy of science in the Czechoslovak socialist dictatorship, offer not only an “outside view” on the Czechoslovak scientific elites in 1950s and 1960s. Because of RFE’s heavy involvement in the ideological conflict of the Cold war, the gathered sources present an ideologically and politically biased approach towards the subject of socialist science. In this sense, the research done in the OSA, together with my previous research in the domestic archives constitutes an interesting comparative topic regarding the various images of scientist in the Czechoslovak socialist dictatorship. Therefore, I assess my stay at the OSA as very positive and useful for my research project. I would like to thank to OSA staff for their help, to Kati Gadoros for her assistance in organizing my stay in Budapest and to my supervisor Ioana Macrea-Toma for her advises regarding my research.