

## "Against Myself": Ego Documents in the Archives of the State Security

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The present study is concerned with the issue of ego documents that were created in the second half of the 1940s and at the turn of the 1950s at the request of the Commission of Interior of the Slovak National Council<sup>1</sup> in Bratislava, Slovakia. The documents are of a strong ideological character. Their authors, who were of Jewish origins, were employees of the State Security Service, who were active in the communist partisan resistance movements during the World War II. After it ended, with the support of the Communist Party they joined the State Security Service, the repressive body of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia (KSČ). Their mission was to promote the interests of the Communist Party in the security forces. In the early 1950s along with other members of the State Security Service, they were convicted in a fabricated political trial. This study analyses how the authors of the biographies consciously worked with the contemporary ideological discourse and constructed a self-image that corresponded to contemporary demands. It answers the questions of why and how they sought to distance themselves from their origins, as well as their family and religious background.

This paper also responds to long-standing debates among scholars regarding the diversity of ego documents, their use and interpretation in the historical and social sciences. The aim of the study is to draw attention to the specificity of working with documents produced under totalitarian conditions, which primarily testify to the era

1 The Commission of the Slovak National Council for Internal Affairs. The Slovak National Council (Slovenská národná rada – SNR) was the representative of legislative, governmental and executive power in Slovakia. The Presidency of the SNR was subordinated to the Board of Commissioners who led the various Commissions. The Commission for Internal Affairs was also in charge of the state-security forces, which included the State Security Service as a repressive organ of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia. In archival documents from a later period, its name is already mentioned as the Commission of the Interior (in Bratislava).

that constructs the subjectivity of authors rather than reflecting their individuality. In terms of methodology, the study is based on a discursive analysis of source materials.

*Keywords:* ego documents, individuality, Communist regime, Jewishness, self-representation, self-construction

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## Introduction

The purpose of this paper is to problematize the nature of ego documents that have been created for the State Security Service in the second half of the 1940s and at the turn of the 1950s in Slovakia. The study is based on the analysis of the biographies that were written during employment at the Commission of Interior in Bratislava or (from June 1950) for the Ministry of National Security in Prague,<sup>2</sup> and which eventually became part of the investigation files for the fabricated political trial<sup>3</sup> against the so-called Zionists and bourgeois nationalists<sup>4</sup> (the case of Oskar Valášek<sup>5</sup> and his associates). This trial took place with the exclusion of the public on 7–9

- 2 In 1949–1950, a major reorganisation of the national security forces took place. After the establishment of the Ministry of National Security in Prague (23 May 1950), they came exclusively under its administration.
- 3 Political show trials were taking place in Czechoslovakia from the beginning of the 1950's. They were directed against perceived or real opponents of the communist regime, as well as against members of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia. The most famous is the trial against the so-called Anti-State Conspiracy Centre, which was supposedly headed by the former General Secretary of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia, after whom it was named: Rudolf Slánský and his associates. It took place in November 1952. Of the fourteen accused, eleven were of Jewish origin. Eleven of the accused received the death penalty, three received life imprisonment (Kaplan, 1992; Löbl, 1968).
- 4 The political trial was linked to the aforementioned Slánský trial, which was intended to expose traitors within the Communist Party. It involved members of the National Security Corps (and a few executives) from Slovakia who had their own idea of how the State Security Service should be run in Slovakia. In this way, the Central Committee of the Communist Party in Prague succeeded in removing inconvenient party members and officials in Slovakia and (in this case) gaining control of the Slovak security forces.
- 5 Oskar Valášek (birth name Weiss, 1921), after whom the trial is named, worked from 1949 to 1951 at the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Slovakia as a security officer. He was rather unremarkable in the trial, and the trial was named after him probably because, as security officer, he fell under the authority of the General Secretary of the Communist Party of Slovakia Rudolf Slánský, who was convicted in the aforementioned show trial (Štefanica, 2017: 113–114; Kaplan, 1992). Seven of those convicted in the Oskar Valášek and his associates trial came from Jewish backgrounds: Matej Bel (birth name Móric Blumenfeld, 1914), Šimon Čermák (birth name Porges, 1924), Juraj Glaser (1920), Mikuláš Horský (birth name Stern, 1915), Martin Kraus (1920) and Mikuláš Fodor (1928). The remaining three convicts, who held the most important positions in the Committee, came from the majority population: Viktor Sedmík (1916), Teodor Baláž (1917) and Rudolf Viktorin (1898). All of these were convicted to heavy sentences of between 23 and 16 years, a large part of which they served. In 1963 they were fully acquitted and gradually rehabilitated.

December 1953. This was a group of ten so-called Zionists and bourgeois nationalists<sup>6</sup> who, in the years between the liberation (1945) and their arrest (1951; Mikuláš Fodor was arrested in 1952), worked for the State Security Service (Štátna bezpečnosť – ŠtB) in Slovakia (for more see Štelmachovič Bumová, 2019).

In this case study, we focus on the ego documents of two authors: Matej Bel (1914; birth name Móric Blumenfeld<sup>7</sup>) and his younger colleague Šimon (Ladislav) Čermák (1924<sup>8</sup>; birth name Šimon Porges).<sup>9</sup> These protagonists are especially intriguing because they came from a Jewish background and held high positions within the State Security Service at the Commission of Interior in Bratislava. They had been members of the security forces since their post-war formation in 1945 (and had a shared common past in the uprising during the World War II).

Our intention is to show that the personal biographies of the employees, which were intended for the State Security Service and the Communist Party, constitute specific source material for analysis. The authors created them at the request of their employer, the Commission of Interior in Bratislava or Ministry of National Security in Prague. These are written sources created by people who were also directly involved in the creation of post-war social relations, whether in the security forces, in their own neighbourhood or in the Communist Party. They were aware of the ideological expectations of the Communist Party, and they used their knowledge or political capital artfully in their self-representation. In their biographies, they used propagandistic language and used the required phrases to fulfil the expectations that the Communist Party placed in the personality of a “conscious communist” or “socialist man”. At the same time, they knew and tried to conceal the very information that could harm them in their positions in the security forces and structures of the Communist Party.

In the following pages, we briefly outline some of the currently debated discourses in the social sciences regarding ego documents. In the next section, we point out the

6 Since the 1950's, the ideological definition of Zionism in the Soviet bloc was based on the theory of a worldwide Jewish conspiracy. “Zionism” was understood as a form of “reactionary nationalist ideology of the Jewish haute bourgeoisie”, which primarily defended its own interests. At the same time, this ideology was to be linked to imperialist circles within Western countries. Bourgeois nationalism was understood in the same way, as the opposite of proletarian internationalism, that is, as a bourgeois policy that preferred the national interests of one nation over another.

7 After World War II, many members of the Jewish community changed their surnames. The reasons were various: some chose to leave the Jewish community and change their personal identity, some kept the surname which they used while hiding during the World War II, others wanted to hide their Jewish origin or to get rid of their “non-Slovak” surname, etc. The latter option was also stated by Matej Bel and Šimon Čermák.

8 Šimon (Ladislav) Čermák was born in 1924, but in his personal documents he gives his year of birth as 1923. At the time of his enlistment in the National Security Corps, he was not yet the prescribed age of 21 (Medvecký, Sivoš, Jašek, 2012: 173).

9 Furthermore, Mikuláš Horský (birth name Stern, 1915), who worked at the Passport Department of the Commission of Interior in Bratislava, was convicted in the trial. The remaining three defendants, Juraj Glaser and Martin Kraus, also came from a Jewish background, but were they were not participants in the uprising, nor were they pre-war/war members of the Communist Party and held lower positions. Mikuláš Fodor took part in the uprising at the age of 16, but he did not join the State Security Services until after February 1948.

specificity of personal source materials that were produced under pressure from the State Security Service (and penal forces) in the second half of the 1940s and in the late 1950s in post-war Czechoslovakia, as well as the way to use such sources.

## Ego Documents

The term “ego document” was introduced by the Dutch historian Jacob Presser in 1958 (Presser, 1958; see also Greyerz, 2017: 277). He is the author of a two-volume history monograph written on the basis of testimonies of Dutch Jews describing the period of German occupation (Presser, 1958). While analysing the testimonies, he was already aware of a number of problems arising from the nature of such material, ranging from the inability of the witnesses to testify about certain experienced events to testimonies influenced by contemporary historiographical knowledge. The Dutch school, already under the leadership of Rudolf Dekker, concentrated abundant material from the Dutch milieu in the 1980's (Dekker, 2002). It was followed by the Swiss school led by Kaspar von Greyerz at the University of Basel, who focused on the era ranging from the early modern period to the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

In Austria in the early 1980s, The Collection of Biographical Records (*Dokumentation von lebensgeschichtlicher Aufzeichnungen*) was founded at the initiative of Michael Mitterauer of the University of Vienna. In 1989, in connection with the organisation of an exhibition commemorating the history of women's suffrage, the archive titled The Collection of Women's Personal Papers (*Sammlung Frauennachlässe*), was established in Vienna. Its collections contain documents mainly from the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries (Voľanská, 2016: 77–78). Partial research on inventories containing written sources from the earlier 15<sup>th</sup> to 17<sup>th</sup> centuries have also been conducted in Austria, e.g. by Harald Tersch (1998) (as in Greyerz, 2017: 274), as well as in Germany,<sup>10</sup> e.g. by Benigna von Krusenstjern (1997) (as in Greyerz, 2017: 274).

Similar research has also taken off in France, where research on “*livres de raison*” has been ongoing for a long time (e.g. Silvie Mouysset, 2007 – as in Greyerz, 2017: 274), as well as in Italy and Spain (Greyerz, 2017: 273–275; Fulbrook, Rublack, 2010: 264).<sup>11</sup>

In Slovakia, ethnologists Ľubica Herzánová (née Voľanská) (Herzánová, 2003, 2004; Voľanská, 2016; Botíková, Voľanská, 2023), who has been focusing on the research of ageism, Marta Botíková (2023), Hana Hlôšková (1998, 1999) and sociologist Zuzana Kusá (1992, 1996, 1997) have been involved in the research of ego documents the most. However, these are individual achievements of scientists, while no thorough research into archival inventories of written sources has been carried

10 In Germany, the term “ego document” was introduced by Winfried Schulze, who proposed the extension of this notion to all personal written documents, regardless of whether they originate from free will or compulsion (Schulze, *Ed.*, 1996: 11 ff.; Greyerz, 2017: 280).

11 This issue is discussed in detail by Kaspar von Greyerz in his study titled “Ego-Documents: The Last Word?” (2017).

out yet. Perhaps the most concentrated inventories of personal writings can be found at the Literary Archive Collections of the Slovak National Library in Martin.

Ego documents, self-narratives, as well as testimonies to the self (Fulbrook, Rublack, 2010: 263; Schulze, *Ed.*, 1996), are a constantly debated source for socio-historical and anthropological research. Discussions focus on the epistemological meaning of the term itself, on the issue of how to situate ego documents within established source classification schemes, as well as on the theoretical and conceptual underpinnings associated with the notion of “ego documents”. Meanwhile, authors with a background in other disciplines, such as neuroscience or cognitive psychology, problematise the relationship between emotion and memory that such source material entails (Švaříčková Slabáková, 2018: 29; Matt, 2011: 117 ff. and others).

There is an ongoing wide debate about the very term “ego document”. In its broadest sense, it can be understood as a source “providing an account of, or revealing privileged information about, the ‘self’ who produced it.” (Fulbrook, Rublack, 2010: 263). Some authors have proposed to extend the notion of ego documents to all forms of voluntary, involuntary or forced self-thematization, such as court documents, tax assessments, as well as documents of political significance – petitions, etc. (Schulze, *Ed.*, 1996: 21). There is an ongoing fundamental debate about the use of this term, e.g. on the issue of designation of written documents dating from the earlier periods of the early modern period. Here it is difficult to determine to what extent the document is directly connected to the author, since many were written by another person, etc. (Greyerz, 2017: 278).

Meanwhile, ego documents have long been viewed as sources that, from a micro-level perspective, provide insight into the subjective experience of a particular historical period, time or event, and the individual’s interpretation of it. However, research has long sought to problematize this rather simplistic view. They emphasize that the writers of ego documents were also responding to the socio-political and historical contexts in which they found themselves at a particular time and place. In their study, Mary Fulbrook and Ulinka Rublack pointed out that several prominent philosophers and sociologists of the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries had also stressed the need to note “the ways in which historical subjectivities are shaped and transformed by the structures through which people construct their lives...” (Fulbrook, Rublack, 2010: 263). The authors point out that it is important to focus on “a key issue that could be conveniently summarised as the problem of ‘structures and subjectivities’”. They also draw on analyses of several philosophical and sociological works from the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries such as Karl Marx, Max Weber, and Norbert Elias that “registered the ways in which historical subjectivities are shaped and transformed by the structures through which people make their lives, long before ego-documents became a direct focus of analysis as a distinctive type of source” (Fulbrook, Rublack, 2010: 263).

As the aforementioned authors argue, memoirs and diaries, autobiographies, oral histories and biographical narratives, as well as forced accounts produced for example in trials, can be considered as representations of the self. Meanwhile, the terms that individuals use to describe themselves, the ways in which they choose

to structure and to account for their past lives, the values, norms, and common-sense explanations, are a reaction to and a product of the times in which they lived (Fulbrook, Rublack, 2010: 267; see also Engelhart, 1990: 221; Voľanská, 2016: 88–91).

Some of the tasks that has been keeping scholars busy recently is the attempt to reconnect structure and agency while analysing the ways in which the agency itself is historically constructed or influenced (Fulbrook, Rublack, 2010: 263). More recently, theorists from a wide range of perspectives have struggled not merely to reconnect structure and agency, but to look at the ways in which agency is itself historically constructed, coloured and inflected.

When interpreting ego documents, it is therefore also important to emphasize the addressee, or, as in our case, the social group or institution for which the document was created.

The problematization of the very notion of the “ego document” primarily concerns the period before the 20<sup>th</sup> century. The ego documents that are accessible to scholars from that period can be contextualized with a number of available sources, including other ego documents. Since there is a relatively vast array of such resources available, they offer us some access to the inner workings of an ego, as Kaspar von Greyerz suggests. In contrast, texts from the early modern period that deal with self-narratives are very sporadic and do not allow sufficient access to the ego. They tell more about groups (e.g. the family and its hierarchical structure, social ties within and outside the family) than about the individuals themselves (Greyerz, 2017: 280–281; see also Jancke, 2015: 347–348; Engelhart, 1990: 221 ff.).<sup>12</sup>

## Ego Documents from the Environment of State Security Service

In this section we would like to problematize the use of the term ego document to denote biographical documents that were created in the environment of the State Security Service in Slovakia. In this case, these are documents that were collected by the state-security forces in connection with the aforementioned political trial of Oskar Valášek and his associates.

The analysed biographical documents of Matej Bel (1914) and his younger colleague Šimon (Ladislav) Čermák (1924), which contain personal and criminal files, are of a threefold nature. Part of them is written (more or less) voluntarily as a personal biography for the purposes of the state institution of which they were employees, while some of the sources are forced ego documents. These were created for the purposes of the trial which took place between 7 and 9 December 1953. Others come from the prison environment and were created on request for the prison system.

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12 Kaspar von Greyerz recommends applying the terms “self-narrative” or “personal narrative” to early modern texts (Greyerz, 2017: 281).



The last category consists of texts created at the initiative of their writers already in a censored prison environment. They were intended for family members or representatives of the judicial and political authorities.

For the purposes of this study, we have primarily analysed the first category of ego documents (biographical questionnaires), which were written between 1946 and 1950 and biographies, which were produced between 1948 and 1950 – i.e. after the communist takeover of political power in February 1948. This was at the time of the formation and gradual imposition of communist ideology into the social and political structures of the Czechoslovak Republic.

The autobiographies were included in the personal files and questionnaires of employees of the Commission of the Interior in Bratislava or the Ministry of National Security in Prague. They can be found in documents of civil servants from the period of the interwar Czechoslovak Republic (1918–1938; the so-called First Republic / 1<sup>st</sup> Czechoslovakia). It is the questionnaires or personal data of public and state administration employees (and gradually from 1948 onwards all workers) required by the regime that also give us an idea of the importance of the information on which the state placed emphasis. For instance, documents from the Jewish religious communities from the interwar era reveal that the knowledge of the Slovak language and/or the nationality of the job applicant came to the fore. This attitude of the state, which at the same time suppressed the autonomy<sup>13</sup> of Jewish religious communities, was related to the enforcement of the usage of the state languages (Slovak and Czech) in public life. It also favoured the declared Czech, Slovak (or Czechoslovak) nationality, as opposed to the German, Hungarian or other nationalities of the applicant, in obtaining a position in the state administration, as well as in the environment of Jewish religious communities (Bumová, 2014: 4). The First Czechoslovak Republic, despite declaring its adherence to democratic values, openly positively discriminated the Czech-Slovak nationality and the knowledge of the Slovak or Czech language. By doing so, it promoted the use of state languages (Slovak, Czech) in official dealings and gradually displaced the still widespread Hungarian and German languages from the institutions of ethnic and religious minorities. The biographical data and biographies of employees thus also reflected this requirement.

Similar expectations (albeit of a different ideological orientation) of the forming communist-dominated regime are also recognizable in the formation of the security forces in Slovakia between (1944/1945) and 1950. They are evident in the requirements set by the institution for certain personal qualities that an adept and their autobiography were to contain. Furthermore, handwritten versions of the autobiography were required, including the completion of several (almost identical) questionnaires, which the authors were forced to submit in quick succession. The process of writing the autobiography took place in the staff rooms of the National

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13 The state institutions expressed their (dis)approval of an applicant for a job position at the Jewish religious community.

Security or the Commission of Interior in Bratislava, or in the rooms of the Personnel Department.<sup>14</sup> The adept had only a pen and paper or questionnaire forms at their disposal. The Commission of Interior in Bratislava and the Ministry of Interior in Prague probably used different versions of the questionnaires and autobiographies to verify the sincerity, openness, objectivity and honesty of the employees in disclosing private and family information. The ethnic, religious and social origin and the family background of the citizen were crucial determinants for the totalitarian regime in Czechoslovakia until its collapse in 1989.

## Descriptions of the Family Background

The earliest version of the autobiography of Šimon Čermák (1924) dates from 24 November 1948 (there are three other versions from 1950).<sup>15</sup> He only dedicates four sentences to the description of his family background in this document. In the remaining two and a half pages he concentrates on his ideological rebirth and his activities during World War II.

In a more detailed version of the autobiography, probably dated 8 July 1950, we can learn more about his family background: *As the son of a bourgeois merchant, I was brought up by my parents in a conservative religious spirit. Even at the age of 12 I disagreed with this, not simply because the religious question was clear to me, but simply because the religious terror on the part of my parents was almost unbearable. The contradictions on this issue climaxed by the time I left elementary school and went on to be an electrician's apprentice. In this period, as a result of my social contacts with progressive friends – the society, I began to study Marxist literature, to familiarize myself with the struggles of the working class, and the break with my family, with my upbringing, and with my own views, which were with me as a result of my religious upbringing, was definitely consummated... (...) ...and mainly as a result of going to work as a labourer and in this environment I experienced on my own body what the exploitation of man by man is...*<sup>16</sup>

On the remaining four pages of the text, Šimon Čermák focuses specifically and

14 Archiv bezpečnostních složek (ABS), collection Personální spisy příslušníků a zaměstnanců (arch. s. PS MV), archive no. (a. č.) KP 381-23-1, Poučení pre osobu vyplňajúcu dotazník MNB, bod č. 3. no pag.

15 The version of the biography dated 24 November 1948 is written for the Commission of Interior in Bratislava – after a forced stay in Prague at the Ministry of the Interior. He spent January and February 1948 there and was transferred there due to ongoing personal and professional disagreements at the Commission of the Interior in Bratislava (for more see Štelmachovič Bumová, 2019: 26–37; 49–57; Medvecký, Sivoš, Jašek, 2012: 173). The biography of 8 July 1950 was already intended for the Ministry of the Interior in Prague; the remaining two, dated 5 December and 28 December 1950, were written after the 30 November 1950 meeting of the vetting committee of the Regional Administration of the Communist Party (Ibid., KP 381-23-1, Zápisnica spísaná na zasadnutí preverovacej komisie dňa 30. 11. 1950, p. 106–107 pag).

16 Ibid., Miesto pro životopis (probably 8 July 1950), p. 15 pag. He makes similar comments in a less elaborate autobiography dated 24 November 1948. (Ibid., KP 381-23-1, Životopis, 24. 11. 1948, p. 46 pag.)



in detail on his political and ideological transformation and underground activities during World War II and his participation in the Slovak National Uprising.

We only learn more about his family background from an autobiography dated 5 December 1950, which was written after a meeting of the Communist Party's vetting committee on 30 November 1950. Here he follows the "Biographical Outline"<sup>17</sup> document precisely and is forced to reveal more information than in the previous document. He writes: *My father was a bourgeois, a religious fanatic. He came from a low background until he married his wife. My mother, born Gelleyová, she came from a haute bourgeois family, and this enabled my father to establish a shop.*<sup>18</sup> He owned it until 1933, when, as a result of the so-called great economic crisis, he got into debt and was unable to repay his loans. After that he made a living as a traveling salesman mainly selling textile commodities. The text reveals the financial and status decline of the family and the fact that the father was unable to support his large family. He had to depend on support from his wife's family and the eldest working sons. Čermák does not elaborate on the description of the social situation of the family in the rest of the document.

Matej Bel (1914), who was nearly a decade older, was in a similar starting position in describing his family environment in certain contexts and used analogous evaluative attitudes and expressions. His only autobiography dating (probably)<sup>19</sup> from 9 March 1950 is, however, much more refined compared to Čermák's. Among the reasons for this are his earlier date of birth, fundamental life strategies and rich experiences that he acquired through his decisions, and which shaped him. This biography was written at the request of the personnel department of the Prague-based Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Czechoslovak Communist Party and was written at a time of continuing internal strife in the workplace.<sup>20</sup>

His parents came from Poland, they immigrated to his native Nitra in 1903. Both were illiterate and came from a poor "backwards" background. His father Izák Blumenfeld (†1922) worked in a pipe factory and was unable to support the family. His mother Ernestína was more successful. At the end of the World War I, she worked her way up from a marketeer to running a small business selling kitchen utensils. Together they had 11 children, of whom six were no longer alive at the time of Móric/Matej's birth (1914) ...*as a result of social conditions...* (...)... *When I was growing up, my mother was already ill and the management of the family passed into the hands my eldest brother, who was also seriously ill...* (...)...*So it happened that already at the age of 12–13 both my mother and my eldest brother considered me a full-fledged*

17 Ibid., Schema životopisu, p. 36 pag.

18 Ibid., Životopis, 5. 12. 1950, p. 49 pag.

19 The biography is undated, but in the Questionnaire of March 9, 1950, he refers to the biography in which he further develops his comments on the Questionnaire.

20 At the time of writing the biography, Bel, with great truthfulness, did not yet know that at the end of the month he would have to leave the Commission of Interior permanently for the Commission of Information in Bratislava (Štelmachovič Bumová, 2019: 50–59; Medvecký, Sivoš, Jašek, 2012: 172; ABS, PS MV, KP 1568-14-1, List pplk. Závodskému, 1. 4. 1950, p. 36–41 pag).

member of the family, who also had certain responsibilities, as far as the work in the shop and the procuring of a livelihood was concerned...<sup>21</sup>

The strongly religiously conservative family background is indicated by pointing at the fact that he completed his civil schooling in evening courses *since I was enrolled in a special religious school*.<sup>22</sup> His mother died in 1929, reason why he did not continue his education but worked in the family shop to support himself and his sister Gizela three years younger. *My brothers, ... (...) ...were developing into petite bourgeois. One of them... (...) ...led me to reading books and also to love them. This brother later developed into a type of anarchist intellectual who, though he recognized and saw through the mendacity of bourgeois life and culture, did not find a connection to organized progressive forces. My other two brothers were politically indifferent with a faint "progressive" tinge...*<sup>23</sup>

In the following text he emphasizes his ideological rebirth: *...Zola's Germinal was a decisive influence on me in this direction. I was about 14 years old when I read it. At that time, I was already a member of the religious youth organization "Mizrachi Hatzair"*<sup>24</sup>. *In this organization I was a leader locally and nationwide... (...)...and had several friends who were directly involved in the Komsomol... (...)...This is how I began to feel the dullness, narrow-mindedness and reactionary nature of the organisation of which I was a member. To combat these tendencies, I began to organize the left wing of this organization... (...)...Gradually, however, it became clear to me that my leftism made no sense on this basis and within this framework, I established a connection with the anti-religious, in my opinion at the time, socialist youth organization Hashomer Hatzair*<sup>25</sup>... *(...) ...Here I completely put an end to the remnants of my religious prejudices, I was about 16 years old, and I began to read mainly socialist literature...*<sup>26</sup>

The autobiographies were not written on the authors' own initiative or in accordance with their value preferences. They adhered to the aforementioned, institutionally required "Scheme of Autobiography" determined by the Directives of the National Security Headquarters No. 781/1945 of 25 May 1945 and 12 June 1945.

In the post-war years, the Commission of Interior in Bratislava adhered to this document and required its employees to comply with it too. In addition to detailed and truthful information about the employee's private life and family background (investigating their family, social and religious background), which the adept voluntarily provided, it also inspected their civil and political reliability, morality and behaviour during the periods of the First Czechoslovak Republic and the wartime Slovak Republic (1939–1945). It also inquired in detail about the political and public involvement of the applicant/employee in both state systems (the so-called bourgeois and the so-called clero-fascist), including detailed descriptions of the activities and

21 Ibid., KP 1568-14-1, Životopis, 9. 3. 1950, p. 5 pag.

22 Ibid.

23 Ibid.

24 Religious Zionist movement.

25 Leftist organization of the Zionist movement.

26 ABS, PS MV, KP 1568-14-1, Životopis, 9. 3. 1950, p. 6–7 pag.

institutions where he/she had been and with what persons he/she had been in contact. It also dealt with contemporary involvement and political activity after the liberation: how was the employee involved in the reconstruction of the state after 1945, what institutions and communities had they been involved in, who they associated with, where they lived, as well as their contacts with foreign countries.

The Commission of Interior in Bratislava also took a detailed interest in the parents, siblings and their personal lives. It also requested the same information about the employees' spouses and their immediate family members.<sup>27</sup>

The autobiography was supposed to be clear, detailed and chronological and "give the Personnel Department a comprehensive picture" of the employee's previous life.<sup>28</sup> Another requirement of the regime was the declaration of political involvement and leadership in the adept or other manifestations of political commitment and defiance/revolution against the pre-1945 social order of society.

In line with these requirements of the system, both job applicants detailed their motives and personal process of transformation into a Marxist-minded person (which they claimed began very early, at the age of 12–14).<sup>29</sup> They logically emphasized certain facts and formulated some interpretations in a way that would not harm them, but, on the contrary, would benefit them.

Before the analysis of the following text, it is necessary to point out a few crucial facts. None of the authors mention their Jewishness in their autobiographies explicitly. We might also state they conceal it. Simon Čermák does not mention his Jewish origins in his 1948 autobiography at all. Only in the revised version of July 1950 do we learn that he had been a member of the religiously oriented Zionist association Bene Akiva in his youth.<sup>30</sup>

In the case of Matej Bel, a hint at his Jewishness comes from the information from the Questionnaire (January 1946), where he states that he was racially persecuted during the World War II.<sup>31</sup> In his biography from 9 March 1950 he only mentions about his involvement in Zionist societies in his childhood and adolescent years. He was active in the religious Mizrahi and the left-leaning Hashomer Hatzair. In his early adulthood he decided to emigrate to Palestine (Haifa).

Meanwhile, neither of these biographies mentions the Holocaust, nor the resulting serious family tragedy: Šimon Čermák was only 20 years old after the war, yet he lost both parents and four siblings out of eleven. An analysis of his biography suggests that he lived alone and without any contact with his family during the war period. Only in the questionnaire information about his parents and siblings does he state

27 Ibid., Matej Bel z Nitry, šetrenie, p. 18 pag. See also: Ibid., Bel Matej, ppor. – prosba o prijatie do služieb NB – vyšetrovanie, 2. 5. 1946, p. 6 pag; Ibid., KP 381-23-1, Schema životopisu, p. 36 pag.

28 Ibid., KP 381-23-1, Schema životopisu, p. 36 pag.

29 At age 13, Jewish boys undergo the Bar Mitzvah rite of passage – a ceremony in which they demonstrate the ability to practice the 613 mitzvot (commandments) in their lives. From this point on, they are considered religiously mature and responsible for their actions.

30 ABS, PS MV, KP 381-23-1, Životopis, 5. 12. 1950, p. 50 pag.

31 Ibid., KP 1568-14-1, Dotazník, 7. 1. 1946, p. 4 rub pag.

that they were “of the Israelite faith” and perished in concentration camps in Poland between 1944 and 1945.<sup>32</sup> The place and time were unknown to him. In the 1948 version, he mentions his family and siblings only in the introduction of the document, emphasizing his break with family values. We learn more about his siblings only from a biography dated 5 December 1950 (four did not survive the concentration camps and five emigrated to Israel after the war).<sup>33</sup> At this point, Šimon Čermák also states that he had no contact with these siblings from 1946–1947. He maintained contact only with his sister Priska, who lived in Bratislava and was married to a pre-war<sup>34</sup> communist.<sup>35</sup> He had no information about his other relatives, stating that he did not know “*where they lived or if they lived at all*”.<sup>36</sup>

This attitude reflects the contemporary attitude of the Czechoslovak regime (which was a satellite of the USSR until 1989) towards the State of Israel. The Communist-controlled Czechoslovakia reacted quickly to the cooling of relations between the USSR and Israel that took place after the Communists’ major defeat in the Israeli elections in January 1949 (Kaplan, 1993: 81) and the subsequent political discussions between the Israeli leadership and the USA. Šimon Čermák was aware that maintaining contact with relatives living in a hostile country was, from the regime’s point of view, dangerous both for the exercise of his profession and his freedom.

Matej Bel mentions in his biography that all of his brothers died prematurely; the eldest Michal from heart disease (1935), the remaining two Henrich and Dávid in concentration camps between 1942 and 1945. His only sister Gizela (1917), whom he had originally cared for, was married and living in Bratislava in 1947.<sup>37</sup>

As we have already mentioned in the Introduction, unlike the preliminary era of the early modern period, the 20<sup>th</sup> century and its sources allow us to obtain a sufficiently comprehensive picture of the structures of the period in which its actors lived. Moreover, in this case we also have a fairly good idea of the partial events in the structures of the institution in which both biographers were active. Although they both held relatively high professional positions and were ranked among the “wartime communists”, they were mainly parts of a distinctly anti-Semitic milieu. Anti-Semitic

32 Ibid., KP 381/23-1, Dotazník, 24. 12. 1950, p. 28 rub pag.

33 His three brothers (Aladár, a student of medicine, Alexander, a lawyer, Dezider, a brushmaker) and his sister Valéria perished in concentration camps. His brother Maximilián emigrated to Palestine before the war. After surviving the war, their brother Ignác and sister Gizela and their families, as well as their unmarried brothers Leopold and Ľudevít followed him to the State of Israel in 1949–1950 (legal emigration). Their sister Alice studied medicine in Prague and Vienna, where she probably still resided (Ibid., KP 381-23-1, Životopis, 5. 12. 1950, p. 49–50 pag.).

34 The terms “pre-war” and “war communist” were used to refer to members of the Communist Party who joined the party before it gained political power in the country. In the hierarchy of contemporary party membership, this designation was seen as prestigious, since pre-war and war communists became party members out of conviction and not because of the benefits that the membership offered.

35 ABS, PV MV, KP 381-23-1, Životopis, 5. 12. 1950, p. 50.

36 Ibid.

37 Ibid., KP 1568-14-1, Životopis, 9. 3. 1950, p. 6 pag.

attitudes towards Jewish members were present at the Commission of Interior in Bratislava, as well as within the Communist Party itself (for more information see Štelmachovič Bumová, 2019: 11–36; 49–64). Nevertheless, we are not always able to capture the motivations of the authors and the various versions of the interpretations of their statements, decisions and attitudes, or the reasons of their silence on certain issues.

Šimon Čermák primarily reflected the social and political discourse of the social and political group in which he had been active since his teenage years (and, of course, that of the pre-war and wartime period). For the sake of his career (and self-defence), like many of his contemporaries, he responded to the expectations of the Communist Party of which he was a member and to whose structures the manuscript was also addressed. In the context of the contemporary era and under ideological pressure, he describes, explains and evaluates his past life, the norms and values he lived by as a child, as the influence of a “bad” petite bourgeois and religious environment. Throughout the text dealing with his family contexts, Čermák emphasizes the break with his “bourgeois” past and with his family.

His first job as a worker in a seed factory was to be the place in which he came to identify himself as a proletarian: *Under these circumstances and in this environment, I experienced first-hand the exploitation of man by man for the first time in my life, and I myself took part in the struggle of the workers for their daily bread. Until this time, as I have already stated, I knew the struggle of the working class against the exploiters only from the explanations of the aforementioned comrades and from progressive fiction.*<sup>38</sup> (He wrote the text at the age of 26 and describes an event in 1939, when he was 15 years old). At the time of the creation of this text (1950), he already held a high position as the commander of the First Department of the ŠtB, and he also served as the deputy regional commander of the ŠtB (Medvecký, Sivoš, Jašek, 2012: 173; Štelmachovič Bumová, 2019: 32).

In contrast to Šimon Čermák (1924), the elder Matej Bel (1914) presents/acknowledges a more extensive interconnection with his family (he spent more time with them). He explicitly mentions the influence of his elder brother, who, as Bel claims, had led him to reading books and educating himself in leftist literature. It seems that his leftist ideological formation had its basis, although he denied it, in his family. (However, we are unable to fully prove this assumption.) Meanwhile, he stressed his (expected) duty to take care of his sister, who had lost her mother when she was a minor, and he became her guardian while being only 3 years older. The attachment to her was also present at the time of writing the autobiography.

Both autobiographies emphasise the rejection of the (from the regime's point of view) “unsuitable” (bourgeois) family background, its values and adherence to Judaism. Of great significance is the silence about the memories of the events of the Shoah and the resulting family tragedy. This attitude is strongly present throughout Šimon Čermák's text: he avoids mentioning his family altogether and only does so

38 Ibid., KP 381-23-1, Životopis, 5. 12. 1950, p. 50 pag.

when writing about situations emphasising a break with the past, or when he is required to do so by the institution.

In the years following the World War II (until 1989), there was a widespread tendency to expunge any narrative by political or social elites about the events of the Shoah and the racial persecution of Jewish citizens from the collective memory (for more information see Vrzgulová, Voľanská, Salner, 2017: 46 ff., 86 ff.; Salner, *Ed.*, 2020). The adoption of this stance is strongly present in the aforementioned texts. We cannot find even a notion of surviving family tragedies, only a dry statement about the deaths of family members in concentration camps. However, we do not know whether blocking out these memories was conscious, subject to ideology, or a combination of both factors.

The reference to the narrator's life around tropes of oppressive (bourgeois) tradition is important, and personal and professional fulfilment within the structures of the Communist Party is emphasised. Marianne Ruth Kamp has also drawn attention to this moment in her research on three autobiographies of an Uzbek journalist from a Soviet background. During the Stalinist period, the function of personal rebirth and a strong anti-religious narrative were emphasised (Kamp, 2001: 30–31), which is also evident in the autobiographies analysed in this study.

Education as a value and the associated acquisition of ideological and cultivated language, emphasising the process of acquiring knowledge from Marxist literature, highlighting ideological awareness, and acquiring a leadership position in a social group come to the fore. Both authors also emphasize the construction of the image of the revolutionary by posing as a protest against family or social values and the disqualification of bourgeois life. The authors strictly defined themselves against the “bourgeois” and middle-class life by joining the proletariat, which was supposed to be a proof of decisiveness, sincerity, consciousness and the fulfilment of the ideal of communist ideology. Both authors<sup>39</sup> were aware of this requirement of the regime and its ideology and placed great emphasis on its fulfilment in the text. The “bourgeois background”<sup>40</sup> of both actors, which they explicitly denounced, were ultimately one of the discriminating factors used by the regime in the trial conducted against them (Štelmachovič Bumová, 2019: 72 ff.). An anti-religious narrative is also present, albeit in a lesser extent. Both authors pointed out that they had been clear on the issue of religion since their adolescence.

Meanwhile, the texts are similar in terms of value and ideology, as well as in terms of means of expression. They have a similar literary style and linguistic (ideological) formulations applied by the authors while constructing their self-image. It is important to note that Šimon Čermák and Matej Bel were friends. Until his marriage (1951),

39 Both of them, as employees of the ŠtB, were also involved in obtaining compromising materials (including the bourgeois background of the family) on various personalities of political or civic life who were evaluated by the regime as hostile and were tried in fabricated political trials.

40 This term might be subject to argument, since both men came from socially challenging backgrounds: their parents only owned small trades.



Šimon Čermák lived in a rented studio with the Bel family, which consisted of Bel, his wife and their younger son. Also, a decade older (and more educated), Bel could have been perceived by Čermák as an older comrade and an authority whom he respected. The similarity in the style of the texts may therefore be related to a close, and relatively intense, relationship between them and a similar family (Jewish) background. An important factor was their common attachment to the wartime Communist Party and their joint participation in the preparation of the Slovak National Uprising.

## World War II and the Slovak National Uprising in Ego Documents

A substantial part of the autobiographies of both authors is devoted to the “emergence of the new man”: a detailed description of the formation of their social, ideological and political self-awareness. Detailed descriptions of their journeys leading to a “personal rebirth” form an essential part of their autobiographies. However, we are still left with the question of what this information tells us about the “ego” of their authors.

In the 1948 version of the biography, this transformation of Šimon Čermák is described in about three and a half pages. The version of 8 July 1950 is already a little more elaborated (it already runs to 5 pages) and in both versions of December 1950 (already intended for the Ministry of National Security in Prague), he discusses this process in great detail and devotes twice as much space to it. The text is coherent<sup>41</sup> and covers the period after the establishment of the Slovak state on 14 March 1939 until the liberation in 1945.

His first contacts with communist ideology occurred at the age of 15 at the retraining centre of the Zionist organisation Bene Akiva, where he was supposed to acquire experience in agriculture and subsequently emigrate to Palestine. Here he met comrades who convinced him “of the fundamental errors of the Zionist movement” and introduced him to the principles of Marxism-Leninism.<sup>42</sup> At this stage he began to call himself a “religious communist”. He was soon led out of this ideological error by his future brother-in-law (a pre-war communist). In the following text he relates the episode of his financial detachment from his family and his first job in his grandfather’s aryanized granary. Here he was to organise the aforementioned strike at the instigation of his future brother-in-law.<sup>43</sup>

He no longer talks about himself in the upcoming text. The document can be understood as an account of the illegal functioning of the Komsomol<sup>44</sup> in Topoľčany, of which he became a member, and of its connection and management by the representatives of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia

41 The text then continues for a further four pages in accordance with the required CV scheme.

42 ABS, PS MV, KP 381-23-1, Životopis, 5. 12. 1950, p. 50 pag.

43 Ibid., p. 51 pag.

44 Komunistický zväz mládeže Československa (The Communist Youth Union of Czechoslovakia).

in Topoľčany and in the Upper Nitra region. The emphasis is on uncovering the conspiratorial principles of the management of the illegal cells in Topoľčany and the surrounding area, as well as on the process of the inner functioning of the banned underground party. It concentrates on portraying the creation of further structures in the party: the addressing and educating of young cadres, the process of their internal vetting and further involvement in the party's activities.

The text provides us with a personal account of the micro-history of the formation of the communist resistance and the partisan movement in the Upper Nitra region, which also shaped its author ideologically and personally.

He looks at his stay in the Nováky Labour and Concentration Camp through a different lens. *In 1942, by order of the Party, I went underground to the concentration camp in Nováky.*<sup>45</sup> This dry statement does not mention the fact that his life was in direct danger at the behest of the Communist Party. From March to October 1942, occurred the deportations of the Jewish population from the territory of the wartime Slovak Republic (1939–1945) to concentration camps, in which he could also have been included. In the text, he solely concentrates on his mission: his task was to build up the illegal organisation, which stagnated in the Nováky camp, and to link it to the illegal organisations of the Communist Party of Slovakia (KSS) in localities between Prievidza and Bratislava. At the turn of 1942/43, he also linked it to the armed group that was active in Vtáčnik and in the vicinity of Prievidza. At the work concentration camp in Nováky, the illegal cell carried out the Party's orders and joined the Slovak National Uprising on 28 August 1944.<sup>46</sup>

Although this part of the text mainly describes the author's mission and actions at the behest of the Communist Party, it constantly stresses his affiliation with the group.

The autobiography of Matej Bel is more personal in many ways. He also went through a phase of religious Zionism and swiftly became a member of the leftist Zionist organization Hashomer Hatzair. Under its influence, he emigrated to Palestine at the age of 20 with his future wife in 1933 (they married in 1937).

The Palestinian episode of his life is a continuation of the story of the ideological reshaping of his personality. Through his personal experiences, he also provides a micro-history of the left-wing Zionist and then Communist movement in Haifa. He gradually explains the reasons for his multiplying objections to the ideology of left-wing Zionism and nationalism as the primary working method of the Zionist movement. Because of his outspoken opposition to these policies, he withdrew from the "collective – commune" in Haifa. Subsequently, in 1934, he became a member of the underground Communist Party of Palestine (CPP). He describes in detail his life underground, his work for the CPP as a member of the party's regional leadership in Haifa, his hiding, his adherence to the strict rules of the conspiracy, the reasons for his temporary change of identity, as well as the physical attacks on his person: *These interfered with my private life to the extent that, apart from my room, my future spouse*

45 Ibid., p. 54 pag.

46 Ibid., p. 55–56 pag.

*and I did not see each other at all, and... (...)...we did not even greet each other on the streets.*<sup>47</sup> At the time, the CPP openly supported expressions of Arab dissent against Jewish immigration, such as armed attacks on Jewish settlements, ambushes, murders of Jewish settlers, etc. *This practice provoked a fierce hatred of the Jewish population and the overwhelming majority of the working class against the Jewish communists.*<sup>48</sup> Due to his difficult living situation, he found himself back in Slovakia in late 1937 and joined the Communist Party of Slovakia in early 1938.

The literary style of describing his work for the underground Communist Party is similar to Čermák's. He draws attention to the system of conspiratorial management of the underground cells (he was at a leader's position), the establishment of links to the leading members of the KSS, the description of the performance of tasks, the connection to the Nováky concentration camp through Šimon Čermák, etc. However, the text is written in a more personal way, and, unlike Šimon Čermák, Bel speaks in the first person. In addition to his tasks for the party, he also mentions his financial support for his brother's family and mentions his concern for his wife's health. She remained with him in Zvolen during the Uprising, where he participated in the armed fights. After the suppression of the Uprising, she accompanied him to Košice, where they joined the Red Army in January.

An important part of the documents is the social and political capital that Šimon Čermák and Matej Bel acquired during the war years. They kept emphasizing their connections to the leaders of the underground leadership of the KSS (often including their current address and location) with the aim of proving their political (and personal) credibility, awareness, and presentation of knowledge of the organizational structures of the underground KSS, the principles of conspiracy, and the cover-up of the members of the wartime underground cells. Meanwhile, references to these contacts were supposed to guarantee the truthfulness of the authors' stories and confirm their participation in the wartime communist and partisan resistance.

In this context, Mary Fulbrook and Ulinka Rublack point at the construction of what they call the "self-representation across time". We have already mentioned that it is impossible to construct any account of the self without simultaneously reflecting contemporary social discourses into the narrative. Ego documents can equally testify to their formation in relationships that are determined by and responsive to the dynamics of social or political relations (Fulbrook and Rublack, 2010: 268), which is also reflected in the biographies analysed. The identities of both authors are socially constructed; their roles (and their associated identities) changed dynamically in rapid succession during the World War II, responding to the contemporary discourse and conditions in which they found themselves.

This moment is evident in their descriptions of their relationship to Judaism/Jewry (the family), Zionism, and communism. The texts are written through the

<sup>47</sup> Ibid., KP 1568-14-1, Životopis, 9. 3. 1950, p. 11 pag.

<sup>48</sup> Ibid., p. 14 pag.

ideological lens of Marxism-Leninism, which influences and constructs the subjectivity of the authors. The aim of both protagonists was to appropriately describe (or rather to obliterate?) the “hesitations” during the process of breaking free from dependence on the family and Judaism/Jewishness. The transitional phase in both cases was Zionism, first its religious wing, then the leftist one.<sup>49</sup> It was followed by the phase of self-awareness and rejection of the “dead end” of political Zionism and the adoption of the “correct” ideology of Marxism-Leninism.

The emphasis on the rejection of political Zionism by both authors is also another sign that they were aware of the potential danger the regime meant for them. Failing to mention the rejection of political Zionism could have been a fatal mistake. Therefore, they concentrated on a detailed portrayal of their mistakes and their genesis of their transformation into communists.

Matej Bel and Šimon Čermák defined themselves as part of the communist structures they co-created as part of their underground activities during World War II and the Slovak National Uprising. They were among the links in the chain that created a collective memory of the activities of the underground Communist Party and the armed resistance during the Uprising. Their biographies capture for us the story of the group or the communist movement, yet they do not primarily provide a personal story. The authors’ private life is secondary in this context (see also Kamp, 2001: 31). Their “petite bourgeois” and Jewish origins, as well as their contact with the Zionist movement, posed significant danger for them, which they tried to explain in an acceptable manner when they were forced to do so. We learn more about the personalities of both protagonists from other source material that the State Security Service obtained (often as compromising material) from its collaborators, who also described their personalities and characters. However, the authors’ biographies provide us very little information about the actual “ego”.

## Conclusion

When analysing ego-documents from the State Security Service environment, it is necessary to realize that the authors of the analysed texts were among the supporters and creators of the regime and participated in the formation of the forces of the State Security Service. They knew and used the propaganda language expected from “conscious” members of the Communist Party and created self-representations corresponding to the requirements of the contemporary regime. The writers’ self-constructions therefore unfolded in the context of rapidly changing socio-political relations, which were reflected in their inter-social communication, as well as in their self-presentation in relation to the institution, in this case, the State Security Service and the Communist Party. The subjectivity of the authors of the texts was therefore

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49 In contemporary discourse, Zionism is already perceived as a “rebellion of the son” (Amir, 2001: 11).

relationally based; they were responding to questions of “who they are” posed by an ideological institution.

Meanwhile, the structuring of the biographies was subject to new ideological norms, values, conventions and language that reflected the emerging new post-war communist society in Czechoslovakia. At the forefront was the rejection of the bourgeois way of life, religious and national ideology,<sup>50</sup> revolutionary ideology, and a change in the social and economic order. It was the knowledge of the ideological preferences on the part of the regime, which both authors possessed, that helped them to create a constructed self-image or self-presentation of their personalities as conscious communists, which, in fact, they really were.

Changing social conventions and the demands of new socio-political structures placed on the individual have shaped the ways and means by which both writers have chosen to express themselves on key issues in their lives. Their biographies, written between 1948 and 1950, are consistent, while reflecting the era in which they lived. The contemporary values and means of expression were partly determined by the authors themselves by holding a position in the structures of the ŠtB. While creating these texts, they were well aware of the “inappropriate” family and social contexts from which they came, as well as of their ideological “strays”, which they tried to “cover up” or “obscure” or acceptably justify before the structures of the regime. They knew that the communist regime could use these facts against them (as it eventually did), which was one of the reasons why they avoided descriptions of their family background. Another reason was the family tragedy associated with the Holocaust and its (conscious or regime-enforced) exclusion from the autobiography.

Unfortunately, the ego documents mentioned above were written in a short time sequence and did not provide us with the “strata” or “archaeological layers” of meanings mentioned by Mary Fulbrook and Ulinka Rublack (Fulbrook and Rublack, 2010: 267) or Marianne Ruth Kamp (2001). The changes in the personal identities and roles of Šimon Čermák and Matej Bel are suggested by their emigration to the State of Israel in the 1960’s<sup>51</sup> (Štelmachovič Bumová, 2019: 104, 107).

The biographies of Jewish members of the ŠtB reflect the broader context of historical, social and cultural representations and provide us with a lot of information about the contemporary era. This peculiarity is the reason why working with these texts is more challenging for historians and social scientists, since the researcher must learn to read “between the lines”. It is important to know the broader context in which the protagonists of the texts found themselves, for example the contemporary narrative of the Zionist movement, the attitudes of the Czechoslovak Communist

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50 Religion was rejected in the Socialist bloc as an unscientific and irrational form of ideology, conditioned by material production and corresponding social (bourgeois) relations. Also, nationalism was seen as an opportunist ideology vis-à-vis proletarian internationalism.

51 Both are also the authors of their later autobiographies: Bel, M. (1969). *Črty spoza mreží*. Bratislava, Epocha; Čermák, Š. (1995). *Spomienky väžňa. Spomienky na Ruzyň, Pankrác, Leopoldov a Jáchymov 1951 – 1958*. Kibuc Dalya.

Party and its members towards anti-Semitism, the regime's policies towards the State of Israel, the contemporary political-ideological discourse, and the resulting antagonisms in the post-war Slovak society (for more information see Bumová, 2016: 39–43).

Therefore, in the context of current discourse, the analysed autobiographies of Jewish members of the ŠtB from the second half of the 1940's and from 1950 by can be viewed as self-representations or self-constructions of their authors. They can be considered political manifestos or ideological documents of wartime members of the Communist Party who belonged to the so-called "believing communists".

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