

Abstract

This dissertation analyses narratives of the Mašín brothers and their father, Josef Mašín senior. The Mašín brothers established what they called ‘a resistance group’ against the Communist regime in Czechoslovakia, which between 1951 and 1952 killed three people. The brothers, alongside the other member of the group, Milan Paumer, escaped from the country in 1953, heading for the Western sectors of Berlin. Despite more than 20,000 East German and Soviet troops hunting them, the group reached West Berlin safely. Later, the brothers went to the USA where they joined the U.S. army. The dissertation analyzes a whole range of discourses including newspaper articles, historical papers, books, detective stories, novels, memoirs and also one episode of the Czechoslovak television series, *Třicet případů majora Zemana* ('Major Zeman's Thirty Cases'), entitled *Strach* ('Fear'), from 1975. The dissertation is conceptually embedded in cultural studies and critical theory. Drawing on Roland Barthes's work on mythologies, Hayden White's theory of history and Slavoj Žižek's theory of ideology, the dissertation considers the relationship of the Mašín brothers' narrative representations with respect to the dominant ideology of the time. The first chapter of the dissertation deals with narratives produced in Communist Czechoslovakia between 1955 and 1989. The main empirical resources are newspaper articles from the leading Czechoslovak Communist daily, *Rudé právo*, from the 1950s, as well as various detective stories published by the *Naše vojsko* publishing house from 1960s onwards. The Mašín brothers are depicted as ‘enemies of socialism’ and as such they are portrayed as murderers. The main focus is on the discursive procedures by which such a portrayal is achieved. Special attention is paid to its relationship with official Communist ideology. The second chapter analyzes the narratives of the Mašín brothers' father, Josef Mašín senior. He is portrayed as a Czech national hero for fighting against the Austro-Hungarian Empire in the Czech ‘Legions’, as well as against the Nazis during the Second World War. The narratives published after 1989 imply that his sons followed him in his footsteps and also ‘fought for freedom’. The third chapter of the dissertation analyzes narratives of the Mašín brothers published after 1989 where they are depicted as heroes fighting against the Communist regime and relates these modes of representation to contemporary dominant ideology. By combining revived nationalism and

liberalism, the analysed narratives fit well into the post-communist ideological situation. The fourth chapter aims to refute the widespread opinion that we live in a post-ideological world. By comparing the Mašín brothers and other Czech post-communist heroes or martyrs to previous nationalist and communist heroic icons, the analysis shows that the discursive procedures used in all of these periods, including the post-communist one, are very similar.