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FRIENDS, NAZIS AND COMMUNISTS:  
THE DOUBLE PERSECUTION OF ANTONIE KLEINEROVÁ<sup>1</sup>

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ABSTRACT

This article takes as its theme the persecution of religious groups and individuals by governments that aspire to totalitarian power. Its subject is the Quakers of Prague during the first half of the twentieth century who suffered at the hands of both occupying German Nazis and native Czechoslovak Communists. In particular, the article focuses on Antonie Kleinerová (1901-1982), who entered into membership of the Religious Society of Friends in 1933 together with her husband. After the Nazis occupied the Czech lands in 1939 she was active in the underground resistance, and for this reason the couple were among the victims of the reign of terror under Heydrich; he was shot, she spent the remainder of the war in Ravensbrück concentration camp. After the war and liberation she became a parliamentary deputy, but after the Communist coup of 1948 she joined the clandestine democratic opposition. As a result she was arrested in 1949, and was one of the co-defendants in the show trial of the more famous Milada Horáková in 1950. Antonie Kleinerová received a life sentence of which she served ten years. Within the context of her story, the article discusses the causes and nature of religious persecution, and the reasons for active resistance on the part of individuals.

KEYWORDS

Persecution, resistance, Nazism, Communism, Czechoslovakia, Prague

Governments that aspire to totalitarian power are notoriously hostile to organised religion, as both a rival source of ideology and focus of loyalty. Such hostility, however, may not be overtly anti-religious; regimes of both the Right and the Left keep up the pretence of freedom of worship, while persecuting individuals in a great or petty way, under the guise of anti-state activity, treason,

or simply suspect loyalty. The Quaker group in Prague in the 1930s was not large, yet a number of its members was persecuted by the Nazis during World War II. One member of the Society, Antonie Kleinerová, was doubly unfortunate; having survived the war years in a Nazi German concentration camp, she was tried by the Communists in 1950 and given a life sentence for treason and sabotage.

Quakers were not, of course, unique in enduring this double persecution. Believers from several churches endured imprisonment from both Nazis and Communists. Among the Czechs were the Protestant Milada Horáková, who would be Kleinerová's co-defendant in a Communist show trial in 1950; and Josef Beran, the Catholic Archbishop of Prague (later Cardinal) and Primate of Czechoslovakia. Antonie Kleinerová was involved in both the underground resistance to the Nazi Germans and the democratic opposition to the Czechoslovak Communists. Such an attitude was consistent with some strands of contemporary Quaker thought. In 1937, for example, T. Edmund Harvey spoke of the 'two-fold strand' in Christian citizenship; respect for the state and desire to serve the Kingdom of God:

this means that we must be willing, when loyalty to the Kingdom of God demands it to refuse the demands of the state and show the highest loyalty to the state and the best citizenship by refusing demands that are wrong, because it is only in that way that the conscience of our fellow citizens can be reached, and in the end a better law come into being.<sup>2</sup>

The Religious Society of Friends was introduced into Czechoslovakia by American Quakers, who were among the officials of the YMCA sent by US President Woodrow Wilson at T. G. Masaryk's request to assist the Czechoslovak Legionaries in Russia during World War I. Masaryk was one of the three founding fathers of the Czechoslovak state, and its first president from 1918. The Czechoslovak Legion was composed of fighting men who had deserted from the Austro-Hungarian army and gone over to the Russians to fight for Czech and Slovak freedom from Habsburg rule. They encountered many difficulties after the Bolshevik revolution of October 1917, and had to fight their way back to Central Europe by way of the Trans-Siberian Railway and the Pacific.

The YMCA personnel accompanied the Legionaries on their epic journey home to Czechoslovakia, which was accomplished by 1921. They stayed in the country for some years, and were joined by others. They started to meet as a group for silent prayer, which also attracted a number of Czechs.<sup>3</sup>

In June 1930 the Germany Committee of the Friends' Service Council in London received letters from Jaroslav Koše, by all accounts a 'weighty Friend'. He reported that a small group of people was meeting in a room in the university and beginning to practise the Quaker way of worship. By November of that year the group was meeting regularly for worship on Sundays at the Prague YMCA.<sup>4</sup> Antonie or 'Tomy' Kleinerová, who had been born in Prague in 1901, entered into membership of the Religious Society of Friends on 6 July

1933 together with her husband, Jaroslav Kleiner. They both joined as foreign or overseas members of London Yearly Meeting.<sup>5</sup>

The Kleiner family background was bourgeois and educated. Jaroslav Kleiner was a graduate of the Technical University in Prague and a higher technical executive of the Czech broadcasting company. His wife Antonie was a social worker between the world wars, (from 1925 until her arrest in 1941 she was an official of the YWCA), and either in a professional capacity or more likely as a Friend was involved in refugee work.<sup>6</sup> Indeed, the small Quaker group in Prague was heavily involved in relief work of various kinds. In 1937, for example, some members were involved in a scheme to provide children with hot meals in one of the more depressed – and ethnic German – areas of Bohemia.<sup>7</sup>

As is well known, the attack on democratic Czechoslovakia began on 30 September 1938 with the Munich conference and resulting pact. The Czechoslovaks were forced by the western democracies to hand over substantial amounts of territory to the Third Reich. Nazi pressure secured the resignation of the democratic Czechoslovak president, Edvard Beneš. He went abroad as a private individual, but during World War II managed to establish a recognised government in exile in London. Meanwhile between Munich and March 1939 his country led a miserable existence as the truncated 'Second Czechoslovak Republic', racked by quarrels between Czechs and Slovaks and subject to continuing pressure from Nazi Germany.

The Prague Friends shared with other Czechoslovaks the sense of betrayal by the west. Corder Catchpool, the British 'weighty Friend' who had organised the child-feeding scheme the previous year, and who had been awarded the Order of the White Lion by the Czechoslovak government for this work, now found himself *persona non grata* with the Prague Friends. Indeed Dr Jarka Linková, who had worked most closely with him on the child-feeding project, could not bring herself to speak with him and asked him not to come back to Prague.<sup>8</sup> At the same time another British Quaker, Tessa Rowntree, worked closely with the Germany emergency committee in London as well as with Friends on the spot in Prague from October 1938, following the Munich agreement. She left by train on 15 March 1939 – the day of the Nazi invasion of the Czech lands – bringing with her 66 refugees. A week later she took a group of 72 refugees out of Prague.<sup>9</sup>

Indeed, on 14–15 March 1939 the Munich agreement was broken when the Czech lands were invaded and occupied by Nazi Germans and became the Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia; Slovakia became an 'independent' clerico-fascist state under the 'protection' of the Third Reich.<sup>10</sup> The Czechs showed their opposition to the German occupation largely by passive resistance and a course of petty harassment known as the 'policy of pinpricks'. Features of this included politely misdirecting Germans in the street, changing the destination boards on the front of trams, and pretending not to understand the German language.

The persistence of this policy was undoubtedly galling to the occupation forces, but there were also more serious acts of sabotage. In the summer of 1941,

for example, there were huge fires at the Skoda armaments works in Plzeň, at the Kralupy oil refineries and at the Vlašim munitions works. The continuation of Czechoslovak resistance despite savage reprisals by the Nazis led to the appointment of Reinhard Heydrich as Deputy Reichsprotektor in the autumn of 1941. Heydrich's predecessor, Constantin von Neurath, had been prompted by the destruction of an entire department of a munitions factory at Polička to say, 'I shall not hesitate to set up a military dictatorship, if necessary. The spirit of the Czechs must be broken.'<sup>11</sup>

For several Czech Quakers the subsequent terror led directly to arrest and imprisonment. Antonie Kleinerová and her husband were both taken by the Gestapo, the Nazi secret police which had powers of arbitrary arrest, in October 1941. Jaroslav Kleiner was shot in February 1942 at either Dachau or Waldhausen. His wife survived the war in Ravensbrück concentration camp, where she worked as a street sweeper and was noted for her good humour and cheerfulness. Among her friends in the camp was the noted Czech writer Milena Jesenská.<sup>12</sup> Antonie Kleinerová returned to Prague in June 1945, apparently in good health. Jaroslav Koše was arrested in July 1942, possibly one of the victims of the reprisals for Heydrich's assassination by Czechoslovaks earlier that spring. He died in a concentration camp, quite probably killed. In addition, the two brothers of Sylva Stahlová, Clerk of the Prague meeting, were sent to Buchenwald at an unspecified date, but returned to Prague in the summer of 1945.<sup>13</sup> This suffering must, of course, be put in the context of more general Nazi persecution of the Czech population. According to figures published by the exiled Czechoslovak government, between 27 September 1941 and 20 January 1942, the summary courts established under Heydrich's civil state of emergency passed 394 death sentences and sent over 1,134 people to the Gestapo for further investigation.<sup>14</sup> Antonie Kleinerová and her husband were among these victims, not least because she had organised a large number of units of the resistance movement.<sup>15</sup>

A letter to England from Sylva Stahlová of 14 July 1945 reveals the devastating effect the Nazi persecution had on the Prague Friends. They had last met as a group in April 1942. There had been no regular contact among the members, as most of them were 'away'. From the winter of 1943–44 to April 1945 there had been new meetings under the leadership of Přemysl Pitter, a clergyman of the Czech Brethren and a celebrated humanitarian.<sup>16</sup> This was not now an official Quaker group, Sylva Stahlová declared, and in its outward form was unlikely ever to be one; but she found it inwardly more Quaker than any that had existed in Prague before. She had no wish to renew the old group, half of whom were dead.

It is not clear whether Antonie Kleinerová joined the new 'Quaker' group, although *The Friend* described her in 1950 as 'one of the few full members of the Society in Czechoslovakia'.<sup>17</sup> What is known is that from 1945 she was social secretary of the Union of the National Revolution and from 1946 a member of the central committee of the National Socialist Party. Indeed, after the elections of 1946 she became a parliamentary deputy for the National Socialists.<sup>18</sup> Within

four years she would be one of the defendants in the largest show trial of non-Communists in Czechoslovakia.

In the 1946 elections the Communists gained nearly 38 per cent of the vote; this entitled them to several key government posts, including that of prime minister, which was held by Klement Gottwald. The government was a coalition and included the National Socialists. Immediately the Communists began a programme of machination combined with intimidation as preparation for a seizure of power. This occurred in February 1948, when the non-Communist ministers unwisely resigned on a technicality, and President Beneš was unwisely advised to accept their resignations. Both during and after the 'February revolution' a remorseless campaign of terror was exercised against the democratic politicians, several of who managed to escape abroad. Among these were the National Socialist ministers Hubert Ripka and Petr Zenkl.<sup>19</sup>

At the same time the Communists made a pretence that Czechoslovakia was still a multi-party democracy. They did this through the 'national front', an apparently free coalition of the Communists with other parties; the Social Democrats (whose successive leaders were all fellow-travellers of the Communists) and the People's (Catholic) Party (whose eventual leader would be a Communist stooge). The original national front also contained the National Socialists. The formation of national or popular fronts was a feature of Stalin's post-war policy towards the states of Central and Eastern Europe. They were intended both to preserve a façade of democracy and to create conditions for the triumph – sooner or later, according to local conditions – of the Communists.

In order to consolidate their position the Communists decided to make an example of their opponents by means of a show trial. The outstanding personality among the National Socialists they targeted was Milada Horáková.<sup>20</sup> Accused with her were two other women, both former MPs and members of her party: Františka Zeminová, formerly the deputy chair of the party; and Antonie Kleinerová, who was arrested on 8 November 1949. The previous month two Soviet advisers had arrived from Moscow to prepare the trial.

Milada Horáková had been a member of the National Socialist Party since 1929. A graduate in law, she had worked before the war in the Prague city social services office. She was especially interested in the women's movement. During the Nazi occupation she was involved, like Antonie Kleinerová, in the resistance movement. She was arrested in August 1940 and spent the war years in various prisons and camps; Pankrác in Prague, Terezin (Theresienstadt) and the women's prison in Munich.

After the war Horáková resumed her political activity and was elected to the national assembly as a National Socialist deputy. She was president of the council of Czechoslovak women and deputy president of the union of former political prisoners. After February 1948 she resigned her parliamentary mandate and left political life.<sup>21</sup> Antonie Kleinerová took a slightly different path. She was screened by the Communists in February 1948 and thus able to continue as a parliamentary deputy until the end of the session. She chose not to stand in the May elections, however, and was consequently unemployed. For this reason she

often went to Milada Horáková's office in the Prague social services department, looking for work. Horáková tried to help her, and often invited her to lunch or dinner as she had so little money.<sup>22</sup>

The 'Horáková group' was mostly composed of members of the National Socialist Party, though some of the alleged conspirators would seem to have been but slightly acquainted with one another. They were accused of treason, espionage and sabotage. The objective of the trial was to discredit both democratic political opponents of the regime and religious groups. The Roman Catholic Church was the main target, though Horáková herself was a devout Czech Protestant and Kleinerová, of course, was a Quaker.

The trial and the preceding interrogations were planned on the model of the Moscow show trials of Communists in the 1930s. They were also a dress rehearsal for the show trials of Communists by Communists that followed. The most notorious of these later hearings was the trial of Rudolf Slánský and other leading party officials in 1952, which resulted in three sentences to life imprisonment and eleven sentences to death.<sup>23</sup> The accused in the Horáková affair were subjected to physical and psychological torture, and were made to learn their answers to questions in court by heart. Kleinerová herself was beaten several times until she bled by Karel Švab, a leading Communist who would himself be among the accused (and condemned) in the Slansky trial some two years later. While hitting her about the face Švab screamed that it did not matter what the accused said, as the verdicts and punishments had been decided beforehand.<sup>24</sup>

The accused were interrogated about even the most innocuous occasions and events. Milada Horáková deposed that on 5 September 1948, shortly after the death of the former president Beneš, she went to his house at Sezimovo Usti to pay her respects and to express condolences to his widow, Hana Benešova. She had met Antonie Kleinerová on the train and at the house. They had travelled back to Prague together, and parted at the railway station. One year later Horáková and Kleinerová, with a third woman, visited the president's grave and tried to call on Hana Benešova. Only Horáková was admitted to see her, however, as Benešova was in bad health and not able to receive many visitors.<sup>25</sup> Plainly, the Communist interrogators hoped to fashion from these humanitarian visits some kind of conspiracy involving the widow of the last democratic president of Czechoslovakia.<sup>26</sup>

The trial began on 31 May 1950, and transmissions of the proceedings by Czechoslovak state radio were picked up by the BBC monitoring service. The transcripts of the case were a valuable source of news, as only two western press correspondents were invited to attend the trial, and everything they wrote was subject to the Czechoslovak Communist censorship.

The opening indictment by the prosecution accused Kleinerová of organising a group as a fifth column to prepare for an Anglo-American attack on Czechoslovakia. Among the foreign diplomats implicated in her scheme were British, American, French, Belgian and Yugoslav representatives. Kleinerová herself had a reactionary attitude, and so for this reason was not

accepted into the 'regenerated' Socialist party (a dummy partner of the Communists in the bogus national front). Therefore with Růžena Pelantová she had formed an anti-state group into which she drew a number of former National Socialist officials. She gave information to Western Imperialists, especially the Americans.<sup>27</sup> According to Leontine Neumanová, a piano teacher from Prague called as a witness, both Antonie Kleinerová and Milada Horáková had given her reports to send to Norway.<sup>28</sup>

On 3 June came the examination of Antonie Kleinerová, who pleaded guilty to high treason and espionage. It was said that immediately after the Communist coup of February 1948 she had started to build up a subversive and illegal group whose aim was to shake 'the confidence of the broad masses of working people in the government'.<sup>29</sup> She had taken instructions from two eminent political exiles, the former government ministers Hubert Ripka and Petr Zenkl, though her first subversive contact had been Růžena Pelantová. Formerly a deputy lord mayor of Prague, Pelantová had escaped to Norway in July 1949 and allegedly had begun to plot high treason with sympathetic circles in the West.

The indictment by the state prosecutor of 8 June contained similar charges. In close co-operation with Milada Horáková's anti-state organisation, Antonie Kleinerová and her underground group had developed subversion and espionage activities. Kleinerová's group had met with American officials and sent memoranda 'in which they slandered conditions in Czechoslovakia and asked the imperialists openly to intervene because – according to them – the peace camp led by the Soviet Union was not yet sufficiently capable of defence.'

In the individual indictment Kleinerová was charged with forming an illicit group with Ruzena Pelantova, whose 'illegal escape' she had arranged. About April 1949 she had acquired parts for a radio transmitter and arranged a hiding place for it. All the members of her group were engaged in espionage and were in contact with the Americans and Norwegians. Kleinerová herself sent important information to Ripka and Zenkl, and also spread propaganda about Czechoslovak conditions.<sup>30</sup>

Undoubtedly Kleinerová was guilty as charged of some of the counts against her. The former refugee H.J. Likier, in asking for British governmental intervention on her behalf, stated:

Even after the Communist putsch in Czechoslovakia she still helped people to escape from the country and I myself was for 2 years trying in vain to obtain permission to enter this country for a Czech couple who had been recommended to me by Mrs. Kleinerová and who are at present in a D.P. [Displaced Persons'] camp in Germany.

Such activities were far from criminal in the eyes of the non-Communist world. Indeed, a Foreign Office minute on the Likier file commented:

The trial was the usual Communist parody of Justice, and Mrs Kleinerová who apparently sent reports on conditions in Czechoslovakia

to RIPKA [sic], has done nothing that could be censured in a near-civilised state.<sup>31</sup>

Antonie Kleinerová was herself questioned about feelings of guilt for her 'criminal activity'. She replied that she was 'very sorry' that her actions had brought many people to prison and had cost their families dear. Otherwise she expressed no regret at all for having opposed the Communists.<sup>32</sup>

The two western press correspondents who were permitted to attend the trial observed, 'For the most part – though this was suppressed in the published accounts – the accused spoke up bravely for themselves, along the lines: "If this was a crime, I did it".'<sup>33</sup> This defiance seems to be borne out by the photographic evidence, which shows all the accused standing up bravely and with dignity to answer the questions of their tormentors.<sup>34</sup>

The verdicts were pronounced on 8 June 1950.<sup>35</sup> Milada Horáková, Žavis Kalandra, Oldřich Pecl and Jan Buchal received death sentences; the other defendants received prison sentences of varying length, fifteen years to life. Antonie Kleinerová was sentenced to life imprisonment. She served ten years with hard labour in prisons in Prague, Znojmo, Kutná Hora and Pardubice,<sup>36</sup> before being released under a presidential amnesty from Antonin Novotny in May 1960. She died on 23 August 1982.<sup>37</sup>

There is little record from 1950 of attempts at intervention on Kleinerová's behalf. H.J. Likier, then of the Luton Labour Party but formerly one of the beneficiaries of her refugee work, wrote to Kenneth Younger, Minister of State in the Foreign Office, asking for governmental intervention. Equally, the British regional board of the Council of Free Czechoslovakia, an international émigré body, asked for government intervention on behalf of all the accused. It described Antonie Kleinerová as a former member of the post war Czechoslovak parliament and as 'head of the Society of Friends in Czechoslovakia'.<sup>38</sup>

As for the Religious Society of Friends itself, *The Friend* for 9 June 1950 reported that she was among the accused in the Prague trial. That same day Paul Sturge wrote to the Clerk of the Meeting for Sufferings that *The Times* had reported her life sentence; but these are apparently the last traces of her in the Quaker records. Possibly the Religious Society of Friends shared the fears of the British authorities about the effects of intervention. As Anthony Meyer of the Foreign Office noted with regard to Likier's plea for intervention,

There is...absolutely nothing we can do to help, and any intervention by H.M. Embassy, which would in any case be technically improper, would serve not only to bring further suspicion on the Embassy, already 'involved' in this case, but possibly also to convert Mrs Kleinerová's life sentence into a death sentence.<sup>39</sup>

Indeed, it is true that not even appeals from such international luminaries as Albert Einstein, Eleanor Roosevelt and Winston Churchill had managed to save Horáková from the hangman's noose.

So much for the double persecution of Antonie Kleinerová. Something must now be said about the nature of the persecution of organised religion by both Nazis and Communists, as well as of specifically Quaker responses to persecution and tyranny. Naturally there was some broad similarity in the attitude and response of Nazis and Communists to those who professed a faith.<sup>40</sup> The Nazis, however, seem to have been either more overt or more systematic in their persecution of Quakers, who they regarded as 'pacifists' rather than 'friends of peace' (to use Corder Catchpool's terminology). Certainly in Germany proper Quakers were harassed in a variety of ways, from losing their jobs to undergoing arrest and interrogation.<sup>41</sup> Corder Catchpool was first arrested and interrogated in April 1933, apparently because of innocent gossip by the family maid and the widow next door.

The Friends were also suspect because of their international contacts. In August 1935, for example, Elizabeth Fox Howard was arrested on the German border and found to be carrying letters from Corder Catchpool, some of which mentioned Prague. She was taken back to Berlin, where Corder Catchpool and William Hughes were both arrested. In the 1930s German Yearly Meeting numbered no more than 250 members; yet the meeting house at Bad Pyrmont was requisitioned by the Nazis and several Quakers were sent to Buchenwald and other camps.<sup>42</sup> Certainly, the number of Prague Friends arrested and imprisoned by the Nazis seems out of all proportion to the smallness of the group.

The Nazi attitude to Quakers and other 'sects' (as they were labelled) was made explicit in a report by Heydrich as head of Reich security police in October 1939, some two years before his posting to Prague.<sup>43</sup> Heydrich classed the Quakers with Christian Scientists and Baptists as groups which, because of their international links and pacifist stance, could act as auxiliary troops (*Hilfstruppen*) of the enemies of German foreign policy. He recommended that all pacifist groups should be proscribed.<sup>44</sup>

Quakers had different approaches to the problem of a régime that was palpably evil. The American Friend Emma Cadbury, who was based in Vienna for much of the inter-war period, felt that relief work in Europe would draw people of different religious and political persuasions together and averred, 'We are not here to make Friends but to find friends.' In summer 1934 following the failed Austrian Nazi Putsch she and her brother-in-law Rufus Jones felt that the Friends should organise a relief scheme for the Nazis similar to the one they had provided for the Socialist victims of the brief civil war earlier in the year. This would provide emphatic proof of Quaker impartiality in political matters.<sup>45</sup>

A similar strand of thought is most prominently represented by the British Friend Corder Catchpool. Effectively one of the founders of the Friends International Centre in Berlin, he had to cope on both a practical and a philosophical level with the tangible nastiness of the Third Reich. He felt it important to meet and talk with hardbitten Nazis in order to understand why they had joined the movement. Only by such dialogue could persuasion be exercised. Further, he felt that the western democracies should co-operate with Nazi Germany so that the 'injustices' of the Versailles system could be addressed, and peace saved.<sup>46</sup>

A number of eminent Friends shared Corder Catchpool's concern with direct dialogue with the Nazis. Elizabeth Fox Howard visited a number of influential Nazis to plead the cause of their victims. In June 1933, for example, she interceded unsuccessfully with the notorious Ernst Roehm, leader of the paramilitary SA (Brownshirts). Other Friends, Carl Heath among them, were appalled at Catchpool's apparently conciliatory attitude to the Nazis, while the American Quaker Albert Martin declared unequivocally, 'There is no compromise possible between the N S [Nazi] philosophy and our own.'<sup>47</sup>

It would seem that, for both national and religious reasons, the Czech Friends' stance was closer to Martin's than to Catchpool's. The bitterness of the Prague Quakers at the 'betrayal' of Munich has already been mentioned, and perhaps it is not surprising that Antonie Kleinerová should pass into active resistance to the Nazi regime after 1939. Nor was she the only Czech associated with Friends to do so. Antonia Bruhá, an employee in Vienna of the Quaker hairdresser Joseph Schindler and a member of the Forum Club organised by the Viennese Friends, was often missing for days on end when she helped organise a Czech resistance group which concentrated on sabotage, chiefly of the railways. Like Antonie Kleinerová she was captured by the Gestapo and sent to a concentration camp.<sup>48</sup>

A glimpse into Kleinerová's state of mind under Nazi persecution is given by one who knew her in Ravensbrück.

I've never known anyone who could laugh so contagiously. She had an inexhaustible supply of jokes and anecdotes and even in the most hopeless situations she never lost her sense of humor. She had a bad hip that made it very hard for her to walk, yet she was never heard to complain.

The only time her cheerfulness deserted her was when she heard news of the death of her husband: 'Her face went suddenly dead. It took her a long time to find her way back to life and laughter.'<sup>49</sup> In the late 1940s, however, she was described as radiating faith and hope despite her husband's death.<sup>50</sup>

The Communists were somewhat less explicit than the Nazis in persecuting religious minorities. Indeed, most of their energies were saved for the Roman Catholic Church and the larger Protestant Churches in Czechoslovakia. (An uncommon instance of persecution of a minority Church came in June 1953, with the trial at Chrudim of four Baptists accused of spying for the United States. All pleaded guilty, and they received sentences of between five and eighteen years.)<sup>51</sup>

The 'Law for the Defence of the People's Democratic Republic' of November 1948 had a section concerning 'misuse of religious office or similar function in order to exert influence upon matters of political life'. This was used in two massive clerical show trials of March 1950, one of thirteen Catholic priests and the other of ten senior members and heads of religious orders.<sup>52</sup> Less than two months later the Catholic Church was one of the objects of attack in the Horáková trial itself. It was alleged that some of the accused had been in

contact with French, American and Yugoslav diplomats. In particular Bedřich Hostička, legal adviser to the general secretariat of the People's (Catholic) Party in the post war national front, was accused of drawing up a plan of his anti-state organisation and sending it to the Vatican with the help of the abbot of Brevnov.<sup>53</sup> The primate of Czechoslovakia, Archbishop Josef Beran of Prague, had been confined in a remote monastery since 1949.

At the same time, the Communist authorities maintained the fiction that there was complete religious toleration and freedom of worship in Czechoslovakia. The churches were all open, and religious instruction was available in state schools. All this, however, was simply to avoid the charge of religious persecution.<sup>54</sup> True, the Catholic People's Party under the leadership of Father Josef Plojhar, was a partner of the Communists in the national front; but not only was this coalition bogus, Plojhar himself was a Soviet agent.<sup>55</sup>

Perhaps it is worth considering here the career and fate of Přemysl Pitter, the cleric of the Czech Brethren Church who took over leadership of the Prague Quaker group in the winter of 1943-44. Pitter had been a pacifist since at least World War I when he had refused to fire on the enemy and only narrowly escaped a death sentence. Between the wars he was a member of War Resisters International and the League for Human Rights, and worked with Albert Einstein and Romain Rolland on human rights issues. He also worked with handicapped children and, after a sojourn in Britain in 1938, returned to threatened Czechoslovakia. During the Nazi occupation he sheltered and helped Jewish children; at the end of the war he helped both Jewish and German children rescued from concentration and internment camps, setting up four convalescent homes for Jewish children from Terezin (Theresienstadt).

Pitter's criticism of conditions in the internment camps for Sudeten Germans brought him into conflict with the Communist official Ladislav Kopřiva (later the notoriously brutal Minister for State Security who gave 'evidence' against the accused in the Slánský trial). Immediately after the Communist coup of February 1948 Pitter was put under state security surveillance, then sent to hard labour in the uranium mines. In 1951 he was able to escape to West Berlin through the German Democratic Republic, and he ended his life in Switzerland.<sup>56</sup>

It may also be fruitful to consider the career and fate of the American Quaker Noel Field. After World War II he was involved with the Unitarian Service Council, an international relief committee initially sponsored by the Religious Society of Friends. In March 1949 he and his wife Herta were lured to Prague from Switzerland. From thence they were kidnapped by the Hungarian security forces and taken to Budapest, where Noel Field's 'testimony' was used in the preparation of the show trial of the leading Communist Laszlo Rajk. Meanwhile Noel's brother Hermann Field had been kidnapped at Warsaw airport while on a mission to search for his brother and had disappeared into prison in Poland. Both Noel and Hermann Field were later released and rehabilitated.<sup>57</sup>

Just as Catholic and other clergy were not prosecuted simply for being clergy, but for misuse of clerical office, so Antonie Kleinerová was not

persecuted overtly for being a member of the Religious Society of Friends; rather, she was accused of treason as a member of an opposition political party. Yet the reference in her indictment to the 'peace camp led by the Soviet Union' holds a clue to the religious nature of her persecution.<sup>58</sup>

In August 1950 when Kleinerová was two months into her prison sentence, the 'peace camp led by the Soviet Union' held a World Peace Meeting in Prague. Corder Catchpool was invited to attend by Pierre Joliot-Curie, the international president, as a guest of both the world and Czechoslovak committees for peace. He thought it wiser to refuse.<sup>59</sup> Quite brazenly, given their regime's recent execution of one woman and imprisonment of two others, the 'Czechoslovak Committee of the Defenders of Peace' claimed:

Our women's effort for peace was the keynote also of the women's congress at which the former independent associations of Czech and Slovak women were merged into one national organisation, the Czechoslovak Union of Women. The creation of this united national organisation... was thus a contribution also to the struggle for peace.<sup>60</sup>

In reality the Communists, like the Nazis before them, hated 'friends of peace'; but more particularly so, since they themselves were posing as upholders of a world peace threatened solely by the democratic powers.

## NOTES

- 1 A version of this article was read to the Research Seminar of the School of Theology, Philosophy, and History at St Mary's College, Strawberry Hill. I am most grateful to members of the group for useful discussion and comment.
- 2 *Quaker Faith and Practice*, 2nd ed. (London: Britain Yearly Meeting, 1999), 23.88. For more discussion of Quaker attitudes to oppression, see below.
- 3 I am indebted to Eugen Schart of Prague for information on the origins of the Czechoslovak Quakers, and to Kurt Strauss by putting me in contact with this valuable informant.
- 4 Library of the Society of Friends [hereafter LSF], Friends' Service Council, Minutes of Germany Committee, 18 June 1930, and of Germany and Holland Committee, 18 November 1931. Eugen Schart describes Jaroslav Kose as the leading personality of the Prague group.
- 5 I am most grateful to Elizabeth Duke and Jenny Butterfield of the Friends World Committee for Consultation for this information and many other kindnesses. Antonie Kleinerová appears in the records as 'Tommy Kleiner'. In Quaker records both her married and maiden names are often given in the German form.
- 6 Public Record Office, London (hereafter PRO), FO 371/86327, NC1699/22/12, H.J. Likier to Kenneth Younger, 1 June 1950. Likier had been one of the refugees from Nazi Germany helped by Antonie Kleinerová after his escape to Czechoslovakia.
- 7 PRO, FO 371/21129, R4577/188/12, Corder Catchpool to Sir Robert Vansittart, 1 July 1937; FO 371/21131, R7251/188/12, same to same, 12 Oct. 1937. Cf. William R. Hughes, *Indomitable Friend: Corder Catchpool 1883-1952* (London: Housman, 2nd ed, 1964), pp. 134-39.
- 8 Hughes, *Indomitable Friend*, p. 153.
- 9 Letter of Tessa Cadbury (née Rowntree) to Brenda Bailey, 2 Jan. 1991. Quoted in Bailey, *A Quaker Couple in Nazi Germany*, (York: Sessions) pp. 87-88. See also Hans A. Schmitt, *Quakers and Nazis, Inner Light in Outer Darkness* (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 1997), pp. 140-41.

- 10 For Czechoslovakia during World War II, Maria Dowling, *Czechoslovakia* (London: Arnold, 2002), Chapter 4.
- 11 Czechoslovak Ministry of Foreign Affairs [ie, the government in exile], *Four Fighting Years* (London: Hutchinson & Co., 1943), pp. 117-21 for the acts of sabotage and Nazi reprisals.
- 12 Margarete Buber-Neumann, *Milena, the Story of a Remarkable Friendship* (New York: Schocken Books, 1988), pp. 176-77, 198. Milena Jesenská is most famous for her love affair with Franz Kafka, though she was herself a remarkable writer.
- 13 LSF, Friends' Service Council News-Bulletin No. 16, July 1945; FSC Europe Committee News Sheets Jan/Feb 1943 (unnumbered), No. 32 May/June 1945, No. 33 June/July 1945.
- 14 *Four Fighting Years*, p.123. See also E.V. Erdely, *Prague Braves the Hangman* (London: The Czechoslovak, 1942).
- 15 Jiří Radotinský, *Rozsudek, Který Otrásl Světem* [The Judgment that Shook the World] (Prague: Czechoslovak Pressfoto, 1990), p. 90.
- 16 Milan Churaň et al, *Kdo byl Kdo v Našich Dějinách ve 20. Století* [Who was Who in our history of the 20th century] (Prague: Libri, 1998), vol. 2 p. 71. Sylva Stahlová's letter appears in FSC European News Sheet No. 33, July/August 1945.
- 17 *The Friend* 108 (1950), p. 438.
- 18 Unlike its German namesake, this was a moderate, non-Marxist socialist party, founded in 1897.
- 19 For the Communist coup see Karel Kaplan, *The Short March, The Communist Takeover in Czechoslovakia 1945-1948* (London: 1987).
- 20 Two accounts of the Horáková trial based on documentary evidence are Karel Kaplan, *Největší Politický Proces, Milada Horáková a Spol.* (The Largest Political Trial, Milada Horáková and Co.) (Prague and Brno: Ústav pro soudobé dějiny AV ČR and Nakladatelství Doplněk, 1992); and Zora Dvořáková and Jiří Doležal, *O Miladě Horákové a Milada Horáková o Sobě* [About Milada Horáková, and Milada Horáková about herself] (Prague: Klub Milady Horákové and Nakladatelství Eva Milan Nevole, 2001). Little secondary literature exists about Horáková, and almost nothing in English. The chapter concerning her in Wilma A. Iggers, *Women of Prague, Ethnic Diversity and Social Change from the Eighteenth Century to the Present* (Providence, Rhode Island and Oxford: Berghahn Books, 1997) is a translation and condensation of Zora Dvořáková, *Milada Horáková* (Prague: edice Kdo je, Středočeskí Nakladatelství, 1991).
- 21 Dvořáková and Doležal, *O Miladě Horákové*, p.125, from Horáková's statement under interrogation.
- 22 Cf. Jiří Pelikan (ed.), *The Czechoslovak Political Trials, 1950-1954* (London: Macdonald, 1971); Josefa Slánská, *Report on my Husband* (London: Hutchinson, 1969); Artur London, *On Trial (L'Aveu)* (London: Macdonald, 1970); Marian Slingová, *Truth Will Prevail* (London: Merlin Press, 1968).
- 23 Iggers, *Women of Prague*, p. 299; Dvořáková and Doležal, *O Miladě Horákové*, p. 209.
- 24 Dvořáková and Doležal, *O Miladě Horákové*, pp. 126-27, from Horáková's statement under interrogation.
- 25 The last, that is, until the election of Václav Havel in 1989.
- 26 PRO, FO 371/86327, NC 1691/20, BBC Monitoring Service transcripts of trial.
- 27 PRO, FO 371/86328, NC 1691/28, same source.
- 28 PRO, FO 371/86328, NC 96127, p. 19, examination of Antonie Kleinerová.
- 29 PRO, FO 371/86328, NC 1698/34, copy of State Prosecutor's indictment from Reuters full transcript.
- 30 PRO, FO 371/86327, NC1691/22, H.J. Likier to Kenneth Younger, 1 June 1950; minute by Anthony Meyer, 9 June 1950.
- 31 Kaplan, *Největší Proces*, p. 189.
- 32 PRO, FO 371/1698/34, Chancery, Prague to Northern department, Foreign Office, 14 June 1950. For the Czechoslovak press reportage of the verdict, cf. *Lidové Noviny* [People's News], 9 June 1950; the headline reads, 'Fair Judgment on Subversives'.
- 33 Cf. Photographs reproduced in Kaplan, *Největší Proces*.
- 34 The court had received some 6,300 resolutions from around the country calling for the blood of the accused; Dvořáková and Doležal, *O Miladě Horákové*, p.215. Kaplan, *Největší Proces*, pp.315-24 prints a selection of these documents.
- 35 Kaplan, *Největší Proces*, p.325.
- 36 Radotinský, *Rozsudek*, p.90. Her date of death was also reported to London Yearly Meeting (infor-

- mation from Jenny Butterfield).
- 37 PRO, FO 371/86328, NC 1691/32, Memorandum from Council of Free Czechoslovakia in Britain, 14 June 1950. The only visitors Kleinerová is recorded as having received in prison between 1956 and 1959 were family members; Kaplan, *Největší Proces*, pp.329-330.
- 38 PRO, FO 371/86327, NC 1691/22, minute by Meyer, 9 June 1950.
- 39 For persecution under both forms of 'totality', Miriam Therese Winters, *Out of the Depths: the story of Ludmila Javorová ordained Roman Catholic priest* (New York: The Crossroad Publishing Co., 2001). For persecution of Christians by Communists, Helena Havlíčková, *Dědictví: kapitoly z dějin komunistické perzekuce v Československu 1948-1989* [Legacy: chapters from the history of Communist persecution in Czechoslovakia 1948-1989] (Prague: Votobia/Poznáni, 2002).
- 40 Bailey, *Quaker Couple*, pp.24,29,41, for loss of employment, pp.38,40,47,62-63,65 for Corder Catchpool's arrest and interrogation on several occasions. Cf. Hughes, *Indomitable Friend*, pp.85-90,103-104.
- 41 Elizabeth F Howard, *Across Barriers* (London: Friends Service Council, 1941), pp. 92-102; Bailey, *Quaker Couple*, pp. 143-44, 155, 186, 191; Schmitt, *Quakers and Nazis*, p. 73.
- 42 Printed in Heinz Boberach (ed), *Berichte des SD und Gestapo über Kirchen und Kirchengemeinden in Deutschland 1934-1944* (Mainz: Matthias-Grunewald Verlag, 1971), pp. 352-65.
- 43 Boberach, *Berichte*, pp. 361, 363.
- 44 Sheila Spielhofer, *Stemming the Dark Tide, Quakers in Vienna 1919-1942* (York: Sessions, 2001), pp.60, 84-86.
- 45 Cf. Schmitt, *Quakers and Nazis*, p.63; Bailey, *Quaker Couple*, pp.38, 40, 47, 62-63, 65.
- 46 Schmitt, *Quakers and Nazis*, pp.52, 64, 113.
- 47 Spielhofer, *Stemming the Dark Tide*, p.136. The author does not make it clear whether Antonia Bruhá was a member of the Society, or simply a friend of Friends.
- 48 Buber-Neumann, *Milena*, p. 176.
- 49 Dvořáková and Doležal, *O Miladě Horákové*, p. 72.
- 50 PRO, FO 371/106152, NC 1781/5. Account of the trial from an English language bulletin of Czechoslovak state broadcasting.
- 51 Dana Adams Schmidt, *Anatomy of a Satellite* (London: Secker & Warburg, 1953), pp. 167, 176-77.
- 52 PRO, FO 371/86328, NC 1691/28, p.16 (BBC monitoring service reports from trial), NC 1698/34 (State Prosecutor's indictment).
- 53 Cf. *L'Osservatore Romano*, editorial of 25 October 1953.
- 54 Zdeněk Mlynář, *Night Frost in Prague: the end of humane socialism* (London: Hurst & Co., 1986), pp. 119, 292.
- 55 Churaň et al, *Kdo byl Kdo*, vol.2 p. 71; LSF, Friends' Service Council Europe Committee - European News Sheet No.32, May/June 2945, Olga Fierz and Přemysl Pitter to War Resisters International, 29 May 1945; information from Eugen Schart.
- 56 Cf. Lionel Richard, 'De Nouveau sur les Procès des Années 50', *Le Monde Diplomatique* (October 1995).
- 57 Phrases such as 'the world camp of peace, democracy and socialism, led by the powerful Soviet Union' appear frequently in the records of the trial. Cf. Iggers, *Women of Prague*, p. 301.
- 58 Hughes, *Indomitable Friend*, p.202.
- 59 Czechoslovak Committee of the Defenders of Peace, *Czechoslovakia A Forte of Peace* (Prague: Orbis, 1950), p. 12.

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