
Conference Report

Time to ensure justice for the victims of Communist rule

by Angelika Beyreuther-Raimondi

Eight years after the fall of the Berlin Wall, how are citizens of the former Communist countries of eastern Europe reappraising their own history? Supporters and opponents of the past totalitarian regimes still live side by side, and often know about one another's past. While there are demands for a thorough reevaluation of this history, there are also calls for finally closing the book. "The Heritage of Dictatorship and Internal Domestic Peace" was the theme of a conference held in Berlin on May 1-3, co-sponsored by the Konrad Adenauer Foundation and the Berlin-Brandenburg Evangelical Academy, the latter led by Ulrike Poppe, a civil rights activist in former East Germany. The conference dealt with the cases of Germany, the Czech Republic, Hungary, Latvia, Romania, and Poland.

Reports issued by the state security organs of the various countries on the way that criminal law has judged the crimes of the past, on the rehabilitation and compensation of the victims, and on the access that citizens have to documents about them, show that the course taken thus far is not considered adequate. Without access to the documents of the Communist era, it is difficult to make a scientific assessment, and, with the passage of time and increasing economic difficulties, media reports and public interest decrease. Has there actually been a change in the elites in these countries, or have things remained essentially the same, behind a new facade? In this report, and the interviews with conference participants that follow, we begin to answer this complex question.

The mountains of documents in the formerly Soviet-occupied countries are a very important heritage of the dictatorships. Yet so far, only Germany and the Czech Republic have set up institutions which are conducting an orderly examination of the papers of the formerly Communist security organs. In no other countries of the Soviet bloc, do citizens have comparable access to documents about them, and thus the possibility to demand the facts, including about the "means of subversion" used for years, sometimes decades, against them, their families, and friends.

Germany: the Gauck Authority

Germany has set up a National Commission for the Documents of the State Security Service (Stasi) of the Former Ger-

man Democratic Republic, which is named after its director, former Pastor Joachim Gauck. This "Gauck Authority" is considered to be the model for dealing with the Communist-era documents, as all the conference participants confirmed. Most of the participants knew Pastor Gauck from conferences in their countries, in which he had reported on his work. It is simply not tolerable, Gauck said at one such conference in Warsaw, that "the state knew more about me than I did myself."

The Gauck Authority has become a big institution, with almost 3,000 employees, since the law was passed in 1992 governing Stasi documents. In addition to its central administration, the Authority has three departments—Archives, Information and Education, and Research—which publish scientific works on the dimensions, structure, and work methods of the Stasi.

Just how great public interest is in this conquest of the past, is shown by the fact that, so far, 3.9 million applications have been submitted, of which 1.43 million are for access to documents by private persons; 1.18 million have already been processed. And 2.47 million applications for information, often regarding public service, have been submitted, of which 2.26 million have been processed.

Although, in 1989-90, large numbers of documents were destroyed in Germany, and the foreign secret service of Markus Wolf was even able to dissolve itself, there are still highly interesting documents filling 180 kilometers of bookshelves, including 40 million boxes and hundreds of thousands of pictures and audio material. About 80 km of material is stored in the Berlin central archives, much of it in bundles or loose pages, some of them torn. From the whole mass of undestroyed written material, about 58 km were taken out of the archives of the former Ministry for State Security (MfS). Many kilometers of documents had to be put in order, or pieced together like a jigsaw puzzle. Now, half the unordered material is available for research, not counting the 16 km of documents which, during the 1989 revolution, were shredded and are now stored in large sacks.

The Czech Republic

Dr. Miroslav Lehky, of the Office for the Examination



Berlin's Brandenburg Gate, October 1990. The fall of the Berlin Wall and the demise of Communism opened up the opportunity for rule of constitutional law in the former Soviet bloc. A crucial aspect of that process must be the orderly release of secret files of the Communist secret services; but that has been blocked in many countries, by those wishing, for one reason or another, to wipe out any trace of the high crimes and misdemeanors committed during the Cold War years.

and Documentation of the Crimes of Communism in Prague, reported to the conference on the process in his country. On Nov. 17, 1989, the 40-year-old dictatorship collapsed. Already at the end of 1989, the constitutional provision on the leading role of the Communist Party had been officially removed; but only five years later, on Jan. 1, 1995, was the first institution established comparable to the Gauck Authority. The director until recently was Dr. Vaclav Benda, a dissident and former spokesman for "Charter 77."

In 1996, the "Law on the Discovery and Individual Access to Personal Documents of the State Security Services on Individual Persons" was passed. Many documents had been destroyed in 1989-90, by security officers who were tried and convicted in 1992. Compared to what happened in East Germany, the document-shredding in the Czech republic was not so thorough and systematic, Lehky said; the documents were not centrally stored and their destruction was carried out, fortunately, in "a Czech manner and in Czech disorder."

In 1991, the so-called transparency law was passed, whereby former state security officials and high-level Communist cadres would be barred for five years from access to sensitive positions in government (in 1996, this was extended to ten years). This controversial law, according to Dr. Lehky, "was a purely defensive act, which was to protect society and democracy from a counteroffensive by the old cadres," since in 1991, the old cadres started "slowly and pragmatically" to sabotage the transformation process. Despite difficulties, this law has "been proven necessary and inevitable for the transformation of society from dictatorship to democracy." Here, too, Germany and the Czech Republic are models, as no other country has similar laws.

Despite this comparatively good situation in the Czech Republic, no one should have illusions that it is possible "to establish complete justice, and punish and document all the crimes of Communism," said Lehky. What can be achieved, is to prove guilt and responsibility in individual cases. And this is very important, because respect for law must be renewed in the citizenry, and that will happen only "if a crime remains a crime, even when the crime was perfectly covered by political power." This, he said, is the most important task of reappraisal of the Communist past, for the benefit of citizens in the present and the future.

Just how difficult all this is to implement in practice, emerged from the conference discussion. The same problems Lehky complained of in his country, appeared almost everywhere: For example, 50% of the old judges are still active, and in the state administration, the percentage is even higher. In the Czech Republic, people sometimes play for time, knowing that neither criminals nor their victims will live forever. And the new judges and attorneys have limited experience.

What about the possessions of the former Communist nomenklatura? At the beginning of 1990, the new Czech Parliament passed a law, as one of its first measures, on the confiscation of properties belonging to the Communist Party and related organizations, and a law on rehabilitation. That opened the way for annulling unjust convictions and giving compensation to victims, although it was, as Lehky said, unfortunately only symbolic.

It was possible, as in all the countries of the former East bloc, to get around the law. Of 12.5 billion estimated possessions of the Communist Party, only a couple of hundred could be found.

According to Dr. Oldrich Tuma, of the newly established Institute for Contemporary History, a change did take place among the Czech political elite, if one is talking about a few hundred people: government ministers, parliamentarians, senators, and leading party personalities. In the Parliament, there are only two members who were also parliamentarians during the Communist regimes. And in the Army, the change in leading personnel was rigorously carried out, and the newly appointed Chief of the General Staff is a graduate of Western military schools.

However, the new economic elite, the new owners of companies and top managers, are, according to Tuma, often those who exercised power in economic and sometimes political offices during the earlier regime—a logical development, considering that these were the people who, at the time of the revolution, had the advantage of financial means, contacts, and experience.

Closing the book on Poland's past?

Poland's first non-communist Prime Minister, Tadeusz Mazowiecki, stated in 1989, that a big X should be drawn across Poland's past, declaring it a closed book. Still today, none of the victims of the Communist secret services in Poland have access to documents, there is no transparency law, and there has been no light shed on various political murders, such as that of Father Popieluszko. Prof. Dr. Sauerland, a dissident from Solidarnosc, argued, during the Berlin conference, for the establishment of something like a Gauck Authority in Poland, so that, among other things, those who were *not* informal collaborators of the state security services, would have the means to prove this, in the face of rumors and accusations against them.

The security service of the Interior Ministry had over 3 million documents, and military counterespionage had another 400,000. After the "clean-up operations," which lasted until February 1990, an estimated 40-50% of those papers, especially those related to leading personalities, were missing. On Sept. 4-5, 1989, for example, an order was issued to destroy documents regarding surveillance of the Catholic Church and Solidarnosc.

As early as 1956, archives with documents from the Stalinist era, had been destroyed. After 1989, the security service of the Interior Ministry, that is, the office defending the state, took over control of the documents. The party documents were handed over to the state archives, and placed under lock and key for 30 years, counting from the day of the initial opening of a document. Personal data on former secret service collaborators who worked in espionage and counter-espionage, are considered state secrets.

Battle for justice and history in Hungary

Two Communist terror waves swept over Hungary, in 1948-53 and following the 1956 uprising. Between 1945 and 1953, about 10% of the population was condemned and pun-

ished, while in the 1956 revolution, 24,000 people were killed or wounded. Four hundred people were later hanged for their role in the uprising, and thousands were imprisoned. These facts have to be kept in mind, when one looks at the reappraisal of the Communist past in Hungary today: Since 1990, three legally binding decisions have been issued against the perpetrators of these crimes.

Dr. Laslo Varga, director of the Budapest Archives, linked the political shift in Hungary to June 16, 1989, when the executed leaders of the 1956 revolution were solemnly reburied, before hundreds of thousands of people. "The battle for democracy was thus stamped with the fight for justice and history," he said. Thereafter, however, the issue of reappraisal became the subject of partisan conflict, and nonpartisanship became impossible, according to Ferenc Koeszeg, member of the Hungarian Parliament and director of the Hungarian Helsinki Committee.

In Hungary, Dr. Varga said, people at the top were often replaced, but then the person who was second in command would work his way in. Today's Prime Minister, Gyula Horn, was the last Foreign Minister under the Communist dictatorship, and had a typical party career. The president of today's Parliament was the last Interior Minister, who was responsible for the elimination of secret service documents in the transition period. With the exception of three Free Democrats, said Varga, all the ministers had a normal career in the party or in the youth movement. Very seldom in Hungary have state attorneys, judges, or police been fired since the transition.

Seventy to eighty percent of today's managers in Hungary, were active in the Communist period, according to Koeszeg. Today they are working for foreign firms. In the notorious "spontaneous" privatization of 1988-90, media outlets were sold to Western publishers for less than their real worth, on condition that the Communist editorial board would remain intact. Thus, Bertelsmann of West Germany bought up the former Communist Party newspaper and employed the staff; Springer bought up the Communist provincial papers, etc.

What would a change in the elites look like, numerically speaking? asked Dr. Varga. There is a secret party report from 1984, which said that the hard-core dissidents numbered 200, the active Communist supporters 2,000, and the passive supporters, 20,000.

In Hungary, the archive law and the law to protect state secrets were passed in 1995, and the state security documents are practically inaccessible. The names of unofficial collaborators are classified as state secrets. The methods of the state security are also to remain secret. There has been only one book written on the activity of the Hungarian security service, and it deals with the end of the 1950s, the early 1970s, and 1988-89. "Summarizing," Varga said, "our scientific understanding of the Communist dictatorship in Hungary is very modest."

First democratic regime in Romania since 1937

The first democratic government in Romania since 1937 entered office in 1996. Parliamentarian Dr. Gheorghe Ceaușescu, of the Civic Alliance, who belongs to this new team, spoke out at the Berlin conference, criticizing the fact that longtime Romanian dictator Nicolae Ceaușescu was supported by the West up to 1989, and that in the end it was the sons of the nomenklatura who received scholarships in the West. In the universities, the old professors have remained in place.

In Romania, there are no legal foundations for access to documents, and it is not even clear what is still extant. Regardless, said Professor Ceaușescu, a legal regime must be established urgently, otherwise there is the danger that rumors, aided by falsified papers, could be circulated against individuals. There is a big fight going on in Romania about this, as the bill for creating a National Committee for the Study of Securitate [secret police] Archives is being debated in Parliament.

Latvia: 50 years an occupied country

Latvia was occupied and annexed by the Soviet Union, following the Molotov-Ribbentrop Treaty of Aug. 23, 1939, and was occupied for 50 years. The Soviet and German occupations were linked to enormous material damage and human losses. Between 1939 and 1949, an estimated 500,000 people died, about one-fourth the population. The majority of the national elite was killed or fled to the West. The country was russified and made a part of the Soviet Union.

Immediately after the restoration of Latvia's independence, in August 1991, the work of the Moscow-aligned Communist Party was declared illegal. However, political activity was not denied former Communists, and thus a former party affiliation did not have any negative effect on individuals, in the economic or political realm — to the contrary.

What about the new elite? Paulis Klavins, a parliamentarian and State Secretary from Riga, gave an impressive example: A Latvian judge had condemned a dissident in the Soviet period to seven years' imprisonment and deportation. Now, the dissident has a right to exoneration. However, the exoneration proceedings are to be carried out by the same judge who sentenced him in the first place!

In Latvia, the changing of the elite will take one or two generations, Klavins said. There was no outstanding opposition to the Communist government; there were only those who thought differently. The people in the courts, schools, and administration are the same who were there in the Soviet period. Alluding to those numerous West German judges and bureaucrats, who, though of retirement age, stayed on after the revolution to shape the administrative shift in the newly liberated eastern German states, Klavins said, "We had no West German pensioners who could be sent here, as they were to East Germany." Klavins added, "We will try to educate citizens. We will try to resist. How and for how long we will succeed, is not clear."

Klavins was in 1993 the director of the office which dealt with the files from the former Latvian security service. He painted a gloomy picture of the situation: The files are now in Russian hands, and could be used anytime to blackmail Latvian citizens. There is in Latvia a file on agents with 7,000 names, and every citizen is supposed to have the right to know whether he is listed there or not; but since the working files are missing, this list of agents is not very informative, since there is no way of knowing what the persons did or did not do.

Will justice prevail?

What conclusions are to be drawn from this stock-taking? There are some in Russia as well as in the West who have no interest in looking back at the Communist past and in opening the files of the old regimes. There are too many hints in the papers of the former Communist regimes and their security services, of their own involvement in various atrocities.

The demand for a thorough accounting is not a matter of blind anti-Communism, or settling accounts with the past. It is a question of the right that men have, who lived for decades under arbitrary, totalitarian conditions, to live, now and in the future, in a state of law. Therefore, it is necessary for each of these states to develop an independent, patriotic elite, in whom the deeply insecure citizens may place their trust. The citizens must be given the opportunity to develop their consciousness of law, that certain simple facts must be rectified, or, as one conference participant put it, "that a crime remains a crime, even if the crime was completely covered up by political power."

Today it is almost everywhere the case, that society does not want to have anything to do with the terrible, irreversible injury done to victims. It is shameful that the victims often have to fight for their own credibility. They have waited in vain for any generous and just compensation, yet this is necessary, for the sake of justice.

Even if the files are incomplete, nonetheless access to them is required for historical and individual reappraisal, and also provides the opportunity to limit political manipulation and blackmail. In Germany, the broad access to files, according to Annegret Stephan, head of the Magdeburg Center for the Victims of Political Violence, has another important aspect to be considered, namely, that you can trace many different forms of resistance: "In the files there is also a lot of civil courage to be found."

These states must bring to light the truth about Communism, and transmit it to future generations; otherwise, speculators like George Soros will finance and influence a new elite.

If the crimes of Communism are not punished, according to Hungarian parliamentarian Ferenc Koeszeg, then those crimes can be cast in a relativistic light. He reported on how Communist songs have come back into fashion among some liberal circles in Hungary, and asked, "Can you imagine what it would be like, if liberals in Germany were to sing Nazi songs?"

How to re-create a constitutional state

Dr. Miroslav Lehky works with the Office for Investigation and Documentation of the Crimes of the Communists in Prague, Czech Republic. He spoke at the conference “The Heritage of Dictatorship and Domestic Peace,” and was interviewed by Angelika Beyreuther-Raimondi.

EIR: Is it true that only Czechia, among all the other former East bloc countries, has founded an institution like the German Gauck Authority to manage archive material and investigate former officials of the Communist regime?

Dr. Lehky: Yes, it’s true—unfortunately so. It would be a great help, if such institutions as in Prague and Berlin also existed in other countries. It would be a great help also for the people in other countries, because it was Moscow’s centralized strategy, the highest power in the East bloc to move in a coordinated way against freedom, to violate human rights, and so forth.

Secondly, there is a mass of documentary material, not only in the Czech Republic, but also in Germany, and, as we have heard, in Latvia, and so forth, which has either been destroyed or still exists somewhere, and if there were international coordination and cooperation in this area, it would be possible, given the centralized coordination of the Communists, to better piece this mosaic together. That would be a practical help, a practical result. Unfortunately, up to now, such institutions exist only among us and in the Federal Republic of Germany.

EIR: The Czech secret service was very effective in its work. Is it your impression that the files are relatively complete, or have a larger number of them disappeared or been destroyed in your country as well?

Dr. Lehky: In my view, the KGB has copies, especially of the most important material. These copies were regularly made for the Moscow leadership, because the KGB coordinated everything that had to do with the intelligence services. Copies of those files, which were destroyed in our country, most likely still exist somewhere. It is probably only a question of time until we find them. . . .

EIR: You mentioned in your speech that some 100 indictments have been handed down.

Dr. Lehky: Not indictments, but accusations. Accusations have been made in those cases, where it is quite evident, that a specific perpetrator did this and that, that he committed crimes, and where we have clear evidence and documentation on that, or where witnesses exist—i.e., where we have recorded the testimony of these witnesses.

According to our regulations, that is where our authority ends, and then, we give our files to the prosecuting attorney. He has the means to corroborate all of this. Then the prosecutor brings the indictment and hands the case over to the court. Since Jan. 1, 1995, when our office was given the authority I mentioned, five persons were found guilty in court. And we have raised accusations in approximately 98 cases. But these are cases which we have not yet given over to the prosecuting attorney. Another 200 cases are still in the phase of documentation.

EIR: In your speech, you said that, in order to re-create a constitutional republic, a sense of law must be revived among citizens.

Dr. Lehky: It is an illusion to expect that one or two people, or the government, or the law, can make a constitutional republic. You know, the law is only an instrument, but a concrete power must stand behind the law, the society. For example, literally the same laws apply in Czechia that were in force in the Austrian-Hungarian monarchy. The monarchy, the first Czech Republic, and after them, the Communists, used the same laws to condemn people. Law, right, justice—these are all quite different things, quite different conceptions.

That is very important for the younger generation. We know that the Communists were perhaps naive in the 1950s, and they were primitive and brutal, and so forth. But I was astonished, and it was a shock for me to be at an interrogation, involving a border incident in 1986. It involved a border guard who is about 30 years old today. He was responsible for shooting a civilian, a citizen of the Federal Republic of Germany, on German national territory. We asked him various things, and it was astonishing to me that he answered: “Just let things be, I have other worries, I have a family and children. Just let things ride.” A relatively young person.

How is that for a state of mind? There is no sense of responsibility, no sense of guilt.

But that is important for a democratic society. Then I posed him the following question: “Will you say the same thing to the prosecuting attorney from the Federal Republic of Germany? Will you say the same thing (and you’ll have the chance, if you wish), will you say the same thing to the wife of the person you shot? ‘Let things ride?’ This woman has two children!”

It was my impression at the time, and that is what is important, that this was the first time that this young man ever heard such a thing, and that he thought about it. That is the core of the issue of the constitutional republic.

Changes since 1989 in the Czech Republic

Dr. Tuma is an historian at the Institute for Contemporary History in Prague, Czech Republic founded after the collapse of communism. He spoke with Angelika Beyreuther-Raimondi at the conference on "The Heritage of Dictatorship and Domestic Peace."

EIR: Can you explain the change of the political elite in your country since 1989?

Dr. Tuma: Yes, the political elite, the politically active people, are mostly new people. Even, as I stressed, within the Communist Party itself. Those leading figures of the present Communist Party are people who are quite different compared to the Communist Party before 1989. So, even in the party, which still is Communist, it was necessary to make this change of personnel. As far as political elites are concerned, the change is very extensive.

EIR: And what about the industrial and economic management-level people? Despite the fact that you had Vaclav Klaus as the Prime Minister for a long time, and he is well known as the so-called "star pupil" of the free-market economy, there are still the old networks alive in the economic field.

Dr. Tuma: What I would like to say, is that there are people with a Communist past in the economic elite. But they are not in the same positions, and the structures are different. But those were the people, who, when the privatization began in 1991, had money, had connections with the information—those people who either belong to the old Communist managerial elite, or were even just political functionaries of the Communist Party apparatus. And they started quite new careers in private business or as managers in the partly state-owned companies, but mostly in the private companies; and, also, very often, in the companies owned by foreign capital, because the foreign capital considered them experts, with the experience and the knowledge, and the know-how.

It doesn't mean that the old networks exist as they used to be; of course, the structures changed, but many people with a Communist past, members of the Central Committee of the party, are now in positions which you can describe as the economic elite.

EIR: What is the structure in the banking sector?

Dr. Tuma: These are also those people. For instance, the present Prime Minister of the Czech Republic, Josef Tosov-

sky, is a person with a Communist past. He was member of the Communist Party during the Communist period; he was even chief of the only Czech bank in the 1980s to have a branch abroad, in London, the Zivnostenska Banca. He was director of this Zivnostenska Banca in London. This was quite an important function, and, obviously, not just anyone could be sent there, and probably only a real expert on banking. He was a governor of the Czech national bank, and now he is Prime Minister. Maybe he is an exception in the political elite, a man with a Communist past. But as far as public opinion is concerned, he is a transitional figure—he will serve as Prime Minister for a few months, and the public accepts him mostly as an expert on economy, not as a real politician.

EIR: The political change in the Czech Republic is the most complete, compared to the other countries we talked about.

Dr. Tuma: Compared to other countries. Well, Germany is a different case, the former East Germany; but yes, in Poland or in Hungary, you have very deep political changes, but still people in the Hungarian government, or the President of Poland, are people with a Communist past, and this is something, which probably wouldn't be tolerated in the Czech Republic. . . . Those people basically disappeared from political life. This doesn't mean from public life—they have influence—but they use their influence for themselves, not to promote the old ideas.

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The problematic issue of Poland's files

Dr. Banaszak is a jurist and a professor of constitutional law at the University in Wroclaw, Poland. Angelika Beyreuther-Raimondi spoke with him on May 3.

EIR: The revolutions in the former East bloc countries took place with a great deal of initiative from Poland. That is why it was surprising for me to learn that there is no institution yet, which lets Polish citizens have access to their secret police files, and that Poland seems to be lagging behind other countries in working through its communist past.

Dr. Banaszak: First let me quote from the Bible: The first may also be the last. But, quite seriously: At the beginning of the Mazowiecki government, there was the “rough stroke” policy, which means that we drew a line, a stroke of the brush or pen that marks off the past, and we built the future anew. . . .

In the 1993 elections, the left came back to power. The reason for that was not that they had the majority of votes, but because the 5% threshold [to enter Parliament] was introduced. The conservative parties received [cumulatively] 35% of the vote, but no one party managed to get over 5%, and therefore could not enter Parliament. The ex-communists received 20% of the vote, and that made them the strongest party in Parliament—it was not that Poland had suddenly voted for the ex-communists.

But in this election, you can also see that it was not important to people, whether someone had been an agent or not: People elected an individual because they saw that he had adapted to new conditions, that now he spoke eloquently about the constitutional state, about the market economy, and he also took action in this direction. It is no accident, that the party elite transformed itself into a financial elite, which is the same phenomenon as we have heard about from Romania. . . .

Poland has had two generations living under circumstances which are very different from those in East Germany or Czechoslovakia. We had private agriculture, private craftsmen, private merchants, and Poland was well adjusted to the market economy. That is why hopes were so great that we would be able to take the [state-sector] businesses into our own hands.

What happened after 1989? Suddenly, the European Union was closed off to us in those very areas where we were competitive: agriculture, steel, coal. Then, of course, we tell

people, “Yes, you just talk a lot about market economy. But what is happening? The French farmers block Polish trucks with Polish meat from entering France. Where is this free-market economy?”

So people saw that the communists were a lie, but the free-market economy is not always the truth, either. And, then many people voted for the ex-communists, because they would say, maybe, they will find a “third way,” i.e., less than a totally free-market economy. We can observe the same thing in Slovakia and in Belarus—these hopes, which lead nowhere. . . .

EIR: What is happening with the files of the old regime, the party files, the state dossiers?

Dr. Banaszak: The first important thing is to allow citizens to see the files—all citizens. That is not the case now, but soon it will be possible. Why is that so important? This is something, which cannot only be important for the elite. There must be a “lustration” [ritual cleansing].

I’ll give you an example, the Oleksy case and even the head of state, [Lech] Walesa, were accused of having been agents. [Prime Minister Jozef Oleksy was forced to resign in January 1996 after allegations were made against him the previous month.] So, you can say, theoretically, he is an agent, but there is no proof; and then comes Oleksy and he claims that it is just a lie. Whom should I believe? Why can’t a constitutional republic prove these things through the legal system? Okay, we do not have all of the files; but, in the files we do have, we do not have Oleksy as a spy, and we do not have Walesa as a spy. Much has been altered in these files, and there was enough time to do that. Of course, this is all problematic. But, if we ignore the files completely, then that is a victory of the former secret service, because they will become important again, and they will appear as witnesses, and they can continue their manipulations.

EIR: Careful use of the files is naturally important, because they were forged and manipulated, and the Russians have used the files as blackmail material.

Dr. Banaszak: You have cited an important reason for the lustration. If we do not do that, foreign nations can always interfere. Any country can interfere in our politics; if we do not “lustrate,” then that can always happen. That is why access to the files is important. How can an individual prove that he was not a collaborator of the Stasi, if he has no access to the files? . . . Access to the files provides the possibility to defend oneself against lies about collaboration with the Stasi.

EIR: When will the draft legislation be passed?

Dr. Banaszak: Soon, I hope, but when? The next question is whether the President will veto it. The President, an ex-communist, is playing a game here. He said that we would not “lustrate” former Polish spies, i.e., agents in the West, because that would threaten our national security. . . .

Hungary's files are still under wraps

Dr. Varga is an historian and director of the Budapest City Archive. He spoke with Angelika Beyreuther-Raimondi at the May 1-3 conference on "The Heritage of Dictatorship and Domestic Peace" in Berlin.

EIR: What is the City Archive? Do you manage the files from the old system?

Vargas: We have files which concern more than just the city. In a sense, we are a State Archive, because we have everything which pertains to Budapest, whether that is the city or the country. We store the files of the Budapest court, for example, where most of the political trials were prosecuted. That is one of the reasons I have been interested in this subject.

In 1995, a commission was constituted, with archivists and historians, whose task was to investigate just what still existed of the files of the Stasi [Hungary's communist secret police]. We found out what we know today about the Stasi files. We worked for four months and then offered our report, and only one book, as I said [in my conference speech], has been published on this subject in Hungary. The political parties had no interest in opening the files. Before the change in 1994, when the transparency law was passed [which allows "discovery" of party officials' political past and prohibits them from serving in political office], the Constitutional Court found parts of this law to be unconstitutional. At first, the Constitutional Court said that former victims, civilians, have a right to information. The discovery law had no provision for the concerned persons to have access to the files.

That is what the Constitutional Court demanded after the fact, and that was supposed to have been settled by September 1995, and then approved by Parliament. As it happened, it was only settled half a year later, long after the date set by the Constitutional Court. The Parliament is obligated to keep to the deadlines which are set by the Constitutional Court, but it often does not fulfill this obligation. That characterizes the situation: What happens in practice is often worse than whatever is written in the laws. If you look at how the Stasi files were treated, then you see that, to this day, everyone talks about how communism in Hungary was liberal: "gulash communism," you could travel, and so forth. But too little is said about the fact that it was the same system, the same Stasi, the same dictatorship.

Once we have investigated what was the same, then it makes sense to talk about the differences.

EIR: In Hungary, there were far fewer unofficial collaborators of the Stasi than in East Germany. But you said that the methods of Hungary's State Security were more effective and more modern than in East Germany.

Vargas: The Stasi in East Germany operated such, that they covered all areas, they observed everything, even if it was meaningless. The situation in Hungary up to 1956 and the beginning of the 1960s was similar, but it turned out that such an approach was not effective. Among us, there were some 1.2 million people targeted by the Stasi, but we have a population of only 10 million. It was perfectly clear that the Stasi could not possibly manage so many dossiers. And, they were repeatedly accused by the party of not taking on the right, or the real enemy thoroughly. So, they changed, and picked targets, where they knew exactly what to observe.

So, there are many people who were not under Stasi surveillance, and that naturally meant a certain freedom. If you didn't get into politics or otherwise make yourself prominent, then you could have a private life. To be sure, that was a big difference from East Germany, but there was no difference in the system. That is why I say that the Stasi in Hungary was more modern and much more effective.

EIR: In 1995, a law was passed to protect state secrets. The archive files, according to this law, were then sorted out by the successors of the Stasi, as to which were to remain secret, and the ones that were not then accessible. Is that right?

Vargas: The lawmakers have prescribed that all files which were established before 1980, have to be reviewed for a new classification within 12 months, and that deadline was passed in the summer of 1996. According to the law, all files which were not given a new classification, are open. But in practice, classifications are still being made by the National Security authority and other institutions.

EIR: Do citizens or do the victims have access to the files?

Vargas: Yes and no. Officially, they do have access, but this access is quite limited, because the files, which were compiled after 1980, are state secrets. If people are able to obtain anything at all, they are only allowed to read the files, but they cannot take notes or make copies. Since September, we have had an "Office for History," which was proposed by the Ministry. I wrote a report, or tried to write one, and I demanded that we establish a Hungarian "Gauck Authority"... [But] I would not compare Germany's "Gauck Authority" with [the Office for History], because our office has the opposite task in practice. It is supposed to release as little information as possible; yet it is in the Constitution, that everyone must have access to his own information. That was what the Constitutional Court demanded, but in practice, it is quite different. . . .

Romanians want a new type of society

Dr. Ceausescu is a member of the Parliament in Bucharest and also vice president of the Civic Alliance, a coalition of several parties, which is now part of the coalition government in Romania. He spoke with Angelika Beyreuther-Raimondi.

EIR: You said that there was a reactionary government in Romania up to 1996. Is there a change of political elites now?

Ceausescu: We are now attempting to build a new type of society. There is a struggle in all of these countries against a system, and the system still exists, and we are fighting against this system. In Romania, the situation is the worst, because the same people were actually in power up to November 1996 as had been in earlier governments. It was more an adaptation, than a real change. Now there is a real change. But a real change of elites will happen only with the new generation. The youth have to be prepared so that they really bring the country back into Europe. That is how I think about this change of elites. There was of course a communist elite, and it wants to remain in power and in the leadership of society. . . .

EIR: Today Mr. Klavins, from Latvia, said during the conference, that only 7,000 names can be found in the secret police files in Riga, and that the rest have been removed to places east of Moscow. Are the files that were in Bucharest really still there?

Ceausescu: No one can know that, and the people who do know can't say anything, because they do not have access. These files are secret for 50 years. So they can't say anything. So, we just do not know. We only know that much has been destroyed. In [communist dictator Nicolae] Ceausescu's time, files on party members who were also unofficial collaborators of the Securitate were destroyed on a regular basis. So we only have the files of the non-party members. . . .

EIR: The Iliescu government was practically a continuation of the old policy.

Ceausescu: Yes, of course. [President] Iliescu studied in Moscow in the early 1950s, probably also had connections to the KGB; and during the Hungarian uprising in 1956, when Romanian students showed their solidarity with the Hungarians, he was personally responsible for having students arrested, with the result that they were thrown out of the univer-

sity. So he has a lot on his conscience. . . .

EIR: You reported that students had demanded the end of communism in 1989-90.

Ceausescu: On Dec. 21, 1989, when [Nicolae] Ceausescu was still in power, in Bucharest, I saw it with my own eyes.

EIR: Then people were put under massive pressure, people were killed.

Ceausescu: Yes, so that people would stay home, so that they would not go out on the streets, not make contacts, not organize demonstrations. "Stay home, it is dangerous, these terrorists shoot!"

EIR: And this pressure continued until 1996?

Ceausescu: Yes, and there was also pressure on the miners who came in June 1990 [when President Ion Iliescu mobilized pro-communist miners to come into Bucharest and violently break up demonstrations]. I can tell you, you don't see, even in the worst horror films, what you saw on the streets then. Iliescu said in 1990 that we should build an original democracy. What was destroyed when the miners came? They demolished the university; so, it was directed against the students. The headquarters of the democratic parties were also demolished, as well as the editorial offices of the democratic newspapers. The TV news reported that the miners found drugs and weapons in the party headquarters, and counterfeiting machines. Well, when you find these kinds of things, drugs in a party's headquarters, then that party is finished. . . .

An "original democracy with one party," that is what he had in mind, and he was in an alliance with the extremist parties, with the Greater Romania party, an extremist party, anti-Semitic, against the Hungarians, against democracy, against everything. . . .

EIR: Now there is a new government. Is it a priority to clarify the past?

Ceausescu: I think that is a priority, because reforms cannot be made only in economics. Of course, we do have to do something in the area of economics, so that people are a bit better off, we have to see that. But, we have to begin with this. The law on access to the files is moving a bit too slow, in my opinion. . . .

EIR: Do you think this whole history has to be rewritten?

Ceausescu: Absolutely, . . . especially because there are certain things in Romania, for which there are probably no precedents: in the prisons, in the extermination camps. People were tortured for so long and so brutally, there, until they were turned into henchmen. That was an experiment they carried out there: such experiments! Hardly anything is ever said about the people who were there. Horrible, unbelievable things have been learned from other prisons, but something like this, it seems, no one wants to remember.

Most Latvians live below the poverty line

Mr. Klavins is a member of the Latvian Parliament and State Secretary in the Defense Ministry. He was among the speakers at the conference on "The Heritage of Dictatorship and Domestic Peace," during which he gave an interview to Angelika Beyreuther-Raimondi.

EIR: You said in your speech that your country is dying.

Klavins: Yes, that is the statistics. They prove that the death rate in recent years, is twice the birth rate. The general economic situation affords only a small percentage of our people a secure income and well-being: These are businessmen, entrepreneurs, and people who earn large (and perhaps undeserved) income from state-run firms. But 80% of the people live below the subsistence level, and a large number of them are pensioners or handicapped. Also in this category, are the people who do not work in factories, that is the entire educational workforce—all teachers are underpaid—the medical professionals—from doctors to nurses—as well as the judges. That causes problems in the courts; there are too few jurists, not all judges' positions are filled. Good lawyers are not available in the district attorney's office or in the courts; they go into private practice.

EIR: How do the Russian economic sanctions affect you?

Klavins: At first, the Russians threatened economic sanctions. When they noticed that that was not appreciated by the West, they rescinded them quickly, but continued them in practice. It didn't operate through a ministry, but very simply, at the border, certain goods are not let in. So, you cannot import goods anymore. Or, other tricks are played: For instance, all documents must be notarized and presented in Russian, such international documents as drivers licenses, customs documents, and so on. And so, with these things, one can affect whole areas of the economy, which, of course, causes unrest in the country. And, it affects the Russian-speaking population, many of whom work in the factories. One could survey exactly who is being affected by these sanctions. . . .

And why? Even during the Tsars, there was a Russification policy. During 50 years of Soviet occupation, the Latvian population was culled by deportations; many, of course, were killed in the war, or fled east or west, or overseas. And, now by the artificial industrialization: Latvia is an agricultural country; in spite of the fact that it was economically irrational,

factories were built, such that everything had to be brought in from outside—energy, raw materials, and manpower. That is completely uneconomical, but thereby one could increase the Russian population, and what they did was to increase the population of Russian-speaking peoples from Russia, Ukraine, and Byelorussia to 46%, and reduce the Latvian population to 54%; of the Russian-speakers, 30% are from Russia, and the rest from the other republics. Russian was supposed to be the dominant language, which it was until independence. Now we see that it is Russian policy that these people should be recognized as citizens. But, among those who are eligible to be naturalized citizens, only 7% elect to do so. . . .

EIR: What is the situation with the secret police records in the three Baltic states?

Klavins: The situation with the records is as follows: The KGB transferred documents from Estonia and Latvia to Russia as early as 1988-89. What remained in Latvia, is in Riga, that is a file of agents; that is, "agents" is the designation for unofficial collaborators, who are compelled or who signed on. We don't have their working files, so we can't tell what they did or didn't do. Anyone can file a request and find out whether he was listed as an agent or not. We cannot say, who betrayed whom; that is not possible at this time.

In Lithuania, there were more KGB files left over, and the Lithuanian state spends more money for the documentation center, and to employ more people in the processing. . . .

EIR: You also talked about the change of elites in your country.

Klavins: The change came about through many factors. First of all was the economic heart attack in the Soviet Union, in the centralized economy, which all countries went through. Secondly was Gorbachov's realization that the state could no longer be held together by force, that one must allow the possibility of free thought and free discourse, that is, perestroika and glasnost.

An important factor on our side was what our citizens have suffered. The fuse were the dissidents, who immediately uttered thoughts about independence, at first, not as political demands, but rather in memory of the victims of Stalinism. . . .

When independence was achieved, and the elections for the Supreme Soviet brought the People's Front to power, when the Latvians, and also the Russians, the old citizens who had striven for independence, as these people came into power, then the first stage was reached; so that one could begin to change the laws, and achieve independence and self-determination. This was not yet completed, when it was almost lost again, had the August 1991 putsch succeeded. Only after the final collapse of the putsch was independence de facto achieved. Only afterwards did we establish the Defense Ministry. The first elections in an independent state were conducted in 1993. . . .