

Abstract

This text assesses the database which contains a list of persons killed at Czechoslovak borders in the years 1948-1989. Data from archival materials were collected for individual cases and the collected information was labelled with assigned codes in the environment of a relation database. The whole text describes individual variables in the database, and points out and explains problematic categories.

The main aim of the text is to allow scholars not acquainted with the database to understand it easily and allow for quicker orientation in it.

List of key words

- Crossing the border
- Emigration
- Killing
- Border Guard

Time span covered

Beginning:	End:
02/1948	12/1989

Date of data collection

Beginning:	End:
11/2011	12/2013

Country

Czechoslovak Republic, Czechoslovak Socialist Republic

Area covered

The data are related to cases of killing at Czechoslovak state borders and in their close vicinity.

Territorial unit

Czech Republic, Slovak Republic

Basic population

276

Data collection

ÚSTR

Data collection technique

Archival materials (Security Services Archive, National Archives, Central Military Archives, Nation's Memory Institute Archive, regional archives)

Expert text assessing the “Border” database

The Institute for the Study of Totalitarian Regimes (Ústav pro studium totalitních režimů, ÚSTR) is creating a database of people killed at Czechoslovak state borders in the years 1948-1989. This database is one of the outputs of the project *Documentation of people killed at Czechoslovak state borders in the years 1948-1989*, which aims at informing both the general public and scholars about the actual fates of people who were killed while attempting to cross the Iron Curtain.¹ **The presented data file is described in detail in the text below; individual variables are assessed from the point of view of validity as well as reliability.**

The data collection is based on archival materials created in connection with the activities of the Border Guard (Pohraniční stráž, PS) and the State Security (Státní bezpečnost, StB) stored primarily in the Security Services Archive (Archiv bezpečnostních složek, ABS), from among the Slovak archives primarily in the Nation’s Memory Institute Archive (Archiv Ústavu paměti národa, A ÚPN). Most often it is the following funds (f.): Archival collections of units of the Border Guard and Interior Guard (e.g., f. Main Border Guard and State Border Protection Service Directorate, f. PS, Use of arms), funds of the Study Institute of the Ministry of the Interior (e.g., f. Main Military Counterintelligence Directorate, f. Miscellaneous security files after the year 1945, f. State Security Service Central Office), Operative Agenda (f. Investigation files) and others; in the case of A ÚPN, f. The 11th Bratislava Border Guard Brigade Bratislava and f. KS ZNB Bratislava were mostly used.

These archival materials concern people mentioned in the publication *Organizace a činnost ozbrojených pohraničních složek. Seznamy osob usmrčených na státních hranicích 1945–1989 (Organization and activity of armed border patrols. Lists of people killed at the state border 1945-1989)*,² in particular people who died in connection with crossing the Czechoslovak borders with Austria and Germany (FRG, GDR) in the period between February 1948 and the end of 1989.³

Other sources include archival materials from the registry of the Office of the Documentation and Investigation of Crimes of Communism (Úřad dokumentace a

¹ This documentation project is available at the website of the Institute for the Study of Totalitarian Regimes. “Documentation of people killed at Czechoslovak state borders 1948-1989”. Available at: <http://www.ustrcr.cz/cs/dokumentace-usmrčených-statni-hranice>.

² PULEC, Martin. *Organizace a činnost ozbrojených pohraničních složek: Seznamy osob usmrčených na státních hranicích 1945–1989. (Organization and activity of armed border patrols. Lists of people killed at the state border 1945-1989.)* 1st edition. Prague: Office of the Documentation and Investigation of Crimes of Communism, 2006.

³ Nevertheless, the database does not include information about all people mentioned in the publication by Martin Pulec as in several cases it was impossible to find evidence of the deaths in archival materials or they were even excluded. On the other hand, several people were included into the database based on the study of archival materials although they are not included in the abovementioned publication.

vyšetřování zločinů komunismu, ÚDV) and in the case of at least one third of the people also materials from regional archives.⁴

The database consists of a data collection of the studied variables which concerns the individual killed persons (276⁵). The database contains 40 variables of different types together with 30 textual notes to the different variables in the comments section (excluding comments to the “note” variable).⁶ This sub-project aims at creating a complex, standardized and well labelled data file. At the same time, data verification and determination of their reliability is assumed.

A Codebook was created which precisely defines the studied variables (so called fields), according to which the information collected from available archival materials is recorded into relational tables using assigned codes. These relational tables were originally created in the Google Docs office application.

During work with the archival materials and recording data into the tables, the Codebook was extended by other variables and in some cases a variable code was specified and extended. These alterations were caused by ambiguity of some information contained in the archival materials to be recorded using the given code, or a piece of information was repeatedly found which served for better identification of a killed person and explanation of his/her reason for crossing the state border.

Notwithstanding all effort to accurately record the variables, some categories are rather problematic.⁷ For most people, source criticism is not possible, it is impossible to compare more sources of information. As stated above, the database has been compiled based on available archival materials, primarily from ABS or A ÚPN.⁸ Consequently, all information is based solely on the study of these archival materials, which sometimes included inaccurate data, mistakes in the records, or in some cases data about the given variable were missing altogether. In that case, the indeterminable variable was labelled “undetermined” and has not been completed by compiler’s conjectures.

⁴ These are primarily cases that ÚSTR has processed as biograms, see <http://www.ustrcr.cz/cs/usmrceni-statni-hranice-portrety>.

⁵ The total number of people killed in the given territory and time is probably higher, but the studied archive base only contains information about 276 people. In the case of persons No. 102 and No. 230, a total of five people tried to escape, of which one was detained, two (No. 102 and 230) were killed and the death of the other two is evidenced only by a survivor’s testimony and is not confirmed by other archival materials, therefore these persons were not included in the data collection.

⁶ The English version of the database contains only 39 variables (the variable “Occupation” is available only in the Czech version). The data collection also contains the number of the person; this, however, is not a variable but a number used solely for the sake of organization of the database and bears no factual meaning.

⁷ It is probably the variables with the GPS data which are most problematic; they have been included into the database in order to schematically record the data on the map. In many cases the data are only approximate even though the GPS refers to an exact point.

⁸ With the exception of about one third of the persons for whom archival materials are stored in regional archives, the National Archives or the Central Military Archives, etc., were also used.

The so called harmonized variables have a special function. They state approximate values of variables which work with intervals or otherwise incomplete data. These are construed variables created in order to enlarge the possible variety of operations with the data.

With respect to these ambiguous moments and for further precision of disputable information, the relational database includes a second, so called comments section which serves for recording comments to each variable. The structure of the second part is almost identical with the first one (comments to both harmonized and non-harmonized variables are recorded in one field), with names of variables always beginning with the word "comment" in Part 2. Nevertheless, codes are not used for entries, all comments are textual.

Names of the studied variables are recorded in the database in individual fields in the order given in the Codebook. Names of variables are given in capital letters, in one word and without diacritics in order to facilitate work with the database as well as possible data transfer to other applications.

In the database environment, columns indicate the variable category and lines indicate the specific case – a person for whom the variables are studied.

In order to publish the database in the Czech Social Science Data Archive and with respect to protection of survivors, some sensitive data in the first and the second commentary section of the data collection have been anonymised. Thus the data collection does not include full names of persons who were detained together with the killed persons; instead initials are used together with information about gender or the person's relationship to the killed person. Initials are also used in other cases for persons who were not killed. Apart from names, partial anonymization is used for addresses; in this case house numbers were deleted from the database with only names of streets and towns left.

Assessment of individual variables (enlargement of the original brief CODEBOOK)

1) Surname:

Valid = 265

Undetermined = 11

Surname of the killed person at the time of the incident. Women's maiden names, several forms of the same surname or completely different (false) surnames of agents are given in comments. If two or more forms of a surname occur, the form which recurs most frequently in the documents is given in Part 1 of the database (Part 2 consists of comment variables). Several forms of one surname often occur in foreigners, often due to misspelled or phonetic transcription of the surname. If the surname is missing altogether, a person is called "undetermined".

Example:

Person No. 251: This person's surname appeared in three different forms in the archival documents. In Part 1 of the database, the surname which recurred most frequently in the archival documents is given. In Part 2, i.e. in the comments, the other two forms are given.

Field without code, text.

2) First name:

Valid = 262

Undetermined = 14

First name at the time of the incident. If two or more forms of a first name occur, the form which recurs most frequently in the documents is given in Part 1 of the database; other forms are recorded in the comment. If a person had more names, they are given in one field without punctuation.

If this information is missing, especially in persons for whom "Unknown" or "Unknown person" is used, the field is marked as "undetermined".

Field without code, text.

3) Gender:

Valid = 274

Undetermined = 2

Divided into male/female. In the case of some killed persons labelled as “Unknown person”, the gender was not evident, therefore they are marked as “undetermined”.

Field with code:

0 = M

1 = F

2 = undetermined

4) Age:

Valid = 247

Undetermined = 29

Age of the killed person on the day of the incident, i.e. the information is derived from the date of death and the date of birth. If accurate information concerning age is missing, i.e. the person’s date of birth is not known, it is marked as “undetermined”. If an estimated age was cited in the archival materials, in Part 1 it is marked as “undetermined” and the estimated age is given in the harmonized variable (Harmonized age); possible other information is given in the comment (shared by the variable and its harmonized version).

Field without code, age in years.

5) Harmonized age:

Valid = 266

Undetermined = 10

Age of the killed person on the day of the incident, i.e. the information is derived from the date of death and the date of birth. This variable also includes estimated data. If only an interval of estimated age is available, the middle of the interval of the estimate is used rounded up to whole numbers. Any additional information is given in the comment (shared by the variable and its non-harmonized version).

Example:

Age of person No. 214 is known only as an estimated interval of 30-45 years, the middle of the interval is used in the field, i.e. 38.

Field without code, age in years.

6) Citizenship:

Valid = 213

Undetermined = 63

Citizenship of the person at the time of the incident. For the majority of the killed persons, this information is cited in the archival documents. If the information concerning citizenship is missing, the field is marked as “undetermined”. If a place of birth or permanent address is cited, the citizenship has not been determined based on the compiler’s conjecture.

A total of 9 codes have been created for this field in order to determine the citizenship. Cases of other citizenship which do not have an assigned code are marked as “other” and the citizenship is stated in the comments.

Quite often ambiguities appear in connection with German citizenship after 1949.⁹ If the archival documents do not include precise information concerning whether a person came from West or East Germany, the person’s citizenship is marked as “undetermined” and more information is given in the comment.

Field with code:

0 = undetermined

1 = Czechoslovakia (ČSR, ČSSR)

2 = Poland

3 = Hungary

4 = Austria

5 = Germany (until 1949)

6 = GDR

7 = FRG

8 = other

7) Nationality:

Valid = 196

⁹ That is after the creation of the two German states (GDR, FRG).

Undetermined = 80

Nationality of the person at the time of the incident. For most people, this information is cited in the archival documents, but the number is lower than in the case of citizenship. If the information concerning nationality is missing, the field is marked as “undetermined”. This code is also used in cases of ambiguous nationality, while more information is given in the comments. Even if the place of birth, permanent address or citizenship were cited, nationality has not been determined based on the compiler’s conjecture.

A total of 8 codes have been created in order to determine nationality. If nationality which does not have an individual code appears, it is marked as “other” and the nationality is given in the comment. Nationalities are marked as “other” if they appear rarely in the archival documents and thus have not been assigned an individual code.

Field with code:

0 = undetermined

1 = Czech

2 = Slovak

3 = Polish

4 = Hungarian

5 = Austrian

6 = German

7 = other

8) Place of birth:

Valid = 218

Undetermined = 58

Name of town or village cited in archival materials. While searching for the place on the current map,¹⁰ in some cases the name of the town or the village was different from that given in the archival materials. If it was evident that it was just an incorrect entry (typo) in the archival materials, the name was automatically corrected. If two or more letters did not match, the name was noted in Part 2 – comments.

¹⁰ Electronic maps by Google (<http://google.cz/maps>) and Seznam (<http://mapy.cz>) have been used.

In some cases the towns or villages have disappeared. This fact was determined based on available web pages.¹¹ In such case, the original name is given in Part 1 of the database and the current name of the town or village or other specifications are given in the comment. If no information concerning the place of birth is given, the field is marked as “undetermined”.

Example:

Person No. 125: The original entry Oravské Veselí was looked up on a map and consequently changed to Oravské Veselé.

Person No. 250: Rebrín, the name of a disappeared village is given in Part 1 of the database, while its current name Zemplínská Široká is given in the comments.

Field without code, text.

9) GPS of place of birth:

Valid = 206

Undetermined = 70

Determined based on electronic maps¹² as the centre of a given town or village. If no information is available concerning the place of birth, the field is marked as “undetermined”; possible notes are given in the comment.

The position is recorded using the WGS 84 standard (World Geodetic System); the entry is given in degrees (in the majority of cases) with 6 valid decimal places.

10) Contemporary district of birth:

Valid = 120

Undetermined = 156

Determined in accordance with the data collection¹³ in Historical lexicons of municipalities¹⁴ provided by the Czech Statistical Office (Český statistický úřad, ČSÚ). The information is related to the place and date of birth, i.e. to the latest information cited in

¹¹ Primarily using the internet project “Zaniklé obce a objekty po roce 1945” (Municipalities and objects disappeared after 1945). Available at: <http://www.zanikleobce.cz/index.php?>

¹² Maps by Google. Available at: <https://www.google.cz/maps/>.

¹³ A structured collection of data from *Historický lexikon o územním uspořádání* (Historical lexicon on territorial organization). The data are classified according to current parts of towns or villages including the name of the district and the town or the village it belonged to in the years of census.

¹⁴ Czech Statistical Office, *Historický lexikon obcí České republiky 1869–2005* (Historical lexicon of municipalities in the Czech Republic 1869–2005, parts I, II). Available at: [https://www.czso.cz/csu/2004edicniplan.nsf/t/9200404384/\\$File/13n106cd1.pdf](https://www.czso.cz/csu/2004edicniplan.nsf/t/9200404384/$File/13n106cd1.pdf).

the census which had been carried out before the person in question was born. Information about districts which was found in archival documents is given in Part 2 – comments.

In the case of Slovak towns and villages, the variable is determined based on sources provided by the Statistical Office of the Slovak Republic. These sources include information about Slovak towns and villages belonging to districts in the years 1960-1968, 1969-1996 and after 1996.¹⁵ Districts from before 1960 are marked as “undetermined”, or are determined only based on information given in the archival materials which are cited in the comments.

For other states the field is marked as “undetermined” and the district, region or other territorial administrative specification given in the archive material is cited in the comments.

Example:

Person No. 32 was born in the village of Trpnouze in 1951; according to the data provided by ČSÚ, at the time of the census in 1950 the village belonged to the Trhové Sviny district, consequently the field contains the name of this district town.

Field without code, text.

11) Type of contemporary district of birth:

Valid = 119

Undetermined = 157

Determined based on Maps of territorial division (districts) of the Czech Republic provided by ČSÚ.¹⁶ Classification of neighbouring states and territories as part of the Western (the West) or Eastern (the East) bloc is determined based on later identification of these territories during the 2nd half of the 20th century.

Example:

Person No. 68 was born in 1929 in the contemporary district of Lučany nad Nisou; this border district was later located at the border with the Polish People’s Republic, therefore it is marked with code 2, i.e. border district with the East.

Field with code:

¹⁵ Database of territorial administrative division in the years 1960-1968, after 1969 and after 1996.

¹⁶ Czech Statistical Office, *Mapy územního členění (okresů) České republiky* [Maps of territorial division (districts) of the Czech Republic]. Available at: http://www.czso.cz/xu/redakce.nsf/i/mapy_uzemniho_cleneni_ceske_republiky.

- 0 = intrastate
- 1 = border district with the West
- 2 = border district with the East
- 3 = undetermined

12) Current district of birth:

Valid = 156

Undetermined = 120

Determined in accordance with Historical lexicons of municipalities¹⁷ provided by ČSÚ.¹⁸ Related to the place of birth and today's date, or the date of the last census whose data are available, i.e. as in 2001.

In the case of Slovak towns and villages, the variable is determined based on sources provided by the Statistical Office of the Slovak Republic¹⁹; the information is as on 1 January 1999.

In the case of other states the field is marked as "undetermined".

Field without code, text.

13) Domicile:

Valid = 199

Undetermined = 57

Domicile according to the archival materials. It is always the town or the village which was cited in the archival materials as the permanent address or the last address before the incident. If the street and the house number were also cited, they are given in the field.

While searching for the place on the current map,²⁰ in some cases the name of the town/village was different from that given in the archival materials. If it was evident that it was just an incorrect entry (typo) in the archival materials, the name was automatically corrected. If two or more letters did not match, the name was noted in the comments.

If information about the domicile is missing, the field is marked as "undetermined".

¹⁷ Czech Statistical Office, *Historický lexikon obcí České republiky 1869–2005*. Available at: [https://www.czso.cz/csu/2004edicniplan.nsf/t/9200404384/\\$File/13n106cd1.pdf](https://www.czso.cz/csu/2004edicniplan.nsf/t/9200404384/$File/13n106cd1.pdf).

¹⁸ A structured collection of data from *Historický lexikon o územním uspořádání*. The data are classified according to current parts of towns and villages including the name of the district and the town or the village it belonged to in the years of census.

¹⁹ Database of territorial administrative division in the years 1960-1968, after 1969 and after 1996.

²⁰ Electronic maps by Google (<http://google.cz/maps>) and Seznam (<http://mapy.cz>) have been used.

In some cases, the town or village has disappeared. This fact was determined using available web pages.²¹ In such case, the original name is given in Part 1 of the database and the current name or other specifications are given in the comment. If no information is available about the place of birth, the field is marked as “undetermined”.

Field without code, text.

14) GPS of the domicile:

Valid = 213

Undetermined = 63

Determined using electronic maps²² as the centre of the given town or village. If no information is available about the place of birth, the field is marked as “undetermined”.

The position is recorded using the WGS 84 standard (World Geodetic System); the entry is given in degrees (in majority of cases) with 6 valid decimal places.

15) Party membership before:

Valid = 109

Undetermined = 167

The killed person’s party membership before 25 February 1948 (i.e. as on 24 February 1948) is given. A total of 9 codes have been created in accordance with the frequency of occurrence of the different political parties. Detailed information on party membership is given as a text in the comments; a note about a stated membership in other organizations is also given there, such as the Czechoslovak Union of Youth (Československý svaz mládeže, ČSM).

Code 7 (i.e. none due to age) is automatically assigned to persons who were under 15 as on 25 February 1948 and could not be members of any political party.

This information is missing for most people; it was probably not determined. Most often the archival materials included information about non-partisanship of the killed person.

Field with code:

0 = undetermined

1 = non-partisan, non-party man

²¹ Primarily the internet project “Zaniklé obce a objekty po roce 1945”. Available at: <http://www.zanikleobce.cz/index.php?>

²² Maps by Google. Available at: <https://www.google.cz/maps/>.

2 = Communist Party of Czechoslovakia (Komunistická strana Československa, KSČ)

3 = Czechoslovak National Socialist Party

4 = Czechoslovak People's Party

5 = Polish United Workmen's Party

6 = Communist Party of Austria (Kommunistische Partei Österreichs, KPÖ)

7 = none due to age (at the time of his/her death, before February 1948, the person was under 15, i.e. could not be a member of any political party)

8 = Czechoslovak Social Democracy

9 = other

16) Party membership after:

Valid = 48

Undetermined = 228

The killed person's party membership after 25 February 1948 is given. A total of 8 codes have been created in accordance with the occurrence of the different parties. More detailed information on party membership is given in text in the comments. Membership in other organizations such as ČSM is also given there.

Code 7 is automatically assigned to persons who were under 15 at the time of the incident (i.e. after 25 February 1948) and could not be members of any political party.

If a person was a member of political party before 25 February 1948, this party membership is given in the "Party membership after" category, unless the person had left the party in the meantime or the party had been dissolved, etc. Thus this field has not been necessarily coded solely based on archival materials related to the incident at the borders.

Field with code:

0 = undetermined

1 = non-partisan, non-party man

2 = Communist Party of Czechoslovakia (Komunistická strana Československa, KSČ)

3 = Czechoslovak National Socialist Party

4 = Czechoslovak People's Party

5 = Polish United Workmen's Party

6 = Communist Party of Austria (Kommunistische Partei Österreichs, KPÖ)

7 = none due to age (at the time of his/her death, i.e. after February 1948, the person was under 15, i.e. could not be a member of any political party)

8 = other

17) Origin:

Valid = 54

Undetermined = 222

Origin of the killed person recorded in the field in compliance with the contemporary terminology used in the archival materials. The following three categories recur most often: working class, peasant or clerk origin. This information is missing for most persons and consequently was left without a code.

Field without code, text.

18) Place of incident:

Valid = 275

Undetermined = 1

The place of the incident is determined as accurately as possible based on testimonies, comparison of contemporary and current maps, etc. Apart from the geographical name it also usually contains the name of the acting lower unit, etc. In some cases, only an approximate description is given without a detailed specification of the place; for instance that the person was killed in the forest behind a certain village.

Field without code, text.

19) Unit of incident:

Valid = 274

Undetermined = 2

The relevant Border Guard unit which was involved in the incident is cited. A total of 12 codes have been created for this field, determined by the Border Guard brigades which acted in the given incidents.

However, this division was valid only after 1951 when the Border Guard had been created. Units or bodies which guarded the state border in the years 1948-1951 are cited in text.

Textual field (for the period 1948-1950),

Field with code (for the period 1951-1989):

0 = undetermined

1 = 10th Volary Border Guard brigade

2 = 11th Bratislava Border Guard brigade

3 = 12th Planá Border Guard brigade

4 = 15th České Budějovice Border Guard brigade

5 = 19th Děčín Border Guard brigade

6 = 3rd Karlovy Vary Border Guard brigade

7 = 4th Znojmo Border Guard brigade

8 = 5th Cheb Border Guard brigade

9 = 7th Sušice Border Guard brigade

10 = 9th Domažlice Border Guard brigade

11 = 9th Poběžovice Border Guard brigade

20) Harmonized unit of incident:

Valid = 274

Undetermined = 2

The relevant Border Guard brigade which was involved in the incident is cited. A total of 12 codes have been created for this field determined according to the Border Guard patrols.

For the years 1951-1989, the field is identical with the Unit of incident category. Units in the years 1948-1951, i.e. before the Border Guard was created, are recorded with the code of the brigade to which they were probably subordinated later.²³

²³ Primarily based on PULEC. Martin: Organizace a činnost ozbrojených pohraničních složek 1948–1989 (Organization and activity of armed border patrols). In *Securitas imperii* VII. Office for the Documentation and Investigation of the Crimes of Communism, Prague 2001.

The category has been included in the database despite its problematic validity and reliability primarily with respect to units based at the border of the future units (throughout the time, territorial changes within the brigades, transfers of individual units, etc. were carried out) and is meant solely for approximate geographical localization.

Field with code:

0 = undetermined

1 = 10th Volary Border Guard brigade

2 = 11th Bratislava Border Guard brigade

3 = 12th Planá Border Guard brigade

4 = 15th České Budějovice Border Guard brigade

5 = 19th Děčín Border Guard brigade

6 = 3rd Karlovy Vary Border Guard brigade

7 = 4th Znojmo Border Guard brigade

8 = 5th Cheb Border Guard brigade

9 = 7th Sušice Border Guard brigade

10 = 9th Domažlice Border Guard brigade

11 = 9th Poběžovice Border Guard brigade

21) GPS of incident:

Valid = 264

Undetermined = 12

Determined by means of electronic maps²⁴ as the most accurately determined place or the centre of the given town or village. The centre of a town or village is marked as the place of incident only in a minimum number of cases, approximately in units. In the case of an accurate description, such as for example at a crossing of two roads, in the vicinity of a still existing recreational area, at a station, etc. the GPS location is relatively precise. In some cases, a drawing of the place of the incident made by the Border Guard is included in the archival materials which can be compared to current maps. In other cases, the GPS location of the place of the incident is only approximate and is depicted only schematically on the map.

²⁴ Maps by Google. Available at: <https://www.google.cz/maps/>.

The position is recorded using the WGS 84 standard (World Geodetic System); the entry is given in degrees (in the majority of cases) with 6 valid decimal places.

Field without code, WGS 84 data.

22) Distance of incident:

Valid = 204

Undetermined = 72

The distance of the domicile from the place of the incident is calculated using the Haversine formula and rounded to one decimal place.

Field without code, number of kilometres.

23) Intention of crossing:

Valid = 259

Undetermined = 17

The intention of crossing determines whether the killed person intended to cross the border out of his/her own will and knowingly. It is quite a problematic category as it is based on conjectures made by members of the Border Guard and in most cases no witnesses (refugees) were available to testify the purpose of crossing.

If the archival materials contain the information that the given person intended to emigrate or cross the border, such a person is marked as “person with intention”. If it is not clear whether the person wanted to or was even aware of having crossed the border, the field is marked as “undetermined”. In the case of plain disinterest in crossing the border, the person is marked as “without intention”. More detailed information about the person’s background which might have been related to the intention to cross the border is stated in the comments.

Example:

Person No. 132: The body was found by the Border Guard in the river Dyje. Consequently, the person is cited in the archival materials as having an intention to cross the border to Austria. However, the person in question had been treated in a mental hospital in the town of Kroměříž and thus he/she might have drowned or committed suicide. This conjecture is stated in the archival documents. It has been marked with code 2.

Person No. 215: The person was detained by a guard while collecting wood on German territory and was transferred to ČSR. The person was shot in an attempt to escape. It was marked with code 0.

Field with code:

0 = without intention

1 = with intention

2 = undetermined

24) Direction of crossing:

Valid = 247

Undetermined = 29

It determines where the incident happened in terms of direction of crossing. A total of 8 codes have been created for this category. Crossing the border as such is not decisive for selecting the code; a clear intention or the indicated direction is. If the refugee, for example, tried to escape from ČSR (ČSSR) to Austria, but was shot in an attempt to escape from the Border Guard within the Czechoslovak border zone heading inland, it is still considered an escape from ČSR (ČSSR) to Austria.

If the killed person crossed several state borders on his/her way in different directions, it is always the direction of the crossing during which the incident happened. Previous crossings of the state borders are stated in the comments.

Field with code:

0 = undetermined

1 = to Germany's western zones; to FRG

2 = to Germany's eastern zones; to GDR

3 = to Austria

4 = from Germany's western zones; from FRG

5 = from Germany's eastern zones; from GDR

6 = from Austria

7 = no direction

25) Before/behind:

Valid = 204

Undetermined = 72

It indicates the place of the incident with respect to Czechoslovak borders and other states' territories. The variable is problematic in terms of determination of the border zone solely based on entries in archival documents as the Border Guard tried to conceal its activities on the territory of other states. Furthermore, if a person drowned, for example, it is not possible to determine on which bank of the border river the person drowned.

Moreover, clearly specified border zones were established only in 1951 by a secret order of the Minister of the Interior, which stipulated rules for the implementation of the Act on Protection of state borders (69/1951 Coll.). For this reason, code 3 has been created, i.e. border area between two states (impossible to determine more accurately) and in the case of incidents before 1951, the field was automatically labelled with code 3.

Field with code:

0 = outside border zone

1 = within ČSR border zone

2 = behind the border (on the territory of another state)

3 = border area between two states (impossible to determine more accurately)

26) Occupation²⁵:

Valid = 186

Undetermined = 90

It indicates the occupation at the time of the incident. Occupations are cited in accordance with the contemporary archival materials. Consequently, in some cases it is not the occupation according to the person's qualification but that which he/she had right before his/her death. Especially in the case of workmen this possibility is quite likely. If a previous occupation is known, it is stated in the comments.

The comments also include whether a person was marked as a smuggler or an agency collaborator in the archival materials.

²⁵ The uncoded data concerning occupation are available only in the Czech version of the data file.

Field without code, text.

27) Occupation ČSÚ:

Valid = 186

Undetermined = 90

Occupation in accordance with categorization made by the Czech Statistical Office.²⁶ A total of 13 codes have been created for this category in accordance with the number of categories of the Czech Statistical Office, acknowledging the fact that the occupation is not always stated in the archival materials.

Field with code:

0 = undetermined

1 = armed forces employees

2 = legislators and senior officials

3 = specialists

4 = technical and expert workers

5 = officials

6 = workers in services and sales

7 = qualified workers in agriculture, forestry and fishery

8 = tradesmen and repairmen

9 = machine and equipment operators, mechanics

10 = auxiliary and unskilled workers

11 = pupils, students and apprentices

12 = other

28) Agent:

Valid = 33

Undetermined = 243

²⁶ Czech Statistical Office, Classification of Occupations (CZ-ISCO). Available at: <http://apl.czso.cz/iSMS/klasstru.jsp?kodcis=80040>.

This variable depicts cases when the killed person was labelled as an agent or an agency collaborator in the archival materials. It must be stressed, though, that it is based solely on conjectures made by the source of the archival document, i.e. primarily the Border Guard or StB, which may only partly correspond to the real cooperation of the killed person with foreign secret services.

The field is marked as “undetermined” in case cooperation with an agency network was neither confirmed nor rebutted in the archival document.

Field with code:

0 = undetermined

1 = yes

29) Temporary address:

Valid = 20

Undetermined = 256

Information concerning another address is given under this heading. For most persons it is missing.

In the case of persons killed in an attempt to escape from prison, this information is given in the comments.

Field without code, text.

30) Death:

Valid = 276

Undetermined = 0

This category concerns the way a person was killed as recorded in archival materials. In some rare cases, several different possible ways a person was killed are given in the archival materials; therefore a possible other way of killing is given in Part 2 – comments. In Part 1, such way of killing is given which recurred most often. If a person committed suicide but did not shoot him/herself, it is also noted in the comments.

Example:

Person No. 192: In all archival materials, it is stated that the person was killed by electric current. Consequently, the person was labelled with code 0. However, the post-mortem

certificate stated that death was caused by a gun-shot wound to the brain. This information is given in the comments.

Field with code:

0 = electric current (in the border barrier)

1 = gun-shot by Border Guard, or members of the army or police

2 = injury caused by a fall of a (downed) airplane

3 = gun-shot by the killed person (or his/her partner) – i.e. suicide

4 = injury caused in a car crash

5 = drowning

6 = drowning after gun-shot injury

7 = injury caused by anti-personnel mine

8 = injury caused by Border Guard dogs

31) With whom:

Valid = 276

Undetermined = 0

It is given here whether someone else also tried to cross the state border together with the killed person. The potential name of a partner in crossing the border or how he/she was related to the killed person is cited in the comments.

If the information concerning whether someone accompanied the person is missing, the field is coded “alone”. The field is coded in the same way also if such information is stated in the archival documents as a result of an investigation led by border authorities.

Field with code:

0 = alone

1 = with 1 person

2 = with 2 people

3 = with 3 people

4 = with 4 or more people

32) Date of birth:

Valid = 250

Undetermined = 26

Date of birth of the killed person. For people marked as “unknown person” or “unknown” it was impossible to determine the date of birth. Possible additional information is given in Part 2 of the database – comments, which is shared with the harmonized variable.

Field without code, numerical entry in the “DD.MM.YYYY” format.

33) Harmonized date of birth:

Valid = 265

Undetermined = 11

Date of birth of the killed person. For people marked as “unknown person” or “unknown” it was impossible to determine the date of birth. The variable also includes estimated data.

If only the month and the year of birth are available, the date is set on the first day of the given month and year. If only the year of birth is available, the date is set on 1 January of the given year. If only an estimated age interval is available, the date is calculated by subtracting the middle of the estimated age interval from the date of death, in which way the year of birth is estimated.

Furthermore, the harmonized variable makes use of data given in the publication by Martin Pulec²⁷ in the case of persons for whom no dates are available in the archival documents. More detailed or additional information concerning the variable is given in the comments, which are shared with the non-harmonized variable.

Example:

For person No. 214, the age is known only as an estimated interval of 30-45 years of age (i.e. the middle of the estimate interval is 37.5, i.e. rounded to 38) and the date of death (22 October 1949); consequently the date of birth is set at 1911. After that, the procedure is the same as in the case that only the year of birth is known, so the date of birth is set at 1 January 1911.

For person No. 188, the date of birth is only known as May 1936, the harmonized date of birth is 1 May 1936.

²⁷ PULEC, Martin. *Organizace a činnost ozbrojených pohraničních složek: Seznamy osob usmrcených na státních hranicích 1945–1989*. 1st edition. Prague: Office of the Documentation and Investigation of Crimes of Communism, 2006.

Field without code, numerical entry in the “DD.MM.YYYY” format.

34) Date of incident:

Valid = 272

Undetermined = 4

The date of the incident does not have to be identical with the date of death. For example, the person might have been shot while crossing the state border and died later (in hospital).

Field without code, numerical entry in the “DD.MM.YYYY” format. Possible additional information is given in the comments, which are shared with the harmonized variable.

35) Harmonized date of incident:

Valid = 276

Undetermined = 0

The date of the incident does not have to be identical with the date of death. For example, the person might have been shot while crossing the state border and died later (in hospital). The variable also includes estimated data. If an interval of several days is known, the first day of the interval is used. If a month and a year of the incident is available, the date is set on the first day of the given month and year. Furthermore, data from the publication by Martin Pulec²⁸ are used in the harmonized variable in the case of persons for whom no dates are available in the archival documents.

Possible additional information is given in the comments, which are shared with the non-harmonized variable.

Example:

For person No. 54 the date of the incident is marked as “undermined”, the incident happened during the night of 25 to 26 October 1978, the first day of the incident is used as the harmonized data, i.e. 25 October 1978.

Field without code, numerical entry in the “DD.MM.YYYY” format.

36) Period

Valid = 276

²⁸ Ditto

Undetermined = 0

The years 1948-1989 are divided into 4 periods according to the development of technical measures at the border and organizational changes in the development of the Border Guard.

Field with code:

0 = 1948–1950

1 = 1951–1965

2 = 1966–1971

3 = 1972–1989

37) Date of death:

Valid = 272

Undetermined = 4

The date of death of the killed person, which in some cases followed with a certain delay after the incident, e.g. the person died in hospital on the following morning. Sometimes the date is only approximate, e.g. when the body of the killed person was discovered later (usually in case of drowning).

Approximate date is marked as “undetermined” and a time interval or the phrase “ca” and the numerical data are given in the comments, which are shared with the harmonized variable.

Field without code, numerical entry in the “DD.MM.YYYY” format.

38) Harmonized date of death:

Valid = 276

Undetermined = 0

The date of death of the killed person, which in some cases followed with a certain delay after the incident, e.g. the person died in hospital the following morning. The variable also contains estimated or approximate data (usually in the case of drowning).

If only an interval of several days is known, the first day of the interval is used. If only the month and the year of death are available, the date is set on the first day of the given month and year. Furthermore, the harmonized variable makes use of data given in the

publication by Martin Pulec²⁹ in the case of persons for whom no dates are available in the archival documents.

Additional information is given in Part 2 of the database – comments, which are shared with the non-harmonized variable.

Field without code, numerical entry in the “DD.MM.YYYY” format.

39) Investigation after 1989:

Valid = 276

Undetermined = 0

Information on whether the case was studied by the Office of the Documentation and Investigation of Crimes of Communism. Provided by ÚDV.

Field with code:

0 = no

1 = yes

40) Note:

Any important information concerning the case not included in the given variables and their categories.

Example:

Military rank, cooperation with secret police, information concerning previous attempt to cross the state border, prison sentence, etc.

Field without code, text.

²⁹ Ditto

Summary

The database studies variables for 276 persons, most of whom were males. It is dedicated to the period of 1948-1989. Throughout this time the character of the archival materials changed depending on the development of the system of protection of the state border and the relevant documentation. Unlike in the late 1940s, the documents from the mid 1950s and later years kept during investigations of killings at the state border were more structured and were created following a unified system.

The system of documentation of incidents at the state border in later years is much better arranged and simpler. On the other hand, plans with the drawing of the place of the incident are included less often.

For some cases, photographic documentation of the incident is also available. It should be noted that such photographic documentation was mostly kept in cases of people killed by electric current. In the case of shooting, photodocumentation is less common.

The most common cause of death of people killed at the state border was electric current. The second most common cause was shooting; other causes were rare.

Some information leading to determination of the value of some variables was easy to find while other information was often missing. These facts are cited in the description of the variables.

The database includes a huge amount of data; nevertheless, scholars should find work with the database easy. Each field with a code has an explanatory note (so called data verification) in the Excel database which is displayed automatically after the field has been marked.³⁰ All information concerning one person is given on one line with a number. Textual entry in the field is given in the most concise way. Furthermore, for each field an additional part has been created – see Part 2 of the data collection – comments.

³⁰ Consequently, this form does not concern the data created in the SPSS programme.

List of abbreviations used³¹

ABS	Security Services Archive (Archiv bezpečnostních složek), http://www.abscr.cz/
bps	Border Guard brigade (brigáda Pohraniční stráže)
CIC	Counter Intelligence Corps
č. p.	house number (číslo popisné)
ČSA	Czechoslovak Army (Československá armáda)
ČSD	Czechoslovak Railways (Československé dráhy)
ČSLA	Czechoslovak People's Army (Československá lidová armáda, from 1954)
ČSM	Czechoslovak Union of Youth (Československý svaz mládeže)
ČSÚ	Czech Statistical Office (Český statistický úřad)
JZD	agricultural cooperative (Jednotné zemědělské družstvo)
n. p.	state enterprise (národní podnik)
ONV	District national committee (okresní národní výbor)
OO VB	District Department of Public Security (okresní oddělení Veřejné bezpečnosti)
OPK	Passport control department (oddělení pasové kontroly)
prPS	Border Guard battalion (prapor Pohraniční stráže)
PS	Border Guard (Pohraniční stráž)
ROH	Revolutionary Trade Union Movement (Revoluční odborové hnutí)
rps	Border Guard company (rota Pohraniční stráže)
SNB	National Security Corps (Sbor národní bezpečnosti)
SSM	Socialist Union of Youth (Socialistický svaz mládeže)
StB	State Security (Státní bezpečnost)
ÚDV	Office of the Documentation and Investigation of Crimes of Communism (Úřad dokumentace a vyšetřování zločinů komunismu)
VB	Public Security (Veřejná bezpečnost)
VÚ	military unit (vojenský útvar)

³¹ For more information see <http://www.ustrcr.cz/cs/usmrceni-statni-hranice-glosar>.