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How to cure the war? The development of psychiatric knowledge and its impact on the

construction of social norms in Europe between 1945 and 1968

My PhD thesis examines the growing interests of psychiatrists in criminal behaviour and its

impact on the criminal justice systems in different states in post-war Europe. The PhD project

aims to contribute to a better understanding of the impacts of scientific knowledge and praxis

on the ways how people were governed in the modern European states. It will investigate the

following research questions: How were the concepts of ‘insane’ and ‘deviant’ criminal

behaviour constructed in psychiatric knowledge in Czechoslovakia, West Germany, and the

United Kingdom? How were these concepts reflected in psychiatric assessments of criminal

proceedings at the courts of Prague, Düsseldorf, and London? Were there any similarities or

differences across the Iron Curtain in how the law, the state and psychiatrists approached the

issue of ‘deviant’ and ‘insane’ crime? The research project is divided into two main parts: The

first part analyses the production of psychiatric knowledge about ‘deviant’ and ‘insane’

criminal behaviour and the second part examines how this psychiatric knowledge was used in

expert testimonies of criminal behaviour at the courts in Prague, Düsseldorf, and London.

Those cities were selected because all of them were situated within different political and

social contexts in which psychiatric knowledge and the criminal justice system interacted. The

primary sources for the analysis are academic journals, textbooks, and records of criminal

trials.