

### TOMÁŠ VILÍMEK: CIVIL SOCIETY AND ITS SIGNIFICANCE AT THE TIME OF THE PRAGUE SPRING

The Prague Spring reform movement of 1968 had a markedly revitalizing effect on Czechoslovak society. The long suppressed instincts of civil society were reawakened within just a few weeks. Dozens of periodicals started to come out together with hundreds of formerly banned books, traditional associations were being restored and new were being founded. All this was mostly inspired by spontaneous movement from below. Along with the revival of civil society, interest was growing among the public in subjects that had been inadmissible until then. This concerned in particular the crimes of the communist justice, political plurality, and the legitimacy of the leading position of the Czechoslovak Communist Party in Czechoslovakia's life. Civil society at the time of the Prague Spring was characterized by three basic features: firstly, almost all strata of society joined the process of social changes, secondly, it was for the first time in twenty years that civil society presented itself as a power factor which the ruling communists could not ignore or suppress, and thirdly, this new force manifested itself most strongly during the days of Czechoslovakia's occupation by Warsaw Treaty forces in August 1968, when an overwhelming majority of the country's population stood up against the forceful interruption of the revitalizing process. All this made the consequences suffered in the subsequent months yet worse and the civil society restored in the first half of 1968 quickly petered out, suffocated by the changes brought forth by the process of normalization. It thus „froze“ in the winter of 1968 and in the course of 1969 as quickly as it “blossomed” in the spring of 1968, with no evident traces of its existence left after 1970.

### PAVEL ŽÁČEK: COMMUNISTS DO NOT RAISE A FINGER BUT A FIST

In the course of Czechoslovakia's occupation in August 1968, State Security (StB), which acted as the political police of the communist regime, got largely out of control of its superior, the then Interior

Minister Josef Pavel. The support granted by some StB officers to the occupiers largely contributed to the successful completion of the occupation. In addition, high StB officers had established contacts with their colleagues from the Soviet KGB long before August 1968, and they later acted according to schemes agreed on earlier, or according to direct commands from Soviet officers. Colonel Viliam Šalgovič, lieutenant colonel Josef Ripl and lieutenant colonel Bohumír Molnár pursued this treasonable activity most eagerly. The latter provided assistance to the occupiers even after Interior Minister Pavel had recalled both his colleagues from their posts.

In the period from August 20 to 24, StB employees split into two camps, with one of them assisting Soviet occupiers and the other staying loyal to the legal Czechoslovak government. These loyal employees were exposed to persecution and threats. They were even detained, and released only after an insistent intervention by the interior minister. Meanwhile, those who were assisting the occupiers managed to put radio transmitters out of operation and to arrest and intern Czech National Council Chairman Čestmír Císař. They were permanently ready to serve the occupiers wherever their assistance was needed. The official government representatives soon learned about the effort of Viliam Šalgovič for a putsch at the Prague Directorate of the National Security Corps (SNB), and they took an action against it. Šalgovič was demoted from his position, the interned StB employees were released and the situation – apparently – returned to normal. However, occupation had been already brought to completion and the traitors had fulfilled their role.

### JIRÍ BAŠTA: THE „GOLDENTREASURE“ OF THE 1968 FUND OF THE REPUBLIC

In the course of the Prague Spring of 1968, some state enterprises came up with an idea of a national collection to the so-called Fund of the Republic. The collection was intended to support the effort of economic reformers to improve Czechoslovakia's economic situation. The idea met with a broad response across all

strata of society, without anybody drawing too much attention to the fact that it was the ruling regime that had brought the economy to ruins. At the turn of July and August 1968, a collection of money and gold was launched, together with voluntary working shifts. Those who could not contribute money, gold or work, offered, e.g. their own blood for medical purposes. Soon the slogan *Every Citizen to Contribute at Least 1 Gram of Gold to the Golden Treasure of the Republic* spread all over the country. Family jewels, pieces of noble metals spared after dental surgeries, or their equivalent in the form of money or things were being sent to the Czechoslovak State Bank or other authorized institutions. More than 190 million Czechoslovak crowns and 61kg of gold were collected before the start of the occupation. However, the collection did not end up with the occupation, only its sources started to dry out. In spite of this, over 278 million crowns and more than 86kg of gold were raised before July 1969. It was generally believed that the „treasure“ had been captured by Soviet occupiers, but in reality the collection stayed in the Czechoslovak State Bank until the revolution of November 1989.

### JAROSLAV PAŽOUT: IVAN DEJMAL'S ACTIVITY IN STUDENTS' MOVEMENT

Ivan Dejmal, a signatory of the Charter 77 human rights manifesto, ecological activist, former Czech minister of the environment and a deputy chairman of the Institute for the Study of Totalitarian Regimes Council, died on February 6, 2008 at the age of 61 years. The start of Ivan Dejmal's political activity was linked with his involvement in students' movement of the 1960s, to which this article is devoted.

In 1965, when Ivan Dejmal started his studies at Prague's Agricultural University, strong nonconformist students' movement had already existed in Prague and he actively joined it. Until the end of 1967, he participated in the formation of the Independent Students' Organization, a selective political organization that became a recognized representative of students at Prague's Agricultural University. Ivan Dejmal was in charge of a large part of its

agenda throughout its existence. He helped organize students' strikes in November 1968 and in April 1969, and he represented students of the Agricultural University in the Union of University Students of Bohemia and Moravia and in the Prague Students' Parliament, while contributing to their radicalization in the sense of consistent defence of democratic values. From the very beginning he was also active in the Revolutionary Youth Movement, a prevailingly students' opposition group which was one of the first to stand up against the so-called normalization regime in an organized way. Ivan Dejmal had to pay for his membership of the Revolutionary Youth Movement by two years of imprisonment.

### **TOMÁŠ BURSÍK: IVAN DEJMAL BEHIND THE BARS**

Ivan Dejmal spent four years behind the bars of Czechoslovak prisons. He was condemned on fabricated charges of „subversion of the republic“, to be jailed in 1970-1972 and later again in 1974-1976. The latter sentence came as a „punishment“ for Dejmal's activity in students' movement. As a political prisoner, Dejmal was exposed to chicane, carefully watched and continuously punished, e.g., for „sleeping after the waking-up time“. He stayed in a number of prisons, with his jailers agreeing that the „service of the term of imprisonment failed to fulfil its reformatory function“, which in other words means that Dejmal refused to give up his opinions. In spite of all injustice and chicane, Dejmal left the prison unbroken. On the contrary, he immediately joined the activity of the opposition and stood at the birth of the Charter 77 human rights manifesto and movement in January 1977.

### **PETR BLAŽEK: ACTION „LECTURE“, SURVEILLANCE OF IVAN DEJMAL**

Ivan Dejmal was kept under surveillance by secret police as of November 1976, i.e. after his release from prison. A detailed plan of his day-long surveillance was worked out by State Security (StB) in December 1977, providing for Dejmal's systematic checks by Czechoslovak police bodies. He was watched on every step, the

persons who came in contact with him were registered, and he was arrested and summoned for interrogation without any legal grounds from time to time. Dejmal's surveillance kept busy a number of StB agents, several cars, and it even involved the use of disguise and hidden cameras. The surveillance was not carried out constantly but in certain waves in 1978, in February 1978, in the spring of 1980, etc. The last record on Dejmal's surveillance comes from May 1985, when the action was carried out under the cover name of „Lecture“.

### **PAVEL ŽÁČEK: COMRADES DESTINED FOR INTERNMENT**

The testimonies of Prague's State Security employees who were arrested by their colleagues in August 1968 and without any explanation interned on StB premises (see Pavel Žáček: Communists do not Raise a Finger but a Fist) evoke the memory of the conflict that was ripening among employees of the communist secret police throughout the year 1968, and that culminated during the country's occupation in August. The testimonies of the interned StB employees, even though sometimes grotesque, stylistically clumsy and grammatically incorrect, throw light on the support provided by StB to Soviet occupational forces in Prague, and on its role in the forthcoming events.

### **PROKOP TOMEK: COMRADE KODRLE'S WILD COCKTAIL**

The document concerned comes from the office of the chief of the Czechoslovak Interior Ministry 1st Directorate and deals with a breach of discipline by member of the Czechoslovak military mission in the Federal Republic of Germany and State Security intelligence agent Josef Křenek, whose actual surname was Kodrle. This man got drunk at the Polish military mission in West Berlin during an event marking Poland's national day, got in a car with an American registration number, and then fell asleep in the streets of West Berlin. Still completely drunk, he was brought back to the Czechoslovak military mission by American military police. It was rather

difficult to settle the whole affair, yet Kodrle got through it without any greater harm.

### **JÍŘÍ BAŠTA, PEOPLE'S MILITIAS**

People's Militias were called the armed fist of the working people and they acted accordingly. Although at the close of their era they looked rather ridiculous in their shabby uniforms, there was still an arsenal of thousands of guns in their warehouses. Their use was last considered in November 1989. The presented study describes the origin, development and dissolution of People's Militias.

This paramilitary force, which in many aspects resembled the Nazi SA, first presented itself during the coup of February 1948. The presence of its armed members was intended to have and really had a devastating effect on the will of politicians and on citizens' resolution to stand up against and resist the oncoming changes. People's Militias closely cooperated with the Czechoslovak People's Army which supplied them with weapons, and they reinforced SNB (police) guards and border guards in case of need. They functioned as the repressive component of the communist apparatus. As of the year 1953, People's Militias were subordinated directly to the Czechoslovak Communist Party Central Committee. Another significant moment in the history of People's Militias came in 1968-1969. In the course of the Prague Spring of 1968, People's Militias were under the pressure of the public. However, they became a major support of the normalization apparatus after the suppression of the reform movement. Their action against a demonstration marking the first anniversary of the Soviet occupation on August 21, 1969 was particularly brutal. This was the imaginary peak of the history of People's Militias. In the course of normalization, their activity was restricted to training and actions against demonstrations marking various anniversaries. Individual members of People's Militias were also sent to schools to show their machine guns to curious pupils. In 1989, People's Militias had more than 84,000 members. In November 1989, their units were summoned to Prague, but they were never put into action. They were dissolved by the end of 1989.