

GINSBERG KRALEM MAJALEŠ  
VÝRAZ PROLETÁRSKÉHO INTERNACIONALISMU



Ginsberg was nominated for King of May by students of the Engineering Faculty of the Czech Technical University. Here the parade is captured on Old Town Square.  
photo: Miroslav Khol

# The Deportation of the King of May

## ALLEN GINSBERG AND THE STATE SECURITY

PETR BLAŽEK

The U.S. poet Allen Ginsberg flew to Prague for the first time on 18 February 1965, from Cuba. Despite turning up in Czechoslovakia completely unplanned, he made a very deep impression.

The American poet had been invited to spend a month in Cuba as an esteemed juror in a literary competition organised by the Havana government foundation *Casa de las Americas*.<sup>1</sup> His initial naïve enthusiasm for the “island of freedom”, which had from the start of the 1960s attracted the Western intellectual left, rapidly turned to disillusionment and eventually concluded in his deportation. Ginsberg later offered various reasons in different interviews as to why; he was uncomplimentary about the policies of the governing party in public several times, suggested that the revolutionary government legalise marijuana, maintained intimate relations with a young Cuban man, assessed the sex appeal of Che Guevara and vocally stood up for local gays, who Fidel Castro and his comrades were then sending to work camps en masse.

*One morning at the end of my stay I was in my hotel room, when it was suddenly entered by three mute soldiers in olive-coloured uniforms and an official. He said that he was the head of the immigration authority, that I should pack my bags, and that I would be deported on the first plane, to Prague,* Ginsberg later recalled of the last occasion he woke up in Cuba.<sup>2</sup>

### Exploration of the Socialist universe

For the American, Prague’s Ruzyně airport, where he arrived in February in

tennis shoes, was originally only meant as a stopover to catch a connecting flight on his way back to his country, to which there were then no direct flights due to the blockade. *And while he was waiting for the flight from Prague to New York, he remembered that he had two acquaintances in Prague. He called*

The second *acquaintance* was the poet and translator Jan Zábřana, who had introduced Ginsberg’s work to Czechoslovakia. The first verses of his famous work *Howl* had appeared in his excellent translation in 1959, when they were published in the review *Světová literatura* (*World Literature*).<sup>4</sup>

### Allen Ginsberg (1926–1997)

Ginsberg was born in Newark, New Jersey into the left-oriented family of an American high school teacher and a Russian Jewish immigrant. He studied at Columbia University, from where he was expelled for repeated theft and drug use. He went through many different jobs and was highly non-conformist. Along with William Burroughs, Jack Kerouac and Lawrence Ferlinghetti he was one of the leading figures of the beat generation. In October 1955, he produced the poem *Howl*, which made him famous. After its publication in 1956 the authorities seized many copies on obscenity grounds. Ginsberg (as its author) and Ferlinghetti (as its publisher) were arraigned; they won the court case and the book was allowed to be published again in 1957. Ginsberg became a genuinely successful writer. He travelled many countries and took an interest in Zen Buddhism. At the end of the 1960s he expressed kinship with the hippy movement and became active in the gay rights sphere. In 1974, he cofounded the Jack Kerouac School of Disembodied Poetics, where he taught. He died of liver cancer.

*one of them. His acquaintance thought the poet was phoning him from New York. The poet set him straight. He then spent the night in the company of his two Prague friends and in the morning decided to extend his Prague stay indefinitely,* his first *acquaintance*, wrote the novelist Josef Škvorecký, describing the circumstances of Ginsberg’s arrival in Prague.<sup>3</sup>

The following day Josef Škvorecký brought his unexpected guest to the offices of the Union of Czechoslovak Writers and helped him make his stay legal. The union provided the poet with a two-week work grant.<sup>5</sup> Ginsberg’s decision to stay in Czechoslovakia was made easier by the fact that he was able to get paid. Alongside money for poems published in *Světová*

1 LASS, Andrew: Allen Ginsberg – The King of May. *Analogon*, no. 30 (2000), p. 37.

2 YOUNG, Allen: *Interview s Allenem Ginsbergem pro Gay Sunshine* (*Interview with Allen Ginsberg for Gay Sunshine*). Votobia, Olomouc 1996, pp. 112–113.

3 ŠKVORECKÝ, Josef: *Hlas z Ameriky* (*A Voice from America*). Sixty-Eight Publishers Corp., Toronto 1990, p. 83.

4 “American Bohemia”, an extensive study by the literary critic Igor Hájek, appeared in the same issue, as did examples of work by other beats. Comparative Bibliography of the Translations of Jan Zábřana, published in the book ZÁBRANA, Jan: *Potkat básníka. Eseje a úvahy* (*To Meet a Poet: Essays and Considerations*). Odeon, Prague 1989, pp. 436–481.

5 MONÍK, Josef: The King of May. *Mladá fronta*, Víkend supplement, no. 17 (29.4.1990), p. 4.



This caricature of Allen Ginsberg appeared in an April 1965 edition of the weekly *Literární noviny* (Literary News).  
Source: Archive of the author

literatura, this mainly concerned fees for programmes of his poetry that were put on at the popular Poetická vinárna Viola (Poetic Wine Bar Viola) on Prague's Národní St.<sup>6</sup>

*It was quite a lot of money – enough to allow me to accept for two weeks the hospitality of the Writers' Union and still have enough cash to pay for a room for another two weeks at the very elegant*

*Hotel Ambassador, on that big street [Wenceslas Sq.], Ginsberg recalled 30 years later.<sup>7</sup>*

Ginsberg spent most evenings at the Viola, where a blown-up portrait of him and Peter Orlovsky hung on the wall.<sup>8</sup> For the young drinkers his presence there was nothing short of a vision. When the 19-year-old poet Vladimíra Čerepková first spotted him

she shouted in surprise: *Good lord, today every layabout looks like Allen Ginsberg.*<sup>9</sup>

The director Pavel Juráček described the legendary appearance of Ginsberg at the Viola in his diary. He said that it appeared that the end of the world was nigh at the wine bar: *Laděna Čerepková had a hysterical fit and Ginsberg was surrounded by a pack of 17-year-old and older Czech beatniks ready to serve and worship him day and night for the entirety of his stay in Prague. The Viola became a virtual chapel for a lot of people at that time. I saw Ginsberg there every night. I didn't like him. He drank a lot and was very dirty.*<sup>10</sup>

At the Viola Ginsberg also met Václav Hrabě, the most distinctive representative of the Czech form of the beat generation. Along with Ludvík Hess and Emil Machálek, he conducted an interview with Ginsberg and wrote a report about his reading for the student magazine *Divoké víno* (Wild Wine). It was the last text he was to be involved in. After getting home on 5 March 1965 he tried to heat his flat using, as was his habit, a gas oven. When he fell asleep the flame went out. The poet, 24, died in his sleep of carbon monoxide poisoning.<sup>11</sup>

It was at the same venue that at the start of February 1965 Ginsberg met Andrew Lass, the son of an American communist who had along with his whole family applied for political asylum in Czechoslovakia at the start of the 1950s.<sup>12</sup> In the following weeks, Lass, who unlike the vast majority of young people in Prague spoke English, became Ginsberg's chief guide to the city. *We visited the Bethlehem Chapel, the Náprstek Museum, the Club of Writers, and even the pub At the Two Cats, which was the haunt of a group of Prague beatnik poets.*<sup>13</sup>

Ginsberg held several public readings and discussions, mainly reciting at the Viola.<sup>14</sup> He also twice visited Libeň's Poetry Club, where he met young poets

6 The main credit for popularising Ginsberg's poetry at Viola (where Radim Vařinka was among those who recited them from Jan Zábřana's translation manuscripts) belonged to the bar's manager Jiří Ostermann. For more see MÜLLEROVÁ, Veronika: *Ostermannova Viola (Ostermann's Viola)*. Kotnov, Tábor 2008.

7 LASS, Andrew: Allen Ginsberg – The King of May, p. 41.

8 MILES, Barry: *Ginsberg. A Biography*. Harper Perennial, New York 1990, p. 354.

9 MONIK, Josef: The King of May, p. 5.

10 JURÁČEK, Pavel: *Deník (1959–1974) (Diary (1959–1974))*. National Film Archive, Prague 2003, p. 436.

11 Václav Hrabě and Co.: Allen Ginsberg. In: *Iniciály*, year 1, issue 1 (1990), pp. 12–13.

12 According to the documents of the State Security (StB, secret police), Herberg Lass became director of the Prague branch of the American organisation CARR. After the processing of his asylum application, Lass worked as an editor at Czechoslovak Radio. He was surveilled by the secret police until the 1950s on suspicion of espionage. *ABS (Security Services Archive)*, collection of documents (hereinafter only f.) MV-KR (Ministry of the Interior-Regional Directorate), archive file no. 591839 MV (Ministry of the Interior), extract from archive file 16706 MV, evidential file, Herbert Lass, 4.5.1965. In 1973 Herbert Lass' family were expelled from Czechoslovakia. His son Andrew Lass later became a professor of cultural anthropology in the U.S.

13 LASS, Andrew: Allen Ginsberg – The King of May, p. 37.

14 Cf. Ginsberg at the Viola. Previously unpublished excerpts from the poet's lost diary. *Mladá fronta*, Víkend supplement, 25.9.1993, p. 5.

from the circle around *Divoké víno*. He also attended a meeting at the Divadlo S. K. Neumanna theatre. Ludvík Hess recalled that on that occasion an unusual autograph session took place; one of his admirers asked him to sign *The Communist Manifesto*. Ginsberg crossed out the names of Marx and Engels and signed his own name as author.<sup>15</sup>

Some gatherings were greatly improvised. In March 1965 one such meeting took place at the well-known pub U Fleků, where according to a secret police record, over 50 young artists and university students chanted long live Ginsberg, etc.<sup>16</sup>

The greatest stir was caused by his appearance at the Arts Faculty at Charles University, which was attended by several hundred people, predominantly students. Ginsberg recited his poems in English and Jan Zábřana then read the Czech translations.<sup>17</sup>

At the start of March 1965, Ginsberg visited the Union of Slovak Writers in Bratislava, where he gave a recital at the Divadlo poezie theatre.<sup>18</sup>

During his sojourn in Czechoslovakia, Ginsberg wrote a number of new poems. One of them was published in *Literární noviny* in a translation by Zábřana alongside an article by Igor Hájek on his stay.<sup>19</sup>

The poet also continued writing in a diary that he had brought from Cuba.<sup>20</sup> In it he made a record of his observations on the Communist regime, conversations, bar visits and erotic encounters. The notebook, which was confiscated by the secret police, became the key evidence during his deportation from Czechoslovakia and his denigration in the country's press.

However, Ginsberg was at least temporarily celebrated in the press.<sup>21</sup> On 3 March 1965, a report on his stay appeared in *Rudé právo*. Its author made reference to the American guest's travel plans: *He came to acquaint himself with our reality and he says that from here he will continue his exploration of the Socialist universe with a visit to Moscow.*<sup>22</sup>



Pavel Beran, a young poet from the circle around the magazine *Divoké víno* (*Wild Wine*), also met Ginsberg at the Viola. This photo was taken at the start of May 1965 by members of the secret police while monitoring the two on Wenceslas Sq. Ginsberg acquired the picture from the archive of the Ministry of the Interior during a visit to the Prague in the 1990s. Photo: Allen Ginsberg Estate

### From a summary Interior Ministry report on Allen Ginsberg's stay in Czechoslovakia

During GINSBERG'S stay in the CSSR we have acquired his diary, which A. GINSBERG recognised and confirmed for the record that he had recognised. [...] Several snippets of the diary characterise his political views: "Czech Communism with its bureaucrats above and its secret trials. Terror like in Cuba, only better masked. All the capitalist myths about Communism are true. I've started to feel that Communism is a big brake everywhere. They whisper everywhere. J. is always unconsciously looking around in pubs to see who's sitting there and whether or not they can hear... People in Czechoslovakia aren't afraid to speak openly if they know you. They criticize the government sharply. I had a meeting with the poet HOLAN, a big man. He says he believes in a rebirth. You can always trust somebody in a police state... I met Mr. SCHMIDT. This regime is... everybody has to have a stamp saying they're employed... it's so incredibly stupid it's tragic. Infiltrate the party?... They've been a secret organisation for 50 years. They know all the tricks. But everything is slowly changing. Samples of everything to be printed are sent by messengers to the censors at the HSTD [Interior Ministry censorship dept.]. Private printing is punishable by prison. Everything must be officially approved... Neruda would be like NOVOMESKÝ here in the 1950s." The diary's subtext characterises his anti-Communist leanings.

ABS, f. A 9, inv. jedn. (inventory unit) 774, Report on Allen Ginsberg's stay in Czechoslovakia, 13.5.1965.

15 HESS, Ludvík: Mluvil jsem s Allenem Ginsbergem, <http://www.divokevino.cz/0403/index.php> (verified 25.4.2011).

16 ABS, f. A 9, arch. jedn. (archival unit) 243, preliminary report on the May Day celebrations and the King of May, 4.5.1965.

17 HÁJEK, Igor: From Bradbury's World. *Literární noviny*, year 14, č. 12 (20.3.1965), p. 8.

18 POLÁČKOVÁ, K.: A. Ginsberg discovers the CSSR. *Svobodné slovo*, 21.3.1965, p. 4.

19 Cf. GINSBERG, Allen: Labutí jezero (Swan Lake). *Literární noviny*, year 14, č. 12 (20.3.1965), p. 8.

20 ABS, f. MV-KR, archive file no. 591839 MV, Police record of questioning of Allen Ginsberg, 5.5.1965.

21 Cf. KLINGENBERG, E.: Ginsberg's Czech Expulsion. In: HYDE, Lewis (ed.): *On the Poetry of Allen Ginsberg*. The University of Michigan Press, Michigan 1984, pp. 240-243.

22 At a meeting with Allen Ginsberg. *Rudé právo*, 3.3.1965.

Ginsberg left for the Soviet Union on 19 March 1965, having bought a return train ticket and booked a room at Moscow's Inturist hotel. He travelled as an ordinary tourist.<sup>23</sup> He met a number of Russian writers in the city: *When I arrived there I first met Achmatova, Yev-tushenko and Voznesensky.[...] At the Union of Writers, I saw Mrs. Mandelstam along with Lily Brik descending a huge staircase. It was after the rehabilitation of a painter that Stalin had had killed. I also met Eugenia Ginzburg [...] and I saw Konstantin Simonov, and otherwise enjoyed a few weeks there on my own. Then I went to Warsaw for a month and to Krakow for about a week. Then because of my ticket I returned to Prague, where I wanted to book a ticket to London and New York. I went back to Prague expecting to stay for a few days, see some friends and then leave.*<sup>24</sup>

Ginsberg returned to Czechoslovakia by train on 29 April 1965.<sup>25</sup> He stayed at the Hotel Merkur at Prague's Tišnov, where he waited for a plane to London. It was there on 1 May 1965 that a delegation of students knocked on the door of his room and offered to make him a candidate for King of May.<sup>26</sup>

### Breaking the tradition

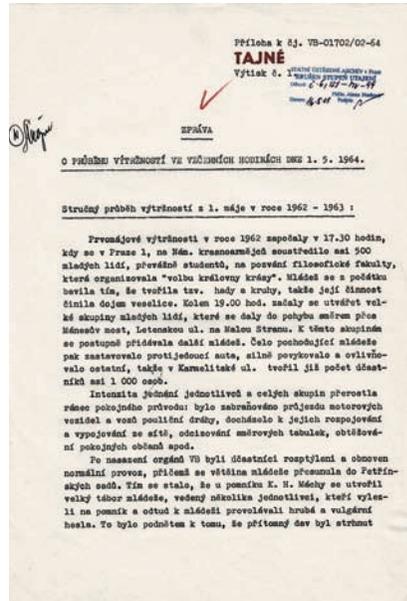
At the end of April 1965 preparations were well underway for a student celebration that was due to take place in Prague for the first time in nine long years.<sup>27</sup>

The fact that the authorities allowed the King of May to be held again symbolised at the general level a cautious change on their part towards young people. A new generation that knew no other regime than communism was loudly reaching adulthood. The power structure also faced a period of marked

pressure from other social classes in connection with the difficult economic situation, the unresolved legacy of the 1950s and stasis in the composition of the Communist Party's leadership.<sup>28</sup> The pressure coming from the new generation is clearly apparent in the concrete reasons that the King of May

sive measures were frequently carried out.<sup>29</sup>

In a report by the party first secretary, Antonín Novotný, the Petřín disturbances that around 1,000 young people took part in on 1 May 1962 were placed in comparison to similar [student] provocations in 1956.<sup>30</sup>



First page of a report by the first secretary of the Communist Party, Antonín Novotný, on disturbances at Petřín in the years 1962–1964.

Source: National Archive



As in 1956, the students prepared a number of witty signs and costumes.

Photo: National Archive

was permitted, with the main one being an attempt to bring to an end the tradition of unofficial 1 May gatherings at Petřín. From 1962 young people had been gathering every May Day at its statue of Karel Hynek Mácha, in the evenings drinking, singing and chanting anti-regime slogans; some participants also engaged in hooligan behaviour. As a consequence, repres-

In 1962, 17 students were expelled from university while 10 were suspended for a year in connection with the Petřín interventions. On 14 July 1962, 14 young people were handed suspended sentences of several months at a Prague district court for causing disturbances, incitement and defamation.<sup>31</sup>

The following year, from 30 April to 2 May 1963, a state of standby for both

23 ABS, f. A 9, inv. jedn. 243, Preliminary report on the May Day celebrations and the King of May, 4.5.1965.

24 LASS, Andrew: Allen Ginsberg - The King of May, pp. 41–42.

25 ABS, f. A 9, inv. jedn. 243, Preliminary report on the May Day celebrations and the King of May, 4.5.1965.

26 LASS, Andrew: Allen Ginsberg - The King of May, pp. 41–42.

27 For more on the King of May tradition in Czechoslovakia see SVATOŠ, Michal: Student Kings of May of the 1960s. In: DENEMARKOVÁ, Radka (ed.): *Zlatá šedesátá - česká literatura a společnost v letech táni, kolotání a ... zklamání (Golden Sixties - Czech Literature and Society in a Period of Thaw, Gyration and... Disappointment)*. Materials from a conference held by the Institute of Czech Literature AS CR 16–18 June 1999. Institute of Czech Literature AS CR, Prague 2000, pp. 92–102; SVATOŠ, Michal: History of Student King of May. In: *Dějiny a současnost*, year 23, issue 2 (2001), pp. 22–26.

28 Cf. the young people's questions on various levels of the power apparatus in the mid 1960s in the books O'TAHAL, Milan: *Studenti a komunistická moc v českých zemích 1968–1989 (Students and Communist Power in the Czech Lands 1968–1989)*. Dokořán, Prague 2003, p. 13–17; PAŽOUT, Jaroslav: *Mocným navzdory. Studentské hnutí v šedesátých letech 20. století (Powerful Nonetheless: The Student Movement in the 1960s)*. Prostor, Prague 2008, p. 75–80; POSPÍŠIL, Filip - BLAŽEK, Petr: „Vratte nám vlasy!“ *První máničky, vlasatci a hippies v komunistickém Československu (“Give Us Back Our Hair!” The First Longhairs and Hippies in Communist Czechoslovakia)*. Academia, Prague 2010, pp. 131–195.

29 Cf. SVATOŠ, Michal: *Studentský majáles roku 1965 aneb Allen Ginsberg Králem majálesu (The 1965 Student King of May, or Allen Ginsberg Becomes King of May)*. In: ZILYNSKÁ, Blanka - SVOBODNÝ, Petr (eds.): *Czech Scholarsip and the Prague Spring (1963–1970)*. Conference collection 22–23.11.2000. Nakladatelství Karolinum, Prague 2001, pp. 366–367.

30 National Archive (hereinafter NA), f. Antonín Novotný, inv. jedn. 600, Student Provocations of 1 May 1962 - report of 24.8.1962. The cited assessment and reference to the 1956 King of May arose from the fact that the majority of young people had gone to Petřín in connection with a beauty contest put on by Arts Faculty students. For more on the student movement in 1956 see MATTHEWS, John P. C.: *Majáles 1956. Nevydařená revolta československých studentů (King of May 1956: An Unsuccessful Revolt by Czech Students)*. Prius, Brno 2000.

31 NA, f. Antonín Novotný, inv. jedn. 600, Student Provocations of 1 May 1962 - report of 24.8.1962.

the security forces and functionaries of the Czechoslovak Union of Youth was declared on the orders of the leadership of the Communist Party. In order to head off a repeat gathering at Petřín, the Union of Youth organised a programme that featured live pop bands at the Julius Fučík Park of Culture and Leisure.

Despite these steps, around 1,500 people went to Petřín on the evening of 1 May 1963. The outcome was similar to that of the previous year. Thirty-five were detained during an intervention that this time was led by uniformed Public Security (VB, police) men, members of the VB's auxiliary guard and Union of Youth functionaries.<sup>32</sup>

Despite various *preventative measures*, there were more *disturbances* at Petřín on 1 May 1964. Because the young people were driven out of the park by the security forces, there were clashes there and in the vicinity. There was even an effort to march in protest on Prague Castle, with several hundred setting off for there from Újezd. In the end, the participants crossed the bridge to the other side of the Vltava and gathered at the National Theatre, from where they continued in the direction of Spálená St.

At the nearby Perštýn, members of the police moved in with the aim of dispersing the march of several hundred people. However, they did not succeed and there was a spontaneous demonstration on Wenceslas Sq. after 10 PM: *Here the disturbances continued with shouting, whistling, threats to public order and jeering at members of the VB.* Only after another intervention, during which the VB made forceful use of nightsticks, was the centre of the city cleared. In all, 85 people were detained during the evening, some of whom were convicted in July 1965 (some received jail terms).<sup>33</sup>

From the point of view of the Communist leadership, the official holding of the King of May in 1965 was chiefly intended to break the three-year tradition of costly repressive interven-



May Day celebrations, 1965.

Photo: National Archive

tions linked to the *Petřín disturbances*, which Western radio stations regularly reported on.<sup>34</sup>

Another reason was offered by Col. Bohumil Říha, commander of the Regional Directorate of the Interior Ministry in Prague, who had been charged with leading a security team set up in connection with the May Day celebrations: *I am preparing security measures for this year's cele-*

*brations. A lot of attention has been devoted to 1 May, chiefly because it is the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the liberation of Czechoslovakia by the Soviet army.*<sup>35</sup>

### The search for a candidate

For many students, the King of May offered not only a chance to have fun but also a welcome opportunity to express their political views by means of a provocative jape. Despite the fact that

<sup>32</sup> ABS, f. A 2/2, inv. jedn. 238, Slogans chanted by hooligans at Petřín on the evening of 1 May 1963; NA, f. Antonín Novotný, inv. jedn. 600, State of the investigation of the disturbances at the statue of K. H. Mácha until 7.5.1963.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid., inv. jedn. 612, Report on the disturbances that took place on the evening of 1.5.1964.

<sup>34</sup> Two extensive operations by the Regional Administration of the Interior Ministry in Prague against defective individuals helped in this respect, seeing 883 people detained. Fifty-five were remanded while 11 received punishments and 646 crimes were examined. ABS, f. A 9, inv. jedn. 243, Preliminary report on the May Day celebrations and the King of May, 4.5.1965.

<sup>35</sup> Ibid.

various authorities<sup>36</sup> watched the preparations closely, the main organisational work – and naturally the choice of candidates for the King of May at individual universities – was taken on by students themselves.<sup>37</sup>

Most credit for the fact that Allen Ginsberg became a candidate for the King of May belongs to the writer Josef Škvorecký. On 30 April 1965 students of the Faculty of Mechanical Engineering at the Czech Technical University in Prague had asked Škvorecký if he would stand; their original candidate, the actress Jiřina Bohdalová, had changed her mind about participating at the last minute, so they had to find a substitute quickly.<sup>38</sup>

According to one of the leading figures in the student movement, Jiří Müller, they were looking for somebody provocative.<sup>39</sup> At the Czech Technical University a radical group of students had at that time formed around the magazine *Buchar*, on the pages of which Müller had called in the spring 1964 article *The Party and Us* for the breaking down of the tutelary relationship of the Communist Party to youth organisations.<sup>40</sup>

The article was picked up on by Interior Ministry's censors, who immediately, on 22 April 1964, sent a note with an appropriate comment to Interior Minister Lubomír Štrougal and the chairman of the Central Committee of the Communist Party, Vladimír Koucký. The letter to Štrougal later reached the first secretary of the Central Committee, Antonín Novotný.<sup>41</sup>

Škvorecký turned down participation in the King of May as he had the flu, but he promised to find somebody suitable by the following day. The students met him again on the morning of 1 May 1965, when he offered the name Allen Ginsberg, with whom he had arranged everything by phone.<sup>42</sup> Ginsberg had already known about the King of May before he got Škvorecký's call. On Na Příkopě St. on 30 April 1965 he ran into an acquaintance from his first sojourn in Prague, the editor and poet Vladimír Kafka, who spoke enthusiastically about the planned student celebration and even gave him a ticket to the Julius Fučík Park of Culture and



May Day celebrations, 1965.

Photo: National Archive

Leisure, where the election of the King of May was to take place.<sup>43</sup> Students Jiří Müller and Karel Kovanda visited Ginsberg at the Hotel Merkur on the morning of 1 May 1965.<sup>44</sup> So we knocked on the door of the hotel, we entered – and Ginsberg. We saw a bed,

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36 For more on preparations for the Prague King of May see SVATOŠ, Michal: Studentský majáles roku 1965 aneb Allen Ginsberg Králem majálesu. In: ZILYNSKÁ, Blanka – SVOBODNÝ, Petr (eds.): *Czech Scholarship and the Prague Spring (1963-1970). Conference collection 22-23.11.2000.* Nakladatelství Karolinum, Prague 2001, pp. 367-368.

37 PAŽOUT, Jaroslav: *Mocným navzdory. Studentské hnutí v šedesátých letech 20. Století.* Prostor, Prague 2008, p. 84.

38 ABS, f. MV-KR, archive file č. 591839 MV, Record of a meeting with a confidant who provided a report on the entire situation before the election of the King of May and a conversation with Ginsberg at the Hlávkova students dorms, 5.5.1965.

39 Interview by Pavel Urbášek with Jiří Müller, May - June 2004. In: VANĚK, Pavel - URBÁŠEK, Pavel (eds.): *Vítězové? Poráženi? Životopisná interview. 1. díl. Dissent v období tzv. normalizace (Victors? The Defeated? Biographical Interviews. Part 1. Dissent in the Period of so-called Normalisation),* Prostor, Prague 2005, p. 579.

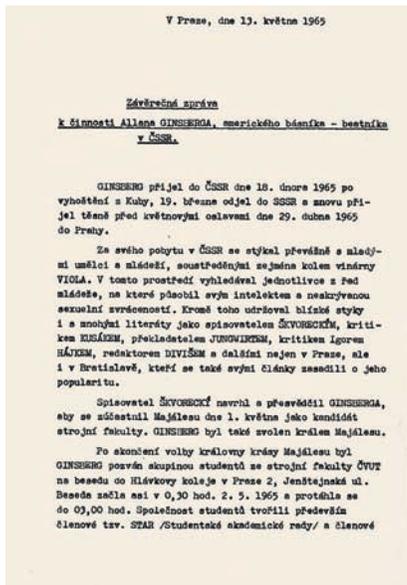
40 PAŽOUT, Jaroslav: *Mocným navzdory. Studentské hnutí v šedesátých letech 20. století.* Prostor, Prague 2008, pp. 87-88.

41 NA, f. Antonín Novotný, inv. jedn. 610, Report of the Interior Ministry's HSTD censorship department on the diffusion of the student magazine *Buchar* at the Faculty of Mechanical Engineering at the Czech Technical University in Prague, 22.4.1964.

42 ABS, f. MV-KR, archive file č. 591839 MV, Record of a meeting with a confidant who provided a report on the entire situation before the election of the King of May and a conversation with Ginsberg at the Hlávkova students dorms, 5.5.1965.

43 ABS, f. MV-KR, archive file č. 591839 MV, Report on questioning of Vladimír Kafka, 5.5.1965.

44 Interview by Pavel Urbášek with Jiří Müller, May - June 2004, pp. 579-580.



First page of the final StB secret police report on Allen Ginsberg's stay. Source: Security Services Archive

*a bed full of duvets, so we said a few words and the duvets went flying and beneath lay Ginsberg, with his tennis shoes on, dressed, and with great pleasure he agreed, Müller recalled of the quick negotiation.<sup>45</sup>*

### An expression of proletarian internationalism

There was huge public interest in the King of May, partly because 1 May fell on a Saturday that year. In addition, some participants were returning home from an official parade on Wenceslas Square that morning that had been attended by 400,000 people.<sup>46</sup> Following a prepared schedule, students first met near their particular universities: technical students gathered in Dejvice and on Charles Bridge, economics students in Žižkov, art and humanities students at Alšovo náměstí. From those spots they made their way to Old Town Sq.<sup>47</sup> A joint parade started there at 15:30 and took over 90 minutes to reach the Julius Fučík Park of Culture and Leisure, where the main programme was set to take place.<sup>48</sup>

<sup>45</sup> Ibid.

<sup>46</sup> (lh): Twenty years of struggle and work in the creation of a Socialist republic. Up to 400,000 participants in joyful parade in capital. In: *Rudé právo*, 2.5.1965, p. 1.

<sup>47</sup> SVATOS, Michal: Studentský majáles roku 1965 aneb Allen Ginsberg Králem majálesu, p. 368.

<sup>48</sup> Student King of May. *Rudé právo*, 2.5.1965, p. 2.

<sup>49</sup> Some appeared in a period Interior Ministry report that featured in the catalogue of the exhibition *On the (Beat) Road* held at Prague's Lucerna on 22–24.4.1965. SRP, Karel: *Ginsberg králem majáles, výraz proletářského internacionalismu (Ginsberg King of May, an Expression of Proletarian Internationalism)*. Artforum – Jazzová sekce, Prague 1998.

<sup>50</sup> FAMU students shot a documentary about the 1965 King of May.

<sup>51</sup> Cf. the list of slogans chanted that appear in the box. The comments in brackets are transcribed word for word. They are part of a report that Col. Bohumil Říha, commander of the Regional Administration of the Interior Ministry in Prague, sent to Col. Jan Záruba, first deputy interior minister. The report states that the list “does not contain slogans that were on signs. Those slogans were photographed and that photo-documentation was sent with a report on the course of the King of May.” ABS, f. A 9, arch. jedn. 243, Preliminary report on the May Day celebrations and the King of May, 4.5.1965.

### Slogans chanted by students on the King of May parade

We won't let anybody tell us what to do!  
 Give us freedom, we're the fifth wheel on the carriage  
 Soviet hermit, our model  
 All slogans were pre-approved. We agree with them all  
 With Antonín for eternity  
 Every other day an educational reform until 1970  
 Whoever doesn't go with us will have a heart attack  
 Long live Gizberg [!], Gizberg [!], our guru  
 Long live our Emperor [paraphrase on an allegorical spectacle]  
 Down with corn, cultivate rice  
 Don't smack us in the mouth, long live Ubu Roi [this rhymes in Czech]  
 Long live Servit. They're all asses [a jeer at a Law Faculty professor]  
 Eat Russian eggs – the eggs of our friends [Technical and Medical Faculties]  
 We were here before the memorial, we'll be here after it [Arts Faculty]  
 Forward to the left, forward to the left, left perversion, right perversion,  
 golden middle way [sung by a group of 50 students, walking backwards, at the Arts Faculty]  
 If you want to reach pension age earlier, eat at the canteen [most faculties; this rhymes in Czech]  
 With red China we will defeat evil imperialists  
 In the interests of operation, we're the fifth wheel on the carriage [this rhymes in Czech]  
 They permitted the King of May because we were good [this rhymes in Czech; feedback from the pavement]  
 Bravo, bravo, what will they say tomorrow in Rudé právo  
 Better a stupid system than the need to think [this rhymes in Czech]  
 We want to get involved and we mean that seriously  
 Long live the enemies of students [directed at the VB]  
 We greet the Public Security – and the non-public  
 We greet all highly positioned comrades [in front of the Prague 7 District Committee of the Communist Party, to a group of comrades on a balcony]  
 Finally birth control in the CSSR [in response to posters for contraceptives; this was condemned by some spectators]  
 Renew the first night right

In connection with the election of the King of May the following chants were heard:  
 Vote Stella Zázvorková  
 We want Sedláček, long live Sedláček  
 Long live the little Czech man

The enormous euphoria, release and joy that the prankster-like parade – full of signs that were witty and had double meanings, along with allegorical vehicles – evoked in both the participants and the estimated 150,000 spectators can be seen in

the preserved photographs<sup>49</sup> and film footage.<sup>50</sup> The slogans that were chanted met with a great reception, provoking peals of laughter.<sup>51</sup> Neither the uniformed nor undercover members of the security forces dared to intervene and merely monitored the



Allen Ginsberg shortly after being elected King of May.

Photo: Miroslav Khol

situation, leading some participants to suddenly feel like they were living in a different country.<sup>52</sup>

The American poet rode with the parade in a vintage car that the students had sent to the hotel to pick him up.<sup>53</sup> Some students walked in front of the vehicle bearing a banner reading *Ginsberg for King of May, an expression of proletariat internationalism*. The hirsute candidate wore a shiny crown and colourful beads. On the route he sang Buddhist mantras and, in front of the building where Frank Kafka had written *The Trial*, delivered a short speech in which he dedicated the glory of his royal crown to the writer.<sup>54</sup>

When Ginsberg finally arrived at the park where the election took place he was in total shock: *I expected to find a small King of May celebration with a few hundred or a thousand skinny, badly dressed students at the park - instead*

*there was a sea of faces. [...] There was a covered stage for rock concerts. Everybody had to go up to the mic and deliver an agitprop speech. [...] When I was at the mic, I couldn't speak Czech at all so I solved the problem by singing Om shri mantraja, Om shri mantraja, the whole time when it was my turn, maybe four minutes. Om shri mantraja is a mantra for future enlightenment, or of the future Buddha, the majfraja Buddha, the Buddha of the future generation, which, in my view, suited the situation perfectly. A society that was slowly thawing and moving in the direction of some kind of open thinking...*<sup>55</sup>

In video recordings from that day, as Ginsberg jingles some cymbals and sings Buddhist mantras he is also seen repeating the line *Long live the King of May in Czech*. The rules stated that whoever got the loudest reaction from spectators became the king. To

that end, a large meter was attached to the microphone on stage. Andrew Lass said that the meter was actually operated by two students at the back of the podium who manipulated it according to the wishes of the organisers. He later explained that to a surprised friend who had to then be convinced that it was a genuine instrument for measuring sound: *After 11 years I've got to tell you that when you appeared they said 'Ginsberg' in the back and, frrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrr, the sound-level meter shot up and you became the King of May.*<sup>56</sup>

While still on the stage, Ginsberg became the "victim" of a student jape and was forcefully ejected from the throne by František Sedláček, an opposing candidate from the Czech Technical University's Construction Faculty. The evening programme at Výtaviště in Holešovice culminated in a rock concert, during which there

52 SVATOŠ, Michal: *Studentský majáles roku 1965 aneb Allen Ginsberg Králem majálesu*, p. 368.

53 ABS, f. A 9, arch. jedn. 243, Preliminary report on the May Day celebrations and the King of May, 4.5.1965.

54 LASS, Andrew: *Allen Ginsberg - The King of May*, p. 42.

55 *Ibid.*, p. 43.

56 *Ibid.*, p. 44.

was one marked disturbance. Because of problems with the sound system, the gaps between acts were twice as long as they should have been, leading to tensions among the 5,000 dissatisfied fans. The situation culminated in fights in the audience and the mass destruction of chairs, which the young people pointedly threw onto one pile.<sup>57</sup>

### Nocturnal discussion

After midnight, a group of students and Ginsberg went to the Hlávková dorms, where a get-together had been organised in a club. For two hours, the newly elected King of May answered a plethora of questions from students.<sup>58</sup> The discussion began with the question of how the invited guest assessed the morning (May Day) and afternoon (King of May) parades. Ginsberg replied that the *morning one was more colourful and varied, but the afternoon one was real life*.<sup>59</sup> Other questions touched on the situation in Czechoslovakia and the Soviet Union. When somebody asked Ginsberg if there was freedom in the former, he offered a comparison: *In the West, I can say what I think. When I'm in Prague I have to think about what I want to say, and when I was in Moscow I didn't speak at all!* Another student asked for Ginsberg's view of the cult of personality. He replied laconically that *20 million dead in the Soviet Union spoke for the cult of personality*. The American also spoke with admiration about Yevgeny Yevtushenko and Andrei Voznesensky, whom he even described as the greatest *Soviet poet*. The students themselves spoke for a long time, explaining to Ginsberg their difficulties in winning respect for their rights. In answer to a direct question, the poet explained why he was not a Marxist: *Marxism and its results in the political sphere mean only cruel spiritual terror*

*that limits people; it is based on limiting people, because they can then be easily led like lambs*. At the end of the discussion, Ginsberg returned to the King of May and declared *that it was for him a spectacle like nothing he'd seen - a combination of the political courage to protest and to organise the entire environment with maximum eroticism*.<sup>60</sup>

Around 30 people took part in the gathering on the ground floor of the Hlávková student dorms, among them Müller, Karel Kovanda and Andrew Lass.<sup>61</sup> There were also two unknown persons present who at Výstaviště had offered to give Ginsberg and his entourage a ride, saying they were big fans of the poet's. One of them spoke a little English and the second only Czech. Some students were concerned that they might be secret police agents, a fear which dissipated when the two did not take part in the meeting and allowed it to flow freely. Ginsberg ended up spending two days at the dorms.<sup>62</sup>

The poet first came into open conflict with the security apparatus on 3 May 1965. According to a report written by 1<sup>st</sup> Lt. Bouda of the Emergency Unit of the Municipal Directorate of the VB, while on a patrol he saw *walking on the pavement a man who was staggering and rapping on two hubcaps, which he accompanied by singing. The man attracted my attention thanks to his beard and long hair. In view of the fact that he was causing a public scandal and was in a state of inebriation, I saw fit to check this unknown man's papers*.<sup>63</sup>

Because Ginsberg did not produce any papers when challenged and a group of passers-by had begun to congregate, 1<sup>st</sup> Lt. Bouda wanted to take him to a drunk tank in Prague 2 in order to establish his identity. According to his report, at that point an unnamed officer

of the Interior Ministry (who by all accounts had come with Ginsberg from the Viola) approached the vehicle and asked the patrol to leave the detained in the drunk tank until morning. However, there he was refused admission, as the doctors said his was not a case of *deep inebriation*. In the end the patrol took Ginsberg to the Hotel Merkur where his identity was confirmed, leaving him to his fate.<sup>64</sup>

1<sup>st</sup> Lt. Bouda's report appears in a recently discovered secret service file in which StB officers had entered documents on Ginsberg's stay in Czechoslovakia. These documents make it possible to reconstruct the approach of the repressive apparatus that led to the American's deportation from Czechoslovakia, above all making it clear that StB agents began *targetting* Ginsberg just a few hours after he became the King of May.<sup>65</sup>

It is unfortunately not clear from the preserved documents when exactly they took the decision to take action against Ginsberg. It is possible that it was spurred by the displeasure of Central Committee secretary Vladimír Koucký, who had been present at the Julius Fučík Park of Culture and Leisure with Čestmír Císař, the minister of education and culture. Some witnesses said Koucký had been shocked by the American poet's appearance, or that he had been offended by the fact Ginsberg had not turned up to a meeting to which he had invited him.<sup>66</sup>

The whole affair illustrates quite well the two-sided approach of the authorities to a series of different questions in this era. Permitting the King of May in 1965 after several years was unquestionably proof of the liberalisation of the regime and an expression of "the summer of love"; on the other hand it remained to a large degree an entertainment organised by the regime and

57 ABS, f. A 9, arch. jedn. 243, Preliminary report on the May Day celebrations and the King of May, 4.5.1965.

58 ABS, f. MV-KR, archive file č. 591839 MV, Allen GINSBERG, American poet - beatnik - report, 3.5.1965; *Ibid.*, Record of a meeting with a confidant who provided a report on the entire situation before the election of the King of May and a conversation with Ginsberg at the Hlávkova students dorms, 5.5.1965.

59 *Ibid.*, Allen GINSBERG, American poet - beatnik - report, 3.5.1965.

60 *Ibid.*

61 According to an unnamed StB *confidant*, the following were also present: Kupec, Müller, Janský, Linhart, Bumba, Kleinová, Jakš, Jakšová, Čech, Hájek, Vavříčka, Kalmán, Lass and Kovanda. ABS, f. MV-KR, archive file č. 591839 MV, Record of a meeting with a confidant who provided a report on the entire situation before the election of the King of May and a conversation with Ginsberg at the Hlávkova students dorms, 5.5.1965.

62 *Ibid.*, Record of a meeting with a confidant who provided a report on the entire situation before the election of the King of May and a conversation with Ginsberg at the Hlávkova students dorms, 5.5.1965.

63 *Ibid.*, Service report of 1<sup>st</sup> Lt. Bouda, 5.5.1965.

64 *Ibid.*

65 It is almost certain that Ginsberg's name was in the StB's sights immediately after he landed at Prague airport, given the circumstances of his departure from Cuba and his environment in Prague subsequently. However, the documents were not preserved, or have not been uncovered in the archives to date. Cf. ABS, f. MV-KR, archive file č. 591839 MV.

66 Cf. LASS, Andrew: Allen Ginsberg - The King of May (Allen Ginsberg - The King of May), p. 45.

a permitted safety valve for students. Whoever contravened relatively clearly defined roles faced various sanctions and consequences.<sup>67</sup>

Allen Ginsberg, who the moment he was elected King of May became an idol to many young people in Czechoslovakia, was no exception.

### Ginsberg's shadow

Several hours after the election, Capt. Karel Vodrážka, who was then commander of the 3<sup>rd</sup> department of the 7<sup>th</sup> section of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Directorate of the Interior Ministry (the department of counterintelligence HQ that "looked after" youth) shadowed the King of May. He was one of the two men who had offered to give Ginsberg and his entourage a ride from Výstaviště to the Hlávkova dorms.

Capt. Vodrážka was chosen to play an *illegal* partly because he knew at least some English, as well as being familiar with the Czech Technical University, where he had in the mid-1950s been secretary of the university committee of the Czechoslovak Union of Youth.

In his notes on shadowing Ginsberg he said that there were *members of a group of intellectuals that organise meetings with famous people. I bet with my friends that we'd spend the evening with Ginsberg and eventually introduce him into our company, but that we were willing to respect his personal rights, however. We even introduced ourselves using our real names (occupations: historian of WWII and lawyer).*<sup>68</sup>

Capt. Vodrážka subsequently wrote on 3 May 1965 a very detailed report about the meeting at Hlávkova dorms, where he had been an eye witness. His statement later reached the Interior Ministry's leadership and evidently led to the deportation of Ginsberg.<sup>69</sup>

In the quoted report, Capt. Vodrážka proposed a further course of action. With the help of the Regional Directo-

### Karel Vodrážka (1933–1989)

Born in Prague to two teachers. Following the war, his father was the head of the culture department at the Central Military Hospital in Prague, before becoming director of the Prague Symphony Orchestra in 1962. His mother became a housewife after the war. Karel Vodrážka graduated from the Jirásek Grammar School in Resslova St. in Prague 2. From 1947 he held various positions in the Czechoslovak Union of Youth and in February 1948 organised a demonstration in support of the Communist Party at his school.

In 1951 he was accepted into the University of Political and Financial Sciences. When it was shut down he studied history (specialising in the history of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union) at Charles University's Arts-History Faculty. In 1955 he was accepted onto the Regional Committee of the Czechoslovak Union of Youth, where he served as secretary of the university committee of the Czechoslovak Union of Youth. He joined the Communist Party on 1 June 1956. On 1 July 1957 he was accepted into the service of the Ministry of the Interior. From 1962 he held various leadership positions at the HQ of the StB's counterintelligence service. He rejected efforts at reform within the Communist Party during the Prague Spring period. In 1970 he was assigned to the civil intelligence, eventually becoming its head. He became the commander of the 1<sup>st</sup> Directorate of the National Security Committee on 1 May 1989. His career ended on 30 June 1989 when he died suddenly.



Photo: Security Services Archive

rate of the Interior Ministry in Prague, the students who had actively participated in the gathering were to be identified. The students' photographs and tape recordings of the meeting were to be acquired using *operative means*. The telephone in Ginsberg's hotel room was to be bugged (*technical operation E-4*). Meanwhile, a group was deployed to surveil Ginsberg with the aim of ascertaining *all of his contacts*. All the companions who served as his translators were also to be identified. Finally, an *independent meeting* with Ginsberg was to be prepared.<sup>70</sup>

The StB also made use of several confidants, which it tasked with gathering information on Ginsberg's stay in Czechoslovakia. The most important of

them according to the preserved documentation was codenamed "Mirek", moved in Prague literary circles and had personally met the American poet several times.<sup>71</sup> Besides Capt. Vodrážka, detailed information on Ginsberg's candidature for the King of May and his two-day stay at the Hlávkova dorms was acquired from a student at the Czech Technical University who worked as a secret police confidant.<sup>72</sup>

The StB men had a problem from the off as they were unable to locate Ginsberg, who for two days had been at the student dormitory, at either his hotel or his usual haunts. By all accounts they succeeded in finding him on 3 May 1965 at the Viola, when they also managed to take his notebook.<sup>73</sup>

67 SVATOŠ, Michal: Studentský majáles roku 1965 aneb Allen Ginsberg Králem majálesu. In: ZILYNSKÁ, Blanka - SVOBODNÝ, Petr (eds.): *Czech Scholarship and the Prague Spring (1963–1970)*. Conference collection 22–23.11.2000. Nakladatelství Karolinum, Prague 2001, p. 370.

68 ABS, f. MV-KR, archive file č. 591839 MV, Allen GINSBERG, American poet - beatnik - report, 3.5.1965.

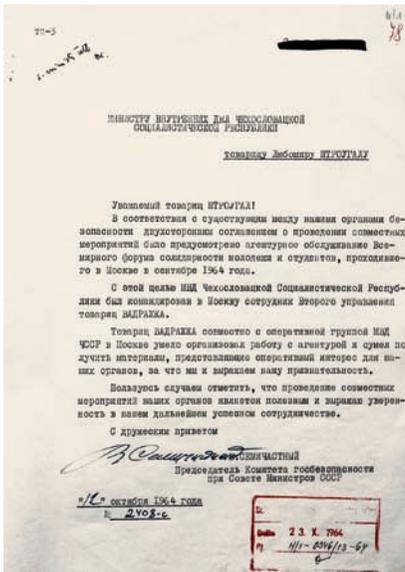
69 Cf. ABS, f. A 9, inv. jedn. 243, Preliminary report on the May Day celebrations and the King of May, 4.5.1965.

70 ABS, f. MV-KR, archive file č. 591839 MV, Allen GINSBERG, American poet - beatnik - report, 3.5.1965.

71 Ibid., American poet GINSBERG - notes.

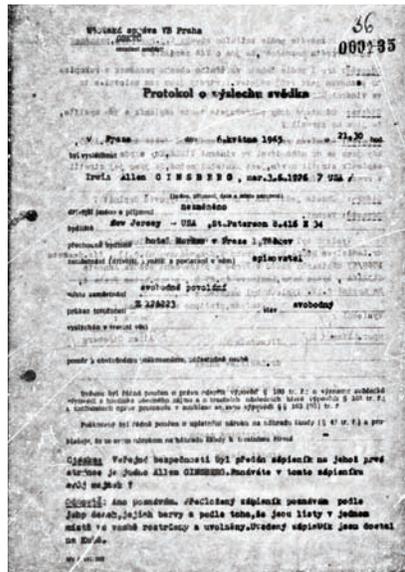
72 Ibid., Record of a meeting with a confidant who provided a report on the entire situation before the election of the King of May and a conversation with Ginsberg at the Hlávkova students dorms, 5.5.1965.

73 MONÍK, Josef: Král majálesu. *Mladá fronta*, Víkend supplement, issue 17 (29. 4. 1990), p. 4. The director Pavel Juráček evidently saw a drunk Ginsberg and StB officers with his own eyes at the Viola. His diary entry was written a year later: *After some time I saw him in the strange company of three men who ordered Georgian cognac by the bottle. Ginsberg could barely stand. He had no interest in the men, but wanted to go to the bar where a flock of admirers were waiting for him. But the three wouldn't let him leave the table. They made him drink and when they left Ginsberg couldn't even speak. He staggered about the Viola as if he were looking for something. I was sitting with Vašek Havel and we watched him with some repugnance. Three days later [in reality this must have been later, the article in Mladá fronta did not appear until 16.5.1965] I read that some citizen found an English notebook on the ground, in which the security service found Ginsberg's notes about his homosexual episodes with boys in Prague. Then it hit me who those three in the Viola had been and what Ginsberg had been looking for.* JURÁČEK, Pavel: *Deník (1959–1974) (Diary (1959–1974))*, p. 436.



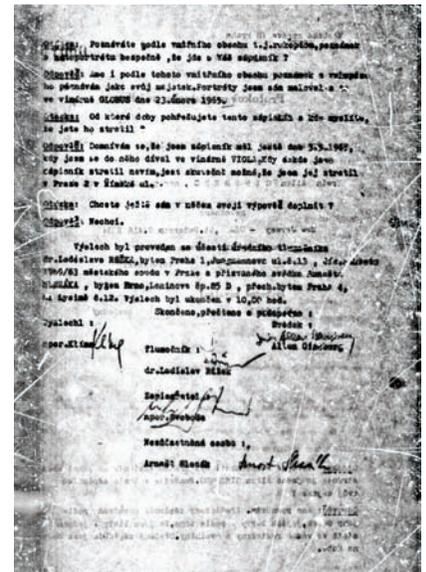
In October 1965, KGB commander Vladimir Yefimovich Semichastny sent a letter to the interior minister of the CSSR, Lubomír Štrougal, praising Capt. Karel Vodrážka's good work as an operative in connection with the II World Youth Forum in Moscow.

Source: Security Services Archive



The interrogation record signed by Allen Ginsberg on 6 May 1965 has been preserved only on microfiche as part of a secret service file.

Source: Security Services Archive



This was a key moment that later played an important role in the denigration of Ginsberg in the press. Along with a passage criticising the political situation in Czechoslovakia, the secret police had the notes about his sexual experiences translated. StB agents also recorded all of the names in the diary and sent the list to the 1<sup>st</sup> special section of the Ministry of the Interior, which was responsible for evidence. According to a subsequent report, of the 42 names only 12 had previously appeared in the records.<sup>74</sup> The secret police also subsequently acquired - evidently via investigators from the Municipal Directorate of the VB - confidential information from doctors who had been looking into the mental problems of several of the youths. While the articles vilifying Ginsberg reported that their problems had begun after meeting him, in reality they had previously received psychiatric treatment. The VB investigators also visited their parents, who

on 4 and 5 May 1965 wrote emotional complaints against Ginsberg's actions. The young men were later called in for questioning, which took place on 5 and 6 May 1965. Their testimonies were all gathered with the apparent aim of being used in the public defamation of the poet.<sup>75</sup>

### Provocation

After midnight on 5 May 1965 Ginsberg was attacked on his way from the Viola by an unknown man, who evidently did not appreciate the fact that the poet and his companions, a youth and a young woman, were engaged in erotic activities on the street, and made a spontaneous vulgar remark. In his testimony, he said that the young couple rushed at him and attacked him physically. However, Ginsberg's acquaintances denied the accusation of causing a public outrage, saying the unknown man had attacked the American for no reason. The conflict was ended by a VB emergency unit auto

patrol, which arrested all of them and questioned them at a nearby police building.<sup>76</sup>

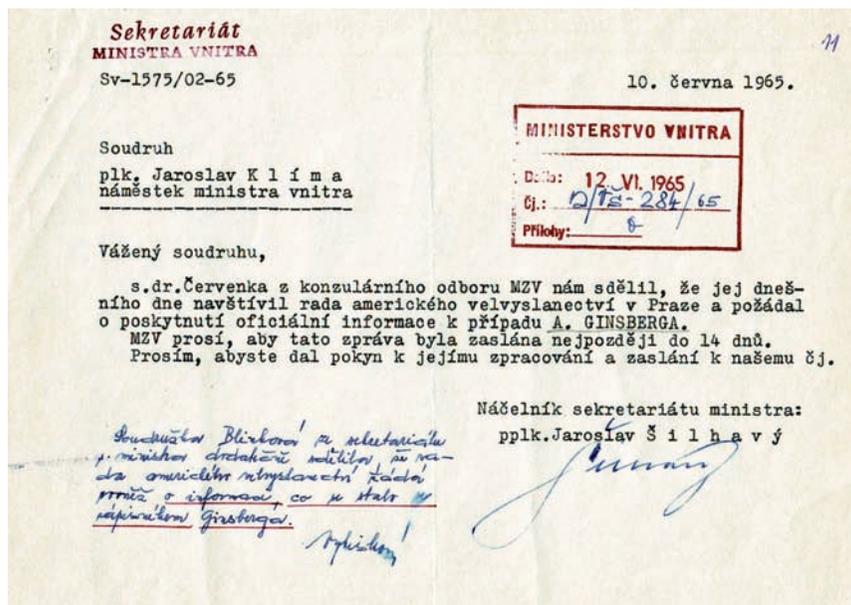
According to a report by a member of the patrol, they were crossing Jindřišská St. in the direction of Wenceslas Square when at the Jindřišská-Nekázanka crossroads they heard a big shout and saw a group of three men fighting. *When the patrol got out of the service vehicle in order to intervene, one of the men fled in the direction of Wenceslas Square. He was pursued by another man who shouted "catch him, he's a homo". The fleeing man was caught by the patrol and arrested and taken away along with whole group,* wrote three VB officers in their description of the incident.<sup>77</sup> This was virtually certain to have been a provocation prepared by the secret police against Ginsberg. According to the preserved interrogation record, the unknown man was one Lubor Funda, born 3 May 1933. The section of the StB headed by Capt. Vodrážka handled

74 According to the record preserved in the file, the following persons appeared in the notebook: Vladimír Šedivý (born 1912), Helena Šedivá (1913), Michal Šembera (1945), Pavel Beran (1947), Jan Zábřana (1931), František Jungwirth (1920), Jan Franklová (1944), Kamil Müller (1948), Miroslav Válek (1927), Lubomír Tomaškovič (1944), Stanislav Vynikar (1946), Marie Nováková (1943), Petr Kovařík (1945), Helena Samohelová (1946), Eva Fischerová (1932), Jitka Hauková (1919), René Fischer (1932), Eugen Finkey (1945), Jan Heřman (1926), Daniela Heřmanová (1939), Jan Buzáši (1935), Jindřich Chaloupecký (1910), Zdeněk Jeník (1923), Alois Javířek (1942), Otto Muneles (1894), Milada Muneles (1921), Miroslav Novák (1924), Miloš Novotný (1930), Robert Wittmann (1945), Jan Ungár (1946), Hana Žantovská (1921), Eva Kondrysová (1926), Daniela Turková (1924), Ivan Diviš (1924), Vladimír Kafka (1937), Eva Masnerová (1929), Hilda Lassová (1915), Pavel Vačkář (1940), Miroslav Stoupa (1944), Vladimír Žabkay (1921), Kateřina Poláčková (1935), Ivan Sviták (1925).

75 The documentation appears in a secret service file. ABS, f. MV-KR, archive file č. 591839 MV.

76 The secret service file includes preserved interrogation reports for all the participants in the conflict. The questioning of Ginsberg, which evidently had to wait for an official translator, ended at 5:30 AM. Ibid.

77 Ibid., Service record, 5.5.1965.



The US Embassy in Prague also sought to learn more about the expulsion of Allen Ginsberg in 1956.

Source: Security Services Archive

OPIS		3. 6. 1926 data narození	
GINSBERG Allan příjmení a jméno		ASA USA	
7	státní občanství	místo narození	
dřívější jméno	U S A - New York		bydliště
básník	původní povolání	nynější zaměstnání	
kde je zaměstnán			
registrační číslo svazku	společnost - odbor - oddělení kde je svazek veden a jméno operat. pracovníka	archivní číslo svazku	místo uložení svazku
	II-7-3 Blatný	591839	MV 66
2.XII.1966			

MV č. skl 742

Allen Ginsberg's name was written wrongly on a record card of persons of special interest to the StB.

Source: Security Services Archive

an agent of the same name and date of birth, under the code name "Lubor", at the time of the incident described.<sup>78</sup> Ginsberg was taken in once again the following day, this time in connection with his diary, which, according to 1<sup>st</sup> Lt. Klíma of the Municipal Directo-

rate of the VB, had been found by a pedestrian on Římská St. in front of the Divadlo Špejbla a Hurvínka puppet theatre. According to the preserved record, signed by Ginsberg, the questioning took place on 6 May 1965, from 21:30 to 22:00. The American said in the record

that he recognized the notebook, which he had last seen at the Viola on 3 May 1965.<sup>79</sup>

This was another case of provocation – the alleged finder of the diary was in fact an StB agent. His role in the entire affair is not clear, though he evidently served to legalise the theft of Ginsberg's notebook, which had been taken by secret police officers. As in the case of the attacker on Jindřišská St. he was working under the StB section headed by Capt. Karel Vodrážka. His identity has been ascertained thanks to one of the articles defaming Ginsberg that appeared after his departure. It said the unnamed *honest finder* had been born in Štramberk on 14 November 1926.<sup>80</sup> A man named Jan Holub, who according to the preserved records cooperated with the secret police in the middle of the 1960s under the code-name "Horyna", was born on the day and in the town in question.<sup>81</sup>

## Deportation

On 7 May 1967 Ginsberg was brought to the Passport and Visa Directorate at the Regional Directorate of the Interior Ministry in Prague where he was told definitively that his stay in Czechoslovakia was undesired. As Capt. Karel Vodrážka wrote in his concluding report, *Ginsberg accepted the information without any protest and 7.5.1965 at 17:30 departed from Ruzyně airport to London.*<sup>82</sup> Before he had landed in London, the American had written King of May, which became one of his best known poems. He returned to Czechoslovakia as an old man in 1990.<sup>83</sup> Eleven days after Ginsberg's departure, a full-page article written on the basis of secret police materials appeared in *Mladá fronta*. It condemned the expelled King of May as a pariah who had corrupted young people. In the same piece, Igor Hájek and Alexej Kusák were criticised for the *popularisation* of the American poet in *Literární noviny* and *Kulturní tvorba*. *Mladá fronta* also ran a number of quotes from the confiscated diary, documenting Ginsberg's sexual promiscuity and his

78 Cf. relevant entries in StB registers and archive records.

79 ABS, f. MV-KR, archive file č. 591839 MV, Record of the interrogation of witness Allen Ginsberg, 6.5.1965.

80 (MF): Allen Ginsberg and morality. Why the American poet was deported from Czechoslovakia. *Mladá fronta*, 16.5.1965.

81 Cf. relevant entries in StB registers and archive records.

82 Cf. the imprecise recollections of Ginsberg, who placed the interrogation of 6 May 1965 and his expulsion on 7 May 1965 on the same day. LASS, Andrew: Allen Ginsberg - The King of May (Allen Ginsberg - The King of May). *Analogue*, č. 30 (2000), p. 46.

83 In 1990, Ginsberg was also able to publish a solo poetry collection in Prague for the first time. It was a selection of his works prepared in 1969 by Jan Zábřana. Cf. GINSBERG, Allen: *Kvilynti (Howl)*. Odeon, Prague 1990; MORGAN, Bill: *The Response to Allen Ginsberg 1926-1994. A Bibliography of Secondary Sources*. Greenwood Press, Westport 1996.

antagonism to the domestic regime. There were also quotations from the testimonies of witnesses and the complaints of parents.<sup>84</sup>

The daily of the Central Committee of the Communist Party *Rudé právo* also condemned Ginsberg on 18 May 1965, describing the American poet as a person who had abused the trust of his hosts.<sup>85</sup> Ginsberg's name was

subsequently frequently cited in various internal documents of the Interior Ministry, in which he was accused of influencing the massive spreading of the fashion for long hair among young men in Czechoslovakia.<sup>86</sup>

From the perspective of the StB, Ginsberg's expulsion reached a definitive conclusion in March 1966 when a secret police file with documents on his

sojourn in Czechoslovakia was entered into the archives. However, the name was wrongly written and the file could not be found until recently. To date it has not been possible to find Ginsberg's original notebook, which the records say was shredded in the 1970s. All that has been preserved is a partial translation carried out for the purposes of the Ministry of the Interior in 1965.<sup>87</sup>

84 (MF): *Allen Ginsberg and morality. Why the American poet was deported from Czechoslovakia.*

85 (haj): Hangover with Ginsberg. In: *Rudé právo*, 17.5.1965, p. 2. Paradoxically, the Federal Bureau of Narcotics had the article denigrating Ginsberg translated and entered it in its own file on him. A facsimile of the document in its files is published in the book "In Our Files" (from Memorandum, Federal Bureau of Narcotics, New York Office). In: HYDE, Lewis (ed.): *On the Poetry of Allen Ginsberg*. The University of Michigan Press, Michigan 1984, pp. 244–250.

86 Cf. POSPÍŠIL, Filip – BLAŽEK, Petr: „Vratte nám vlasy!“ První máničky, vlasatci a hippies v komunistickém Československu.

87 Cf. ŠLAJCHRT, Viktor: Ginsberg in Prague. The Secret Diary. *Literární noviny*, issue. 4 (26.4.1990), p. 4; Ginsberg at the Viola. Previously unpublished excerpts from the poet's lost diary, p. 5.