

# You are Salt of the Earth...

Mrs. Eva Jiřičná, an outstanding Czech architect living in London, mentioned in an interview that only few structures have been built lately in Prague; consequently, architects didn't have many opportunities to come into their own. The main reason was a long authorization procedure, often taking up to ten years. In the meantime, the project becomes outdated...

The *covid* crisis made it obvious that state authorities are dealing with the citizens like with potential offenders who are going to swindle – the authorities are trying to apply various hindrances e.g. *tenders of suppliers* to suppress that. As a rule these don't help – offenders are very inventive – and straight people suffer. There is no society without mutual trust.

After the *Velvet Revolution* some people invited *Liberty*, but the others used the opportunity to start up a business without strict rules – the necessary acts hadn't yet been in force. A new class of *nouveau riches* appeared, who mostly came from followers of the previous regime, black marketeers, state security men et al. In the post-revolution period<sup>1</sup> I often heard the view that *ethics and morality* are out- of-date: everybody lies and steals. Once I attended a talk at Charles University, where the lecturer proposed that ethics is a superfluosity, one only should observe the law. I asked to speak and adduced some cases of my experience. The lecturer shouted: „You are a thief!“. I stood up and left the room. Nowadays, the acts taken by the Parliament are mostly toothless; a law is a compromise of various lobby requirements and nobody can make head or tail of it. As our President Miloš Zeman said: *When two lawyers meet, they have three legal opinions...*

In the period of first Czechoslovak Republic (1918 – 1938) the profession of *civil servant* was a highly valued one, as can be seen on gravestones of that time. My father was a lawyer. He started his carrier as *tax inspector*. One of first tasks was taxation of the famous conductor *Václav Talich*, who worked as the chief of the Opera of National Theater. He had a relative independent standing and father's chief deduced that Master should be taxed as a tradesman. My father was a regular visitor of the Opera, so he knew Master by sight very well. Father arranged what was necessary and soon Master appeared in the office, sweaty and tousled as on the dais, holding a blank with a column entitled „*Tax of meat*“. Father tried to calm him down and it was somehow settled in the end.

My father also told me that some tradesmen tried to bribe him. There were even people who obviously lived in grand style but they were not able to explain where they took the money. In such a case, one had to strike a deal. It is clear that work needed a man (or woman) with nimble mind and moral integrity. In contrast, nowadays, a clerk is a blind practitioner of directives which he in fact doesn't understand. When dealing with clerks, one often gets into preposterous situations. Once a friend of mine asked me to accommodate his Thai girlfriend for a few days. I had to visit the mayor and ask him for confirmation that I live in a house, not in a storage of wood; in the map my house (former forestry management) was denoted as *Forestry object*<sup>2</sup>.

1 In the 90th years

2 Nowadays one can find the house on a computer application

In the period of “*normalization*” (1969 – 1989) the Communist Party was by no means a party of true communists; nobody believed the theory of class struggle and building a righteous society under leadership of the Communist Party any more. There remained those, who declared that the Soviet invasion in August 1968 was fair; most of them were pushers who used the opportunity to hold the others in their power. For these people it was not a problem to turn later by 180° and start to enterprise.

During the exciting days in November 1989 it was Miloš Zeman who put in a claim for *free elections*. During the following years it turned out however, that free elections do not suffice for establishing law and democracy. In the first elections it was the *Civic Forum* that comfortably won, but soon it fell into two fractions – Civic Movement (OH) and the Civic Democratic Party (ODS) established by *Václav Klaus*. ODS won in the following elections and started the process of spontaneous privatization, also called *misappropriation*. A new class of *nouveaux riches* (or sponsors) appeared, who didn't stand out, but they started to influence the course of events (see above). The newly established political parties were infiltrated by sponsors and during the time they languished into political clubs without any ideological agenda – the only interest was to win in elections and to reach a greater share of state finances.

After the financial crisis in 2008 two protest movements appeared – the *Pirates* and the ANO<sup>3</sup> Movement by a Slovak tradesman *Andrej Babiš*. Babiš appealed his voters by his informal expression and by the slogan “*to manage the state as a firm*”. He could rely on his concern *AGROFERT*, which however, as turned out, was dependent on European grants. If EU stops these grants, it would be the Czech taxpayers to finance the concern. In that case, Babiš will probably have to sell his pride.

*Davle, May 6, 2021*

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