

Ivo PEJČOCH

## Fašismus v českých zemích.

## Fašistické a nacionálněsocialistické strany a hnutí v Čechách a na Moravě 1922–1945

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Critical review of Ivo Pejčoch's book "Fascism in Czech countries. Fascist and national-socialist parties and movements in Bohemia and Moravia 1922-1945"

The peer reviewed book written by Ivo Pejčoch, a historian working in the Military Historical Institute, was published by the Academia publishing house in 2011. The central topic of the monograph is, as the name suggests, mapping of the Czech fascism from the time of its origination in early 1920s through the period of Munich agreement and World War II to the year 1945. As the author mentions in preface, he restricts himself to the activity of organizations of Czech nation and language, due to extent limitation.

The topic of the book picks up the threads of the earlier published monographs by Tomáš Pasák and Milan Nakonečný. But unlike Pasák's book "Czech fascism 1922-1945 and collaboration", Ivo Pejčoch does not analyze fascism and seek causes of sympathies of a number of important personalities to that ideology. On the contrary, his book rather presents a summary of parties, small parties and movements related to fascism and National Socialism. He deals in more detail with the major ones - i.e. the Národní obec fašistická (National Fascist Community) or Vlajka (The Flag), but also for example the Kuratorium pro výchovu mládeže (Board for Youth Education) that was not a political party but, under the guidance of Emanuel Moravec, aimed at spreading the Roman-Empire ideas and influencing a large group of primarily young Protectorate inhabitants. On the contrary, the history of First Republic right-wing parties like Národní liga (National League), Národní demokracie (National Democracy) or later Národní sjednocení (National Union) is not included in the monograph, particularly due to the fact, as the author himself mentions that they were not fascist parties, although they were frequently labelled so in the past.

In connection with Radola Gajda and the National fascist community, the book describes all landmarks of its activities on the political scene of the First Czechoslovak Republic (1918 – 1938, referred also only as First Republic), like the Sázava affair or the Putsch of Písek. In a self-contained chapter, Pejčoch deals with the Putsch of Židenice in a detailed and gripping manner, analyzing in detail the course of the putsch and the motives of Ladislav Kobsínek, its initiator.

It is also interesting to follow the fate of The Flag which was established in spring 1930, promoting the idea of corporative state according to the model of Mussolini's Italy; its supporters saw symbols of Czech consciousness in great political personalities of Czechoslovakia of that period, Alois Rašín or Karel Kramář, but also in significant personalities of

the Czech history, František Palacký, František Ladislav Rieger or Karel Havlíček Borovský. In the period of Protectorate, it was characterized by increasing aggressiveness against the government and against the only allowed political party, Národní souručenství (National Community), which culminated by so called Battle in Dušní street, i.e. by sort of attempt at a Nazi putsch. The author also deals with that event in detail, but he polemizes whether it really had the importance assigned to it in older literature.

It could seem that mere chronological arrangement of information on individual political subjects would give a boring or distant impression. But Ivo Pejčoch is a very good narrator, able to capture the attention of the readers, including those not informed about the topic. He devotes a self-standing chapter to each party or movement, even to those of marginal or regional importance, and describes their political program and, for better illustration, introduces the main representatives and their fates after the war; great majority of them, naturally, ended up before popular courts for collaboration with the Nazi regime, and a lot of them were condemned to maximal penalty.

It is also interesting to follow the transformations of the Czech fascism in the period under observation. During the First Republic period, it was characterized mainly by hatred towards Bolshevism and the German element, which is demonstrated for example by so called dispute over the insignia, i.e. fight for the old symbols of the Czech university, in which nationally oriented students, often related with The Flag, were engaged. Members of the army, but also a number of university professors or intellectuals became supporters of the ideology. On the contrary, during the Protectorate, a number of fascists started collaborating with the Nazi regime; some of them cooperated with the Gestapo or with the Sicherheitsdienst and had no scruples about doing the most disgusting acts and completely absurd statements, aimed mostly against Jews and representatives of the First Republic political scene. For understandable reasons, they most frequently attacked Beneš and Masaryk. They also tried to create armed units, but failed almost every time. It was only at that time that the fascist ideology became really dangerous.

On the other hand, there were also personalities among them who refused to accept the German occupation, did not want to cooperate with them or contacted the resistance movement, which is demonstrated also by the fate of Radola Gajda, their most important personality.

It must be stated in conclusion that the peer reviewed book includes also a very interesting text enclosure. We can find even poems related to the Czech fascism and Nazism there, and they sound really absurdly today.

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