

# Political Sociology of the Zdeněk Mlynář Research Team

Kateřina Dufková — Jakub Rákosník<sup>1</sup>

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Czechoslovakia — Prague Spring — Socialism — Political Sociology — Zdeněk Mlynář

In the second half of the 1960s four large research teams were working within the Czechoslovak Academy of Sciences (“CSAS”), processing scientific data for a hypothetical social reform: ‘economic’ under the leadership of Ota Šik, ‘sociological’ led by Pavel Machonin, ‘modernisation’ under Radovan Richta engaged in interdisciplinary study of the phenomenon of the scientific and technical revolution, and ‘political’ led by Zdeněk Mlynář.<sup>2</sup> Although they are usually grouped together, the results of the work they left behind are markedly different and the information in the secondary literature about their activities is diametrically different in depth. While a number of scientific works have been devoted to the first two names, Richta is only now becoming the subject of thorough historical research.<sup>3</sup> Mentions of the Mlynář team concentrating its attention on the issue of development of the socialist political system barely rate in the literature a laconic observation of its brief existence.<sup>4</sup> Even the recently published books by Vladimír Čermák, which ascribe to Mlynář in the spirit of conspiracy theories a far more fundamental role in 1968 and 1989, and whose author constructs diverse hypotheses both about the different development potential and (potential and actual) goings-on in the background, they recall the existence of this team of political scientists only very laconically and focus on other activities un-

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2 A fifth one is occasionally added to them, organised jointly by Charles University and the Institute of State and Law of the CSAS under the direction of Jiří Hájek. According to the memories of Lubomír Brokl, who worked in addition with Mlynář and Machonin, this team only held two discussion meetings and no scientific outputs from its activities remained. Cf. also Eva Broklová, *Pojem a funkce politické kultury s přihlédnutím k českému kontextu*. In: Jan Randák — Petr Koura (eds.), *Hrdinství a zbabělost v české politické kultuře 19. a 20. století*, Praha 2008, p. 27.

3 Michael Voříšek, *The Reform Generation: 1960s Czechoslovak Sociology from a Comparative Perspective*, Praha 2012; Vítězslav Sommer, *Towards Scientific Civilization? Science in Radovan Richta’s Theory of Scientific and Technological Revolution* (in print). At present, a three-year research project is in progress at the Institute for Contemporary History of the CSAS (2013–2016) funded by the Czech Science Foundation: *History of Czechoslovak Scientific Interdisciplinary Teams in the 1960s* (Investigator: Jiří Hoppe).

4 Comp. Alessandro Catalano, *Zdeněk Mlynář a hledání socialistické opozice*, *Soudobé dějiny* 21, 2013, pp. 277–344.

dertaken by Mlynář. So far the only comprehensive treatise on the functioning of the Mlynář team, apart from a few paragraphs in Nešpor's upcoming *History of Czech Sociology*, is a commemorative article by Lubomír Brokl from 1997 and Mlynář's own reflections from 1975.<sup>5</sup> So far the only comprehensive treatise on the functioning of the Mlynář team, apart from a few paragraphs in Nešpor's upcoming *History of Czech Sociology*, remains a commemorative article by Lubomír Brokl from 1997 and Mlynář's own reflections from 1975.<sup>6</sup>

This absence of information and of a wider scholarly interest is easy to explain. First, unlike the other named research centres the Mlynář team did not leave behind any work comparable with Machonin's work *Československá společnost* [Czechoslovak Society] or Richta's *Civilizace na rozcestí* [Civilisation at the Crossroads], let alone the wide pleiad of analytical monographs and articles published by the circle of pro-reform economists around the Economics Institute of the Czechoslovak Academy of Sciences. Even scholarly articles about the political system relative to the activity of the Mlynář team appear seldom (some are referred to below). Second, Zdeněk Mlynář was such a politically significant personality during the Prague Spring of 1968, that in his autobiography, "Mlynář-politician" completely overshadows "Mlynář-scientist". That is why historians are far more interested in his political reform activities than in the short-lived efforts of his research team in 1967–1968, which petered out completely in the end. We can only speculate now how much the ideas from the periodic thematic discussions were reflected in later Mlynář analytical works on the functioning of Soviet-type systems from the 1970s and especially 1980s, although this is highly likely.<sup>7</sup> Thus the only published output of this team can be considered the empirical research of Lubomír Brokl on political attitudes of the citizens in 1968, produced after an interval of more than twenty years on the basis of a simple questionnaire, of whose original corpus only one third is extant.<sup>8</sup> Brokl itself states that the theoretical basis for this research, whose data were collected in May 1968 consisted of two internal studies for the Mlynář team entitled *On the Issue of Social Structure and the Political System* (No. 13/1967) and *On the Issue of Democracy* (No. 14/1967) and the data collected in May 1968.<sup>9</sup>

5 Vladimír Čermák, *Operace Srpen 1968: o „psyopu“, československé společnosti, problémech sovětského vládnutí a o mnoha dalších faktorech událostí roku 1968*, Praha 2011; Vladimír Čermák, *Operace Listopad 1989: o putování české společnosti odnikud nikam a zpět a o jejím hledání cest jinudy a jinam*, Praha 2012.

6 Lubomír Brokl, Prof. Dr. Zdeněk Mlynář, CSc. (1930–1997): Mlynářův tým a jeho místo v české politické vědě, *Politologická revue* 3, 1997, No. 2, pp. 164–176; Zdeněk Mlynář, *Československý pokus o reformu 1968: analýza jeho teorie a praxe*, Köln 1975; Zdeněk Nešpor, *Dějiny české sociologie*, Praha 2014.

7 Cf. for example Zdeněk Mlynář, *Krise v sovětských systémech 1953–1981: příspěvek k teoretické analýze*, Köln 1983. Enlarged version see Zdeněk Mlynář, *Krise v sovětských systémech od Stalina ke Gorbačovovi*, Praha 1991.

8 Lubomír Brokl, *Postoje československých občanů k demokracii v roce 1968*, Praha 1999; Josef Bečvář, *Postoj občanů k politice v roce 1968*, *Sociologický časopis* 35, pp. 121–128.

9 Lubomír Brokl, *Pražské jaro a česká politická kultura*. In: Vladimír Mikule (ed.), *Pocta Františku Šamalíkovi k 80. narozeninám*, Praha 2003, p. 156.

For these reasons the main sources of knowledge of the activities of this scientific team are on the one hand archival documents of the Academy of Sciences (Collection: Institute of State and Law) and published and unpublished personal recollections of the key actors. Of the published ones let us mention Viktor Knapp and especially Mlynář himself.<sup>10</sup> For the purposes of this article its authors performed interviews with Petr Pithart (20 December 2013) and Lubomír Brokl (17 January 2014).

## WAY TO THE FORMATION OF A RESEARCH TEAM

The Mlynář biography, or its first four decades, respectively, which is our main focus of interest in this article, is well known from his own, still popular memoir, *Night-frost in Prague* (in Czech: *Mráz přichází z Kremlu*). In 1955 he graduated from the Law Faculty of Lomonosov University in Moscow, where he was posted at his own request and on the recommendation of the Communist Party in 1950 as a promising young party member from a family of party stalwarts. His parents joined the Communist Party in May 1945 and from 1946 his father Hubert Mlynář worked for the national police force. In October 1948 he died from injuries suffered in a traffic accident.<sup>11</sup> Zdeněk Mlynář said that he joined the Communist Party at the age of fifteen, in March 1946. Until 1950 he was active in the party youth movement. In 1948–1949 he worked in the personnel department of the Regional Committee of the Communist Party (“RCCP”). In May 1949, he returned to the youth movement, where he was employed as secretary to the RCCP for education.

After return to his homeland he was first employed in the Public Prosecutor’s Office, through whose structures he rose fairly quickly. He ended up as head of the department for general supervision of the General Prosecutor’s Office.<sup>12</sup> We know this period of his life from his recollections, where he portrays himself as a person enforcing stricter compliance with the law and retrospective investigations of illegal practices from the previous period, coming into conflict with other staff, including the former Interior Minister Rudolf Barák.<sup>13</sup> The fact that this might not be just a personal retrospective stylisation is corroborated by Viktor Knapp, who interpreted the Mlynář transfer to the Institute of State and Law of the Czechoslovak Academy of Sciences as personal agreement between him, as director of the Institute, and Jan

10 Viktor Knapp, *Proměny času: vzpomínky nestora české právní vědy*, Praha 1998; Zdeněk Mlynář, *Mráz přichází z Kremlu*, Praha 1990 (original edition 1978).

11 After his death Hubert Mlynář became involved in a smear campaign started against his son by *Rudé právo*, see Stanislav Oborský, *Práškač — o mistrovi v převlékání kabátů*, *Rudé právo* 57, 1 March 1977. For an abridged version of the article with a short commentary on the affair by Mlynář that he sent to his acquaintances Zdeněk Mlynář, *Socialistou na volné noze*, Praha 1992, pp. 71–77.

12 Biography of Zdeněk Mlynář. Masarykův ústav a archiv Akademie věd ČR (“MÚA” — Masaryk’s Institute and the Archive of the Academy of Sciences — Czech Republic), coll.: *Ústav státu a práva ČSAV*, no. 110.

13 Zdeněk Mlynář, *Mráz přichází z Kremlu*, Praha 1990, pp. 48–50.

Bartuška, then fresh Attorney General, who needed to get rid of the “extremely intelligent”, “Moscow-trained” young prosecutor, “who would certainly be better suited for science than for routine practice”. Although Knapp says that he was originally wary of this offer, after the first meeting he took a liking to Mlynář and accepted him, although he was to be notified by the CCP Central Committee that was admitting to the institute “just about any revisionist, such as this Mlynář”.<sup>14</sup>

Thus Zdeněk Mlynář was transferred to the post of a worker of the Institute of State and Law on 15 October 1956. The fact that this move was not so unnatural was evidenced by the previous attendance of Mlynář of the meetings of the Commission for the Theory of State and Law, which functioned within the Institute and was headed by Radim Foustka, one of the main representatives of the then Marxist doctrine of the State.<sup>15</sup> When an expansion of the Commission was considered in May 1956, Mlynář was among those who were contacted.<sup>16</sup>

His main task at the Institute during the following years was to work on a PhD thesis as part of his research assistantship. Its theme radically changed over time, and eventually he handed in in the spring of 1959 a thesis on the theme *The Political Doctrine of Niccolò Machiavelli: Criticism of Idealistic Interpretations of his Theory*.<sup>17</sup> He defended the thesis successfully on 27 April 1960.<sup>18</sup> The main propositions can be found in Mlynář survey of 1961 on early modern ideologies, in which a considerable space is dedicated to the reflection of Machiavelli’s work.<sup>19</sup>

In addition to the study of sources and literature related to the thesis he carried out other activities that are related to his involvement with the institution. His publications from this period show that he profiled himself as a sound theoretical polemicist. At the same time, they show a high degree of caution as to not deviate from the official party line. Why he concentrated on scientific work and tried to act within the party he explains discreetly in his memoirs: “The construction of my original faith [after 1956] too many elements collapsed all at once, and I myself did not know what part of this can be and should be preserved. My political activity was never motivated, after all, by other than ideological conviction, and it was therefore a necessary consequence that I was now incapable of it. In addition, I was in the position of a party member who barely escaped party disciplinary punishment and in the party I had no choice but to be silent.”<sup>20</sup> To be on the safe side he was biding his time,

14 Viktor Knapp, *Proměny času: vzpomínky nestora české právní vědy*, Praha 1998, pp. 185–186.

15 See for example Radim Foustka, *Stát, jeho vznik, podstata a vývoj*, Praha 1954.

16 MÚA, coll.: *Ústav státu a práva ČSAV*, no. 79.

17 The original theme was “Idea of democracy in political doctrines before the advent of Marxism”.

18 The opponents were Ladislav Štoll and Viktor Knapp. Those on the committee were Josef Glos, Zdeněk Kryštůfek, Jiří Kejř and Jiří Klabouch. MÚA, coll.: *Ústav státu a práva ČSAV*, no. 708. See also Zdeněk Kryštůfek, *Obhajoba kandidátské práce z oboru dějin politických ideologií*, *Právník* 99, 1960, No. 8, p. 787.

19 Zdeněk Mlynář, *Z dějin západoevropských politických ideologií: Část první — renesance a reformace*, Praha 1961.

20 Zdeněk Mlynář, *Mráz přichází z Kremlu*, Praha 1990, p. 52.

building an intellectual reputation, and, at the same time, fulfilling political tasks, standing guard for the party orthodoxy.

He reactivated himself politically from 1959, initially through ideological articles in the party newspaper *Rudé Právo*. He was building up a reputation that facilitated his entry into various working groups within the party apparatus, preparing expert opinions for decisions of the Communist Party organs. The main group, which at that time functioned within the apparatus, was the Law Commission of the CPC Central Committee set up on 8 March 1964. This committee was made up of representatives of state and political institutions and scientific institutes. Its task was to discuss important state policy issues and problems of legal practice and to submit relevant proposals to the leading authorities of the Party and government.<sup>21</sup> According to his memoirs, during the year 1966 he started getting into increasing conflict with the new repressive practices employed by the Antonín Novotný regime in the final stage of its existence, and therefore, not to risk an exacerbation of the tension, he again curbed his political activities.<sup>22</sup> A turning point in his activities was the 13<sup>th</sup> Party congress (31 May — 4 June 1966) and the developments immediately following. When Ludvík Vaculík publicly attacked Mlynář in March 1968 as an opportunist because Mlynář had taken part in a scathing campaign against non-conformist cultural journalism at the turn of 1965 and 1966 (polemic about the magazine *Tvář*, he displayed an uncharacteristically defensive, even humble and apologetic attitude. From the end of the 1950s Mlynář had taken part in several press campaigns against different varieties of unorthodox thinking and revisionism and felt no need to apologise for his sharp tirade.<sup>23</sup> In his defence he stated in the case of the Vaculík attack that: “On the way of seeking new perspectives [transformation of the political system — author’s note] I sometimes defended the old ruling regime [...] I mainly did not want to bring wanted the political conflict to a head before the 13<sup>th</sup> Party Congress [...] with the issue of one magazine and to avoid complications in the formulation of a realistic chance in the line of the 13<sup>th</sup> Congress of the newly developing democratic political system [...] [My] journalistic activity served for ideological justification of undemocratic administrative interference in culture. When I [...] realised this, I abandoned all activity in this direction. [...] Instead, I began what was more theoretical work.”<sup>24</sup> The distancing from Novotný in the second half of 1966 gave Mlynář time so that he could do more scientific work again — the result was the creation of an interdisciplinary research team for the questions related to the political system.

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21 For its social activity see Zdeněk Jičínský, *Právní myšlení v 60. letech a za normalizace*, Praha 1992, p. 92.

22 Zdeněk Mlynář, *Mráz přichází z Kremlo*, Praha 1990, p. 69.

23 Some cases are captured in the book Michal Kopeček, *Hledání ztraceného smyslu revoluce: Zrod a počátky marxistického revizionismu ve střední Evropě 1953–1960*, Praha 2009.

24 Milan Jungmann, *Literárky — můj osud: kritické návraty ke kultuře padesátých a šedesátých let s aktuálními reflexemi*, Brno 1999, p. 257.

## FUNCTIONING OF THE TEAM IN 1966–1970

Based on a decision of the Presidium of the Czechoslovak Academy of Sciences taken in June 1966, three special social-science teams were to be assembled. They were to be headed by Radovan Richta (scientific and technical revolution), Karel Kouba (economic, as part of the organisation of research within the Economic Institute of the Czechoslovak Academy of Sciences), and Zdeněk Mlynář. The document cited by Lubomír Brokl further reads: “Overall, this is an attempt to focus social-science research on fundamental problems of development of socialist society in Czechoslovakia and the way these teams create conditions for coordinated and totally independent work of scientists in different disciplines and departments, so that planning and coordination of work do not suffer from deficiencies in the existing planning system, which is largely a formality and, for the development of social-science research, is of little importance.”<sup>25</sup> The team was assembled during the second half of 1966.<sup>26</sup>

The research task was first assigned in the long term (over the next five to seven years) in order to tackle a series of problems in the scientific works of monographic character, which would analyse with interdependence the long-term trends in the political system of Czechoslovakia. It was conceived as an interdisciplinary basic research into questions of the political system of socialist society in relation to the dynamics of economic development, the issue of the scientific and technological revolution, and the possibilities of social autonomy. A short-term goal (until the end of 1968) was to put forward a hypothesis about the most appropriate conceptual model for system modifications in the coming years. The results would therefore be reference materials for the party and state authorities. Twenty-five studies were planned just for the year 1967.<sup>27</sup>

The formation of the team naturally raised the question of competency definition. At the end of 1966 the Central Committee created the Institute for Political Sciences, whose leadership was entrusted to Václav Slavík and which “in addition to its own research activities in close communion with the Party’s practical activities helped to standardise the state humanities research, and synthesise and further develop the work of these facilities“. The documents do not indicate that any pressure exerted on the focus of the teamwork came from that direction. It is surely no coincidence, however, that Mlynář volunteered in an interview with *Rudé Právo* in July 1967 to cooperate with his team with this committee, but he also categorically defined the spheres of research activity of both institutions so that they do not overlap, and thus manifested his relative autonomy.<sup>28</sup> Moreover, Mlynář managed in the spring of 1968

25 Lubomír Brokl, Prof. Dr. Zdeněk Mlynář, CSc. (1930–1997): Mlynářův tým a jeho místo v české politické vědě, *Politologická revue* 3, 1997, No. 2, p. 168.

26 The report “Assessment of the activities of the Institute of State and Law of the CSAS in 1968 and 1969” even dates the formation of the team to 22 December 1966. MÚA, coll.: Ústav státu a práva ČSAV, no. 123.

27 Aktuální práce kolektivu našich vědců o politickém systému v Československu, *Rudé právo* 47, No. 184, 6 July 1967.

28 Aktuální práce kolektivu našich vědců o politickém systému v Československu, *Rudé právo* 47, No. 184, 6 July 1967.

to strengthen his position in the field of science by creating in the Institute of State and Law a Department of Political Science, headed by himself. The Department's first line of inquiry was the research team, another one historical research into political and legal theory, which was to be pursued by researchers Jiří Klabouch, Zdeněk Kryštůfek and research assistant Zdeněk Masopust.<sup>29</sup>

Who belonged and who did not belong to the team is not easy to determine. *Rudé Právo* claimed in July 1967 that "the basic core of the team consists of about 30 workers from different social-science disciplines".<sup>30</sup> This circle was much wider, however. According to the project documentation, the base of the team were working groups for individual thematic spheres of activity and altogether, it was a team of roughly forty members. Since the numbers in the extant sources differ with regard to the method of selection of the participants, it is not possible to determine exactly who was "in" and who was not. According to the recollections of the team secretary Petr Pithart, there was no precise system for convening the individual participants to discussion meetings. Rather, a simple informal procedure was followed — people moving around the team core and inviting experts they knew if they thought that they would something to say about a given topic. It appears that it was not a completely random choice, as Pithart said in an interview with *Rudé Právo* in July 1967: "Regarding the composition of the team, it should be stressed that although the team members work in a variety of academic, university or other institutions, we did not want in this regard a proportional representation. We picked people for the team on the basis of what one knew, what one had managed to do, and of course, we had to strive for a unity of views on major policy issues and in relation to our current political reality."<sup>31</sup> Mlynář consistently clung to the plurality of opinions within the team and evidently he cared more about the quality and originality of thought of an individual than anything else. For example, Lubomír Brokl himself, as he recalls, was admitted to the team because someone telephoned him in the autumn of 1966 and identified himself as Mlynář, asked whether he was speaking with the author of an article about the systemic nature of personality cult, and invited him to collaborate.<sup>32</sup>

To control the teamwork a thirteen-member committee was set up.<sup>33</sup> Jiří Grospič, who in 1972 had, like many other workers, to submit a report on his activities in the

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29 Hodnocení činnosti oddělení politické vědy v ÚSP ČSAV za rok 1968. MÚA, coll.: Ústav státu a práva ČSAV, no. 123.

30 Aktuální práce kolektivu našich vědců o politickém systému v Československu, *Rudé právo* 47, No. 184, 6 July 1967.

31 Aktuální práce kolektivu našich vědců o politickém systému v Československu, *Rudé právo* 47, No. 184, 6 July 1967.

32 Lubomír Brokl, Prof. Dr. Zdeněk Mlynář, CSc. (1930–1997): Mlynářův tým a jeho místo v české politické vědě, *Politologická revue* 3, 1997, No. 2, p. 168.

33 Zdeněk Mlynář, Karel Bertelmann, Jiří Grospič (all three from Prague's Institute of State and Law), Zdeněk Jičínský (Faculty of Law, Charles University), Miroslav Jodl, Miloš Kaláb (both from Institute of Sociology), Rudolf Kocanda (State Planning Commission), František Kratochvíl (High School of Politics of the CPC Central Committee), Pavel Levit (corresponding member of the CSAS, Faculty of Law, Charles University), Pavel Peška (Faculty

Mlynář team, stated in the relevant document: “The team committee had only formal significance, its meetings were held shortly after assembling the team, and had an organisational character. The team leader used them to communicate thematic intentions for further discussion.”<sup>34</sup> Despite the apologetic nature of the document in which Grospič needed to portray his role as being quite marginal, this claim seems to be legitimate. It was the Mlynář team, Mlynář had whistled it up out of nowhere, and more or less determined its focus. This was substantiated by Lubomír Brokl in an interview of 20 May 2008 for *Revue Politika*, in which he said: “This was a project of Zdeněk Mlynář, whose contacts were extensive, but how far they reached, no one knew. Personally, I think that he bluffed his way to the entire project from the Communist apparatus.”<sup>35</sup> This autonomy gave Mlynář considerable latitude in determining the direction of the teamwork. However, it also made his job even more vulnerable, as was seen in the early days of normalisation. For Viktor Knapp it then was very easy to point out the fact that in the team the staff of the Institute of State and Law represented only a marginal group, put all the blame on Mlynář, and maintain, according to the normalisation criteria, an untarnished reputation of his workplace.<sup>36</sup>

In the archival collection of “confessions” of the Institute’s individual workers from 1972, from which was quoted the Grospič document, it is claimed in several places that there was no core team, either. Now this claim is difficult to accept. Certainly, the almost one hundred and fifty names which Mlynář says took part in discussions cannot be considered as fully involved researchers. An extant attendance list from five discussion meetings in the year 1967 shows that the vast majority had only taken part in one or two of them.<sup>37</sup> In 1975, Mlynář regarded as the core team, whose members had participated in all or nearly all the sessions, a total of 22 people.<sup>38</sup>

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of Law, Charles University), Miloš Svoboda (Institute of Philosophy, CSAS), František Šamalík (Faculty of Law, Charles University), Felix Vašečka (Institute of State and Law, Bratislava).

34 Vyjádření k účasti na činnosti Mlynářova týmu (Jiří Grospič). MÚA, coll.: Ústav státu a práva ČSAV, no. 124.

35 Dějiny se nedějí, ale dělají — interview of Bohumil Pečínka with Professor Lubomír Brokl, *Revue Politika*, 20 May 2008 (available at: [www.revuepolitika.cz/clanky/308/dejiny-se-nedeji-ale-delaji](http://www.revuepolitika.cz/clanky/308/dejiny-se-nedeji-ale-delaji)). — situation as of 20.1.2014)

36 Hodnocení činnosti Ústavu státu a práva za roky 1968 a 1969. MÚA, coll.: Ústav státu a práva ČSAV, no. 123.

37 MÚA, coll.: Ústav státu a práva ČSAV, no. 124.

38 Apart from himself, Mlynář included in the core Lubomír Brokl, Karel Bertelmann, Jiří Boguszak, Ivan Bystřina, Jindřich Fibich, Jiří Grospič, Josef Hodice, Zdeněk Jičínský, Miroslav Jodl, Rudolf Kocanda, Vladimír Klokočka, Karel Kaplan, Pavel Levit, Vladimír Mikule, Pavel Peška, Petr Pithart, Alois Sojka, Miloš Svoboda, František Šamalík, Iva Tomsová, Felix Vašečka, Bedřich Weiner. Zdeněk Mlynář, *Československý pokus o reformu 1968: analýza jeho teorie a praxe*, Köln 1975, pp. 103–104.



cussions cannot be considered as fully involved researchers. An extant attendance list from five discussion meetings in the year 1967 shows that the vast majority had only taken part in one or two of them. In 1975, Mlynář regarded as the core team, whose members had participated in all or nearly all the sessions, a total of 22 people. The team began to work in early spring 1967 and its activities focused on periodic expert conferences where the members discussed critically submitted preparatory materials for individual issues the team was to resolve over the next few years. The agenda focused on the study of three basic themes. First, there was the issue of general political governance, which included basic questions such as conceptualisation of the policy in a socialist society, the status of classes in the socialist system, characteristics of the political system, retardation tendencies of institutional systems (dysfunction of the power system, bureaucracy), and the possibilities of democratisation. The second group of themes concerned the formulation of an optimal model for the development of the political organisation of Czechoslovak society, which included such issues as division of powers, functioning of state administration, generational circulation in the governing apparatus, and in particular, the position of the Communist Party as the leading social force. The third area concerned comparative-historical questions (for example, the development of political systems in the Eastern Bloc or the political and institutional structure of the First and Third Republic).<sup>39</sup> It follows from the foregoing that there were no questions to which the existing domestic literature had not paid attention. The latter, however, was limited in most cases to repeating party resolutions on these themes, sometimes interleaved with occasional excerpts from the works of the classics of Marxism-Leninism. As Mlynář said, this was “real interdisciplinary research” following “specific methods of scientific research on empirical reality”.<sup>40</sup>

The initial research process concentrated on periodic team meetings discussing reference materials for a particular subject. On the basis of the preserved documents it is not entirely certain how much of the reference materials which were not intended for publication were produced. According to Mlynář, there were 46 such items and his list is accepted by Brokl.<sup>41</sup> The list of the interdisciplinary team’s materials sent by Knapp in March 1970 to the CPC Central Committee for the attention of Jaromír Obzina contains a higher number of items. As those “superfluous” studies lack internal numbering, which was used consistently by Mlynář and Brokl, the destination of these materials is not clear and nor is their function.<sup>42</sup> Mlynář wrote at the end of 1968 in a report on the activities of his team about sixty reference materials, which confirms the correctness of Knapp’s list.<sup>43</sup>

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39 Cit. according to Zdeněk Mlynář, *Československý pokus o reformu 1968: analýza jeho teorie a praxe*, Köln 1975, pp. 93–95.

40 Zdeněk Mlynář, *Československý pokus o reformu 1968: analýza jeho teorie a praxe*, Köln 1975, p. 95.

41 Zdeněk Mlynář, *Československý pokus o reformu 1968: analýza jeho teorie a praxe*, Köln 1975, pp. 101–103; Lubomír Brokl, Prof. Dr. Zdeněk Mlynář, CSc. (1930–1997): Mlynářův tým a jeho místo v české politické vědě, *Politologická revue* 3, 1997, No. 2, pp. 170–172.

42 MÚA, coll.: *Ústav státu a práva ČSAV*, no. 90.

43 MÚA, coll.: *Ústav státu a práva ČSAV*, no. 123.

The first phase of the research was limited to periodic discussions on selected topics. Mlynář states that from March 1967 to March 1968, a total of nine such meetings were held.<sup>44</sup> He does not give any details of them and found archival documents allow their reconstruction to a limited extent. The most frequent meeting place was a villa at Tupadly near Mělník which the Czech Academy of Sciences had at its disposal. Those who had the opportunity to attend these meetings concur in one point in their testimonies regardless of where the situation after August 1968 led them: There was a very open atmosphere in the discussions and the attendees did not have to take consideration of whether some issues had been tabooed. In this regard, Jiří Grospič stated in his above-mentioned report: “To the criticism of revisionist views and tendencies Mlynář responded in the sense that so far it was a free exchange of ideas, the procedure had received the consent of party officials, and referred to his talks with Comrade Hendrych.”<sup>45</sup> With poetics proper to him the atmosphere was described succinctly in the memoirs of Viktor Knapp: “I went there from my position in the Presidium, as they used to say, on inspection. [...] In my milieu I felt for the first time the early spring with its many contradictions in the so-called Prague Spring in the Mlynář team.”<sup>46</sup>

The archives of the Institute provide a reliable overview of the events taking place before the end of 1967. The first meeting was held in Tupadly on 22–24 March 1967 (theme: General questions concerning the nature of the political system in socialist society, hypothesis about an optimal political system in Czechoslovakia). The second took place in Prague villa Lanna on 4 and 5 May 1967 (theme: Problems of exact approaches to the issue of the social system). The third meeting was held in Božkov on 26–28 June 1967 (theme: Problems of state administration and central management bodies, development challenges of Western political systems). Petr Pithart regards as a turning point in the work of the team the fourth meeting, which was held in Šumava (Brokl said specifically Čeňkova pila) on 11–13 September 1967 (theme: Sociological research on problems of the political system, problems of theoretical concepts of interest and institutionalisation of social conflicts). According to Pithart’s testimony, Mlynář was to be finally convinced here that political pluralism is a “*conditio sine qua non*” for the democratisation process.<sup>47</sup> This would be substantiated by an undated recollection of Mlynář: “In some reflections on the concepts of a reform of the political system, the political system was formulated before 1968 and the principle of alternation of political parties in power, according to the results of the general election as the secret principle being theoretically optimal for socialism. So it was

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44 Zdeněk Mlynář, *Československý pokus o reformu 1968: analýza jeho teorie a praxe*, Köln 1975, p. 100.

45 MÚA, coll.: *Ústav státu a práva ČSAV*, no. 124.

46 Viktor Knapp, *Proměny času: vzpomínky nestora české právní vědy*, Praha 1998, pp. 185–187.

47 Works of Mlynář published before 1967 either explicitly deny the need for political pluralism or at least have reservations about it. Cf. Zdeněk Mlynář, *K teorii socialistické demokracie*, Praha 1961; Zdeněk Mlynář, *Člověk a stát: úvahy o polit. řízení za socialismu*, Praha 1964.

for example in the CSAS research team, which dealt since the spring of 1967 with the concept of development of the political system, and which I led. Of course, considerations of this kind could not be published then.<sup>48</sup>

The fifth meeting was held again in Mělník from 30 October to 1 November 1967 (theme: Problems of the political system in terms of organisation theory and sociology of organisation and law in the system of democracy, in particular legal guarantees of political rights).<sup>49</sup> Details of the sixth, seventh and eighth meeting could not be found in the archive.

The team meeting held in Smolenice on 6–8 March 1968 had a truly historical significance (it was probably the last one according to the numbering of the reference studies). The speakers included Hvezdoň Kočtúch with the paper *Economic aspects of the organisation of relations between the Czech and Slovak nations* (the study is not included in the above-mentioned list of Mlynář), Samuel Falčan with a talk on *Historical aspects of the constitutional relations between the Czech and Slovak nations*<sup>50</sup> and Jiří Grospič with Zdeněk Jičínský, who had prepared a reference study, *On questions of political and constitutional settlement of relations between the Czech and Slovak nations* (No. 44). In the opinion of Jan Rychlík this was the first confrontation of the Czech academic community with the overriding requirement for federalisation of the Republic.<sup>51</sup> This meeting was attended by Gustav Husák, among others. The recollections of the two witnesses indicate that this meeting made a deep impression on them. Brokl and Pithart agree that the overall atmosphere of the meeting was uncharacteristically charged, even strained.

The first stage of the research project was thus concluded and its results were discussed by the Presidium of the Czechoslovak Academy of Sciences in April 1968 at a meeting in Smolenice. The work of the team was initially evaluated positively. When a joint meeting of the Scientific Boards of Sciences of State and Law was held in Bratislava 22 November 1967, the work of the team was approved without objection — only it was recommended that more Slovak experts should become involved in the future. Objections were also voiced, however, whether the conception of the research was too broad and whether it could be put into practice within a limited time frame. The meeting of the two academies also recommended that a major conference be organised for the autumn of 1968 to summarise the research findings.<sup>52</sup>

It is hardly possible to say whether the concern was genuine or not. How would the Mlynář team have developed had it not been for the Prague Spring? The actual development of the interdisciplinary team's workings bore out the sceptical predictions. As the process of revival gathered momentum in the spring of 1968 and as

48 Zdeněk Mlynář, *Socialistou na volné noze*, Praha 1992, p. 149.

49 MÚA, coll.: *Ústav státu a práva ČSAV*, no. 124.

50 On the Mlynář list this study is in the last but one place before the supplementary paper of Felix Vašečka (No. 46) on the Grospič and Jičínský paper.

51 Jan Rychlík, *Češi a Slováci ve 20. století*, Vol. II, Praha: 1998, p. 220.

52 *Zpráva z 8. zasadnutia vedeckého kolégia ČSAV pre vedy o štáte a práve*, *Právnik* 117, 1968, s. 174; *Spoločné zasadnutie vedeckých kolégií vied o štáte a práve ČSAV a SAV*, *Právny obzor* 51, pp. 284–285.

Mlynář's political commitment was reaffirmed, the team's research activity subsided. An eloquent testimony is given in reports on meetings of the Collegium for Sciences of State and Law, published on the pages of the journal *Právník*, from which all mentions of the team's activities disappear until the autumn of 1968. Grospič stated that "during the first half of the year [1968], the activities of the team were still chaotic and improvised, differences of opinion, together with the disinterest Mlynář in leading the team, having achieved his political ambitions, led in the second quarter of 1968 to its disintegration."<sup>53</sup> The problem of increasing differences of opinion is also mentioned by Brokl and admitted by Mlynář himself, when he evaluated the work to date at the end of 1968. Another problem lay in imbalanced standards of basic research on the individual topics, which is why it was hardly possible to proceed to qualified synthesising work. Last but not least, the problem lay in a weak empirical basis for the research. As Pithart recalls, it was precisely Lubomír Brokl, who disturbed the team meetings periodically to with his objections to the spuriousness of the different conclusions arrived at by the debaters. This shortcoming is certain to have been realised by Mlynář himself, even though as late as 1975 he found it necessary to say: "The main shortcoming of the theoretical papers that emerged from the team's debates in early 1968, was the fact that they had not yet been subjected to criticism and verification through own research on the social reality. Their value was therefore theoretical and ideological and their significance lay in their unifying effect on policy issues, but they were not, strictly speaking, yet scientifically proven research findings; they were rather points of departure for such research."<sup>54</sup> One of the tools that should remedy these deficiencies was research on the political attitudes of citizens conducted in May 1968, whose sketchy results were, as noted above, only published at the end of the 1990s by a team of researchers led by Lubomír Brokl. These data now serve as a popular argument in discussions of historians because they clearly demonstrate the value orientation of the population. They highlight the contrast between the programme of "democratisation" of Mlynář and the other reformist communists in 1968, and the demand for "democracy" made by a revived civil society.<sup>55</sup>

In his report of December 1968 for the Institute's management Mlynář noted that there was a manuscript of this monograph running to 400 pages. This book was not to be published ever again. This probably was not one of the causes that affected a wide range of scientific papers from 1968 to 1969, for which there was not time to be published or whose printed copies were pulped. Mlynář himself stated that it was just materials for the chapters and not a "seamlessly integrated, intellectually (in some ways, directly and conceptually) united scientific work that could be published as a scientific paper crowning the 1<sup>st</sup> stage of research and published work of the team".<sup>56</sup>

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53 MÚA, coll.: Ústav státu a práva ČSAV, no. 124.

54 Zdeněk Mlynář, *Československý pokus o reformu 1968: analýza jeho teorie a praxe*, Köln 1975, p. 93.

55 It is well known that Zdeněk Mlynář repeatedly expressed his willingness to crack down on uncontrollably developing civic activities. Cf. Jiří Hoppe, *Opozice 68: Sociální demokracie, KAN a K231 v období Pražského jara*, Praha 2009.

56 MÚA, coll.: Ústav státu a práva ČSAV, no. 123.

By the end of 1968 he did not recommend its completion and publication as he considered it already outdated at that moment. On the basis of the Action Programme of the Communist Party a considerable part of the questions related to the reconstruction of the political system had been solved in the short term, and, in his words, most of the members of the team were involved in the formulation of these political concepts. He admitted that when the manuscript was finished, he was tasked with turning it into a coherent monograph.

It was not just his workload as secretary of the CPC Central Committee that prevented him from this work. Many of his colleagues were busy with preparations for a federal system and worked in other government or party expert bodies. In the conclusion of the report he added: "After the August events it is hardly possible to publish as a comprehensive summary of the book manuscript a set of studies which did not take into account the experiences (positive and negative) to which the implementation of some hypotheses led the political system. Making a truly objective analysis of the experience of the after-January evolution is scientifically impossible for the moment."<sup>57</sup>

Preserved archival documents about the final stage of the working of the interdisciplinary team raise more questions than they give answers. On the last day of the month of November Mlynář stopped his work in the Central Committee and on 1 December he returned to work full-time to the Institute of State and Law of the Academy. During the time spent in top political positions he only remained an external collaborator. Knapp's character reference only stated tersely: "He will once again perform his function as head of the political science department and head of the interdisciplinary team."<sup>58</sup> On 3 December 1968, only three days after his return to regular employment, Mlynář dated a fairly extensive paper elaborating the future action programme of the interdisciplinary team. It was a plan for its gradual dismantling. He recommended that his department be abolished and the existing staff, with the exception of Lubomír Brokl, whose position was to be transferred to the Institute of Sociology of the Academy of Sciences, be transferred to the Department of State and Law. For the second phase of research in 1969 he recommended that the existing team and its committee be disbanded with only the coordinator remaining. It is not clear whether he thought of himself in this position. On 20 December 1968, less than three weeks after the submission of the analysis, he filed an application for termination of employment by agreement. As he does not mention this in his memoirs, we can only speculate whether it was really an "agreement", which in principle presupposes free expression of the will of both parties. Nonetheless, we cannot say that this was the end of political research at the Academy. In the first half of 1969, the situation did not appear to be desperate. Part of the agenda of the Mlynář team passed to a group around Karel Bertelmann dealing with the theme *Local Government and its Prospects*. At the same time, the CSAS bulletin announced in the spring of 1969 the establishment of Institute of Political Sciences of the Academy of Sciences, which actually took place on 1 July of the same year. Within its framework an interdisciplinary team

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<sup>57</sup> MÚA, coll.: Ústav státu a práva ČSAV, no. 123.

<sup>58</sup> MÚA, coll.: Ústav státu a práva ČSAV, no. 110.

was assembled to prepare a perspective concept for comprehensive development of Czechoslovakia. In terms of the breadth of interest it resembled in many respects the original Mlynář team. It was to have a supervisory function in relation to the other interdisciplinary teams and in addition, it was to specialise in its own research into Czech-Slovak relations, post-war political history, and politico-economic questions.<sup>59</sup> This, however, was the swan song of the attempt to revive political science in the socialist Czechoslovakia. The Mlynář team disappeared without trace in 1969 and its founder's headed to the National Museum, where he worked for several years in the Department of Entomology.

Despite this we cannot say that the Mlynář team disappeared entirely without a successor. Ten years later, now in exile, Mlynář developed a new research project. Its scientific committee was set up in 1979, and along with Mlynář, it included Eduard Goldstücker, Jiří Kosta, Jiří Pelikán, Radoslav Selucký, Vladimír Klokočka, and Karel Kaplan. The last two were enthusiastic workers in the previous team. The broad interdisciplinary approach to research that resulted in nearly thirty studies, was very similar to the original one, only instead of exploring future possibilities of socialist societies much more attention was paid to the study of history and scientific legitimisation of the reform attempt in 1968.<sup>60</sup>

## EVALUATION OF THE TEAM'S WORK

Looking at the Mlynář's scientific activities before 1968 is not easy to free oneself from the knowledge of what followed. Mlynář's life strategy consisted in following two lines of career advance — political and scientific — and it was not easy to keep these two lines in harmony: More than once science in Mlynář's life often fell victim to politics. It was not just the actual abandonment of the activities of the research team in the hectic months of 1968, when he had to tackle thorny issues of the day and had no time for science. At the same time, however, we consider exaggerated the opinion that the building of a scientific reputation was just a utilitarian tool to achieve power, which he immediately abandoned once he reached a position of power. Yet the tension between the scientist and the worker of the party apparatus in one person is evident in a number of his writings, including his most important book of the 1960s, *Člověk a stat* [State and Man].

There are divergent opinions on why the activities of the Mlynář team literally fizzled out to nothing and given the absence of irrefutable sources, we have to settle for a plurality of hypothetical explanations that are more or less likely. It does not seem on the basis of the research that has been done that the collective research project was for its author only an expedient means to obtain a sufficient reputation and to reach the top of the political ladder. And the moment that he reached this goal, he lost interest in the project because he had no need for it. A more likely explanation

59 Ustavení nového mezioborového výzkumného týmu, Bulletin ČSAV 15, No. 9, September 1969.

60 Zdeněk Mlynář, *Socialistou na volné noze*, Praha 1992, pp. 142–143.

is pragmatic. The hectic events of the Prague Spring in 1968 diverted Mlynář's attention to another direction and he simply had no time to organise the research work. We cannot rule out another explanation, which is accepted by Lubomír Brokl. It was to be primarily Mlynář's carefulness and fear of future developments, including considerations of the fates of the researchers concerned. Discussion and planned publication outputs would certainly have aroused considerable attention both in the expert community and expertly critique of the existing political system would have in the future adverse political consequences for their authors that actually occurred after 1968. This is why Mlynář had to reduce the team's research activities during the spring of 1968 and wait for an auspicious time to continue them. Whether we agree with any of these hypotheses, there is no doubt that the Czech / Czechoslovak social sciences have lost their collective work, which belonged to the still widely-cited works, such as Richta's *Civilizace na rozcestí* [Civilisation at the Crossroads] or Machonin's *Československá společnost* [Czechoslovak Society].