(ZS Uherske Hradiste)

The evil has never been named evil...!

The story of Vladimír Drábek

Vladimír Drábek was born on October 10, 1927 in the village of Kudlovice near Uherské Hradiště. He was born into an ordinary family. His mother was a housewife and his father was a much sought-after mason. The family owned a farm and he helped. He studied at a gymnasium, but during his third year, the nazis closed the school down. So he completed his education at the Czech Railways. Since he was raised in the spirit of Christianity and the Scouts Movement, he could not accept the communist victory in the elections of 1946 and with their usurpation of the foremost places in the executive. In 1948, aged 21, he started to work at the Employment Office in Uherské Hradiště. A friend gave him a leaflet with a transcription of a speech by the late President Edvard Beneš and a summary of how the communists came to power. In his leisure time Vladimír started making copies of the leaflet and distributing them. He did not hand them out randomly, he picked the people carefully. He says: “I wouldn't have shown it to anyone who would be upset by it. I didn't consider myself a big-shot resistance member, I just followed the voice of my conscience told me. I was even shot at, once. I was returning home from my friend's house when I heard a shot. I didn't know who was shooting and where from, I just ran home. The second day, I found out that a small round missed my head just by centimeters. So, that's the general picture of my relationship with the comrades. My parents had no idea, because should I tell anything, my mother would tell me with her hands clasped together: “Do not go into that, it'll take a bad turn.”. Therefore, nobody knew, not even my brother, no one from the family.

The family found out only when the State Security arrested Vladimír and searched all his things at home for evidence. They found what they needed – the counter-regime leaflets; he was arrested immediatelyand taken to the prison in Uherské Hradiště. They interrogated him for ten hours but he never gave away the name of the personwho gave him the leaflet. The friend was physically disabled and the Security's interrogation methods threatened his life. Mr. Drábek was judged at the so-called State court and was sentenced to two and a half years of severe imprisonment. He was taken to the Cejl prison in Brno and later to the Bory in Plzeň. They were strictly forbidden here to talk to the criminal prisoners. He cannot suppress the memory of the sounds when the gallows for General Heliodor Píka was built.

He was released at Easter in March 1951. He recalls: “There were people who returned my greetings on the street; there were people who weren't afraid of the regime, invited me home and we would speak about how things are and how they should be. There were really only a handful of people who couldn't stand me. My parents had aged and lived off their field. It wasn't much but they supported themselves honorably. I wanted to get a job somewhere near the house so I could come home early after work and help them out.” He was lucky and found a position in a factory in the nearby village of Babice. “The foreman was happy with me, everything went well. But the factory's Party official declared that he wouldn't work in the same place with a person of my sorts. He said he always carried a gun because he was afraid I would attack him. To make a long story short: this man came to the Employment Office and said: “Enough, this one will not work there!”. Despite the absurdity of it, although his arguments didn't make any sense, I lost my job. I got another job in Ostrava. At that time, there was still a six-day working week with only Sunday free. Ostrava is quite far from Hradiště, so on Sunday, I came home only to say hello to my parents and had to return to the station and go back to Ostrava. I worked in a bridge factory where we assembled pieces for the constructions of bridges.”

Vladimír was conscripted and assigned to the Auxiliary Technical Battalions (ATB) in Kladno. The difference between an ATB and an ordinary soldier was that the former never even glimpsed a weapon and were used for hard manual labour. In wartime, they would be sent in the first line to search for mines. When he managed to get a pass and visit his parents, they told him the latest news. They listened to Radio Free Europe regularly. Upon returning to his unit, he would tell his friends. Everyone knew he was a former political prisoner and therefore trusted him.

However, there was a snitch among the conscripts and Vladimír was interrogated again. They asked him to report on the others and threatened to send him to jail and his father as well should he refuse. His ailing mother would remain alone and his brother would be expelled from his studies, which would leave the family without income. The intensified pressure led to Vladimír's collapse. He contracted tuberculosis. His health seriously compromised and there was no effective medication, not for everybody, and even less for people like him. His working ability was lowered by 80%. He refused to comply but due to his bad health, they stopped insisting. . During all this time his future wife gave him great support during these times. They met before his arrest and she stayed by his side throughout his troubles. The past had returned one more time when their daughter wanted to become a teacher. The state did not allow her to enter the studies and she was not allowed to work with children.

Mr. Vladimír Drábek was the mayor of Kudlovice. He cooperates with the Institute for the Study of Totalitarian Regimes in Prague and is the chairman of the Union of Political Prisoners in Uherské Hradiště.

“I didn't consider myself a big-shot resistance member, I just acted upon what my conscience told ordered me to do.”.

Vladimír Drábek as an ATB soldier

Vladimír Drábek in a traditional folk costume

Beekeeping is Vladimír Drábek's favourite hobby

Vladimír Drábek as the mayor of Kudlovice

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