

or even talking would lead to beatings or manhandling. And all this took place beneath a large sign on the wall saying: "A cool head, a warm heart and, above all, clean hands. Dzherzhinski."

After interrogation many of those arrested had to wait many more hours for their release, and before they learnt if and when they would be summonsed. People who had been taken to Opletalova Street reported that they saw lying on the ground amidst the parked cars a boy about twelve years old who was being brutally kicked by policemen. That same day, at Můstek, an disabled news-vendor was savagely beaten. He is a well-known figure, with paralysed hands and a severe speech impediment, who can scarcely drag himself about and sells *Večerní Praha* in the metro vestibule. Elsewhere at Můstek, a crowd formed round some policemen who were beating a man lying on the ground. When people started shouting that these were Gestapo tactics, the policemen turned on the bystanders and started to lay into them with their truncheons, seizing some of them and pushing them into police cars. Those arrested included a sixteen-year-old lad who was on his way from the metro to his dancing class.

The police were clearly targeting the youth. One of the Black Marias contained only boys and girls aged from 14 to 16. After a considerable time they were driven away and made to get off the bus somewhere they didn't know. There they were made to run between two lines of policemen who beat them with their truncheons. Then the girls were taken one side and the boys were made to strip naked and stand up against a wall with their arms held out. The police officers then beat them savagely all over their naked bodies to shouts of "So things are so bad in Czechoslovakia, are they?", "We'll show you Gestapo tactics", etc. etc. In the end, they were taken to the police station in Lazarská Street where they were made to sign something that made no sense to them – most likely a confession of some kind – and they were informed that they would be charged with riotous conduct and slander of the Republic.

D 29

(19th January 1989)

Eyewitness accounts of the 19th January demonstration

*An unnamed witness:*

There have clearly been hundreds of instances of brutality and sadistic treatment meted out by the police in recent days to unarmed citizens peacefully trying to commemorate Jan Palach. The most brutal attacks, however, were on Thursday 19th January. A cordon of police isolated a group of people assembled on the central reservation in Wenceslas Square from the rest of the crowd and then each demonstrator was set upon by three, four or even five uniformed policemen wielding truncheons. The police threw them to the ground and beat and kicked them, before forcing them, with their arms twisted up their backs, into side streets, kicking them all the while. They made them stand there with their hands above their heads facing the parked cars while they beat them across their legs, backs and heads to shouts of, "So it's freedom you want!" After checking their papers, they drove them off to various police stations where they made them stand for hours on end in corridors or in meeting rooms. The slightest protest

The boy who got caught up in it on his way to his dancing class is now at home confined to bed in a severe condition, his mouth lacerated from the kicking he received and his back covered with wheals caused by the truncheons. For fear of possible repercussions, his parents are scared to seek either medical treatment or legal assistance. Such reactions are not unusual among ordinary folk. The police, who foster them by the way they treat people, count on such reactions. And youngsters have not merely been the object of physical attacks in the recent days, they have also been singled out by news broadcasts, the press and television. They seemingly count on the likelihood that out of fear and ignorance young people will not seek legal assistance. Youngsters can easily be used as evidence of confused ideas and it's not difficult to label them as criminal elements.

*Jiřina Šiklová:*

I arrived at Wenceslas Square around five o'clock. The square was packed – from the top end down almost as far as the *Zlatá husa* hotel below Jindřiřská Street. I managed to get up as far as the group opposite the Blaník bistro where the planned discussion was originally supposed to take place. A discussion was already going on within the group. Professor Milan Machovec spoke, followed by Jaroslav Kolafa, but I didn't hear their speeches, only the statement by the representative of the John Lennon Club.

Tomáš Tvaroch of the Independent Peace Association spoke next. Slogans were chanted, the most frequently repeated being "Long live the Charter!", though I also heard "Release Havel!", "Release political prisoners!", "Long live Gorbachev!", "Gorbachev is watching!", "The world is watching!". Once or twice someone shouted "Bring back Dubček!". Interestingly enough, they were mostly youngsters. There were older people there, too, but the overwhelming majority were of the younger generation. And they all behaved in an orderly fashion, even with courtesy and willingness, such as when signatures were being collected on the spot to a resolution calling for the

release of political prisoners. What I also found surprising was the absence of any slogans that might have been misinterpreted. For instance people chanted "Who is to blame?" and followed by the rejoinder: "WE know!" – but no actual names were mentioned.

At about quarter past five, a police announcement boomed out from a loudspeaker on the corner of either Krakovská or Štěpánská Street: "Disperse, citizens, your demonstration is unauthorised. Disperse or you will place yourselves at risk." The announcement was repeated several times during the next five minutes, after which the strong-arm squad appeared: the are the fellows in white helmets that get out of blue police wagons – they're known in Prague these days as "Jakeš's smurfs". They advanced from two sides, from Krakovská Street and the big grocery store *Dům potravin*, and I must say that there was a fundamental difference between the behaviour of the uniformed SNB policemen and the riot police units. The SNB officers reprimanded people and even shoved them around, but they didn't beat them up. The strong-arm squads lashed out in all directions and I had the feeling that they roared as a way of inciting each other. People – where I was, at least – started to clasp each other and shout "Unity is strength!", but they were understandably uneasy and in the end retreated before the crack units. I personally saw some of the strong-arm squad beating a one young fellow in a white jacket until his face was covered in blood from a head wound; two men dragged him away, apparently unconscious. At that moment another white-jacketed youngster rushed up and started shouting at the assailant, so they took him away as well. They put the first lad in an ambulance and arrested the other. It was only then that people starting shouting "Fascists!" at them. If it hadn't have been for treatment like that, they would have never shouted such things.

By the *Dům potravin*, I saw something that was new to me. A police bus was standing there and those arrested were being made to stand in a way I only knew from

Ruzyně prison, i.e. legs apart and hands above their heads, palms against the side of the bus. There were ten or a dozen of them stood like that along the side of the bus. That's about all.

(Abridged from reports telephoned to Radio Free Europe. Ed.)

in  
ar  
m  
cl  
pr