

You all better be afraid of us!

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That's the message the police acting in concord with the Public Prosecutor's Office sent out by raiding the premises of the Energy Regulatory Office (ERU) on the 27th of May, 2015. Dozens of police intervened in Prague, Jihlava and Ostrava under the pretense of seeking a Ms Renate Vesecká's appointment decree to the post of Deputy Chairwoman, ERU. Police units also confiscated and hauled away a number of documents and computers. Instances of abuses of power by the police and the leadership of Public Prosecutor's Office have become so prevalent that neither of them bothers any more with providing even a semi-plausible pretext of conduct. In ordinary circumstances, a single police officer would just look up appropriate information in the ERU's office or phone directory, walk into the personnel department, and simply pick up the decree. Besides, why demand the decree at all? Nobody is denying that Alena Vitásková, the ERU's chairwoman, has indeed appointed Ms. Vesecká to the post. Appointment decrees are single-sentence documents.

The proposed measure is unconstitutional

The reasons behind the raids carried out with the blessing of the Public Prosecutor's Office are two-fold. The first one is the intent to intimidate anyone critical of the police-prosecutorial alliance, and Renata Vesecká is an outspoken critic indeed. The second is the intent to demonstrate the alliance's power at the time when a new legislative measure on public prosecution is moving through the legislature. Patterned after the South American dictatorial juntas, the measure's aim is to inaugurate an oppressive alliance of police and the Public Prosecutor's Office without any provisions for either control or accountability. Who cares that the constitution places the Public Prosecutor's Office within the executive branch of government?

The proposed measure is unconstitutional since the lack of provisions for accountability and oversight represents an unconstitutional transfer of the Public Prosecutor's Office to the judicial branch of the government. Once it became obvious that the measure was not going to pass, both the police and the Public Prosecutor's Office issued a clear warning to the critics, the Parliament deputies, and the senators: *"We are free to act as we please. Should we feel like it, we may bust into the Parliament and under the guise of looking for a piece of paper, haul away boxes of documents and office computers, and then dig through it all at will. We may wiretap you as well, and the recordings may end up in the media, same as the Nečas wiretaps did."*

How far can this go?

A vigilant fight against all instances of abuse of power is a fight for all who, come tomorrow, do not care to wake up in a dictatorship run by the collusion of the police and the prosecutors. At the heart of the matter is a simple premiss: are we going to keep accepting as valid any justification, no matter how ridiculous, the police and the Public Prosecutor's Office choose to utilize as valid grounds behind any one of their willful acts. Martin Niemöller's eloquent commentary on the rise of the Nazis state rings true even today: *"When the Nazis came for the communists, I did not speak out because I was not a communist. When they started to imprison social democrats, I did not speak out because I was not social democrat. When they started to lock up the trade unionists, I did not speak out because I was not a trade unionist. When finally they came for me, there was no one left to speak out."*