

Esteemed chairman,
Esteemed colleagues,
Dear guests!

My task at this international forum, as the first deputy director of the Institute for the Study of Totalitarian Regimes, is to speak in some detail about the institution's work. The Institute is, according to the law, a specific institution with a broad range of set duties. However, as our financial resources are not limitless, which incidentally I am sure is the case for all of us, the management has to continually evaluate and weigh research priorities in such a way that the relevant sections of law no. 181/2007 Coll., under which our institution was established, are fulfilled.

Allow me a small, perhaps slightly boring, digression. Within the framework of a chapter of the state budget, that is not an entirely simple procedure. It starts in the second quarter with the preparation of a draft budget for the government of the Czech Republic and concludes at the end of the year with the passing of a bill on the state budget, respectively with the approval of a Plan of Activity for the upcoming fiscal year by the Council of the Institute. One of the Council's most important tasks is discussing and approving that crucial document, which ensues from the medium term priorities of our institution and is discussed and queried in advance by Academic Council of the Institute.

The approved Plan of Activity is a binding document for all of the Institute's sections, departments and groups; under it middle management, the heads of individual projects and, in some cases, individual employees are constantly assessed. Cooperation with the Security Services Archive and with domestic and foreign partners (whose number, I'm glad to report, is constantly growing) ensues from it. Our annual discussions on the Plan and the priorities set by it are just the way to make the best and most effective use of the potential of the expert scientific potential of our institution and to address the certain persistent imbalance between basic and applied research or the number of projects dedicated to the Nazi and Communist totalitarian regimes.

But now to our work and its results. Because we do not suffer from a lack of self-reflection, we are capable of being self-critical and don't rest on our laurels – we genuinely have something to be proud of. The results we have achieved in five years of existence are clear, verifiable, easily substantiated and marked. Judge for yourselves. The Institute for the Study of Totalitarian Regimes has been the chief organiser or co-organiser of 36 international conferences and symposia, close to 120 specialist seminars, lectures and discussions and more than 40 exhibitions and exhibition projects presented at over 100 places in the Czech Republic and abroad. Our publishing activities are by no means negligible either: the Institute has been the publisher or co-publisher of 114 publications, including 26 periodical ones.

Recently there has been much talk about the importance of oral history (in the past we used instead of this now fashionable term the simpler, but in meaning identical, “work with eye witnesses”). I must say that it is in just this field that the Institute is carrying out a huge amount of important work. In conjunction with the Post Bellum association and Czech Radio, it has contributed to the creation of Memory of the Nation, a digital archive that currently features over 2,500 eye witness testimonies, of which 1,500 are accessible to the public. I personally believe that the Institute’s contribution in this area is crucial and completely irreplaceable. By this I do not mean in financial or personnel terms, but the fact that this activity is being conducted to such an extent and such a standard. Unlike “standard” scientific work with archival documents (which will, at least I hope, always be with us), work with eye witnesses is unfortunately – and I don’t want this to sound disrespectful in any way – “time limited”, because they are gradually leaving us. And if their often crucial testimonies are not recorded, they will depart with them.

Alongside these “eye witness” activities, our institution regards its educational activities, focused on young people, teachers and last but not least the general public, as being of key importance. Between 2008 and 2012, the Institute held 49 presentational one-day seminars and five summer schools for teachers. It produced three educational DVDS, two internet multimedia textbooks, 56 teaching sets and up to 400 work and methodology sheets. In addition, since 2011 it has run e-learning courses for teachers; at present it is the only institution in the Czech Republic that offers this type of education in this field. Since 2008, over 900 teachers have done courses of various kinds at the Institute. And that is a considerable number. We should also bear in mind that the Institute is involved in long-term cooperation with some 30 schools around the Czech Republic, and that figure continues to rise. I also regard as very important the involvement of our institution (in cooperation with the Lidice Memorial and the Arts Faculty of Charles University) in the Lidice for the 21st Century international awareness-boosting competition; launched last year, it is developing successfully.

Besides the Institute’s scientific, publishing and educational activities, I would like to highlight the irreplaceable role it plays – in close cooperation with the Security Services Archive and naturally with the Ministry of Defence and the Ethical Commission of the government of the Czech Republic – in fulfilling Act no. 262/2011 Coll. on participants in the resistance and opposition to Communism. The volume of work in this connection is enormous, even though at first glance it may seem “invisible”. However, the preparation of hundreds of expert opinions and the digitisation of almost four million pages of documents in order to fulfil the law has not happened by itself. What’s more, this work is being done under “pressure of time”. All of those involved are very well aware that the bill was approved late and many resisters have not lived to see it. Therefore, nobody wishes to see any kind of delay and we are all doing all we

can to ensure the process of issuing certification takes place as quickly as possible.

In connection with fulfilling act no. 262/2011 Coll., I referred to the Institute's digitisation and IT department, which transfers archival materials and documents (mainly of the Archive) to electronic form. During its existence, it has reached the absolute pinnacle in the Czech Republic, as borne out by the fact that in five years the Institute has digitised nigh on 30 million files. Please allow me here to thank not only the staff of that section of the Institute but all of our employees for the work that they perform. From my heart, thank you very much!

At present the digitisation of documents is also being adapted to the systematic research of archival collections relating to the years of repression, i.e., from 1938 to 1945. This has been encouraged by the fact that our foreign partners, for instance the U. S. Memorial Holocaust Museum and Israel's Yad Vashem, have expressed extraordinary interest in working with these archival materials in the framework of our joint international projects.

Ladies and gentlemen, dear guests! Allow me to express my deep conviction that the Institute for the Study of Totalitarian Regimes will continue in future to fulfil its primary mission: to examine strictly scientifically and apolitically the years of Communist totalitarianism and the period of repression, that is the years of the Nazi totalitarianism (if anyone believes that the 1939–1945 period has been worked through completely they are unfortunately mistaken; we are just beginning...), and to deliver a precise and undistorted message about them to our fellow citizens and the international community.

I regard this as extraordinarily important, because it still applies that “whoever doesn't know his past is doomed to repeat it.”

Thank you for your attention!