

## SUMMARIES

### CZECH DEMOCRACY 1918-1938 – PARAGON OR PARODY?

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The article offers a critical assessment of the functioning of democracy in the First Czechoslovak Republic. It is argued that the political system – the pluralistic and liberal qualities of which are recognized – was stabilized at the expense of some basic democratic principles. The President and the main Czech political parties shared a disregard for the formal aspects of democracy, and they repeatedly violated the letter of the Constitution for the sake of political efficiency. The Parliament was never allowed to function as a democratic instrument for conflict resolution, nor could the Constitutional Court serve as a guardian of democratic constitutionalism. These steps probably prevented the collapse of the democratic order in the chaotic early years of the Republic, but the continued tradition of informal decision-making in closed Czech elite forums (such as the *Hrad* and the *Pětka*) led to political stagnation and generated a widespread popular indifference towards the higher institutional arrangements of the state. The Czech population was willing to defend their state in 1938, but hardly anyone wanted to preserve its political system, which collapsed without resistance in the Second Republic.