

TOTALITARIAN TRADITIONS IN CZECH POLITICS

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Prompted by Havelka's raising the question of a totalitarian epoch in the Bohemian lands after 1939, the author of the present contribution asks why communist rule was so easily established in Czechoslovakia. That this system was indeed totalitarian he does not question. The fact that Czech society did not offer much of a resistance against communism and that its retrospective view of the communist era is not altogether negative is, according to Holzer, accounted for by a specifically Czech, traditional concept of politics. Holzer identifies a tendency (having emerged in the 19th century) to conceive politics as the realization of certain moral and national imperatives and to reject an openly negotiated compromise between conflicting social interests, favouring national unity instead. Moreover, Czech society twice – after 1918 and after 1945/48 – radically altered its system of values and perceptions. The author suggests a scientific, interdisciplinarian evaluation of Czech political tradition, arguing that there is no alternative way to prevent a return of totalitarian rule.