

The Fourth Prague Defenestration: 5

by Jerry Ratch

Vladimir walked down the little path next to the creek with us. I stopped along the way and picked off a sliver of some of the bedrock that was sticking out alongside the narrow path, to take home with me as a souvenir of my family castle, just to be able to reach into my pocket now and then and feel as though I had really been there, where my ancestors had been for so long. It might have seemed insignificant to others, but somehow it held some significance in my mind.

We crossed the bridge and entered the little café where our driver was waiting. He was eating his lunch still, and wasn't about to be disturbed from one of his little routines of life. Well, I had to admit, we all have our routines, who could blame him? Although it was a pretty hefty sum, hiring a private car to go out to visit your family castle. The hotel in Prague had arranged for the service for a set fee. Maybe around \$150 U.S. I can't remember the amount in Koruna, the Czech currency. And they did not accept Euros.

Vladimir eyed the driver closely. "Boris?" he asked. "Boris, is this you?" Then they broke into Czech, of which we could not understand a word, of course, even though my parents spoke Bohemian fluently and frequently at the dinner table when I was very young. They only spoke this language to each other, when they didn't want us to understand what the heck they were talking about. Often they laughed when they did this, and ogled each other. They stopped speaking Bohemian completely though when my older brother Darrell began picking up a few of the words. Then we never heard this language being spoken around our childhood home again

because, as my father said, they wanted us to be real Americans, not Bohunks like down on the Southside of Chicago where all our other relatives lived in the Bohemian ghetto near the stockyards and what is now Midway Airport. I think we skimmed right over one of my relative's rooftops when we flew into Midway once. I imagined looking down at them drinking dandelion wine at a table in their yard, shaking a fist and cussing out the jet flying low overhead.

But right in the middle of these two Czech men talking, I distinctly heard the word "Lenin." Both men looked over at us and began laughing. And immediately I thought we were being taken for a ride of some sort. Then I distinctly heard "KGB."

Okay, that's it, I thought. We had to get out of there. These had to be Russians, not Czechs. Russians! KGB maybe! Who knows? Maybe they *are* still watching. KGB, Big Brother, it's always the same.

