

## Water Pollution

The article deals with the problem of high nitrate content in tap water in Czechoslovakia, which makes it unsuitable for infants. Smrcka says, among other things: "A study carried out between 1982 and 1984 revealed that more than 70 percent of residents of the Czech Socialist Republic are supplied with water with a nitrate content in excess of 15 milligrams per liter, which is the upper limit admissible for babies. The quality of water has deteriorated further since then. A higher content of nitrates in water makes babies suffocate. It causes alimentary methemoglobinemia, a disease which frequently ends in the child's death."

"Adults are better equipped to cope with nitrates, which is why, according to the Czechoslovak state norm, water for consumption by adults may contain up to 50 milligrams per liter. However, water sources exceeding this norm up to six times are no exception in our country."

Smrcka goes on to say that, in areas where tap water is unsuitable for babies, pediatricians recommend that mothers use mineral water. He points out, however, that, besides not being always available, mineral water also has the drawback of having a high salt content. Smrcka writes: "The medical profession is waging a struggle to limit salt in food for adults, but the youngest generation, via mineral water, is receiving it in large quantities. One citizen in two in Czechoslovakia dies of cardiovascular diseases at present, and one in four of malignant tumors. Among 23 European states whose data are available, we rank 19th in the median length of life. The medical profession sees the problem of water quality as one of the main causes. Most extraneous substances from the environment are getting into the organism together with food."

In the body of the article, Smrcka illustrates the problem by the example of the city of Kladno. He notes that Kladno has recently been connected to a new source of drinking water, which has helped to resolve the problem of water quantity. The nitrate content of the new course, however, "considerably exceeds the norms for babies." Smrcka reports on a "consultative meeting" held in Kladno to cope with the new situation. He cites a number of proposals that were made at the meeting (such as that city's hospital and its soft drinks bottling plant be supplied with clean water from a special source) but observes no final decision was made.

*Source:* "Nitrate Makes Tap Water Dangerous for Babies," August 16, 1989, *Rude Pravo*, trans. Foreign Broadcast Information Service (FBIS).