

Síkela, Pokorný and Czech deindustrialization

Czech industry is facing its biggest collective threat since the collapse of Communism and Comecon in 1989-1991, and perhaps since World War II. Companies of all sizes, segments and financial strength risk going out of business because of high energy prices. There are numerous reasons for this, but we'll concentrate today on energy policy on the Czech government level. Why is Industry Min. Jozef Síkela (STAN) showing so little interest in saving Czech industry, and who is advising him in this respect?

Síkela has [three official advisers](#), and the one who speaks in public most often on energy issues is Tomáš Prouza (seen in the picture to Síkela's left helping to run an [energy-related meeting](#) with the Czech Permanent Representation to the EU). Prouza has a diverse portfolio of responsibilities. He's the [coordinator of the Czech EU presidency](#) at the industry ministry, chair of the ministry's [expert group for reducing the administrative burden on businesses](#), a member of the ministry's [monitoring committee for operational programs](#), president of the [SOCR retailers' union](#), VP of [EuroCommerce](#) for wholesale and retail, VP of the [Czech Chamber of Commerce](#) and a member of the [arbitration committee of the Czech Advertising Standards Council](#).

It's in this last position that Prouza has officially crossed paths with lawyer Radek Pokorný, who has been identified in the press as [Síkela's unofficial chief adviser](#). Prouza was deputy finance minister in 2004-2006 under future PM Bohuslav Sobotka, for whom Pokorný served as the [external brain](#), according to one of Sobotka's later ministers, Jan Mládek of ČSSD. After Sobotka became PM, Prouza joined him as state secretary for EU affairs.

When Sobotka wanted to [replace Mládek as industry minister in 2015 with Prouza](#) (but was blocked by Pres. Miloš Zeman), then-Finance Min. Andrej Babiš said that "all of Prague" knew that a certain marketing agency was trying to install Prouza there, by which he might have meant [Bison & Rose](#). It sued Babiš for saying that oligarchs influenced

Sobotka through the lobbying agency, but Babiš was [cleared of this](#) in March 2020.

After the government of Petr Fiala took over in Dec. of last year, MFD reported that the ["orange team" from ČSSD](#) was rumored to be returning. Pokorný knew

for the other side." Three ex-politicians (ex-PM Jiří Paroubek, ex-Industry Min. Jan Mládek, ex-Transport Min. Dan Ťok) testified in court to the influence Pokorný had over Sobotka and the head of the ÚOHS antitrust office under Sobotka, Petr



well some of the STAN people from the past, according to MFD, including Síkela. Co-founder [Miloš Růžička](#) of Bison & Rose had officially left the PR agency but reportedly maintained close contact with his university professor Petr Fiala and advised him on certain things. This [role of adviser became official](#) earlier this year.

Pokorný, Prouza and Růžička keep up a public discourse on Twitter, where an [analysis](#) shows that Prouza is active in responding to the tweets of the other two. Prouza, as Síkela's official adviser, has the ear of the minister, but [Babiš](#) and [others](#) claim that to get a meeting with Síkela, a person must go through Pokorný. Pokorný says that this is a lie.

The [NFPK Anticorruption Endowment](#) wrote about how Pokorný operates in a 2018 report entitled in English [Cronyism in the Czech Republic, or Power Networks in 2010-2017](#), but available only in [Czech](#): "[Radek Pokorný](#) has stood on the side of private interests since the end of the 1990s, but he has been well acquainted with people from the other side - those who are supposed to defend the public interest. And who made decisions or participated in the decision-making in matters in which Pokorný was working

Rafaj. The court concluded that Pokorný had indeed appeared to indirectly offer to use his influence over Rafaj.

Our experience is that people don't really start paying attention to the darker side of Czech business and politics until it affects them directly. We didn't get much of a response when we first wrote about [Pokorný and Síkela](#) in March. Things are different now. Almost no one is spared when it comes to the energy crisis and the middle stages of [Czech deindustrialization](#). Even Škoda Auto, which has almost always managed to get what it wants from the Czech government, is now in despair because of Síkela's energy policy.

The above information raises serious concerns about the role and intentions of Radek Pokorný with regard to Czech energy policy. Some people in business might benefit from the situation, but there is little evidence that Síkela's actions are benefiting Czech business or society as a whole. This analysis serves to explain the relationships and to alert those involved that the stakes are now much higher than before. Anyone who is seen to be getting special treatment from Síkela will have some explaining to do.