



Borders with the West were protected by fortification of the Iron Curtain

1980s

Regime violently smashed believers during Candle Manifestation for Human Rights and Religious Freedom



The Czechoslovak Communist Party, and its section of the Slovak Communist Party, are responsible for the way of government in our country between 1948 and 1989, in particular for a purposeful destruction of the traditional values of European civilisation, national and religious rights, for a deliberate violation of human rights and freedoms, for judicial crimes committed during state trials, for terror against defendants of opinions differing from the teachings of Marxism-Leninism, for devastation of the economy, for destruction of the traditional principles of the right to ownership, and for abusing education, science and culture for political and ideological purposes.

Act of the National Council of the Slovak Republic No. 125/1996 of 27 March 1996 on the immorality and illegality of the communist system

The frenzy of communism was particularly characteristic of the 1950s. The recklessness and cruelty of those in power created an intense atmosphere of fear. Intrusive propaganda and cheap demagoguery disrupted and deformed traditional values. The merciless force of the rising political power broke characters. Human relationships were filled with mistrust and denunciations. And yet, people put up resistance and fought for their religion, truth and justice. Prisons, labour camps and camps of the convicted were being filled. In prison jargon such a person was simply called a mukul – a man on death row (from Slovak: muž určený k likvidácii, a man to be destroyed). The first victims died at the hands of executioners or from deadly bullets of border guards. Thousands of people were driven from their own homes by the regime. Where did the strength for resistance come from?

Štefan Paulíny, political prisoner



– imprisonment without court proceedings or based on political trials, placement into camps of forced labour, assignment of recruits into auxiliary technical battalions, torture of innocent victims of state trials during investigation, sentences of long imprisonment, or even the most extreme recourse: execution. Even if the regime moderated during the 1960s and was partially democratised, it furthest persisted on persecutions of its potential opponents and terrorization of wide masses of citizens.

THE REGIME BETWEEN 1968 AND 1989

The occupation of Czechoslovakia in August 1968 stopped the process of "socialism with a human face". The communist regime returned to actual application of Marxist-Leninist ideology and the leading role of the Czechoslovak Communist Party within society. However, it changed its power paradigm, which was reflected in the replacement of direct physical persecution with social victimisation, intimidation of broad layers of society, together with targeted persecution of selected individuals. These methods systematically violated fundamental human rights and religious freedoms. The scale of persecution measures used by the normalisation regime against their real and alleged opponents was immense: from intimidation (interviews with employers, threats of a job loss or sanctions against family members), through direct recourse (job loss, preventing children from studying,

pursuit and interrogations by the State Security), up to imprisonment and state trials. It was only the fall of the communist regime in November 1989 that offered the people a chance to enjoy their fundamental human rights in real everyday life.

COMMUNIST CRIMES IN SLOVAKIA IN NUMBERS

- 71,168 people convicted for political crimes during state trials in Slovakia, of which 51 died in prison
- 8,240 people went to forced labour camps in 1948-1953

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COMMUNIST CRIMES IN SLOVAKIA

One of the main characteristics of communist regimes in the 20th century throughout the world was that they massively violated not only human and religious rights but also their own laws. Slovakia, where the communist regime prevailed between 1948 and 1989, was no exception. It resulted in thousands of innocent people falling victim to a wide range of crimes committed, in fact, by the regime itself.

1940s



February 1948 - Communist coup d'état

1950s



Forced collectivisation led to the breakdown of traditional structures in villages

1960s



Secret bishop Ján Chryzostom Korec after his imprisonment



Map of Forced Labour Camp in Nováky



The Palace of Justice was a place of political trials where people were held in pre-trial custody



Thousands of innocent citizens were victims of political prosecutions



The occupation by Warsaw Pact troops resulted 37 casualties

In twenties, Klement Gottwald, the long-standing representative of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia, said: "Communists travel to Moscow to learn how to scrag the neck of the bourgeoisie." By this statement he made it clear that communists in Czechoslovakia see violence as a common working method similar to the Soviet Union. At the time of WWII communists joined the resistance against fascism. They participated in the preparation of the Slovak National Uprising and together with the Slovak army actively fought against the German occupation. The democratic wing of the uprising aimed at restoring the Czechoslovak Republic. In the uprising communists saw an opportunity to assume the political power after the end of WWII. They were supported by the Soviet agents who were infiltrated in the majority of the partisan groups.

Between 1945 and 1948, during their path to an absolute power monopoly in Slovakia, the communists committed a whole series of crimes which brought unlawfulness into society: abuse of proprietary structures, bolshevisation of army and security parts, thanks to them communists persecuted and tortured their political opponents, until the establishment of labour camps for the politically inconvenient and violence committed during exchange and transport of non-Slovak inhabitants.

THE COMMUNIST REGIME BETWEEN 1948 AND 1968

The coup d'état of February 1948 was a milestone for the regime, which brought all the power to communists. The years from 1948 to 1953 were a period of the worst terror against real and alleged regime adversaries, when violence and unlawfulness became its Alpha and Omega, where all "inconvenient" people became its victims. Communists used violence and lawlessness on the way to gain power. According to the Soviet model anyone who did not share their ideology was considered an enemy. Many participants of the Slovak National Uprising, who were fighting against Nazis alongside the insurgents of the democratic wing, were sentenced to long-term imprisonment.

The brutality of communist power was also manifested in political processes with their own members. In their pursuit to gain absolute power, they also took before the manipulated courts their top officials. For instance, they sentenced to death penalty the prominent communist functionary Vladimír Clementis. One of the communist leaders in the Slovak National Uprising, Gustáv Husák, was sentenced to life imprisonment. The life of Slovak villages was negatively affected by forced collectivisation of agriculture, dissolving the traditional village structures. With great difficulty, farmers abandoned their land and passed it to unified agricultural cooperatives. The regime harshly persecuted those who refused to do so willingly. If imposing unrealistic quotas (obligatory amounts of agricultural products and livestock) did not help to persuade

them, physical and mental violence followed. Thousands of people who refused to join cooperatives were sentenced to prison for long years, sent to labour camps, expelled from their home villages, their children were dismissed from schools or could not study at universities. Slovakia's economic elite was destroyed hand-in-hand with forced collectivisation by the same methods – entrepreneurs and landowners had their private businesses and farms nationalised, while the nationalisation also resulted in a decline of small trade owners. In the 1950s, the regime constantly searched for and "found" internal enemies, which gradually led to major purges amongst intellectuals, such as lawyers, clerks, teachers at schools of all levels and their students. Many were forcefully evicted during the Action B from big towns (especially from Bratislava) and moved out to the countryside. The mill of violence and terror also ground those who helped to first spin it as even high-level communist officials found themselves accused and called members of various "anti-state groups".

The forms of communist crimes against real and alleged opponents varied on a large scale of all possible and available suppression methods: light sanctions such as exclusion from public life, job loss, fines for failed quotas by farmers, education bans for children and family members of the accused, through more harsh limitations of personal freedom, such as eviction of inconvenient people from their permanent residence, up to extreme forms