

February 21, 1948



Klement Gottwald in Prague - photo after the retouch of sentenced Vladimír Clementis

I have just returned from the castle from meeting the President. Today in the morning, I submitted to him my proposal for acceptance of the ministers' resignations who resigned on 20 February of this year and at the same time I proposed to the President a list of people who should substitute for the government and reconstruct it. I would like to inform you that the President accepted all my proposals as they were submitted. Comrades, all discharging letters as well as all letters of appointment are signed by the President and I will countersign them soon.

Speech by Klement Gottwald, Prime Minister and Chairman of the Czechoslovak Communist Party, 25 February 1948

Measures of the Action Committees were measures that were taken based on their proposal or instead of them and they were made in the period from 20 February 1948 until the binding force of this Act and which sought to protect or to secure the people's democratic system or to purify public life; they are rightful, including in cases where they would not be in accordance with the relevant regulations.

Act No. 213/1948 Coll.

The February 1948 events in Czechoslovakia were a logical result of the actions by the Czechoslovak Communist Party-Communist Party of Slovakia, the leaders of which started systematically, even during the Second World War, to prepare to seize power in the state.

Róbert Letz, historian



FEBRUARY 1948

The leaders of the Czechoslovak Communist Party decided that, in accordance with the Soviet instructions, they would establish a totalitarian communist regime in the near future. **The decisive power struggle was the 1948 government crisis** triggered by Minister of Interior Václav Nosek, who appointed only members of his party to the crucial positions in the police corps. As he did not respect the government's decision, some of the communist ministers resigned. However, the social democratic and non-party ministers did not join them so they did not manage to topple the government and accelerate parliamentary elections. Finally, President Eduard Beneš succumbed to the pressure and instead of the ministers who had resigned he appointed the nominees of Klement Gottwald, the chairman of the Czechoslovak Communist Party and Prime Minister. Under normal democratic conditions, a government that does not have a majority in the Parliament could not remain as head of state. **However, this government already relied on the repressive apparatus of the established totalitarian regime.** Members of the Czechoslovak Communist Party seized power also at the local level through the so-called Action Committees, which started to make personal purges nationwide. **The opponents of the communist regime (both real as well as fictitious ones) were persecuted**—ranging from executions to long-term

imprisonment and suppression.

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FEBRUARY 1948: ESTABLISHMENT OF THE COMMUNIST REGIME

The communist coup in February 1948 established a totalitarian regime in Czechoslovakia that lasted 41 years until the Velvet Revolution in November 1989. The leaders of the Czechoslovak Communist party had all power in their hands and opponents of the regime were persecuted. The coup in Slovakia in autumn 1947 preceded the communist coup in Prague.

February 27, 1948

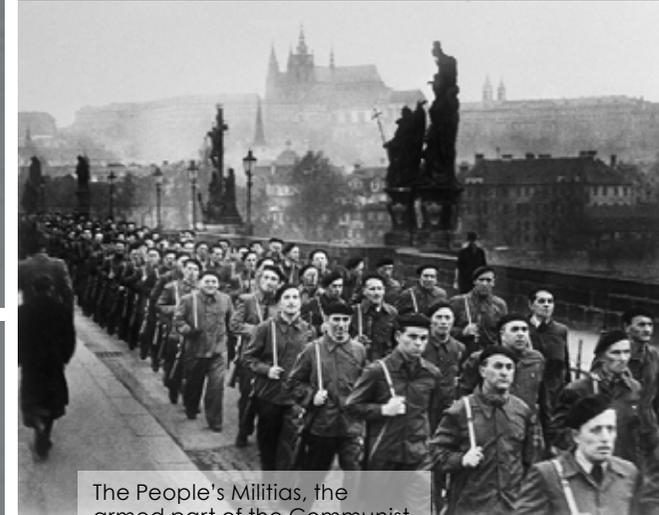


November 20, 1947

After the autumn political coup in Slovakia Gustav Husak makes oath. He was at the head of the Board of Commissioners - Zbor povereníkov



February 1948



The People's Militias, the armed part of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia that took part in the coup d'état

TRANSITION PERIOD 1945-1948

One of the results of the Second World War was the division of Europe into spheres of interests of the Western Allies and the Soviet Union. **Czechoslovakia became a part of the emerging Soviet bloc.** Despite assurance by the Soviet communist dictator Joseph Stalin, it was obvious that it was only a matter of time when a totalitarian regime would be installed in the new Soviet satellites.

The period 1945-1948 in Czechoslovakia was a sort of transitional period that ended with a communist coup. The Soviet influence was very strong in the state and the political system had significant democratic deficits. For example, members of the political system could only be parties that were members of the National Front, which excluded the existence of political opposition. The repressive forces of the state violated human and civil rights and thousands of citizens were unlawfully carted to Soviet gulags. The provisional parliament (Provisional National Assembly) and the new bodies of local authorities (national committees) were established without proper elections. At the beginning, only two Slovak political parties, which emerged from the Slovak National Uprising, were members of the National Front – the Communist Party of Slovakia (KSS) and the Democratic Party (DS). After the dissolution of the

most powerful Slovak political party (Hlinková slovenská ľudová strana – Hlinka's Slovak People's Party), which was the representative of the authoritative regime in 1938-1945, the majority of Catholic voters were without political representation. The situation was resolved by the so-called April Agreement between the representatives of political Catholicism and the predominantly Evangelic leaders of the DS, which led to the **dominant sweeping victory of DS in the 1946 elections in Slovakia. The Czechoslovak Communist party won the elections in the Czech part of the republic and became the strongest party nationwide.**

RESULTS OF ELECTIONS IN THE CONSTITUENT NATIONAL ASSEMBLY IN 1946:

The Czech part of the Czechoslovak Republic:

Political party	Share of votes	Seats in parliament
Communist Party of Czechoslovakia (KSČ)	40,17%	93
Czechoslovak National Socialist Party (CSNS)	23,66%	55
Czechoslovak People's Party (ČSL)	20,24%	46
Czechoslovak Social Democracy (ČSD)	15,58%	37

The Slovak part of the Czechoslovak Republic:

Political party	Share of votes	Seats in parliament
Democratic party (DS)	62%	43
Communist Party of Slovakia (KSS)	30,37%	21
Party of Freedom (SSL)	3,73%	3
Labour Party (SP)	3,11%	2

1947 AUTUMN COUP IN SLOVAKIA

The Communist Party did not want to accept the electoral defeat and decided to resolve the situation with repression. The first step was scrapping the remaining competencies of the Slovak national bodies (the Slovak National Council and the Board of Commissioners – Zbor povereníkov), where the DS held the majority, which was the culmination of the process of a return to the centralist state (the 3rd Prague Agreement). The Democratic Party was to be destroyed. **The police controlled by the communists – the National Security Corps – invented a fictitious anti-state conspiracy** in which also the leaders of the Democratic Party were alleged to have been involved. This was followed by persecutions of DS leaders. The DS was forced to give up its majority in the Board of Commissioners, the majority that had resulted from the outcome of the 1946 elections.