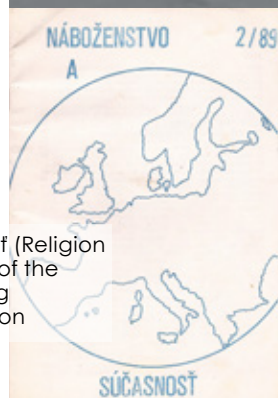


Bratislava nahlas (Bratislava Aloud), title page from 1987



Náboženstvo a súčasnosť (Religion and Present Days) – One of the Christian samizdats during the so-called Normalization

“People [in a totalitarian regime] face a moral dilemma in relation to the law that they cannot resolve unharmed. Disobedience of the law puts them in danger of losing their freedom. Obedience to the law, on the other hand, puts them in danger of losing their inner freedom: personal integrity, vitality and creativity, even in danger of developing a mental disorder.”

Ján Langoš, a member of Civil Disent and the founder of the Nation's Memory Institute, Bratislava Journal, 1988.

“It would be good for the whole of Slovakia if researchers paid more adequate attention to individual chapters and events in our history and provided us with more balanced knowledge of what Slovakia has been through and the consequences of what it has been coping with until today. There has been silence about these issues for fifty years. Historiography does not help people orient themselves in the present if it does not present objective facts about how the present has been made and what it was preceded by.”

Ján Chryzostom Korec, a secret bishop and later a cardinal



Secret bishop Ján Ch. Korec - main representative of Secret Church



Ján Langoš - one of the members of Civil Disent

THE CANDLE DEMONSTRATION AND THE ROAD TO NOVEMBER

On 25 March 1988, in response to the initiative of the World Congress of Slovaks, the Fatima community organized a demonstration **calling for religious and civil rights**, later known as the **Candle Demonstration**. Up to 10,000 people peacefully demanded that the episcopal sees should be populated and religious and civil rights should be upheld. With the assistance of the ŠtB, the police used vehicles, dogs and water cannons in an attempt to disperse the crowd. However, the crowd stayed for the planned 30 minutes. Over 140 people were arrested and prosecuted.

In 1988 and 1989, **Ján Čarnogurský** and **Ján Langoš** published an uncensored, anti-establishment samizdat newspaper entitled Bratislavské listy (Bratislava Journal) and the **Slovak Helsinki Committee** was established under the supervision of **Anton Srholec** SDB.

In the autumn of 1988, the **Movement for Civil Freedom** (Hnutie za občiansku slobodu, HOS) was established and published a manifesto entitled Demokracia pre všetkých (Democracy for Everyone). In Slovakia, its main figures included **Ján Čarnogurský**, **Milan Šimečka**, **Hana Ponická**, **Miroslav Kusý** and **Anton Selecký**. In May 1989 at Bradlo, HOS activists requested the acknowledgement of the positive contribution of General M. R. Štefánik. They later called for a remembrance act for the victims of the August 1968 invasion and the generals of the Slovak National Uprising, **Rudolf Viest** and **Ján Golian**. In August 1989, the regime intervened against them, arresting **Kusý** and **Čarnogurský**. **Ponická**, **Selecký** and **Vladimír Maňák** were

prosecuted, but not arrested. The trial of the so-called **Bratislava Five** was, however, interrupted by the **events of November 1989** that brought down the Communist regime in Slovakia.

NOVEMBER 1989 – THE FALL OF THE COMMUNIST REGIME IN CZECHOSLOVAKIA AND SLOVAKIA

The majority of Slovak dissidents became members of the newly-created revolutionary movements **Verejnosc' proti násiliu** (Public against Violence, VPN) and the Hungarian Independent Initiative (Maďarská nezávislá iniciatíva, MNI) and later the Christian Democratic Movement (Kresťansko-demokratické hnutie, KDH).

WOULD YOU LIKE TO KNOW MORE?

Recommended websites:
www.upn.gov.sk; www.enrs.eu



DISSENT IN SLOVAKIA DURING NORMALIZATION

The dissent movement consisted of people wishing to “live in truth”, defend human and civil rights, protect their personal liberties, criticize the totalitarian establishment and enter into conflict with it.

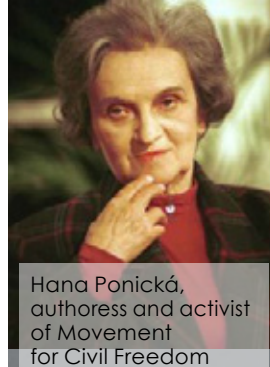
After the suppression of the Prague Spring, the regime's critics were silenced, and the interior ministry and the State Security (ŠtB) began reprisals and oppression. The establishment began trials, especially of those from artistic communities, churches and academic social scientists.



Ján Čarnogurský and František Mikloško – two crucial members of Slovak Christian Dissent



Anton Selecký, member of Movement for Civil Freedom and Bratislava Five



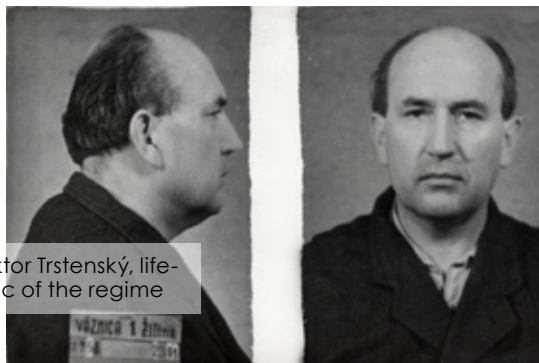
Hana Ponická, authoress and activist of Movement for Civil Freedom

1970s - 1980s



The pilgrimage to Velehrad in July 1985 – a break in the struggle against Communism

(1950s) - 1989



Priest Viktor Trstenský, life-long critic of the regime

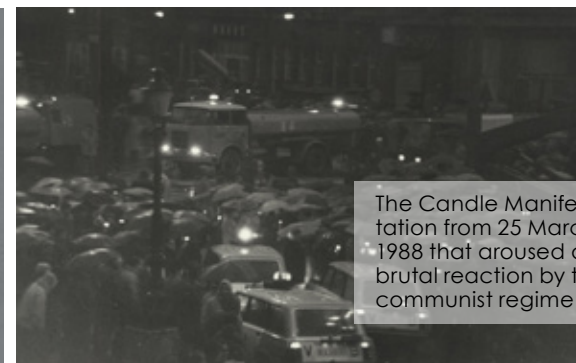


Ján Budaj, representative of civil dissent and one of the leading persons of November 1989



Marcel Štrýko, leading person of dissent in Košice

March 25, 1988



The Candle Manifestation from 25 March 1988 that aroused a brutal reaction by the communist regime

PROTESTS, LIVING IN FREEDOM AND TRUTH

The reprisals led by the establishment provoked criticism, including letters of protest sent by **Alexander Dubček** (1974) and **Václav Havel** (1975). The situation led to the creation of groups that criticized the state for ignoring the law, or which carried out independent activities.

In Slovakia, these groups included the intellectual dissent movement, ecologists, former Communists and **underground church groups and small communities of the apostolate of the laity**, such as Fatima from 1974 and other groups in the regions, led by the secret bishops **Ján Ch. Korec**, **Silvester Krčméry** and **Vladimír Jukl**. Other active members included Ján Čarnogurský, František Mikloško, and Rudolf Fiby.

From 1973, **samizdats** were published including *Náboženstvo a súčasnosť* (Religion and the Present Days), *Rodinné spoločenstvo* (The Family Community), *Kontakt* (Contact), *Trinásta komnata* (The Thirteenth Chamber), *Fragment* and many others. In Slovakia, **secret printing houses** for samizdat literature and periodicals were established. From 1978, "free" literature was smuggled into Czechoslovakia. In December 1983, three smugglers of such literature were arrested: Alojz Gabaj, Tomáš Konc and Branislav Borovský. They were sentenced to several months in prison in 1985. Literature was also smuggled by activists from Protestant churches. This led to the persecution of, for example, Ján Vecan and the priest, Michal Hreško. Several people were persecuted for exporting literature into the USSR, including Rudolf Fiby.

During January 1977 in Prague, the **Charta 77** (Charter 77) document was drawn up. Its supporters in Slovakia included **Miroslav Kusý**. In Slovakia, its Declaration was signed by more

than 40 people. The regime launched an anti-campaign. The anti-Charter campaign oppressions were targeted at Miroslav Kusý, historians Jozef Jablonický and Ján Mlynárik, writer Hana Ponická and two priests, Robert Gombík and Marián Zajíček, whose state pastoral permits were revoked.

REPRISALS

The ŠtB organized various campaigns to paralyze the activities of the dissent movement, such as **Akcia Norbert** (Operation Norbert) targeting several members of the dissent movement, including Ján Čarnogurský, Dominik Tatarka, Miroslav Kusý, Milan Šimečka and Hana Ponická. **Akcia Delta** (Operation Delta) in 1981 saw the arrest of 50 intellectuals and the interrogation of 150. Charter 77 activists protested against the operation. **Secret activities of religious orders** were also targeted by the ŠtB. In 1982, the Czechoslovak operation *Vír* (Whirlwind) organized by the ŠtB led to raids of places where secret members of the Franciscan order operated and many were arrested. 87 leading figures sent a letter protesting against the operation. The last prisoners were granted freedom in 1983.

The judiciary punished mostly Christian activists. Several trials were begun and activists were imprisoned for "sabotaging the supervision of churches". The best-known were **trials of Christian priests** and activists included priest Štefan Javoský in 1975, Jesuit priest Oskar Formánek and Mária Kožárová in 1978, Emília Kesegová (Pastrová) and the priest Jozef Labuda in 1980, Mathias Rompf of the Salesian order in 1981. Other trials included those of František Novajovský and Helena Gondová in 1982, Mária Kotrisová in 1985 and, finally, the trial of the creator of samizdats Ivan Polanský. There were several protests against the trials and these were directed at state authorities.

INSTITUTIONALIZED COURAGE AND PARALLEL POLIS

In 1980, **students** of the Cyrilo-Methodian Faculty of Divinity of Comenius University led a **hunger strike** against the pro-establishment clerical organization *Pacem in Terris* and the interventions of ŠtB in their studies. As a consequence, twelve seminarians were expelled.

A milestone in the confrontation with the regime was the **pilgrimage to Velehrad in Moravia** in July 1985. Tens of thousands of believers called for religious freedom, whistled at the regime's representatives and protested against the abuse of religious rights.

In 1987, the ecologist faction of the dissent movement prepared a highly professional paper on the ecology of the Slovak capital entitled **Bratislava nahlas** (Bratislava Aloud). Its creation was coordinated by **Ján Budaj** and **Mikuláš Huba**. The regime classified this as political activity and prosecuted the authors.

In the autumn of 1987, a number of dissidents and artists published a **declaration on the deportations of Jews** from Slovakia and expressed their regret. This was accepted positively in Slovakia and abroad.

Petitions were a strong instrument for criticism of the regime. A petition with a high number of signatures was the one entitled **Suggestions of Catholics Concerning the Situation of Believers in CSSR**, supported by Cardinal Tomášek, held at the end of 1987 and at the beginning of 1988 thanks to the initiative of Augustín Navrátil. Over half a million people signed the petition, including over 290 thousand from Slovakia. Activities to fight for religious rights in Slovakia manifested themselves in **pilgrimages** to Levoča, Šaštín, Marianka and Nitra with (tens of) thousands of participants.