



Joint agricultural cooperatives (JAC)
as the basis of the Czechoslovak
agriculture

“They said: ‘If Slivka signs, then whole village will sign.’ They wanted to break me down. But they saw, I didn’t. Neither the others, the better ones, efficient peasants. These who were not successful were broken down because of their greed. They were taken in promises – you will have all and the best.”

“Many told me: ‘You should have adapted, you would have had this and that.’ But if again I had to survive the same thing, just so I would do as I did. I do not regret it at all, I stood up against Communism.”

Michal Slivka Sr., peasant



Peasants were rehabilitated and the land
was returned after November '89...

Alojz Kuna
(born 1936)



TESTIMONY

“On 1 September 1952 I started to attend Mining Vocational School in Nováky. Two months later a boy who was from our village, who was also a mining trainee and visited home a Sunday, was the first to tell me: ‘They took your father and put him in prison.’ When I came home I asked my mother how it had happened. This is what she told me: ‘My dear son, in autumn we went to dig the potatoes out with your father. The local National Committee chairman, comrade Mishkolci, came and told us to return home immediately. When we came home, children from the schools and people on the street all watched, as it was like a theatre performance. They let your father stand in the corner, two policemen guarded him and

they took everything.’ My mother told me they even took knives that were to be used for the pig slaughter, plus flour, bread, nuts, our domestic rabbits, they took everything, completely everything. My mother was forty, I was sixteen, my brother was two and my sister was eleven, and when we were leaving, my mother asked them: ‘What shall I give my son to eat when he comes home on Sunday?’ And at that moment the chairman looked at my mother and said: ‘Peg out from hunger, as the dog did.’ This was the answer...”

WOULD YOU LIKE TO KNOW MORE?

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



EUROPEAN NETWORK
REMEMBRANCE AND SOLIDARITY

FORCED COLLECTIVISATION

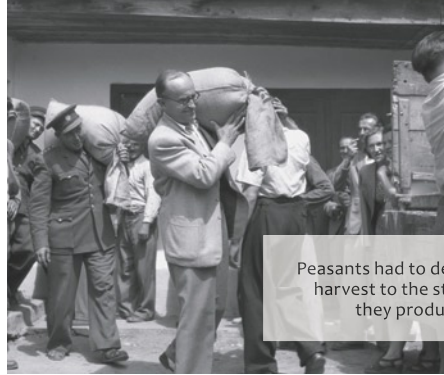
A large group of inhabitants was affected by the forced collectivisation in the 1950s. Peasants and farmers had to give up their land, machinery and cattle for the benefit of established Joint agricultural cooperatives (JAC). The functionaries of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia, who were the main agitators and commission members of the National Committees, first promised people various benefits if they joined the cooperative, but if they refused, they were threatened: “... your children shall be excluded from high schools or universities”, and became victims of various crimes including physical attacks (torturing, beating, investigation of hunger and thirst, drowning in wells...).

After 1945



60 per cent of the population in Czechoslovakia consisted of peasants

1950s and 1960s



Peasants had to deliver more harvest to the state than they produced

1950s and 1960s



Agricultural machinery should increase productivity

1930s



Ukrainian famine

1950s



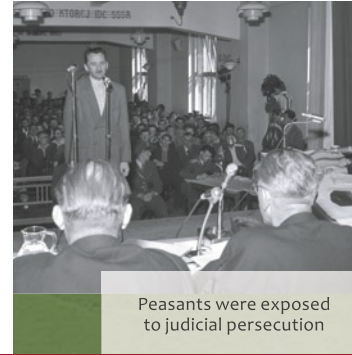
Contemporary newspaper

1950s



Joining Joint agricultural cooperatives (JAC) – ceremonial and “voluntary”

1950s and 1960s



Peasants were exposed to judicial persecution

1950s and 1960s



Contemporary propaganda: JAC – the way to prosperity in the village

THE VILLAGE SHALL BECOME SOCIALISTIC

The attempts to break farmers' resistance are understood as being the main source of violation penetrating the society. Forced collectivisation was a phenomenon implemented in majority of countries under the hegemony of the USSR. Soviet kolkhozy (the name is derived from Russian words kollektivnoye khozyaystvo, i.e. collective management) were used to serve as an example for the agricultural cooperatives. In the USSR the powers of the state and Party over the farmers were regulated by legislation adopted after 1917 and later in 1920s. The laws from 1932 prohibited the farmers to travel out of the territory of the kolkhoz and for the so-called offence of stealing common property the death penalty was imposed. The most radical consequence of forced collectivization, in conjunction with an effort to break the resistance of the Ukrainian people, was famine in Ukraine between 1932–1933, which caused around 6 millions of deaths. In Czechoslovakia, laws were also used against farmers with a clear instruction given by the Communist Party: “To use criminal laws and regulations as an aid to reach so that the villages shall become socialistic.” The aim was clear: to break intrapersonal rela-

tions and to confiscate property; to change the village community into a structure fully controlled by the totalitarian regime. Marek Čulen, the then Commissioner of Agriculture, played an important role in the process of hard collectivisation in Slovakia after 1948. Even A. E. Bogomolov, the then Ambassador of the USSR in Prague, complained about him: “They rely more on putting pressure on the farmers, than convincing them.”

COMPULSORY QUOTAS

Compulsory quotas (part of the crop, meat, eggs etc. had to go to the state) as a indirect form of pressure on peasants had been increased excessively. Security members patrolled and confiscated cropped grain during harvest. Peasants had to hand over much more crop than produced. Not meeting the quotas was understood as economic sabotage and punished.

ACTION KULAK

In 1951 there was also an action organised by the State Security against independent farmers called “Action KULAK”. This was the term used by the Communist propaganda (kulak as a rich

man from the village) to label the farmers who owned more than 15 hectares of land (later even only 2 to 5 hectares). They were often expelled of the villages (from 2,000 to 4,000 peasant families) and many breadwinners were imprisoned, sent to forced labour camps and their sons had to serve their obligatory military service in technical battalions.

HAVE WE COME TO TERMS WITH THE PAST?

After 1989, the land (sometimes only apart) was returned back to its original owners in the process of restitution. Only few managed to continue working as farmers like their grandparents. Nobody was found guilty in a court of forced collectivisation, unlike in Czech Republic, where municipal and party functionaries were and are interrogated, then labelled their co-citizens as ‘kulaks’, and therefore they in fact exposed them and their families to terror and persecution.

COMMUNIST PROPAGANDA

“The kulak does everything to harm; he sabotages and destroys everything, he will not even stop with lies and murders.”