



Memorial of the victims



Commemoration of the liquidation of monasteries in Bratislava



Memorials of the Vyšné Ružby uprising

"There are many monasteries. They're all more-or-less up to anti-state mischief. We have thousand and one reasons to act. We want to gradually concentrate the religious orders together – so that we have them under stricter supervision, under more control, so that they're not as fragmented as they are now."

Klement Gottwald
President of Czechoslovakia
and leader of KSČ (February 1950)

"After the monks were removed from the parish, the library containing 800 to 1000 books remained in the local Slovak Foundation (Matica Slovenská (MS), which expressed interest in them. The suitability or unsuitability of the library's books was ascertained by the church secretary, who selected only 56 books from the whole library for MS. Only classics were deemed as acceptable material. She referred to other books as 'trash' or 'the final poisoning of the souls', as they featured "noble priests and their good deeds." Unwanted books ended up at the Harmenec paper mill used for pulping."

Report on the liquidation of the monastery at Staré Hory



Akvinas Gabura, and the Salesians Andrej Dermek and Ernest Macák, as well as the Blessed Titus Zeman.

RESTORATION OF RELIGIOUS LIFE

The announcement by the General Public Prosecutor's Office of the Czechoslovak Socialist Republic on 29 November 1968 signalled the first attempt to restore the semblance of religious life. Specifically, he declared that there was no legal basis based on which the religious orders could be made illegal. Nonetheless, with the advent of the normalisation period, the crackdowns against religion escalated once again (e.g. Operation VÍR against the Franciscans). Religious life had to wait for the revolutionary events of 17 November 1989 to be truly restored.

MORE ON THIS TOPIC...

Many documentaries have featured the events of the Operation K. Such as 1991's *A Stand Against Faith* (Stát proti víře, director: Angelika Hanauer), and the Nation's Memory Institute's *Shadows of the Barbaric Night* (2010, Tiene barbarskej noci, director Igor Sivák). Related literature includes: *Notes from behind Bars* (Zápisky spoza mreží, Ernest Macák, Salesian), *From the Barbarian Night* (Od barbarskej noci, Ján Ch. Korec, Jesuit), *The Last Villa* (Posledná vila, Vincent Petrik, Jesuit).

DAY OF THE UNJUSTLY PROSECUTED

On 20 October 1993 the National Council of the Slovak Republic adopted Act no. 241/1993 Coll., by which the violent liquidation of religious orders became a memorial day in the Slovak Republic: the Day of the Unjustly Prosecuted. No-one has ever been convicted of forcibly liquidating the religious orders. The Act on Compensation for Victims of Internment was only adopted by the National Council of the Slovak Republic in 2020.

WOULD YOU LIKE TO KNOW MORE?

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



European Network
Remembrance
and Solidarity

.tasr.

CTK FOTOBANKA

BARBARIAN NIGHT

The 'Barbarian Night' of 13 to 14 April 1950 relates to the crackdown on religious life in communist Czechoslovakia. Throughout the country, combined armed forces intervened to send hundreds of monks to internment camps. Those in command referred to this event by the secret codename **OPERATION K** (i. e. the abbreviation of the Slovak word for monasteries – kláštor).

April 1950



Show trial with monks Machalka and com., April 1950

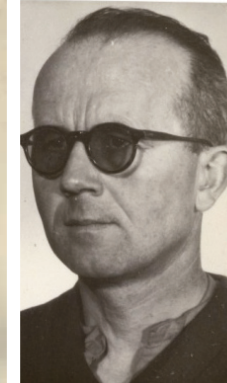


Visitors at a monastery gate

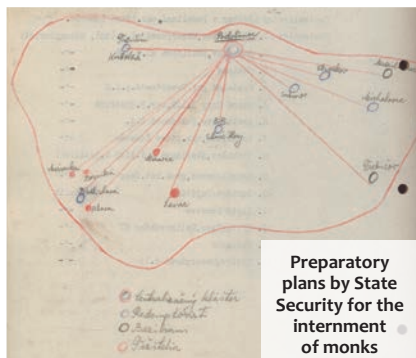


Salesian clerics working at Priebrade mládeže (Nosice)

1950s



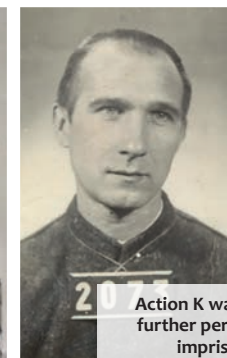
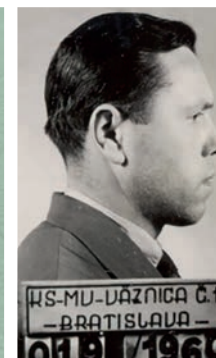
13 April 1950



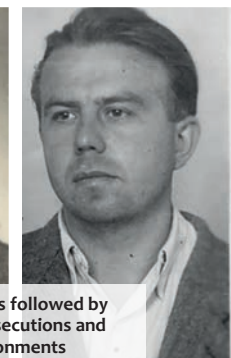
Preparatory plans by State Security for the internment of monks



Podolíneć – centralised monastery with prison regime



Action K was followed by further persecutions and imprisonments



Seventeen male monasteries and congregations remained active after 1948 in Slovakia and their main focus (i.e. charisma) was on charitable, contemplative and education activities. The communist regime sought full control over churches and pursued their subsequent liquidation, as well as the liquidation of religious communities.

In 1949, anti-religious laws were adopted by the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia (ÚV KSČ), which presented its plans to concentrate the monks in the so-called internment (concentration camp) monasteries. The crackdown on monks was preceded by the first show trial, in which ten monks were convicted of treason, espionage, and the preparation of a counter-revolution. Likewise, after the show trial of Machalka et al., the Slovak Redemptorist Ján Mastiliak was sentenced to life imprisonment. The state power portrayed monasteries as bases for resistance and anti-communist activities.

DAYS BEFORE THE CRACKDOWN...

The preparatory phase of the liquidation of religious orders took place at the regional level on Good Friday, 7 April 1950, and was led by the regional commanders of the State Security (ŠtB). Based on their briefing, we know that the telephone exchange was to be occupied immediately after they entered the village, so that access to the bell tower and

siren could be blocked, which lead to the isolation of the director of the National Committee (MNV) to prevent any anti-state local radio transmissions. The post offices were to be occupied by two unit members, whose task was to intercept and block the potential call of the parishioners. Other members were told to monitor the morale of behaviour of the citizens. During the Operation K, motorised divisions and the army were to control the road and rail points of the towns and villages. The crackdowns targeted specific places in Czechoslovakia that were to be removed and detained.

The active units were comprised of the members of the State Security, National Security Corps (today's Police Force), the Army, and the People's Militias. Their support equipment included vehicles, tear gas, batons, automatic guns, and rifles. Each platoon was equipped with a light machine gun. The decision-makers instructed that the crackdown to take place on the night between the 13 and 14 April 1950 at midnight. To uphold its secrecy, the designated commanders were informed of the operation only 12 hours in advance.

HOOR "H"

Upon entering the monasteries, the active units rounded up the monks and informed them of the reason for the crackdown, which was the alleged unlawful activity of their reli-

gious order. The monks were then placed into concentration monasteries with strict prison-like regimes. Throughout Slovakia, 881 monks from 11 religious orders were placed under these conditions during that night. The remaining male monasteries were then occupied on the night between 3 and 4 May 1950. This crackdown impacted 1,180 monks from 15 religious orders and from 76 monasteries. Consequently, in Czechoslovakia, 219 monastic facilities, where 2,376 monks lived, were closed.

The religious population protested against these measures. For example, they protested at the Podolíneć monastery, but they were brutally interrogated and tortured.

THE FATE OF THE MONKS

Those interned recall that Operation K had "a profound impact on personal lives" (Ladislav Lenz). Additionally, they recall the cold and hunger that lead to the death of elderly monks (Andrej Konc).

This crackdown led to further persecutions, imprisonments of monks, emigrations, and illegal activities conducted in the so-called 'secret' or 'underground' church. For example, in January 1951, the Jesuit bishop Pavol Hnilica was secretly ordained. One of the most notable monks of the 'secret' church was the Jesuit bishop Ján Chryzostom Korec, who was forced to work as a labourer, but also the Dominican