

To support their demands, the communists founded People's Militia as a paramilitary organization



1948



Prime Minister K. Gottwald announces the affirmation of communists' demands in Prague

“In autumn 1947 not only doctors Kempný, Bugár and Staško were imprisoned but also numerous people who were labelled as agents of Western democracies and Western imperialists working against the Czechoslovak Republic. In Slovakia, Husák completely reorganized the Board of Commissioners so that the Democratic Party almost lost its majority and decision-making capabilities. There was a wind of change. Nobody knew what was coming... but after October up to February it had become clear.”

Emil Dohnanec,
Secretary of the Democratic Party



communists succeeded – with the contribution of Czech non-communist parties – in pressurising the DP into conceding a disadvantageous compromise. The presidency of the SNR was appointed by the new Board of Commissioners on 19 November – decreasing the number of DP representatives from nine to six. With the DP losing its electoral majority, the communists benefitted by consolidating power in Slovakia. The crisis can also be interpreted as a kind of rehearsal and prelude for February 1948 events, i.e. the communist seizing of state-wide power. The centre of the coup in February was in Prague, even though the communists also used the coup to destroy the Democratic party in Slovakia. The chairman of the Board of Commissioners G. Husák saw the resignation of its ministers in Prague as the resignation of their representatives in the BoC. The events in Prague, especially the general strike, acceptance of the non-communist ministers' resignation by president Beneš and the reconstruction of the government have stirred the waters in Slovakia as well. On the 21st February the People's militia was created as a paramilitary organization of the communist party. Under the pressure of public manifestations, another reconstruction took place in the Board of Commissioners. Members of security forces and the Slovak partisans' union invaded the secretariat of the Democratic party and proclaimed it to be the centre of anti-state activities, which foreshadowed the future

pursuit of its members. Immediately after the coup, the communists started building a totalitarian system, with one of its main integral parts being the removal of actual or suspected opponents, done with specific brutality in the fifties. The reign of the communist regime in Slovakia lasted for 41 years until the Velvet Revolution in November 1989.

WOULD YOU LIKE TO KNOW MORE?

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



European Network
Remembrance
and Solidarity

• tasr •

SLOVAK FEBRUARY

AUTUMN 1947 IN SLOVAKIA

The autumn of 1947 ushered in a coup in Slovak politics. Directed by communist-controlled security forces, under the guise of a trumped up pretext of an anti-state conspiracy against Slovakia – as well as other allegations of the Democratic Party's lead to a political crisis. The Board of Commissioners became Slovakia's key executive body. The Democratic Party lost its majority in the Board of Commissioners that should have belonged to it after the 1946 elections.



The Soviet leader J. S. President of the USA F. and the Prime Minister Britain W. Churchill v architects of the post-W

G. Husák played an important part in the seizure of power in Slovakia as the chairman of the Board of Commissioners



The chairman of the Democratic Party Jozef Lettrich

A manifestation supporting the communists' demands in Bratislava



Europe divided by the Iron Curtain into the communist East (red) and the democratic West (blue)



Edvard Beneš (in the middle), President of the Czechoslovak Republic



Newly appointed Board of the Commissioners, 21 November 1947.



To support their demands, the communists mobilized all public organizations which were under their control

POST-SECOND WORLD WAR DEVELOPMENTS

After the Second World War in May 1945 Czechoslovakia was restored with a Soviet political-orientation – as agreed between Beneš and Stalin in December 1943. In April 1945 in Košice, a new programme which defined the foundations of the new political regime was announced as a result of negotiations in Moscow in March of the same year – the Košice government programme. In Slovakia, legislature was in the remit the Slovak National Council, while the Board of Commissioners oversaw executive power. **Although Czechoslovakia's new regime was termed popular democracy, in practice full democracy was restored neither in terms of civil liberties nor political pluralism.** The government was a National Front coalition of permitted parties – hence it was a political regime with authoritarian elements and with no real opposition.

In May 1946, National Assembly elections were held in Czechoslovakia. After the disbanding of Hlinka's Slovak people's party, as the main representative of the authoritative regime which reigned between 1938 and 1945, Catholic voters (representing the majority) found themselves without proper political representation, but representatives of the mostly evangelic Democratic Party made the so called "April Agreement" with the representatives of Catholicism in Slovakia. In

Slovakia, the Democratic Party (DP) (62%) was ahead of the Communist Party of Slovakia (CPS) (30.34%), the Freedom Party (3.73%), and the Labour Party (3.11%). In Czech, the Communist Party won and became the strongest party in the common state. The CPS was dissatisfied with the Slovak election results and sought ways to reverse the DP's election victory. To this end, under pressure from central government the Third Prague Agreement was signed – which represented significant interference in the competences of Slovak national bodies. Such capabilities were controlled by the Prague government, so that Slovak national authorities essentially became institutions with small competencies a development that also highlighted the interpretative amendment to the Third Prague Agreement. **The communists nevertheless continued to attack the DP with view to hastening its demise.**

'ANTI-STATE CONSPIRACY' IN SLOVAKIA

With view to further weakening the DP, the communist-controlled security service unveiled a fictional anti-state conspiracy in Slovakia implicating DS leaders. The Interior Ministry, led by communist Václav Nosko, filed a preliminary report on the uncovering of this "conspiracy" at a confidential government meeting on 30 September 1947. BThe accused were alleged to have had contacts with Slovak exiles abroad and to have organized domestic anti-

state underground activities. The security forces used torture to secure confessions from the accused.

A pretext for the attack against the Board of Commissioners – where DP had the majority – was also the unfavourable post-war economic situation and summer drought of 1947. Communist-led trade unions, supported by the Union of Slovak Partisans, demanded that the DP commissioners responsible for foodstuff, supply and agriculture should be withdrawn. The communists organized mass demonstrations to support their demands. On 30 October 1947 they convened a congress of factory and work councils that accepted a declaration demanding the resignation of the Board of Commissioners (BC) and the formation of a new board. On the next day CPS commissioners submitted their resignations led by Gustáv Husák, the head of Board of Commissioners as well as interior commissioner Mikuláš Ferjenčík who was formally non-party.

CHANGE OF POWER IN SLOVAKIA

Negotiations between the communists and the DP following the officers' resignations were overshadowed by coercive activities of communist-governed organizations. The orchestrated political crisis in Slovakia ultimately reached the agendas of central government and the nationwide National Front. The