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## SLOVAKIA AND THE COMMUNIST ENTRY TO POWER (AUTUMN 1947 – FEBRUARY 1948)

February 1948 had been preceded by political and social development, which brought to power the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia (KSČ) and disqualified other political parties from further political events. The development of World War II and progressive negotiations between the superpowers suggested that the power in Central Europe will be gained by a superpower state, thus freeing this territory. Battlefields indicated a great possibility of that superpower being the Soviet Union. In 1943, in December, Edvard Beneš signed in Moscow the *Treaty of friendship, mutual help and post-war cooperation between the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics and Czechoslovak Republic*, which set the foundation of both the foreign policy orientation and internal politics of post-war Czechoslovakia. During the follow-up negotiations with the exile leadership of the KSČ in Moscow, a deal about the establishment of the National Front government had been created, as well as the establishment of local national committees with direct elections, and district, provincial and temporary National assemblies based on indirect elections.<sup>1</sup> Czechoslovakia fell into the sphere of influence of Soviet Union, together with the countries of Central and East Europe, and despite reassurances from the Soviet leadership, it had been clear, that it was only a question of time, until a new totalitarian communist regime would be established in the new Soviet satellites. Due to the outcome of the World War II, Soviet troops remained in all of Central and Eastern Europe, with the exception of Czechoslovakia. Czechoslovakia thus represented, in a sense, a paradigmatic model of the so-called a people's democratic regime, which was meant as a transition between the bourgeois and socialist type of state. In the end, Czechoslovakia was the last country in which the communists took power definitively into their own hands.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> M. Barnovský, *Na ceste k monopolu moci. Mocenskopolitické zápasy na Slovensku v rokoch 1945–1948* (Bratislava: Archa, 1993), pp. 11–13.

<sup>2</sup> For more details on the international context and the position of Czechoslovakia in the years 1945–1948 see P. Petruf, “Vývoj zahraničnopolitického postavenia ľudovodemokratického Československa v rokoch 1945–1948” [in:] *Február 1948 a Slovensko*, ed. O. Podolec (Bratislava: Ústav pamäti národa, 2008), pp. 11–49; S. Michálek,

## INTRODUCTION OF A DEMOCRATIC PEOPLE'S REGIME AND SLOVAKIA

The time frame of the years 1945–1948 was a period of a democratic people's regime. Opposition in the country did not exist as free political competition had been forbidden, since the ruling political parties and the president considered the variety of political parties before the War as one of the reasons for “Munich”. The policy of the National Front, that is, the union of communists and non-communist parties, followed the instructions of Moscow, which adopted this concept as a result of the fight against fascism. This concept was promoted until the summer of 1948, when it was definitively buried by the Yugoslav crisis, on the basis of which Stalin proceeded to direct communist control of the states in Central and Eastern Europe. People's democracy in Czechoslovakia in the years 1945–1948 was an authoritarian left-wing regime, also associated with the violation of basic human and civil rights.<sup>3</sup>

The number of political parties had been reduced to the KSČ, Czechoslovak Social Democracy, the Czechoslovak National Socialistic Party, as well as the Czechoslovak People's party in Czech lands, and in Slovakia, to the Communist party of Slovakia (KSS) and the Democratic Party (DS). All parties had been included to the government through the National Front. Civic parties, non-communists, for a power profit, served as a facade for the legalisation of the Communist party and its goals. Under the mottos of national and democratic revolution, national cleansing, and the foundation of a new social order, new possibilities had been opened to solve the issues of society inside of the communist concept of demolishing bourgeoisie power from its positions and to realise “Lenin's conception” of the socialist revolution.<sup>4</sup>

On 5 April 1945, the first plenary meeting of National Front government of Czechs and Slovaks (NF), declared their Košice program. This anchored the system of the National Front, without the possibility for real opposition, as well as other articles that had been brought to life.

The most significant of which had been the recognition of the relationship of Slovaks and Czechs as equals. Article IV of the Košice program had been denoted by Klement Gottwald as the “Magna Carta” of the Slovak nation, and the representative of the Slovak National Council, Ladislav Novomeský said: “The SNR (Slovak National Council) states with satisfaction, that the government of the NF (National Front) fully respects the status of the SNR as of the body of legislative, governing and executive power in Slovakia, and pledges to endeavour the securement of Slovak legislative and constitutional institutions

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“Osemnásty Bruamire Klementa Gottwalda (Postoj amerického kongresu k februáru 1948)” [in:] *Február 1948 a Slovensko*, ed. O. Podolec (Bratislava: Ústav pamäti národa, 2008), pp. 50–62; P. Mulík, “Slovenské špecifiká nastolenia komunizmu s analógiou v stredoeurópskom priestore a na Balkáne” [in:] *Február 1948 a Slovensko*, pp. 84–106.

<sup>3</sup> R. Letz, “Politický systém na Slovensku 1944–1948 (Charakteristika režimu, jeho základné trendy vývoja k februáru 1948)” [in:] *Február 1948 a Slovensko*, pp. 109–126.

<sup>4</sup> *Idem*, “Február 1948 zo slovenskej perspektívy”, *Securitas imperii* 2013, no. 22 (01), p. 10.

in the future constitution of ČSR (Czechoslovak Socialist Republic). It means, that the Slovak nation will be the master in its own country, as it will be the Czech nation in Czech countries, however the mutual matters of the joint state will be decided by the democratic agreement of both nations”<sup>5</sup>

A similar statement was later presented by Edvard Beneš on 7 May 1945, at a manifestation in Bratislava.<sup>6</sup>

The legislative power in Slovakia laid in the Slovak National Council (SNR), while the governing and executive power had been performed by Board of Commissioners (ZP), which consisted equally of representatives of KSS and DS until May 1946. The Prague government, at first, had no impact on the situation in Slovakia. However, when the SNR rejected the national validity of the president's decree on national administration, the Prague government decided on 14 May to invite the SNR Presidency to talk to them in order to discuss some fundamental issues of government and SNR cooperation.<sup>7</sup> The Slovak leaders hoped to discuss the issue of the federation of the republic, which they called for in their resolution of March 1945. The negotiations between 31 May – 2 June 1945 finally resulted in the so-called “first Prague agreement”, under the name of *Agreement of Czechoslovak Government and the SNR Presidency, on the status and powers of the Slovak national authorities*,<sup>8</sup> which defined the concept of national affairs, falling within the competence of the national legislative council. This agreement enshrined the political autonomy of Slovakia with elements of federalism – the SNR was declared as the bearer of state power in Slovakia – while its powers were limited and the national authorities were entrusted with powers in twenty areas, which represented almost the entire state agenda.<sup>9</sup> The KSS had definitively abandoned the idea of federation.<sup>10</sup>

In October 1945, a non-elected Temporary National Assembly was established, tasked with the temporary exercise of legislative power until the election of the Constitutional National Assembly. The main objective was to prepare for the elections in 1946 and to carry out ordinary legislative activities.<sup>11</sup>

In practice, it turned out that the first Prague agreement had several gaps. The agreement defined common issues too generally, which led to conflicts of competence between the ministries of Prague and the commissioners in Bratislava. There was no cooperation between the President's legislative activity, the Temporary National Assembly

<sup>5</sup> K. Fremal, “Programové dokumenty slovenského hnutia odporu o postavení Slovenska v obnovené Československé republice” [in:] *Slovenské štátoprávne snahy v dvadsiatom storočí*, ed. J. Bobák (Martin: Matica slovenská, 2018), p. 262.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 263.

<sup>7</sup> K. Kaplan, *Pravda o Československu 1945–1948* (Prague, 1990), p. 167.

<sup>8</sup> J. Beňa, “Slovenská otázka v Česko-Slovensku (1944–1992). Slovenská národná štátnosť – genéza, evolúcia, dosiahnutie” [in:] *Slovenské štátoprávne snahy v dvadsiatom storočí*, p. 209.

<sup>9</sup> O. Podolec, “Politická kríza alebo prevrat? Ústavnoprávne aspekty politických udalostí na Slovensku na jeseň 1947” [in:] *Slovensko a Európa v roku 1947*, ed. M. Svrný (Banská Bystrica: Múzeum Slovenského národného povstania, 2018), p. 112. See in detail the Prague agreements, along with their full wording. P. Mulík, “Štátoprávne riešenie slovenskej otázky a postavenie Slovenskej národnej rady v rokoch 1945–1948” [in:] *Slovenské štátoprávne snahy v dvadsiatom storočí*, pp. 265–287.

<sup>10</sup> K. Kaplan, *Pravda o Československu*, p. 169.

<sup>11</sup> M. Barnovský, *Na ceste k monopolu moci*, p. 58. See J. Beňa, “Slovenská otázka”, p. 207.

and Slovak National Council. It was necessary to consolidate these legal norms and return some of these competencies to the president. From 9 April to 11 April 1946 in Prague, negotiations were held between representatives of the Prague government, the SNR Presidency and the Board of Commissioners, which resulted in a second Prague agreement. It is officially called the Protocol on the Meeting of the Government of the Czechoslovak Republic and the Slovak National Council of 11 April 1946. This protocol restricted the competencies of the Slovak national authorities in personnel matters and transferred them to the President of the Republic, united both supreme courts into one and strengthened the position of the national authorities in economic matters.<sup>12</sup> The appointment of the Board of Commissioners and the convention of the SNR meeting remained within the SNR Presidency's competence and the renewal of presidential rights in Slovakia took the form of a political agreement. The proposal to subordinate the commissioners to ministries did not pass. The commissioners remained responsible to the Board of Commissioners, which was responsible to the government for the fulfilment of national laws. The second Prague agreement was an addition and clarification of the first one.<sup>13</sup>

In May 1946, the first post-war elections were held in Czechoslovakia. After the dissolution of Hlinka's Slovak People's Party, as the representative of the authoritative regime of 1938–1945, the decisive mass of the Catholic electorate found itself without political representation. Both sides in Slovakia, whether KSS or DS, tried to gain the support of these Catholic voters. Finally, the DS succeeded, whose predominantly evangelical leaders founded the so-called April agreement with representatives of political Catholicism in Slovakia.<sup>14</sup> In this period, before the elections, two parties were formed in Slovakia, the aim of which was to lure part of DS's electorate – the Labour Party (SP) and the Freedom Party (SSL). The agreement with the Catholics helped the Democratic Party to win the Slovak elections (62% of the votes), followed by the Communist Party of Slovakia (30.34%), the Freedom Party (3.73%) and the Labor Party (3.11%). Slovak society was markedly religious, mostly agriculturally oriented, with the rural population and Catholics voting for the Democratic Party. The communists gained their voters mainly from workers and in cities. Over time, however, the communist electorate declined.

In the Czech Republic, the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia, which became the strongest party on a national scale, had won, and its chairman, Klement Gottwald, formed a Czechoslovak government.<sup>15</sup>

The Slovak Communist Party was not satisfied with the results of the elections in Slovakia and looked for ways to reverse the victory of the Democratic Party. The Czechoslovak Communists in Prague were also dissatisfied.<sup>16</sup> Possible measures were

<sup>12</sup> O. Podolec, "Politická kríza alebo prevrat?", p. 112.

<sup>13</sup> P. Mulík, "Štátoprávne riešenie slovenskej otázky", pp. 275–279.

<sup>14</sup> K. Kaplan, *Pravda o Československu*, p. 178.

<sup>15</sup> R. Letz, "Február 1948", pp. 14–15.

<sup>16</sup> V. Široký even announced at the meeting of the Slovak communists: "It is not important how we evaluate the results, but as our side responds to election results. Our line must be fighting" (M. Macháček, *Gustáv Husák* (Prague, 2017), p. 211).

already under consideration on 26 May. One alternative was the liquidation of the rest of the competencies of the Slovak national authorities, where the DS, based on elections, was supposed to form the majority, the KSS became rough centralists. Another alternative was to attack the DS through so-called conspiracy, discredit it, and reverse the election result. Finally, it was decided to bind the DS certain conditions on its entrance to the government.<sup>17</sup> Before the government and the Czech parties negotiated with the DS about their participation in the government, the Czech National Front discussed the requirements that DS should meet. At the meeting on 12 June 1946, the following points were discussed: 1) the position of the Slovak national authorities in relation to the national government and the national parliament; 2) the cleansing of Slovakia from nationalistic/Nazi elements; 3) the trial and punishment of Tiso; 4) the behaviour of the Slovak Catholic clergy. We assume that the points of that agenda were based on the propositions of the Commission of the Ministry of the Interior, which in June 1946 issued its stance on complaints about the election campaign of Democratic Party.<sup>18</sup>

Despite the turbulent debate between the communists and the other parties (particularly on the first and fourth point), the agreed points were adopted. On 14 June 1946, the nationwide National Front met to discuss a new Prague deal. All Czech parties and three Slovak parties – KSS, SP and SSL, stressed the need for changes in the definition of the Slovak national authorities' competences. The DS objected that it went against the Košice program. The Slovak National Front dealt with a new agreement on 17 June 1946. The third Prague agreement adopted by the National Front on 27 June 1946 and approved by the government (28 June) and SNR (16 July), entailed a radical interference with the competences of the Slovak national authorities. The SNR continued to carry out legislative work on matters that were not reserved for the National Assembly, but a follow-up by the government on this work had been established. The Slovak national authorities no longer possessed power, but were only the executors of the decisions of the Prague national authorities in Slovakia.<sup>19</sup> The Board of Commissioners were appointed by the SNR Presidency again, but after prior governmental approval. The Board became the executive body of the government in national affairs. At the same time, the individual responsibility of the commissioners had been set by the minister, whereby the government, or individual ministers could also exercise their powers in Slovakia. The Slovak national authorities had become *de facto* powerless institutions under the rule of the Prague government. During the years 1945–1946, the SNR, as a body that was carrying out the legislative, governing and executive power in Slovakia, had been transformed a few degrees lower when it came to the subordination of the Czechoslovak government in Prague.<sup>20</sup>

The Democratic Party did not find support in the Czech civic parties either. The third Prague agreement represented a triumph of centralism, Czech nationalism and the revival

<sup>17</sup> M. Barnovský, *Na ceste k monopolu moci*, pp. 100–105.

<sup>18</sup> The entire report of the Ministry of Interior Commission was published in K. Kaplan, *Únor 1948. Komentované dokumenty* (Prague, 2018), pp. 410–411.

<sup>19</sup> O. Podolec, "Politická kríza alebo prevrat?", p. 113.

<sup>20</sup> J. Beňa, "Slovenská otázka", p. 213.

of Czechoslovakism.<sup>21</sup> Despite this, the communists continued to attack the Democratic Party with the intention of its destruction. The trial of the former President of the Slovak Republic, the priest Jozef Tiso, also served to further weaken the Democratic Party. The trial began in December 1946 and, despite efforts for a more lenient verdict, ended with Tiso's death sentence in April 1947. The communists assumed that in the April agreement the Democratic Party had promised Slovak Catholics that Tiso would not be sentenced to death. Despite their efforts, this verdict did not fatally weaken the Democratic Party, nor did it lead to its disintegration.<sup>22</sup>

In March 1947, Gustáv Husák, chairman of the Board of Commissioners, wrote to Gottwald that it was necessary to change the party-political structure in Slovakia, which he described as a key issue for communist politics.<sup>23</sup> Despite their independent status – the Communist Party of Slovakia – the communists in Slovakia represented in reality only a “branch” of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia.<sup>24</sup>

### AUTUMN CRISIS IN 1947 IN SLOVAKIA

In the autumn of 1947, the communists created a governmental crisis in Slovakia to discredit the Democrats and try to break their party. The communist-controlled State Security (VII Department of the Commission of Interior) had proclaimed the discovery of a fictitious anti-state conspiracy in Slovakia, into which the leaders of the Democratic Party might have been involved.

The situation in Slovakia was also influenced by the attitude of Moscow when, in mid-June 1947, the head of the Foreign Policy Department of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Bolsheviks, P. Guljajev, came to Czechoslovakia to draw attention to the “reaction” of the Democrats, their influence within the population and contacts with foreign countries. He also pointed out the weak position of the Slovak communists and criticised the top Slovak communists Július Ďuriš and Viliam Široký for not paying enough attention to party affairs.<sup>25</sup> These two communist leaders held high political positions and worked in Prague – Ďuriš was the Minister of Agriculture and Široký was the Deputy Prime Minister of the Czechoslovak Government, so they dealt with party affairs in Slovakia less intensively.

On 19 May 1947, the Central Committee of the Communist Party (UV KSČ) ordered the Minister of the Interior Nosek to initiate an investigation of the so-called illegal groups in Slovakia, to compile a list of “nationalists” in leading positions and to force the DS to

<sup>21</sup> K. Kaplan, *Pravda o Československu*, p. 184; R. Letz, “Február 1948”, p. 15.

<sup>22</sup> See in detail for example M. Macháček, “Přátele z bratislavských vináren? Komunisté, proces s Jozefem Tisem a kauza Alexandra Macha” [in:] *Slovensko a Európa v roku 1947*, pp. 51–60.

<sup>23</sup> M. Syrný, *Slovenskí demokrati '44–48. Kapitoly z dejín Demokratickej strany na Slovensku v rokoch 1944–1948* (Banská Bystrica: Múzeum Slovenského národného povstania, 2010), p. 324; *idem*, “Jesenná politická kríza na Slovensku v roku 1947” [in:] *Február 1948 a Slovensko*, p. 130.

<sup>24</sup> J. Pešek, “Priebeh februárových udalostí na Slovensku” [in:] *Február 1948 a Slovensko*, p. 178.

<sup>25</sup> M. Macháček, *Gustáv Husák*, pp. 229–230.

remove them.<sup>26</sup> There were alleged to be a number of illegal groups in Slovakia, whose intention was to restore and maintain Slovak statehood. Their main activity was issuing and disseminating various anti-state leaflets and prints. These groups included Vesna (Headquarters of Slovak Nationalists), Vesna 2-East, the Bačkor Group in Bratislava, Štefan Chalmovský and his group in Topoľčany, and so on. In the summer and autumn of 1946, 48 people from the above-mentioned groups have been arrested by State Security and, according to the exposition of the Commissioner of Interior Mikuláš Ferjenčík in the SNR of 14 April 1947, security forces uncovered six illegal groups during 1946. State Security overestimated these illegal groups and assumed that they had some control centre that coordinated their activities. But these groups were differentiated. Neither exile group had an overview of the scope and activity of illegal groups.<sup>27</sup> The Democratic party downplayed the activities of illegal groups, claiming that they do not pose any threat to the republic and distanced itself from them. The Party denied any link between DS, underground and emigration. This opinion was also originally held by Mikuláš Ferjenčík, when in April 1947, he declared at the SNR meeting that the emigration activity in Slovakia was based on several irresponsible individuals and fanatics.<sup>28</sup>

According to the latest research, anti-state activity was centred around the three groups that had been under surveillance. The largest was Anton Meltzer and his group. This group consisted of both people living in and around Žilina, as well as two groups of students – Banská Bystrica and Nové Zámky, and other people, including several military persons.<sup>29</sup> In May 1947, the Slovak Action Committee was established in Bratislava, with its Headquarters in Slovakia. This group represented the second centre, also referred to as Otto Obuch and his group. The third group, the most homogeneous, but still unconfirmed by archival research, consisted of important representatives of the DS, centred around two General Secretaries of DS, Ján Kempný and Miloš Bugár.<sup>30</sup> It suited the communists for the attack on the DS, even supporting them with agents – provocateurs. Already in the summer of 1947, they began preparing against the DS using State Security, which concentrated compromising materials on DS leaders. On 11 June 1947, in the National Front of the Czechs and Slovaks, the communists presented their Report on the Security Situation in Slovakia, whose authors were Gustáv Husák and the chief pro-communist officers of the VII Department of the Commission of the Interior. In the process, they accused the DS of contacts with foreign countries, especially with the representatives of the Slovak political exile, demanding the abolition of the April Agreement and the resignation of the Catholic Secretary-Generals of DS, Ján Kempný and Miloš Bugár. The DS objected to the allegations and asked for an explanation of every single charge against its representatives.<sup>31</sup>

<sup>26</sup> K. Kaplan, *Pravda o Československu*, p. 187.

<sup>27</sup> M. Barnovský, *Na ceste k monopolu moci*, pp. 186–188.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 192.

<sup>29</sup> M. Medvecký, “Tzv. slovenské sprisahanie a jeho vykonštruovanie pracovníkmi Povereníctva vnútra” [in:] *Slovensko a Európa v roku 1947*, p. 97.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>31</sup> K. Kaplan, *Únor 1948. Komentované dokumenty*, p. 1315; M. Syrný, “Jesenná politická kríza na Slovensku”, p. 142.

The revelation of this “anti-state conspiracy” was preceded by the activation of the partisans, who on 18–19 August 1947, at the conference, drew ultimate demands for the cleansing from political and public life of the “compromised” people of the past regime, along with a list of people and a deadline of 20 September 1947. At the same time, they demanded to use weapons against Bandera. The communists allowed that.<sup>32</sup>

Anton Meltzer began to be more active at the end of 1946, probably in connection with the trial of Jozef Tiso. He gradually approached several people, but the whole conspiracy activity was quite amateur and chaotic. They were soon discovered by the military Defence Intelligence, forwarding their information to the VII Department of the Commission of the Interior in Bratislava. The Commission of the Interior in mid-September 1947 announced the revelation of an anti-state conspiracy. According to State Security, illegal groups had contact with foreign countries and the Slovak emigration, they had attempted to restore the Slovak Republic and were prepared for the assassination of Beneš. All of these cases were fabricated by State Security itself.

During the arrests, several DS district officials were detained, as well as one of a regional significance.<sup>33</sup> The other two groups were constructed even more audaciously than the first group. An important role in the process of the group around Kempný and Bugár was played by the courier Rudolf Komandera, who was arrested by the Interior Commissioners in Bratislava on 17 August 1947.<sup>34</sup> Komandera, as a representative and a courier of the Slovak Revolutionary Resistance, visited Slovakia several times in 1946–1947, while in 1946 he tried to address Kempný and Bugár with the aim of establishing political contacts. He chose these two representatives of the DS, because they had been attacked and accused of their sympathies with nationalism. Both refused to talk to him, emphasising the need to build Slovakia at home, not abroad. Komandera made his next trip to Slovakia in July 1947. He met with Kempný and Bugár again, but both refused to negotiate with him, considering him to be an agent provocateur and reported this meeting to the police. After his arrest, the communist machinery used his person and forced him to change his initial testimony to the disadvantage of Bugár and Kempný, who were supposed to show their consent to his emigration and activities.<sup>35</sup>

The third group was represented by Otto Obuch and his group, people accused of the creation of the Bratislava group, the Headquarters of the Slovak Action Committee in Slovakia. Otto Obuch was a press officer of Deputy Prime Minister Jan Ursíny and worked for a while for the Propaganda Office. He knew Rudolf Dilong<sup>36</sup> personally, and he did not interrupt this relationship, even after his emigration. It was at his initiative that he should have been involved in promoting emigration, represented by the persona of Ferdinand

<sup>32</sup> M. Barnovský, *Na ceste k monopolu moci*, p. 193.

<sup>33</sup> M. Medvecký, “Tzv. slovenské sprisahanie”, pp. 98–99.

<sup>34</sup> Rudolf Komander's newspaper was published by the Institute of Nation's Memory in Bratislava in 2012. Unfortunately, it only captures the years 1945–1947, after his last trip to Slovakia and his arrest (R. Komandera, *Denník 1945–1947* (Bratislava, 2012), p. 679).

<sup>35</sup> M. Medvecký, “Tzv. slovenské sprisahanie”, pp. 101–102.

<sup>36</sup> Rudolf Dilong (1905–1986) was a Slovak poet, Catholic priest, and a member of the Franciscan Order. During the World War II he was a military priest. In 1945 he emigrated to Rome, in 1947 to Argentina and then in 1965 to the USA. He was a functionary of the World Congress of Slovaks.



Ďurčanský.<sup>37</sup> After being arrested, he confessed to his activities and even defamed Jan Ursíny himself, but has been assumed that he was forced to do so under physical pressure. The inspection of Ursíny's Cabinet did not produce any results.<sup>38</sup> Interior Minister Václav Nosek, at a secret meeting of the government on 30 September 1947, submitted a preliminary report on the unveiling of the Bratislava group, the Headquarters of the Slovak Action Committee in Slovakia. Based on the detainees' statements, state security constructed another anti-state group, which allegedly had a direct foreign connection. A total of more than 700 people were arrested and the case was heavily publicised.<sup>39</sup> On 5 November Nosek said that the scope of the conspiracy was akin to the preparations of the first fraction of the Republic in 1938–1939.<sup>40</sup> The confessions of arrested persons were obtained through physical torture – a fact pointed out by representatives of the Democratic Party.

State Security used the situation to particularly compromise Ursíny and accuse him of anti-state activity.<sup>41</sup> Despite the failure of compromising Ursíny, he had to resign as a Deputy Prime Minister. Previously, DS stood up for Ursíny and suggested to Beneš to leave Ursíny on vacation, until the matter was investigated. He answered "Ursíny must leave". The DS President, Jozef Lettrich, tried to negotiate with Gottwald: Ursíny will resign, the matter will be settled, and abdication will be understood as a cessation of criminal proceedings. At the same time, a government commission will be created to investigate the matter. Gottwald agreed and Ursíny thus resigned on 30 October 1947. The Commission never met. Finally, on 27 January 1948, the Interior Minister announced that he would file a criminal complaint on Ursíny the following day. On 23 February 1948, the Ministry of the Interior issued a report stating that the headquarters of the State Security Service (ŠB) had filed a criminal complaint against Ursíny. On 18 March 1948 the Constituent National Assembly gave its consent for prosecution and on 29 April Ursíny was sentenced to 7 years in prison. Otto Obuch was sentenced to 30 years. Together with 14 other accused persons, they were sentenced to a total of 99 years in prison.<sup>42</sup> In October 1964, the Supreme Court in Prague annulled the sentence for Ursíny.<sup>43</sup>

The Slovak Communist Party also took advantage of the poor economic situation after the war, the extremely dry summer of 1947, and the fact that Kornel Filo of the DS was the head of the Food and Supply Commission, therefore they accused the entire party of negligent supply. Trade unions and partisans demanded for Filo to be removed from his post. The summer of 1947 was characterised by drought, which led to paralysis

<sup>37</sup> Ferdinand Ďurčanský (1906–1974) was a Slovak lawyer, politician, journalist, and pedagogue. He also was a representative of Hlinka's Slovak People's Party, a minister in the Slovak Autonomous Government and the Government of the Slovak Republic (1939–1945). In March 1945 he emigrated abroad to Rome, Italy. In 1947 he was sentenced to death by the National Court. In 1952 he moved to Munich. In exile, he established the Slovak Action Committee, later renamed the Slovak Liberation Committee.

<sup>38</sup> M. Medvecký, "Tzv. slovenské sprisahanie", pp. 103–105.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 97.

<sup>40</sup> M. Barnovský, *Na ceste k monopolu moci*, p. 195.

<sup>41</sup> M. Syrný, *Slovenské demokrati '44–48*, p. 330.

<sup>42</sup> B. Kinčok, *Politické procesy na Slovensku v rokoch 1948–1954* (Bratislava, 2019), p. 67.

<sup>43</sup> M. Barnovský, *Na ceste k monopolu moci*, pp. 201–202.

of the supply system.<sup>44</sup> Similarly, they accused Martin Kvetko, who was the head of the Agriculture Commission, of sabotaging the land reform.<sup>45</sup> The Slovak communists organised mass demonstrations against these commissioners. On 21 September 1947, a nationwide conference of delegates of partisans took place. It demanded the punishment of the so-called traitors, the withdrawal of those who diverted from the anti-fascist line and the representation of resistance forces on the National Front.<sup>46</sup> A day later, the Slovak National Front met to accept the demands of the resistance fighters. The third point of the resolution said: “The National Front agrees that in high political positions (MPs, commissioners, SNR members and leaders in national committees), only those who have not been compromised during the former fascist regime and who have a positive relationship to the Republic and to the political, economic and social achievements of our liberation, may be present. If the representatives of the resistance forces submit any objections to a political party against any person, that political party, after examining the material, will exclude or refer the person to the NF commission...”<sup>47</sup>

Only Rudolf Fraštický, Martin Kvetko and Milan Polák from DS participated on the approval of this third point, because at that time, the meeting of the Executive Committee of the DS was held. The leadership of KSS decided to escalate the cleansing campaign and organise mass events. A resolution of its Presidency, on 11 October formulated the campaign’s goal: “[...] to change the whole political structure, that is the composition of the Board of Commissioners and other bodies of the people’s power. In the context of further investigations, we seek: a) for the exclusion of the DS from the government or b) to impose conditions for the participation of the DS in the government or c) its dissolution.”<sup>48</sup>

On 30 October 1947, factory and employment councils convened to accept a declaration, requesting that the Board of Commissioners resign and the creation of a new one. On the following day, four communist deputies resigned, as well as the chairman of the Assembly of Commissioners, Gustav Husák, and the interior commissioner, Mikuláš Ferjenčík (non-party). Husák announced to the Presidency of the Slovak National Council and to the Prime Minister Klement Gottwald in Prague, that the Board of Commissioners is incapable of performing its role and that he considers this announcement to be the demise of the entire Assembly. Of course, DS representatives protested the resignation, as the resignation did not concern their commissioners, who formed the majority in the ZP.<sup>49</sup> A new crisis started and did not end until 19 November.

On 31 October, the Slovak National Front met with the representation of all parties and constituents, except the Democratic Party. The Slovak National Front took note of the report on the resignation of the Board of Commissioners, acknowledged the need for its reorganisation and instructed Husák to begin negotiations. On the same day, however, the

<sup>44</sup> K. Kaplan, *Pravda o Československu*, p. 187.

<sup>45</sup> He writes in detail about supply problems and the use of the situation by the communist forces against democratic commissioners (M. Syrný, “Jesenná politická kríza na Slovensku”, pp. 134–137).

<sup>46</sup> *Idem*, *Slovenské demokracie 44–48*, p. 334.

<sup>47</sup> M. Barnovský, *Na ceste k monopolu moci*, pp. 210–211.

<sup>48</sup> *Ibidem*, pp. 210–211.

<sup>49</sup> K. Kaplan, *Pravda o Československu*, p. 188; M. Macháček, *Gustáv Husák*, p. 231.

Democratic Party announced that its commissioners had not given up their positions, and therefore the demise of the entire Board of Commissioners could not be discussed. The DS considered the resolution of the Slovak National Front to be invalid. The DS gradually abandoned its position, especially because of its uncompromising stance to remain alone in the fight against communist pressure, without the support of the nationwide National Front. In this period, cooperation and coherence between the civic parties did not exist. On the contrary, the Czech civic parties also opposed the DS in fear of separatism. The isolated DS did not have enough strength to defend itself and only succeeded in summoning three larger meetings of DS sympathisers in November 1947 in Bratislava, Zvolen and Košice.<sup>50</sup> On 3 November, the National Front met with the representatives of the DS, who agreed with the reconstruction of ZP, from the viewpoint of the exchange of persons, but without change to the party-political structure. The DS also promised to cancel the April Agreement. But the deal had never been sealed.<sup>51</sup> On 5 November, the issue of the political crisis in Slovakia came to the agenda of the government meeting, which also heard reports of a “counter-state conspiracy” in Slovakia by Václav Nosek and Mikuláš Ferjenčík. The communists suggested that the government authorise the Prime Minister to start negotiations on the establishment of a new Board of Commissioners.<sup>52</sup> Gottwald had been negotiating in Bratislava for three days (8–10 November), but he could not solve the crisis. On 9 November, the KSS demanded that no political party should have a majority position in the ZP, with a representation of small political parties and so-called nonpartisan organisations. The DS submitted its statement to Gottwald in writing: the ZP must be composed solely of political parties and based on election results. Small political parties should have their representatives in the governmental and executive bodies in Slovakia, and the DS will send respectable persons to the ZP.

The following day, both sides dispensed with their demands, KSS did not insist on the representation of national organisations anymore, abandoning their original claim that the Commissionership of Agriculture and the Nutrition Commission would fall to them, and accepted Gottwald’s suggestion that they would be taken by small parties. The DS no longer insisted on proportional representation, it agreed that the small parties would gain seats at the expense of them. They could not agree on the judiciary commission, that the communists wanted to be able to complete the “anti-state conspiracy”, but which the DS did not want to release. The DS did not want to renounce the Commission of Agriculture or Land Reform. At the SNR Presidency meeting, on 10 November, Gottwald wanted to change the third Prague agreement to the effect that the government could, under certain conditions, recall and appoint the ZP. KSS agreed, DS not. Gottwald did not solve the crisis.<sup>53</sup>

The crisis was finally discussed at the meeting of the National Front on 17–18 November 1947. Finally, the representatives of the Democratic Party were compromised. The DS abandoned three commissions – of health, post and law – and had to change the

<sup>50</sup> R. Letz, “Február 1948”, pp. 15–16.

<sup>51</sup> M. Syrný, *Slovenské demokrati* ‘44–48, p. 336.

<sup>52</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 337.

<sup>53</sup> M. Barnovský, *Na ceste k monopolu moci*, pp. 214–215.

commissioners of Agriculture and Land Reform, Alimony and Supply. The Commission of Justice was to be administered by the expert Andrej Buza. The KSS had to replace the commissioner of industry and commerce, against which the DS protested. On 19 November, the Presidency of the Slovak National Council appointed a new Board of Commissioners, in which no political party had a majority. The number of representatives of the Democratic Party dropped from 9 to 6, the KSS continued to have 4 commissions as before, two small parties obtained one commission, and two ministries (of interior and justice) were to be managed by experts (non-partisans).<sup>54</sup> The DS lost the majority that it gained in elections and the entire Board of Commissioners its legitimacy. Despite the efforts of the communists, however, there was no open split within the DS, and attacks against the party in fact united its political leaders. The Czech civic parties also acknowledged, after the autumn crisis in Slovakia, that the DS did not jeopardise the unity of the state and that their nationalism was outweighed by the belief that it was necessary to stop the power campaign of communism.<sup>55</sup>

The communists in Slovakia were, in the words of Gustáv Husák, who coordinated the whole autumn process against the DS, “quite disappointed, we said: we did this work, and nothing came out of it”. Husák should have got himself into a conflict with Klement Gottwald, since Gottwald considered this conflict in Slovakia as merely a general test of the nationwide seizure of power in Czechoslovakia and refused to start the nationwide offensive of the communists. From a political point of view, Slovakia was better prepared for a communist coup than the Czech Republic at the end of 1947.<sup>56</sup>

## FEBRUARY 1948 IN SLOVAKIA

In March 1946, Gottwald claimed, that the political and economic reforms that took place after the liberation were steps towards socialism, but this would not be achieved by the Soviet type. He explicitly stated that the dictatorship of the proletariat in Czechoslovakia would not be established, but Czechoslovakia would apply its own path to socialism, which meant, first and foremost, dominance of the state apparatus by the communists and, above all, of power ministries – the Ministry of Interior and the Ministry of Defence.<sup>57</sup>

The communists in Czechoslovakia wanted a decision before the elections, planned for 1948, as were preparing to take over power. Gottwald wanted to clarify the process of how to achieve this also during his stay in the High Tatras in the villa at Štrbské Pleso, where he stayed from 23 January to 4 February 1948. Gustav Husák, who had also been present at this meeting, left a message about it: “He was formally studying a five-year plan, but actually he was putting together his thoughts on this twist and I was there with him

<sup>54</sup> O. Podolec, “Politická kríza alebo prevrat?”, p. 114.

<sup>55</sup> K. Kaplan, *Pravda o Československu*, p. 189.

<sup>56</sup> R. Letz, “Február 1948”, p. 17.

<sup>57</sup> K. Kaplan, *Únor 1948. Komentované dokumenty*, p. 18.

for 10 days. So, I was very well informed about what the things were, he didn't know well, through which moments it will go, but so he was putting it together, how it should be".<sup>58</sup>

The political situation in February 1948 was affected by three controversial issues: the adjustment of public and civil servant wages, new land reform and security issues. At a government meeting on 10 February, a proposal of the communists and the Central Council of Trade Unions (ÚRO) for salary adjustment, did not go through. Two days after, the Board of Directors of the ÚRO, decided to convene a meeting, scheduled in Prague on 22 February. On 12 February, the Agricultural Committee of the Parliament refused to discuss the outline of the law on the permanent adjustment of the ownership of agricultural land with the communists. It was supposed to work as proposed by the Social Democrats. For this reason, the communists convened a congress of farmers commissions on 28–29 February in Prague. The dispute on safety was permanent. The communists did not want to withdraw from the power control positions and just when this issue was discussed, on 13 February 1948, eight officers and commanders, non-communists, of the National Security Corps (ZNB) in Prague were reassigned on the basis of an order issued by the ZNB Provincial Commander.<sup>59</sup> Subsequently, the civic parties asked for the order to be revoked, which the government approved, in spite of the communist votes. At a government meeting on 17 February the National Socialist, People's and Democratic ministers were not willing to discuss other issues until this resolution was met, and on 20 February 12 ministers resigned with the expectation that the communists would either retreat or call for new government elections. They were worried about a potential union of the social democrats with the communists, that might have happened on 20 February at a rally of factory councils. They also assumed that the Social Democrats would also submit to their demise. Although the Social Democrats refused the offer from Gottwald to form a majority government, they did not resign. Gottwald therefore insisted that Beneš accept the resignation of the given ministers.<sup>60</sup>

On 20 February, the Presidiums of ÚV KSČ and ÚV KSS issued a joint statement on the situation, in which they noted that the three political parties had thrown themselves out of political life by turning into a *disruptive opposition*. At the same time, the communists began to organise demonstrations as an instrument of pressure. On 21 February, at the Old Town Square, Gottwald introduced the communist's solution to the crisis, calling for the creation of action committees that should "purify public and political life from the reactionaries".<sup>61</sup> Action committees were to be established in towns, municipalities, factories, and social organisations, and they should have removed all opponents of the KSS from social, political, economic and social life. On 22 February, a rally of factory commissions supported the communist's resolution and called for the resignation of the ministers. On the same day, in the evening, Beneš announced to the Minister of Justice, Prokop Drtina, that he was skeptical about the situation and that he would have to accept

<sup>58</sup> R. Letz, "Február 1948", p. 18.

<sup>59</sup> M. Barnovský, *Na ceste k monopolu moci*, p. 234.

<sup>60</sup> M. Syrný, *Slovenské demokrati '44–48*, pp. 346–347.

<sup>61</sup> For more details on the issue of action committees in Slovakia (M. Barnovský, "Akčné výbory – nástroj nastolenia mocenského monopolu a pofebruárovej očisty 1948" [in:] *Február 1948 a Slovensko*, pp. 438–457).

the resignation on 23 February. However, at a meeting with the national socialist and people's parties, Beneš changed his mind and promised not to accept the resignation.<sup>62</sup>

Minister Július Ďuriš evaluated the situation in Slovakia on 10 February 1948: "Slovakia is still weak, not seen by our own – but the tide of time takes it there too". According to him, Slovak communists lacked in combativeness compared with the centre in Prague. Slovak conditions in February 1948 could be characterised as provincial and dependent on developments in Prague.<sup>63</sup> The development of crisis in Czech territory is well known and mapped. Although the Presidency of the Democratic Party disagreed with the resignation of its ministers, they did, on 20 February, join the Czech civic parties in their activities. Subsequently, the same Presidency approved the action of its ministers.

The government crisis had been brought to Slovakia on purpose.<sup>64</sup> Klement Gottwald sent Viliam Široký to Slovakia. He was supposed to coordinate the actions of the Slovak communists with the Prague center to achieve a coup.<sup>65</sup> On 21 February, the leadership of the Communist Party of Slovakia qualified the resignation of the Democratic Party ministers in Prague (Mikuláš Franek, Štefan Kočvara, Ján Lichner and Ivan Pietor) as an act by which representatives of this party opposed the popular democracy, thus also excluding themselves from the Board of Commissioners. It called for action committees to be built and the partisan and workers forces (militia) to be armed. Gustáv Husák, as the chairman of the Board of Commissioners, wrote letters to the democratic trustees, with which he deprived them of their duties with this reasoning: "the dismissal of members of the government should also be regarded as the demise of representatives of the Democratic Party in the Board of Commissioners", because "the Board of Commissioners administers the majority of its powers as an executive body of the government and ministers".<sup>66</sup>

This step was clearly unlawful, since only the Presidency of the Slovak National Council could recall or appoint the commissioners, a fact that Husák was well aware of as a lawyer. On 23 February, the Presidency of the Slovak National Council opposed the deposition of the Democratic Party commissioners, but the communist leaders deliberately abstained from its meeting. The SNR Presidency stated, "that the Board of Commissioners keeps legally in existence, since it was appointed by the Presidency of the Slovak National Council on 19 November 1947, after the previous approval of the Government of the Republic".<sup>67</sup> On this day, the DS commissions had been occupied with the assistance of the security forces. Husák himself took over the Agriculture Department from Jozef Styk,<sup>68</sup> and after 26 February took over the interior commission from non-partisan Mikuláš

<sup>62</sup> *Idem, Na ceste k monopolu moci*, p. 238.

<sup>63</sup> R. Letz, "Február 1948", p. 20.

<sup>64</sup> J. Pešek, "Priebeh februárových udalostí na Slovensku", p. 179.

<sup>65</sup> R. Letz, "Február 1948", p. 25.

<sup>66</sup> M. Barnovský, *Na ceste k monopolu moci*, p. 240.

<sup>67</sup> Slovenský národný archív Bratislava [Slovak National Archive] (hereinafter: SNA), fond Úrad Predsedníctva Slovenskej národnej rady (fund Office of the Presidency of the Slovak National Council), škat. 7, inv. č. 23, Mimoriadne zasadnutie Predsedníctva Slovenskej národnej rady dňa 23. februára 1948 (Extraordinary Meeting of the Slovak National Council on 23 II 1948).

<sup>68</sup> K. Kaplan, *Únor 1948. Komentované dokumenty*, pp. 160–161.

Ferjenčík, who refused the communist offer to participate in the new government.<sup>69</sup> The most significant difference between the Czechs and Slovaks was the fact that while in Prague the government crisis was more or less dealt with formally by parliamentary means, in Bratislava it was an aggressive act that violated laws and the constitution.<sup>70</sup>

The Slovak Union of Partisans, headed by the communist Karol Šmidke, was already active in the days leading up to this. On 20 February they even formed a partisan headquarters, to which over 3,600 partisans were subject. It was headed by the Secretary-General Samuel Faľan. Of these, a substantial part, more than 1000, came to Bratislava to support the position of the Slovak communists and to lead the crackdown on the Democratic Party. The partisans were armed, and they also put pressure on DS officials and supporters.<sup>71</sup>

The culmination point of the political crisis in Slovakia was 23 February. Július Ďuriš arrived to Bratislava on the night of 22 and 23 February and Gottwald instructed him to lead the following events of the coup in Slovakia, giving him precise instructions on how to proceed.<sup>72</sup> Mostly, it was the division of commissions of the Democratic Party, the internal purge of commissions, leading of demonstrations, the arrest of not only the top representatives of the Democratic Party but also their supporters. The so-called action trio had been created, composed of Ďuriš, Široký and Husák, who became the main actors of the coup in Slovakia.<sup>73</sup> The leadership of the Democratic Party had more or less resigned, especially when, after meeting with Beneš, they saw that he would not risk an open conflict with the communists.<sup>74</sup> On 23 February, the Central Secretariat of the DS in Bratislava was occupied by about forty members of the National Security Corps and Partisans led by Juraj Špitzer. Already before that, on 22 February 1948, pro-communist typesetters in Slovak Grafia, refused to print out the main paper of DS called Čas.<sup>75</sup> This left the DS without the possibility of addressing its supporters and mobilising its voters. On 24 February, Husák wrote in a report to Gottwald about the situation: "There is a peace in Slovakia, nothing against us, things go in a good direction".<sup>76</sup>

On 25 February, Beneš finally accepted the resignation of ministers and signed the appointing decrees of new governmental members. Out of 24 members, there had been 12 communists, including the Prime Minister Klement Gottwald and Antonín Zápotocký as the representative of Trade Union. Slovakia had been represented only by 5 members – Viliam Široký, Július Ďuriš and Vladimír Clementis for KSS, for Party of Freedom by Vavro Šrobár and by opposition member from DS, Ján Ševčík. On the same day in the evening, a preparatory committee of the Slovak National Front Action Committee

<sup>69</sup> M. Macháček, *Gustáv Husák*, p. 234.

<sup>70</sup> J. Pešek, "Priebeh februárových udalostí na Slovensku", pp. 181–182.

<sup>71</sup> In detail, the question of partisans, their movement and involvement in the autumn crisis of 1947, but also in February 1948 events dealt with M. Lacko, "Najhorlivejší pomocníci komunistov (Sväz slovenských partizánov a udalostí na Slovensku v rokoch 1945–1948)" [in:] *Február 1948 a Slovensko*, pp. 519–556.

<sup>72</sup> R. Letz, "Február 1948", p. 28.

<sup>73</sup> M. Macháček, *Gustáv Husák*, p. 236.

<sup>74</sup> M. Syrný, *Slovenské demokrati '44–48*, p. 349.

<sup>75</sup> *Ibidem*, pp. 348–349.

<sup>76</sup> R. Letz, "Február 1948", pp. 30–31.

was appointed from the representatives of political parties and social organisations in Bratislava. The DS was represented by “members of the opposition group”: Milan Polák, Jozef Lukačovič, Jozef Mjartan and Jozef Kyselý. Of course, the Party of Freedom and Social Democracy was also represented. This meeting was also attended by representatives of the Slovak Trade Union Council, the Unified Union of Slovak Farmers, the Union of the Slovak National Uprising, the Union of Slovak Partisans, the Union of Anti-Fascist Prisoners, the Association of Foreign Soldiers, the Union of Slovak Youth and the Union of Slovak Women.<sup>77</sup> The Committee instructed Husák to start discussing the amendment to the ZP. At the same time, the Presidency of the Slovak National Council approved the removal of commissioners of the Democratic Party on 23 February, adopted the resignation of Mikuláš Ferjenčík and dismissed Andrej Buza. On 6 March, eight new members were appointed by the Board of Trustees. Of the 14 members, 8 were communists, including the chairman (Husák). Members of the KSS also included two commissioners representing the resistance forces and trade unions (Július Viktory and František Zupka). Democratic Party Action Committee received two seats – Jozef Lukačovič and Jozef Mjartan, and the Freedom Party and Social Democracy just one chair each – Pavol Blaho, Ján Bečko.<sup>78</sup> The Democratic Party’s Central Action Committee did not take place until 28 February, when it became clear that the Democratic Party had become a member of the Central Action Committee of the National Front. The DS Action Committee consisted of the following members: Ján Ševčík, Milan Polák, Anton Granatier, Jozef Mjartan, Jozef Lukačovič and Jozef Kyselý.<sup>79</sup>

The then British Consul in Bratislava, John A. Grant, reported to Prague after 8 March 1948, that the coup in Slovakia was due to Husák’s personality even more precisely and quickly than in the Czech lands.<sup>80</sup> In Slovakia, the only opponent of the communists, the Democratic Party, came apart even faster than the Czech civic parties. It was the result of the fall of 1947 and the constant pressure of the Communist Party and the resistance forces against the leaders of the Democratic Party.<sup>81</sup>

The reports of the Commission of the Interior, which were sent to Prague, also inform us about the situation in Slovakia after the communist coup. They noted that the situation was calm, public rallies for the new government were mass-attended and peaceful, individual organisations set up their own action committees to act against the citizens who “embezzled the people’s democratic concept”. The situation stabilised and DS officials, if not joined by the communists, had fallen into lethargy and resignation.<sup>82</sup>

<sup>77</sup> SNA, fond Ústredný Akčný výbor Slovenského národného frontu (fund Central Action Committee of the Slovak National Front), škat. 4, inv. č. 11, Zápisnica z ustavujúcej schôdzky Prípravného akčného výboru Slovenského národného frontu (Minutes of the constituent meeting of the Preparatory Action Committee of the Slovak National Front).

<sup>78</sup> M. Barnovský, *Na ceste k monopolu moci*, p. 245.

<sup>79</sup> SNA, fond Ústredný Akčný výbor Slovenského národného frontu (fund Central Action Committee of the Slovak National Front), škat. 61, č.j. 30.

<sup>80</sup> M. Macháček, *Gustáv Husák*, p. 237.

<sup>81</sup> J. Pešek, “Priebeh februárových udalostí na Slovensku”, p. 185.

<sup>82</sup> K. Kaplan, *Únor 1948. Komentované dokumenty*, pp. 428–430.



Slovakia thus experienced two Februaries, a small one in the autumn of 1947 and a large one in 1948. The first was devastating and the second liquidating for the Slovak political scene.<sup>83</sup> During the events of February 1948, Slovakia remained passive and in vain, fully under the control of the Communist Party of Slovakia and its armed forces, factory guards or the Union of Slovak Partisans. Already during 1947, the communists had established departments of National Security in central and eastern Slovakia, which were formed to prevent the penetration and crossing of Ukrainian Insurgent Army (UPA) units through Slovakia. On this basis, part of Slovakia was occupied militarily and this prevented more active resistance to the communists' seizure of power in February.<sup>84</sup>

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<sup>83</sup> R. Letz, "Február 1948", p. 34.

<sup>84</sup> See for example T. Řepa, "Přesun jednotek UPA přes Československo v kontextu počátku studené války v roce 1947" [in:] *Slovensko a Európa v roku 1947*, pp. 123–137; M. Šmigel, M. Syrný, "Prechod oddielov Ukrajinskej povstaleckej armády územím Československa do Západného Nemecka v roku 1947 (z hľadiska vyšetrovania štátnobezpečnostných orgánov ČSR)" [in:] *Slovensko a Európa v roku 1947*, pp. 138–152.

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## Slovakia and the Communist Entry to Power (Autumn 1947 – February 1948)

The study describes developments in Czechoslovakia from the liberation from Nazi rule to the definitive takeover of power by the communists. It focuses mainly on Slovakia. It

brings a view to the most important circumstances that determined the political scene in Slovakia. The author briefly mentions the successive reduction of power of Slovak national organs through the three Prague agreements. He captures political developments in Slovakia and the struggle between the Democratic Party and the Communist Party of Slovakia. The study also focuses on the autumn crisis in Slovakia in 1947, which led to the defeat of the Democratic Party. The so-called anti-state conspiracy, fabricated by State Security through violence and torture, was a major means of curtailing the power of the Democratic Party. The events of February 1948 and the final victory of the communists in Czechoslovakia were also reflected in Slovakia. The Slovak communists illegally deprived the leaders of the Democratic Party of their powers and, more peacefully than in the Czech lands, took control into their hands.

#### KEYWORDS

Slovakia, Communists, Autumn crisis, Democratic Party, February 1948

### **Słowacja a zdobycie władzy przez komunistów (jesień 1947 – luty 1948)**

Artykuł opisuje rozwój wydarzeń w Czechosłowacji od wyzwolenia kraju spod władzy nazistowskiej aż po całkowite przejęcie władzy przez komunistów. Skupia się głównie na Słowacji i przedstawia spojrzenie na najważniejsze okoliczności, które zadecydowały o kształcie słowackiej sceny politycznej. Autor zwięźle opisuje kolejne ograniczenia uprawnień słowackich organów państwowych wprowadzane na podstawie trzech porozumień praskich. Ukazuje rozwój sytuacji politycznej w Słowacji oraz zmagania między Partią Demokratyczną a Komunistyczną Partią Słowacji. Artykuł skupia się na jesiennym kryzysie w Słowacji w 1947 r., który skończył się pokonaniem Partii Demokratycznej. Ważnym sposobem na ograniczenie władzy Partii Demokratycznej stał się tzw. spiszek antypaństwowy sfabrykowany przez państwowe służby bezpieczeństwa z użyciem przemocy i tortur. Luty 1948 r. i ostateczne zwycięstwo komunistów w Czechosłowacji znalazły również odbicie w Słowacji. Słowaccy komuniści bezprawnie odebrali prerogatywy komisarzom z Partii Demokratycznej i przejęli władzę, choć odbyło się to w sposób bardziej pokojowy niż w Czechach.

#### SŁOWA KLUCZOWE

Słowacja, komuniści, kryzys jesienny, Partia Demokratyczna, luty 1948

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