

SUMMARY

Anti-communist demonstrations in Czechoslovakia in 1953

Pavel Marek

In both Czech and general history, the year 1953 is one of the milestones of the development after the Second World War. The building of socialism in the Soviet bloc led to its first general crisis, marked by upheavals in political and economic fields as well as by open expressions of discontent of the population calling for regime change. Symptoms of destabilization also appeared in Czechoslovakia. The prelude to mass demonstrations, strikes and disorders, caused by the currency reform, was formed by protests in response to the campaign accompanied by the removal of monuments, busts and plaques commemorating and symbolizing T. G. Masaryk, the first Czechoslovak president and a co-founder and creator of the democratic Czechoslovakia. In Prostějov, the resistance of the population to his discrediting turned into a mass protest against the removal of the statesman's statue-monument. On 10 April 1953, several thousand people gathered around the remains of Masaryk's monument in the main square and in front of the Town Hall to attack the offices of the Municipal National Committee and to destroy the symbols of communist power in its interior. The representatives of the power only managed to restore peace at night, after the intervention of the armed forces. The drastic monetary reform, which deprived the entire population of their savings, became a new impetus for mass protests against the regime. Beginning on 1 June 1953, the monetary reform was accompanied by protests, especially in industrial plants, which became relatively large in scale and which resulted in a series of demonstrations, strikes or production stoppages. In several places, especially in Pilsen, Prague, Bohumín and Strakonice, the protests turned into street disorders connected with a number of excesses. Their participants not only criticized the monetary reform, but also called for free elections and a return to democracy. The analysis of events in Pilsen, which saw the largest protests as a result of the participation of workers from the former Škoda Factory (renamed V. I. Lenin Factory), showed that they were spontaneous demonstrations, i.e. a mass explosion of discontent the aim of which was not to take over power over the town. However, Prague's communist elite viewed them as a prepared operation, and believed that it was organized by the "class enemy", "reactionaries" (seen as the former members of non-communist parties, especially the Social Democrats), and members of the petty bourgeoisie deprived of power and wealth after 1948. As in the case of Prostějov and Pilsen events, the participants were severely punished, and both judicial and non-judicial repression was applied.

The year 1953 in South Bohemia – the population’s response to some major events

Jiří Petráš

For citizens of Czechoslovakia, the year 1953 saw many fatal events. In the early fifties, numerous villages in the Czech borderland were destroyed as part of the expansion of the forbidden border zone. This drastic step affected, for example, Rapšach and the nearby villages of Nová Ves near Klikov (Najdorf) and Kunšach. The actual act of resettling the unreliable population was planned to start on 25 May 1953, and it was supervised in the villages by the Regional Resettlement Commission. Other dramatic events took place in the country, in connection with the collectivization of agriculture (e.g. in the traditional farming village of Plástovice). The most common reason for the persecution of local farmers by the state was failure to meet the mandatory quotas. On the one hand, the state needed regular and sufficient supplies for the population, but, on the other hand, the quotas were used in the fight against private farmers as part of the collectivization process. Farmers did not or, more precisely, could not meet these quotas for a number of reasons (farm labourers leaving after the war, bad weather, etc.). In some places, Local National Committees proposed mitigation of punishment or alternative solutions, confirmed the failure to meet the quotas as described by the punished farmers in their appeals, and even pointed to the interest of the village. The monetary reform introduced in 1953 was a traumatic event for the national community. The situation in the region was closely monitored by both the Public Security Service and the State Security Service at that time. However, the number of strikes and their active participants was not as high, so we cannot speak of any mass resistance of the population. Furthermore, it is far from truth that the number of strikes and participants was higher in large industrial cities – see the example of České Budějovice, Písek, Tábor and Jindřichův Hradec. The most dramatic situation occurred in Strakonice and Vimperk, where the army had to intervene.

Involvement of Czechoslovak Security Services in the preparation and implementation of the monetary reform in 1953

Milan Bárta

The monetary reform in Czechoslovakia in 1953 was the culmination of a series of reforms in the countries of the Soviet bloc. It was largely prepared and implemented, in cooperation with the bodies of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia and state authorities, by the repressive apparatus controlled by the Ministry of National Security. The apparatus consisted of a non-uniformed secret police known as the State Security Service, a uniformed riot police known as the Public Security Service, the People’s Militia, composed of armed workers dedicated to the Communist Party, and the Border Guard and Interior Guard Services, responsible for surveillance of the

state border and important buildings within the country. The leaders of these forces were informed of the planned monetary reform in the evening of 29 May 1953 at a meeting held in Prague, and then they set up their own exchange centres (however, at these centres, money was exchanged under the same conditions as elsewhere). The State Security Service was tasked with the monitoring of the situation among the population – with the help of a network of secret agents. The Public Security Service, supported by the People’s Militia, was mainly responsible for patrolling the streets and monitoring the exchange centres. The whole operation was led by the main officials of the State Security Service, with Public Security Service commanders appointed as their deputies. Communists were concerned about potential local and limited public disorders organized by “class enemies”. Instead, many places saw strikes and work stoppages that locally turned into anti-communist demonstrations. The largest protests took place in Pilsen and Ostrava, where the local Security Services and the party apparatus failed to suppress them, and the crisis was not stopped until the arrival of reinforcements from other regions, including troops of the Czechoslovak Army. The initiators and main participants were tried, and even more people were punished out of court (transferring to heavier and less paid jobs, pay cuts, expelling students and teachers from schools or preventing students from studying, dismissals, evictions, etc.). Protests accompanying the monetary reform and developments in neighbouring countries drew the attention of the communist leadership to the possibility of large-scale unrest, or even an armed uprising. The monetary reform helped to overcome economic problems of the regime in the early 1950s, and Czechoslovakia was spared major effects of the crisis of the communist system in 1956, which, however, resulted in more significant problems linked to the deteriorating economic situation in the 1960s.

Hungary in 1956 – From socialist reforms to a national uprising

Jan Adamec

The study aims to analyze the crisis of the Hungarian Communist regime in 1956. It begins with the internal party struggle between Prime Minister Imre Nagy and First Secretary Matyás Rákosi in 1953–1955; this created a potentially explosive situation, with the divided and quarrelling party bodies unable to rule the country effectively and control key instruments of power, such as the press or the secret police. Nikita Khrushchev’s destalinisation initiative in 1956 triggered a new wave of conflicts between Rákosi’s supporters and those that favored more or less radical changes of the system. The demise of Rákosi and the installation of Ernő Gerő as his successor in July 1956 only encouraged dissatisfied elites within the Petofi group to criticize the party and challenge its monopoly on power. The crisis within the Communist Party was then deepened by the emotionally charged reburial of László Rajk, a former minister of the interior tried and executed during a show trial in 1949, and coincided with grave economic shortages and rising dissatisfaction in the countryside. The installa-

tion of Władysław Gomułka as a member of the leadership of the Polish Communist Party at the end of October encouraged Hungarian students to organize demonstrations of support that, on 23 October 1956, grew into mass riots against the regime. New agents that then played a key role in the events in question entered the political arena. Firstly, the Soviet army intervened on behalf of the Hungarian Communist leadership; however, it failed to restore order or suppress the mass movement. Secondly, dozens of guerrilla-like insurgent groups fought enthusiastically against the Soviets. The article argues that the insurgent groups and revolutionary committees pushed a radical political agenda (national independence, multiparty system, anti-Soviet fight) and thus made it increasingly difficult, even impossible, for the newly appointed Prime Minister Nagy to reign in the conflict and negotiate a “Polish scenario” with the Kremlin. Khrushchev and his comrades contemplated postponing the use of military force for a brief period of time; however, they were then alarmed by the radicalisation of anti-Soviet sentiments within the Hungarian population and, under pressure from the Chinese Communists, opted for a massive intervention and the reinstallation of a loyal and openly pro-Soviet government and the resurrection of the already collapsed communist system. The drama of the Hungarian Uprising continued when the shattered armed groups of insurgents were replaced by trade union bodies and factory revolutionary committees in the resistance against Kádár’s newly installed regime until the end of 1956.

Gdańsk 1970 – unpunished crime and fight for the memory

Sławomir Cenckiewicz

The study summarizes the events associated with workers’ protests in Gdańsk in December 1970, after the Polish communist government radically increased the prices of basic food. The Gdańsk events were part of a tragic context – workers’ protests and the subsequent massacre of protesters by military and police forces, led by the highest representatives of the Polish Communist Party – in the streets of an urban area consisting of three major Polish cities known as the Tricity (Gdańsk, Gdynia, Sopot). The end of 1970 also saw the resignation of Władysław Gomułka from the leadership of the Polish Communist Party, and thus also of the Polish communist state. When Gomułka came to power in 1956, the public hoped that he could improve the unsustainable situation and liberalize the Stalinist regime. People believed in “a little stabilization”, but it soon became apparent that these were illusory expectations – on the contrary, Gomułka’s policy led to “a little destabilization”. Gomułka managed to “survive” events in 1966 and 1968, involving mass protests against the communist government, but as a result of the protests in December 1970, caused by the deterioration of the economic situation, he was replaced by Edward Gierek. The immediate cause of the December events was a rise in prices announced to the public shortly before Christmas – for example, the price of meat was increased by 17.6%, flour by 16.6%, jam by 36.2%, groats and cereals by 20–30%, and building materials and solid fuels

(wood, coke and coal) by 10–25%. Communists expected outbreak of protests – the army, security forces and secret services were on alert. On 8 December 1970, before the announcement of the price increase, General Wojciech Jaruzelski, the Minister of National Defence, issued an order *regarding the rules of cooperation between the Ministry of Defence and the Ministry of the Interior in the fight against hostile activity, ensuring public order, security and defence preparation*. A day later, an analogous decree *to ensure public order and security* was issued by General Kazimierz Świtała, chief of the Ministry of the Interior. The strike of the V. I. Lenin Shipyard employees in Gdańsk began on 14 December 1970, gradually joined by the employees of other factories – the next day there were about 10–15 thousand protesting people, who also attacked offices of the communist administrative bodies and destroyed police vehicles. Senior party members and commanders of security forces arrived in Gdańsk, and special police forces using combat vehicles, water cannons and chemical means were deployed against the demonstrators. At the same time, the politburo of the Polish Communist Party had a meeting, giving an instruction to use firearms and to shoot at legs. Commanders and officers in the place subsequently issued orders to use live ammunition, and the centre of Gdańsk turned into a battlefield – 20,000 demonstrators were faced by 5,000 members of the armed forces. The final result was tragic – 7 demonstrators were killed, hundreds of injured people were taken to hospitals, and 500 people were arrested. The strikes, which had spread to other towns (including Gdynia and Elbląg), continued, but as early as 18 December the forces deployed in Gdańsk managed to force the protestors to stop the strike. According to the police data, 2,300 people (of which 1,543 in Gdańsk) were arrested and 119 were taken into custody in January 1971 in connection with the December events. A special group was established within the Gdańsk secret police (SB), operating until 1973; its 7 operating teams were charged to monitor the Gdańsk factories and to prepare detailed “elaborations” of people who participated in the protests (2,300 people were registered, 1,114 of whom were “operatively elaborated”). These people were dismissed from their jobs, or even forced to move out of the town. Along with the operations of the aforementioned special group, the Gdańsk SB prepared a broader operation called “Autumn 1970”, which was conducted from 1970 to 1978; about 3,300 people were registered and monitored as part of the operation. However, the tradition of “December 1970” became an important part of the identity of Gdańsk inhabitants and formed the basis of the later anti-Communist movement in the Tricity. Beginning in December 1978, regular meetings were held at the Gdansk shipyard to commemorate the December events; in August 1980, the erection of a memorial to the victims was finally approved – the memorial was unveiled in December of the same year, and it became one of the symbols of the struggle for national restoration against the evil posed by the communist regime.

Pamät' národa

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ZDRUŽENIE KATOLÍCKYCH DUCHOVNÝCH PACEM IN TERRIS

GUSTÁV HUŠÁK VO VYŠETROVACEJ VÄZBE ŠTB

STRETNUTIA NEMCOV Z NDR A NSR V MAĎARSKU

Ústav pamäti národa vydal začiatkom roka 2014 nové číslo časopisu *Pamät' národa*. Opäť prináša zaujímavé štúdie a články, ktoré čitateľom bližšie priblížia obdobie nedemokratických režimov 20. storočia. Pavol Jakubčín vo svojej štúdií popisuje pozornosť, ktorú Štátna bezpečnosť venovala Združeniu katolíckych duchovných Pacem in terris. Monitorovala nielen vývoj v samotnom združení, ale aj aktivity namierené proti jeho existencii. Branislav Kinčok v rozsiahlej štúdií mapuje priebeh viac ako trojročnej vyšetrovacej väzby G. Husáka, ktorá vyvrcholila vykonštruovaným politickým procesom v apríli 1954. Autor v štúdií použil viacero dodnes neznámych a nepublikovaných prameňov k vyšetrovaniu G. Husáka. Posledná štúdia, ktorej autorkou je maďarská historička Krisztina Slachta, sa venuje stretnutiu občanov NDR a NSR v Maďarsku pri jazere Balaton v auguste 1989. V rubrike „Materiály“ Dominik Šabo a Mária Herdová popisujú na príklade Kongregácie bratov tešiteľov Božského srdca z Getseman so sídlom v Zlatých Moravciach priebeh tzv. Akcie K. Ďalší príspevok od Michala Mikloviča prezentuje dva dokumenty z obdobia krátkej existencie Pobočky Hlavnej správy rozvedky v Bratislave (1969 – 1971). V rubrike „Svedectvo“ Martin Lacko približuje neuveriteľný príbeh Štefana Fáreka z Kľaku, ktorý prežil svoju vlastnú popravu. Ten istý autor sa v rozhovore s bývalým politickým väzňom Martinom Hagarom o. i. zamýšľa aj nad priebehom a odkazom Novembra 89. V rubrike „ÚPN interne“ sa čitateľ môže oboznámiť s bohatými aktivitami ÚPN v poslednom období. Nové číslo časopisu *Pamät' národa* tak opäť o trochu viac poodkrýva zákulisie „obdobia neslobody“ v rokoch 1939 – 1989.

