

ONE WORLD IN SCHOOLS

STORIES OF INJUSTICE

COMMUNIST TOTALITARIANISM
IN EUROPE

TEACHING MANUAL

One World in Schools –
STORIES OF INJUSTICE

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Dear Teachers,

the publication which you hold in your hands is part of the “Stories of Injustice” teaching kit. This kit, which has been published by the Czech non-profit organisation People in Need, includes a handbook and a DVD containing six documentary films.

People in Need has organized the One World in Schools programme since 2002. The main aim of this programme is to use the extraordinary potential of documentary film through the use of such films in Czech schools. The programme allows teachers to expand their usual teaching approaches, strategies and aids with the addition of a modern and attractive teaching method. In conjunction with the documentary films, we provide the schools with complementary educational and informational materials and instruct teachers in their use. The programme has met with a positive response from teachers, students and pupils, educational experts, and the broad educational community. Currently, teachers at more than 2,800 primary and secondary schools – one in two schools in the country – are making use of our sets of documentary films.

One of the subjects covered by the One World in Schools programme is modern Czechoslovak history. We are convinced that increased awareness of history and a better understanding of the events of the recent past enable young people to better navigate contemporary society and can have a positive impact on their civic attitudes. Under the title “Stories of Injustice”, we have put together 52 films capturing the period after 1918 (the founding of an independent Czechoslovakia), with an emphasis on the communist era (1948–1989).

Because the legacy of communism affects not only the former Czechoslovakia or just the countries of the East Bloc, but is a part of the shared history of all of Europe, we have decided to put together a teaching kit on communist injustice that could be distributed beyond the boundaries of the Czech Republic. The handbook that you have just opened contains materials for six films that we have selected with a view towards their applicability in classrooms in both the former East Bloc as well as in Western Europe. The films tell the story of Stalinism as a general phenomenon, without a specific emphasis on historical events related exclusively to the history of Czechoslovakia.

The handbook contains recommended activities for two longer films – *The Case of Dr. Horáková* and *Interrupted Spring: The August Hammer* – as well as for the four shorter episodes from the film series entitled *The Lost Soul of a Nation*. All the films should hopefully awaken pupils’ interest in the subject. For each film, we provide a summary, an activity or project, and answers to the most common questions related to the subject of the film in question. We have also included two activities that can be applied to any of the films.

The second part of the handbook contains general advice and recommendations on the use of documentary film in the classroom, based on eight years of experience in using this method. You will also find a description of other applicable interactive learning methods.

The third part of the publication features a text by a historian, summarising the history of communist totalitarianism in Europe between 1945 and 1989. This text presents typical examples of how communism functioned in this period. Partly because of its broad scope, this historical overview does not presume to offer a detailed description of forty years of communist rule. Instead, its aim is to point out similarities or differences amongst the various communist countries in Central and Eastern Europe.

We hope that you will find the subject of communist injustice of interest and that the use of the audiovisual materials and exercises will be of value to both you and your students.

In conclusion, we would like to thank all who helped to make this teaching kit possible.

For the authors,
Kateřina Saporová

ADVICE AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR WORKING WITH THE ACTIVITIES

1. Selection and aims of activities

This handbook includes eight activities and one project. The two introductory activities are standalone activities that can be done separately or in conjunction with any of the films. The activity for *The Case of Dr. Horáková* relates to the show trials in early 1950s Czechoslovakia. The activity and project for *Interrupted Spring: The August Hammer* introduces pupils to an important event in the history of both Czechoslovakia and Europe – the year 1968. The four activities for the *Lost Soul of a Nation* film series have been designed to address various aspects of communist persecution during the 1950s. Some of these activities can be applied to several school subjects – not just history, but also social science, civics, or media education.

Film	Name of activity (project)	Topic
	Memory and remembering	oral history
	A letter to the UN Secretary-General	human rights
The Case of Dr. Horáková	The trial as theatre	show trials
Interrupted Spring: The August Hammer	And what then?	occupation, loss of sovereignty
Interrupted Spring: The August Hammer,	1968 – Year of great changes (project)	regional vs. European history
The Lost Soul of a Nation – Loss of Dignity	An opinion of one's own	eliminating wartime heroes
The Lost Soul of a Nation – Loss of Decency	Banished for life	the fate of political prisoners
The Lost Soul of a Nation – Loss of Tradition	Nationalized	nationalization of property
The Lost Soul of a Nation – Loss of Faith	Monastic danger	eliminating the church

2. Time requirements

In view of the films' running time, we recommend that teachers ideally devote a block of two combined classroom hours on introducing the subject, screening the film, subsequent discussion and answering questions. A separate, third classroom hour should be devoted to the activities. Some of the activities (as well as the film screening) can be done within two combined classroom hours – it all depends on the pupils' level and their prior knowledge.

3. Adapting the activities to pupils' needs

All activities have been tested by teachers in practice. Before using them in your classroom, be sure to take into account their suitability for your pupils. The activities can be adapted to the pupils' current educational needs, for instance by using only some of the materials or by adding others.

4. Before the screening

Since they discuss specific historical events, it is best to incorporate the films into your instruction plan after the pupils have gained at least a partial familiarity with post-1945 European history.

In fact, this kind of historical exposition provides a good introduction to the film screenings. The films and activities offer excellent tools for expanding and deepening this “passive” knowledge.

5. After the screening

An important part of working with documentary film is post-film discussion (see the section “Advice and recommendations for working with documentary film”). In choosing the proper teaching technique, bear in mind the technique’s suitability for the grade level or group and for the given topic. The time immediately following the film screening is a good time for asking questions that may have occurred to the pupils while watching the film (for each film, we have included several questions and answers that can be used as a basis for discussion).

MEMORY AND REMEMBERING

Oral history, one method of historiography, forms an important component of qualitative historical research. It is especially indispensable if, for whatever reason, certain source documents are inaccessible or have been destroyed; in such a case, oral history represents the **sole source of information on a certain event**. For this reason, oral history plays a **specific role in the study of totalitarian societies**, which do not offer a diverse range of primary sources. What is more, most of the available documents were produced by the government or ruling party, meaning that they tend to record only those events that their authors considered important from their own point of view. In the period immediately following the restoration of democracy, neither the defunct institutions nor the newly established ones focused much attention on preserving and archiving their documents. As a result, certain key events are completely absent from official documents. In order to fill these gaps, **personal recollections and eyewitness accounts** can help to expand the written record and, together with other sources of information, can contribute to our analysis of historical facts. Nevertheless, the main objective of oral history is not the acquisition of facts; instead, its focus is the subject of the interview itself and his or her individual testimony, personal experiences, decisions made during difficult as well as everyday situations, personal motivations and so on.

This activity is best done **following a film screening**, as it makes use of eyewitness testimony, but it can also be done **separately**.

OBJECTIVES:

- introduce pupils to the concept of “oral history” as one tool for recording recent events
- develop communication skills and group work
- develop pupils’ creativity

TIME: **30** minutes

TOOLS:

- WORKSHEET – list of questions to aid the process of remembering
- a poster-sized piece of paper for each group
- writing utensils

INSTRUCTIONS:

1. Start with a brief introduction of the concept of “oral history,” explaining its importance for recording historical events, including personal feelings and the experiences of normal, everyday people.
2. The pupils will experiment with the process of remembering. Propose a shared topic for the entire class. A suitable topic may be an event that the class experienced together (field trip, physical education lesson, first day of school, etc.). Each pupil receives a WORKSHEET and works independently, writing down notes on the worksheet.
3. Organize the pupils into groups of four or five. First, they share their memories in order to see who remembers the event in the same manner, what differences there are in their accounts, and whether certain memories are more important for some than for others.
4. Following a brief discussion within the group, ask the pupils to record everything they remember on the piece of paper. They create a picture (map) of their collective memory of the event. Ask the pupils to express themselves not only in words, but also using symbols and drawings.
5. Each group gives a brief presentation of their collective memory.

	STORIES OF INJUSTICE
FILM	STANDALONE ACTIVITY
	ACTIVITY

DISCUSSION:

During discussion time, pupils talk about what surprised them the most, whether hearing their classmates' memories awoke additional memories in them, whether there was a difference between collective memory and personal memory, and what personal memory can offer society at large.

NOTE:

In view of the fact that not all the pupils may have been at the same event, it is a good idea to have a substitute topic ready.

Source:

Oral History Centre, Institute of Contemporary History of the Academy of Sciences of the Czech Republic, www.coh.usd.cas.cz

MEMORY AND REMEMBERING

EVENT:

Try to remember the event. The following questions may help; or create your own outline of the event.

When was the event?

What was the weather like?

What things were on the program?

What did I like?

What bothered me?

What surprised me?

What was my impression of the teachers, pupils, other people?

What new things did I learn, experience?

Did anything unusual happen?

What was important for me personally?

What were my feelings and expectations?

Was there anything that disappointed me?

Other

A LETTER TO THE UN SECRETARY-GENERAL

The violation of human rights in communist Czechoslovakia

In June 1956, twelve female political prisoners from the segregated unit of the women's prison in Pardubice wrote a letter to UN Secretary-General Dag Hammarskjöld. The letters were written in Czech, and each was accompanied by a translation into English, French, or German.

In their letters, the women described their lives after 1948 and their living conditions in the Pardubice prison. They described the status of political prisoners in the "people's democracy" of Czechoslovakia, using their personal examples to show the discrepancies between the claims of Czechoslovak politicians and the actual state of affairs, and asked the Secretary-General to help rectify this situation. The letters were intercepted by the censors and were never delivered to their intended recipient.

The women were then subjected to interrogations regarding the organization of the letter-writing campaign and their complaints regarding the harsh interrogation methods and prison conditions. The investigations resulted in stiff disciplinary punishments for all the letter-writers. This courageous act on the part of the prisoners had repercussions for many years to come, as participation in the protest was considered an aggravating circumstance when it came to deciding whether a prisoner would receive amnesty or not.

General information on political trials in communist Czechoslovakia in the 1950s can be found in the "Questions and answers" section for the film *The Case of Dr. Horáková*.

OBJECTIVES:

- introduce pupils to the violation of human rights in communist Czechoslovakia, with an emphasis on the 1950s
- become aware of the impact of the violation of human rights on the life of the individual
- give pupils an idea of the living conditions of people whose rights are being threatened

TIME: 30 minutes

TOOLS:

- piece of paper for each group
- writing utensils
- **SOURCE MATERIAL** – letter from Dagmar Skálová (for each group)
- **WORKSHEET A** – a selected list of rights guaranteed by specific articles of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, cut up into the individual articles (for each group)
- **WORKSHEET B** – a list of the impacts of the failure to observe these specific articles of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, cut up into the individual articles (for each group).

	STORIES OF INJUSTICE
FILM	STANDALONE ACTIVITY
	ACTIVITY

INSTRUCTIONS:

1. Divide the pupils into groups of roughly five, each of which will select its spokesperson. Each group receives a piece of paper and a copy of the **SOURCE MATERIAL**
2. The pupils are assigned the task of reading the letter within their groups and work together to list at least three examples of human rights violations described by Skálová in her letter. The spokesperson presents the outcomes of the group work to the others. This is followed by a brief discussion on the subject of human rights violations by the communist regime.
3. The pupils are reminded that in December 1948 the UN passed the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (with communist Czechoslovakia abstaining from the vote). Explain that the activity will involve working with several articles from this declaration.
4. The pupils continue to work in groups. Each group receives **WORKSHEET A** (cut up into the seven articles) containing selected articles from the Universal Declaration of Human Rights that were violated by the communist totalitarian regime.
5. As part of the activity, we will now begin to gradually limit the individual groups' rights.
6. In the first round, each group chooses three rights (articles) that the group members agree are the most important for them. The group's spokesperson explains the reason for their choice to the other groups.
7. In the second round, the teacher informs the groups that, by choosing these three rights, they have just voluntarily given up their remaining four rights. The teacher takes away the four articles that the groups did not select and replaces them with the corresponding parts of **WORKSHEET B** describing how these four rights will be violated. The groups familiarize themselves with these limitations of their rights.
8. In the third round, the teacher randomly takes one of the remaining three articles (rights) that each group had wanted to keep. In its place, the group receives the corresponding piece of paper describing how the right they have just lost will be limited (again, hand the group the relevant information from **WORKSHEET B**).
9. In the last round (the pupils now have only two rights left), the pupils have to decide for themselves which of the remaining two rights they will give up. Before they decide, however, the teacher hands them the corresponding pieces of **WORKSHEET B** (i.e., the information describing the consequences of giving up their right). Based on this information, the pupils decide which right to give up and which to keep. Each group tells the others which right they have decided to hold on to.

DISCUSSION:

Discussion should focus on helping the pupils to understand that life under the communist regime was accompanied by a significant limitation in human rights. The pupils discuss whether it is necessary to make sure that human rights are being observed in a democratic state, and they ask themselves questions such as: Can you imagine living your life with your rights being limited in this way? How would your life be affected by such limitations? What would be different from today?

NOTE:

Towards the end of the lesson, the teacher can hand out the full text of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, so that the pupils may familiarize themselves with its other articles. The complete text of the declaration can be found on the United Nations website (www.un.org).

The exchanging of the various articles from the worksheets can prove to be demanding work, and may distract the teacher from following the discussion. If possible, use the help of a teaching assistant. For more advanced grade levels, the pupils can exchange the pieces of paper themselves.

P. 1

Ministerstvo zahraničních věcí Republiky
Československé v Praze

Prošbu o barbarské přetváření přírodních dopisů
pánu Dag Hammarskjöldovi, generálnímu
 tajemníku OSN

Ve vyřčení dle
Dagmar Škalová, km. 1. 192,
Pardubice B, 10

Vážený pane generální tajemníku, z minulé listiny jsem se
dočetl, že budete za svého pobytu v Praze jednat o některých
věcech, které se týkají Československa a OSN. Chci vám na vás
psát, abyste ale svého uvážení nepropadl a dle
politických věcí.

V r. 1948 jsem byla odvozena státním soudem v Praze
podle zákona na ochranu republiky k doživotnímu vězení při
pokutu o deset let vězení, a v r. 1955 byl mi zrušen
zákaz armády na 25 let.

Byla jsem chemickou inženýrkou a pokračovala jsem na svou
občanskou povinnost podávat se spolu se staršími ženami do
organizace proti metodám a duchu výzkumu mládeže a proti
vedení dělníků. Když jsem pokračovala na dle se
jsem mládeže, byla jsem první zbytek funkce. V roce 1950
všichni jsem se chemickou mládeží pracovala dále až do
svého zatčení, ovšem dle mého mínění. Organizace ženské
v Londýně.

Velká část chyb, klady se stávají a při své práci činnosti
dopisů, je dle přetváření v novinách, některé jsou
množství, jsou zbytek funkce, ale naprosto domněnky
nikdy vidět. Když? Pan ministr by předseda. Když
prohlásil, že u nás není politických věcí a tak jsem nám

politických věcí dle upírání. To se stalo je přece
signifikantní. Když OSN a my jsme je veda v rámci
politických přetváření, moudrosti v čase.

54. zachytila jsem s kulovými šípovými střelami
a padla proti nadostřování základních lidských
a se stávkou na dvířkách přes dváry, umístě
labrína ke dezinfekci, chytily nejzákladnější

ty, a do toho prostředí jsem byla dle toho, jakto
sejít na dnu, podle toho, jakto jsem se stýl,
máda, a na těchto jsem se stýl sedět.

Byl jsem stávkou, vzhledem, zbytek, škodlivost
chytily, ovšem práva politických věcí
má domus. Jsem nám na př. výhledy
odst. si nepříjemně utváří náboje povahy,

a při přetváření politických věcí
a dle toho odvozena do Prahy a poměra
s ověřením. Celá se se nám nikdo
nech a když jsem pochopila její obsah

byl proti vládnímu k ovšem odvozenému
dodám, když jsem zachytila v r. 1949
byl dle mého, že nakonec zbytek pravou a pevnou

na 24. září a vyprávně byl v Londýně (mánil se odstavem
vzhledem k funkce a moudrosti zbytek pravou a pevnou
Cimlování se tím, vážený pane generální tajemníku, že

se na vás v této věci obrátím. Lituji to se jmenem Boha,
přesvědčení a domněnky, že mám omluvu a pochopit,
že vaše mínění je pro nás opravdovou politickou
k vyřčení náprav.

V blízkosti vás

Dagmar Škalová

V Pardubicích, 29. srpna 1956.

STORIES OF INJUSTICE	
FILM	STANDALONE ACTIVITY
TRANSCRIPT	

Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the
Czechoslovak Republic in Prague.

Please forward to:
Mr. Dag Hammarskjöld,
Secretary-General of the United Nations.

Thanking you in advance
Dagmar Skálová, no. 482,
Pardubice B/10.

Dear Mr. Secretary-General,
I have learned from the daily papers that, during your visit to Prague, you will be discussing certain issues related to Czechoslovakia and the UN. For this reason, I am writing to ask that, upon your discretion, you also discuss the issue of political prisoners.
In 1949, the state court in Prague sentenced me to life in prison according to the Act for the Preservation of the Republic for my involvement in an attempt at overthrowing the system. In 1955, my sentence was amended to 25 years as part of an amnesty program.
I was an official in the Scouting movement and considered it my civic duty to join with older members of the Scouting organization in order to take a stand against the methods and spirit in which the young were being educated, and to stand up to the rulers of this state. When I pointed out problems within the Youth Union, I was removed from office. Despite this, until the time of my arrest I continued to work with young Scouts, though according to the guidelines of the International Scouting Organization in London.
Many of the errors committed by government and other officials are today being discussed in the newspapers. Some have been imprisoned, others stripped of their functions, but no rectification is evident. Quite the opposite! Prime Minister Široký has declared that there are no political prisoners in our country, and as a result we are denied the rights of political prisoners. Our country is one of the signatories of the UN Charter and my act clearly falls within the list of political offences contained in the Charter.
In 1954, I and another sixty prisoners engaged in a hunger strike to protest the failure to observe basic human rights. There were more than twenty of us in a room intended for two. Inside the cell was a dirty latrine, and we lacked the most basic hygienic supplies. In these surroundings, we were forced to eat on the floor because there were no chairs, nor was there any room for them, and we were forbidden from sitting on the beds! All infractions were punished with cold, damp, health-damaging "corrective measures."
After this, conditions improved, but we continue to be denied our rights as political prisoners. For instance, we are denied access to language textbooks, and any notes we make for ourselves are confiscated during regular inspections.
At the beginning of this year, I was even transferred to Ruzyně prison and used to perform non-manual labour. At first, I didn't understand the work I was doing, nor could I refuse ahead of time. In addition, nobody ever asked me if I wanted to do it, and once I understood what it involved, in view of my state of health and the interrogation techniques that I had been subjected to in 1949, I could no longer say no. The official line then as now is that no such methods are used. Since, however, I believe that truth and justice will prevail, I trust that one day I will meet my family in freedom (my husband was sentenced to 24 years and is imprisoned in Leopoldov), and I do not wish to return home a physical and nervous wreck.
I apologize for turning to you with this issue. I do so in the name of God, truth and freedom. Please forgive my intrusion; I hope that you will understand that, for us, your visit is truly a unique opportunity to rectify this situation.

Sincerely,
Dagmar Skálová
Pardubice, 29 June 1956

UNIVERSAL DECLARATION OF HUMAN RIGHTS

(excerpt)

Article 5

No one shall be subjected to torture or to cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment.

Article 10

Everyone is entitled in full equality to a fair and public hearing by an independent and impartial tribunal, in the determination of his rights and obligations and of any criminal charge against him.

Article 12

No one shall be subjected to arbitrary interference with his privacy, family, home or correspondence, nor to attacks upon his honour and reputation. Everyone has the right to the protection of the law against such interference or attacks.

Article 13

(1) Everyone has the right to freedom of movement and residence within the borders of each state.

(2) Everyone has the right to leave any country, including their own, and to return to their country.

Article 17

(1) Everyone has the right to own property alone as well as in association with others.

(2) No one shall be arbitrarily deprived of his property.

Article 19

Everyone has the right to freedom of opinion and expression; this right includes freedom to hold opinions without interference and to seek, receive and impart information and ideas through any media and regardless of frontiers.

Article 27

(1) Everyone has the right freely to participate in the cultural life of the community, to enjoy the arts and to share in scientific advancement and its benefits.

EXAMPLES OF VIOLATIONS OF THE UNIVERSAL DECLARATION OF HUMAN RIGHTS IN 1950S CZECHOSLOVAKIA

Failure to observe Article 5

In communist Czechoslovakia in the 1950s (and later, as well) you can be imprisoned for your beliefs, opinions, or family background, all on the basis of fabricated evidence. Interrogators use physical violence and psychological pressure in order to get you to confess. You can be beaten, locked into solitary confinement, you can be deprived of food or sleep, you can be held in unhygienic conditions.

Failure to observe Article 10

In the 1950s, you can be sentenced in a show trial to extreme sentences (including the death penalty) for crimes that you did not commit. Your guilt has been decided ahead of time and the court proceedings are staged for theatrical purposes. You are not sentenced on the basis of the evidence, but according to the requirements of the ruling party.

Failure to observe Article 12

If the communist regime decides that you represent a possible threat or opposition, your personal life and that of your family may be monitored by the secret police. They can read your letters, wiretap your telephone and follow you wherever you go. You do not feel safe even if you do not speak out publicly against the totalitarian regime. In school and at work you are constantly subject to “evaluations” and you never know whether you are being monitored by the secret police.

Failure to observe Article 13

If you are deemed “undesirable,” you can be forced from your community and forbidden from returning to the place where you grew up and where your family lived. At the same time, however, you cannot choose freely to leave Czechoslovakia in order to go to another country. The borders to West Germany and Austria are lined with barriers and – between 1951 and 1965 – even with electric fences. You need a special permit in order to visit another country, but this permit is not issued to everyone. You can also try to cross the border in secret, but if you are caught you can be imprisoned or even shot.

Failure to observe Article 17

All your property can be confiscated on the basis of fabricated accusations of activities against the state. There are mass confiscations of property, as well as nationalization – the takeover of private property by the state.

Failure to observe Article 19

In a totalitarian state, you are not free to express your opinion. Before saying anything in public, you have to worry about whether what you say might conflict with government ideology. Newspaper articles first have to pass by the censors in order to remove any “objectionable” information. You can be punished for listening to foreign radio stations.

Failure to observe Article 27

Cultural life is controlled by the state – you can only read permitted books, listen to permitted music, go to permitted theatre plays or movies. You can even be punished for engaging in independent artistic activities (if your art is considered harmful to the state and society).



THE CASE OF DR. HORÁKOVÁ

Jan Mudra

Czech Republic, 1990, 55 min

"I am resigned to my sentence. I have stood by my conscience in court," Milada Horáková wrote in her final letter, completed just an hour and a half before her execution. The year was 1950 and Czechoslovakia was entering one of the darkest eras of communist rule.

Who was Milada Horáková? Horáková was born 25 December 1901. She experienced the best part of her youth after the end of World War I, within the newly founded Czechoslovak Republic. While studying at university, she became involved in the women's rights movement. When her country was occupied by Nazi Germany, she joined the underground movement called "We shall remain faithful", whose most frequent meeting place was at the Horák home. In 1940, she was arrested by the Gestapo. Instead of the recommended death penalty, she was sentenced to eight years in prison. After the end of World War II, she became the vice president of the Union of Liberated Political Prisoners and was elected to parliament for the National Social Party. The communist takeover in February 1948, however, would bury Czech and Slovak hopes for democracy for decades to come. The communists monopolized all state power, and after the mysterious death of Minister of Foreign Affairs Jan Masaryk (the son of the first president of Czechoslovakia), Horáková resigned her seat in parliament. Soon afterwards, she was arrested. "The communists' aim was to eliminate opposition of any kind," remembers František Přeucil, one of Horáková's co-defendants. "The footage of her trial clearly shows that every time she deviated from the answers the communists demanded to the previously prepared questions, the cross-examiner and the prosecutor would interrupt her and drown out her words, so that she could not continue. I have the sense that she took on more guilt than she should have because she was convinced that they couldn't sentence her to death." Horáková's confession was eventually gained with the help of Soviet interrogators. "False communist justice, a fabricated indictment and a defamation campaign in the communist newspapers – that was what passed for the rule of law at the time," remembers her sister Věra Tůmová. On 27 June 1950, a brief report appeared in the media that the sentence against Milada Horáková and the others had been carried out, despite the fact that letters asking for clemency had been sent to the president from around the world (letter-writers included famous individuals such as Albert Einstein).

►

THE TRIAL AS THEATRE

Political show trials

OBJECTIVES:

- work with source materials from a specific trial (Milada Horáková) in order to understand the concepts of “show trials” and “mass trials”.
- work critically with historical documents

TIME: 30 minutes

TOOLS:

- writing utensils
- a sheet of paper for each group
- **SOURCE MATERIAL 1** and **2** – documents related to trial preparations (for each group)

INSTRUCTIONS:

1. Begin the activity with a discussion of the concepts of “show trials” and “mass trials”.
Work with the students to clarify the meaning of these concepts. Familiarize the pupils with their task: to collect evidence about how the Milada Horáková trial was prepared and staged.
2. Based on the similarities between show trials and theatre performances, engage in group brainstorming and write on the board everything that needs to be done when preparing a theatre performance.
The list of preparations required for a theatre performance should include:
 - choosing the actors;
 - determining the place and date of the performance;
 - promoting the event, media support;
 - writing the script;
 - practising the play;
 - inviting an audience;
 - making sure that the play is well received.
3. Divide the pupils into groups of around five and hand out **SOURCE MATERIAL 1**, **SOURCE MATERIAL 2** and a sheet of paper.
4. The groups’ task is to take the preparations necessary for putting on a theatre performance (the list from the board) and to add, based on the information from the film and the source materials, aspects of the Milada Horáková trial that were prepared ahead of time. The groups write their notes on their sheets of paper.
5. Each group’s spokesperson gives a presentation to the other groups, reporting everything the group learned about how the trial was staged. Summarize this information with the class, adding additional information not immediately clear from the documents (for further information on the trial, see the section “Questions and answers”).

	STORIES OF INJUSTICE
FILM	THE CASE OF DR. HORÁKOVÁ
	ACTIVITY

DISCUSSION:

Discussion should focus on the facts learned from working with the materials: What information on the trial's preparations did the pupils find most surprising? Do the materials contain any information about who prepared the trial? Might it be possible that the trial's defence attorneys, prosecutors or judges were unaware that it had been prepared in advance? How does a show trial differ from court trials in democratic countries?

NOTE:

Reading the source material may interrupt the pace of the lesson. There are several ways of making the process of reading more effective. For instance, the pupils can divide up the task of reading the text (each pupil reads one part of the text and informs the others in the group of its contents) or you can use the "jigsaw classroom" technique (see "Methods of interactive learning").

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o poradě ve věci Direktorátu, se dne 3.V.1950, konané na ministerstvu vnitra.

Na ministerstvo vnitra: soudruh ministr Kopecký, s. Pavel, dočasně se účastnil s. Kráň.

Na ministerstvo spravedlnosti: soudruh ministr Dr. Bala a s. Dr. Klose.

Pro projednání situace správy o dosavadním postupu přípravných prací, předneslých na ministerstvo vnitra soudruhem Kopeckým a na ministerstvo spravedlnosti soudruhem Dr. Klosem, konstatovalo, že školy dané na posledním zasedání komise byly splněny. Po-
kud jde o další postup přípravných prací a přípravu procesu ozna-
meno:

- 1/ Ministerstvo vnitra dokončí do konce tohoto týdne Ukrytí /končím / relace / protokolů / obšervancí a svědků. Soudr. Kopecký zajistí dostatečný počet překladů jak pro přítomné soudruhy ministry, tak pro potřebu vedoucích prokurátorů, před-
sedů senátů a jeho zástupců.
- 2/ Obšervanci spisů bude vypracován ve spolupráci vyšetřovací sku-
piny vnitra a vedoucí skupiny prokurátorů do 13. května. Obš-
ervací spisů bude předložen k politickému schválení, který bu-
de projednán do 13. května. Zajistí s. Klose a s. Kopecký.
- 3/ Termín zasedání procesu stanoven na 10. květen a doba trvání
procesu stanovena na 8 až 10 pracovních dnů. Bezpečnostně
musí být proces, včetně vynešení rozsudku, ukončen nejpozdě-
ji do 15. srpna. Zajistí s. Klose.
- 4/ Místo procesu usneseno provést proces v porotní síni kraj-
ského soudu na Pankráči; od záměru provést proces mimo hu-
dovnu soudní upuštěno, s důvodů bezpečnostních.
- 5/ Organizační veřejnost Veřejnost bude organizována celostátně
na s. Klosem záměrem publikovat výběr veřejnosti bude zameran
Kopeckým na dálniční vstupy, pracovní vstupy, pracovní vstupy
dál, školy vnitra a spravedlnosti. Všechny budou dány vý-
kresně na jasně a v krajích zajistí krajští sekretáři předem
předložit jasných seznamů návštěvníků. Přesný plán organi-
zace veřejnosti připraví s. Dr. Klose do zasedání příštího týdne.
- 6/ Propagační kampaň Usneseno, že nemá být prováděna přípravná
kampaň před zasedáním procesu mimo zasedání akcí reakce vnitřní
avisoval proces vyšetřovací rozvrhů akcí reakce vnitřní
i zahraniční. Tento záměr byl by vyšetřen v Rudém Právu
v období o svatočeských svátcích. Soudruh Klose, přípravi návrh
kampaň jak point jde a tisk, tak film a rozhlas a projedná se
soudruhem Kopeckým. Všechno bude předložen do příštího zasedá-
ní komise. V návrhu je třeba uvést, zda má být celý proces
vytvořen knižně, zejména zveřejněn tak jako. Pro lepší organi-
zaci tisku bude pro proces vytvořena speciální komise pro pří-
pravu materiálu a proces v tisku /výsledky a protokoly, point

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části protokolu, zejména dialogy.
Poručiti připravení novinářů západních, sde
organizovat návštěvu redaktorů ze soudru-
západních zemí. Zajistí jednání s minister-
stvem Dr. Klose.
Rozprava o filmu a rozhlasu projedná soudr.
Kopecký informací /s. ministrem Kopeckým, resp.
Kopecký /s. soudruh /s. film, se rozhlas /s.
na zasedání všech škol, uložených fil-
mů politických vyšetřování průběhu a výsledků pro-
cesních řádů. Tímto soudruhem budou dani po-
ministerstva spravedlnosti a vnitra. Zajistí
Kopecký.
Procesu, bude vedoucí prokurátorů dle
elaborát soudruha Kráňského k letákům
Kopecký. a hospodářsko-politický soudruh
Kopecký a záměr obšervancí Kopecký. Zajistí
Kopecký.
5/ Soudr. Kopecký provede prověřením advokátů, uvedených v situ-
ační zprávě ministerstva spravedlnosti.

Zapsal: Dr. Klose

STORIES OF INJUSTICE	
FILM	THE CASE OF DR. HORÁKOVÁ
TRANSCRIPT (ABRIDGED)	

TOP SECRET (hand-written)

Minutes

of meeting on the subject of the Directorate, held on 3 May 1950 at the Ministry of Interior.

Representing the Ministry of Interior:

comrade Minister Nosek, comrade Závodský, comrade Pavel, with comrade Šváb arriving later

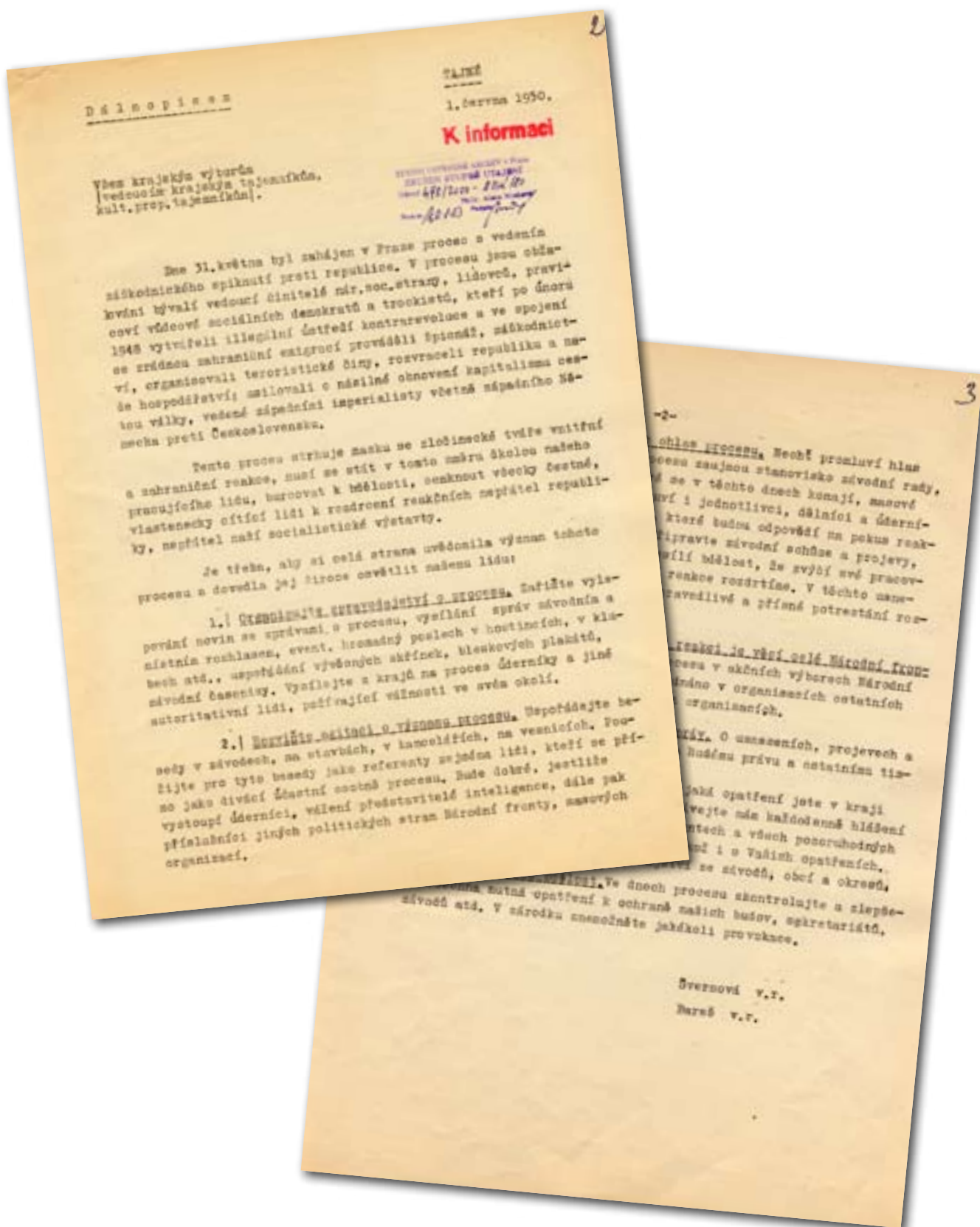
Representing the Ministry of Justice:

comrade Minister Rais and comrade Klos

After discussion of the situation reports on the progress of preparations, it was stated that the tasks assigned at the last meeting of the committee have been completed. As for future preparations and the future preparation process, the following has been resolved:

- 1) By the end of this week (6 May), the Ministry of Interior shall complete final editing of the statements by the accused and the witnesses. Comrade Závodský shall ensure a sufficient number of copies for the attending comrade ministers, for the lead prosecutors, the lead judge and his deputies.
 - 2) The list of charges shall be prepared by 13 May by the Ministry of Interior's investigators, working together with the lead prosecutors. The list of charges shall be presented for political approval. To be organized by comrade Klos and comrade Závodský.
 - 3) The trial date is set for 30 May and the trial's duration is set at 8 to 10 working days. The trial, including sentencing, must absolutely be concluded by 15 June at the latest. To be organized by comrade Klos.
 - 4) Trial location: in the courtroom of the regional court in Pankrác; plans for holding the trial outside the court building abandoned for security reasons.
 - 5) Public spectators: The viewing public will be organized on a countrywide basis, with a new group of spectators each day; the choice of public attendees will focus primarily on the working class, rural workers, working-class youth and schools operated by the Ministry of Interior and Ministry of Justice. Tickets will be issued exclusively by name, and regional secretaries shall provide a list of names of selected attendees. Comrade Klos will prepare a precise plan for organizing the public.
 - 6) Promotional campaign. It is hereby resolved that, except for a brief introduction of the trial that will describe the subversive activities of the domestic and foreign reactionary forces, no preparatory campaign shall take place prior to the start of the trial. This introductory report shall be published in *Rudé Právo* on Whitsunday. Comrade Klos will prepare a draft campaign proposal for print, film and radio, and shall present this proposal at the next committee meeting. The proposal shall indicate whether the entire trial, in particular the indictment, will be published in print. In order to better organize press coverage, a special committee will be set up in order to prepare trial materials (court transcripts and dialogues in particular) for the media.
- It is further resolved to recommend the admission of Western journalists with local accreditation and to organize a visit by reporters from Western communist papers. Comrade Klos will organize discussions with the Ministry of Information. Comrade Klos will also negotiate the cooperation of film and radio with the Ministry of Information. There is a need to assign the comrades from film and radio who will be responsible for duly performing all the tasks assigned to film and radio while making proper political use of the trial's course and outcome, up to and including the final stage. These comrades will be assigned political advisors from the Ministries of Justice and Interior.
- 7) In order to facilitate the handling of the trial, the lead prosecutors shall be provided with a political analysis of the flyers produced by Dundr and co., as well as an economic and political examination of the activities of defendant Hejda. To be organized by comrade Závodský.
 - 8) It has been resolved to present the testimony of "S" regarding foreign emigrant groupings and their espionage activities for the Western imperialists. In this regard, we require a precise list of the questions which he will be posed. To be organized by comrades Závodský and Klos.
 - 9) Comrade Závodský shall perform authorization of the attorneys listed in the Ministry of Justice's situation report.

Secretary: Klos



	STORIES OF INJUSTICE
FILM	THE CASE OF DR. HORÁKOVÁ
	TRANSCRIPT

Via telex

SECRET
1 June 1950

Information for:

All regional committees
regional secretaries,
cultural propaganda workers

On 31 May, a trial was begun with the leaders of a terrorist conspiracy against our republic. The accused are former leading officials of the National Social Party and People's Party, right-wing Social Democrats, and Trotskyites, all of whom conspired after February 1948 to form an illegal counterrevolutionary organization, and who – in alliance with treacherous foreign emigrant groupings – engaged in espionage, sabotage and terrorist actions, disrupting our republic and our economy; their aim was nothing less than the restoration of capitalism in a war waged by the Western imperialists, including West Germany, against Czechoslovakia.

This trial will tear the mask from the criminal face of domestic and foreign reactionary forces. It must become a lesson for our working people, arouse their vigilance, and unite all honest, patriotic citizens in smashing the reactionary enemies of our Republic and the enemies of our socialist system.

The entire Party must be aware of the importance of this trial and inform our people as widely as possible:

1. Organize news reports on the trial. Organize the posting of newspaper articles about the trial, broadcast reports using factory and municipal public address systems, organize listening events at inns, clubs, etc., post information on bulletin boards, print posters and factory newspapers. Send your regional shock workers and other authoritative people who command local respect to attend the trial.
2. Hold a campaign for emphasizing the trial's significance. Organize meetings: at factories and weddings, in offices and village squares. Invite speakers who will attend the trial in person. Speakers should be shock workers, respected members of the intelligentsia, members of other political parties from the National Front, representatives of mass organizations.
3. Highlight the public response to the trial. Let the voice of the people's righteous anger be heard. Let factory councils, meetings and conferences, and gatherings of mass organizations held during this time take an official position. Prepare factory meetings and declarations in which our people affirms its increased vigilance, its increased working efforts, its intention to smash what remains of the subversive reactionary forces. Let these declarations include a demand for the righteous and severe punishment of these subversive criminals.
4. The struggle against the treacherous reactionary forces is a matter for the entire National Front. Discuss taking a stand on the trial in your National Front action committees. Make sure the issue is discussed by mass organizations and by the other parties within the National Front.
5. Inform the media. Immediately inform Rudé Právo and the other print media about your resolutions and declarations and events. Inform us about the measures which you have implemented in your regions and what the local response to the trial has been. Submit daily reports about your measures and on the public mood, on the local response, or on incidents and all noteworthy events related to the trial. Organize similar reports from factories, towns and counties.
6. Heightened vigilance. During the trial, double-check and improve all measures necessary for safeguarding our buildings, offices, factories, etc. Prevent any provocations before they can occur.

Švermová m.p.
Bareš m.p.

1. What types of activities were defined as “activities against the state” in 1950s communist Czechoslovakia?

What were people jailed for?

In February 1948, the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia began work on establishing a social and economic system based on single-party rule, with power concentrated in the hands of the party leadership. The new regime passed several laws aimed at preserving the newly established political system. These laws were then used to launch a campaign of terror against the population. Political show trials affected all ages and social groups. Some of those who were convicted had truly decided to fight against the communist system and had even gained the support of Western intelligence agencies. At the same time, however, many people found themselves thrown into jail solely because of their affinity with certain groups that had been labelled “enemies of the working class”. The various trials were part of more comprehensive measures aimed at the persecution of entire groups of inhabitants. The Communist Party realized that systematic resistance would be impossible without a political programme, and so it focused on the persecution of members of the political parties that had been members of the National Front prior to February 1948. Another wave of trials took place against members of the armed services – from top military commanders down to individual units – with the aim of transforming the army into an instrument and bulwark of the totalitarian regime. The elimination of the private sector and the collectivisation of the countryside were accompanied by the persecution of independent business owners and farmers, and other victims of mass persecution included church dignitaries and members of voluntary associations such as Scouting, the “Sokol” youth and physical fitness movement, and many others.

2. How many political trials were held in communist Czechoslovakia and how many people were convicted?

Political trials were one feature of communism that accompanied the regime throughout its history. Historians are still working to identify the actual extent of the persecutions. The precise number of convicted individuals is difficult to determine because the communist regime convicted many people of both

“anti-state” and criminal offences, and in some cases it is difficult to state for certain which offences were of a political and which of a criminal nature. The greatest number of political trials took place during the early years of communist rule, i.e., between 1948 and 1954, when the vast majority of the 250,000 people rehabilitated after 1989 were sentenced. Other trials took place in the 1960s, '70s and '80s. In addition to thousands of people imprisoned, the communist regime is also responsible for 248 executions. Other inhabitants of Czechoslovakia were persecuted without trial: In order to isolate undesirable citizens or citizens the regime considered a threat to its survival, the government established forced labour camps where more than 20,000 people were sent for up to two years, solely on the basis of a political decision. A similar form of persecution was assignation to army work brigades during mandatory military service or during military training exercises. More than 22,000 people were consigned to these units, which functioned essentially as forced labour brigades.

The communist regime in Czechoslovakia has many more victims on its conscience: according to general figures, as many as two million people were affected in various ways (court verdicts, being sent to forced labour camps, losing one's job or expulsion from school, etc.). More than 170,000 individuals fled or were expelled from the country.

3. In what way were the trials in Czechoslovakia staged? Did the defendants have a chance to defend themselves?

The aim of the political trials was to solidify the Communist Party's power, to eliminate opponents of the regime (real or possible future opponents), to spread an atmosphere of fear among the population and to instil a feeling that the country was threatened by internal and external enemies. One feature of a political trial is the fact that the trial's course is significantly influenced by politicians at all levels of government. This involves close cooperation among party organs, the state security service, government offices, prosecutors and judges. Party committees proposed and approved the defendant's sentences (the extent of the sentences was sometimes decided before the trial had even commenced) and were involved in the selection of judges, prosecutors and defence attorneys. The Communist Party also managed the trial's

	STORIES OF INJUSTICE
FILM	THE CASE OF DR. HORÁKOVÁ
	QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

impact on the public through the media, which was subject to censorship, and it organized public campaigns against so-called traitors, spies and murderers. The State Security Service (secret police) also played an important role in preparing political processes by seeking out suspects and following, arresting and interrogating them, by fabricating evidence against the accused and by using physical violence and psychological terror in order to force people to confess to crimes they did not commit. In line with Soviet methods, the secret police wrote up transcripts of their interrogations that the accused had to memorize and follow in court. Guilt was not determined on the basis of the facts and proven deeds, but was often based merely on speculation and deduction, often as directed by the political leadership. After February 1948, the justice system was purged and new judges were selected, with an emphasis on their loyalty to the Party and the “people’s democracy”. Defendants had a right to a defence attorney, but they could not select him themselves. Most of the defence attorneys tended to agree with the prosecution. As a result, the justice system more or less merely executed political orders and decisions, giving the system a semblance of legitimacy and impartiality.

4. When did the truth about the political trials in Czechoslovakia first come out? Were former political prisoners rehabilitated and compensated?

Official reports about “violations of socialist law” were first published in the mid-1950s. With just a few exceptions, these involved former members of the Czechoslovak Communist Party who had been victims of intra-party purges. Their rehabilitation was taken up by several commissions from the mid-fifties to the early 1970s. The rehabilitation of non-communist political prisoners was first discussed to a greater extent in the year 1968 with the adoption of a law on legal rehabilitation. This law was the first attempt at making amends for the repression and crimes committed during the previous twenty years. However, as the so-called period of “normalization” took hold after the Soviet invasion, the law was amended in 1970 and possibilities for rehabilitation limited. In this limited form, rehabilitation continued until roughly the mid-1970s, by which time around 1,500 persons had been fully rehabilitated. The across-the-board re-

habilitation and compensation of political prisoners was only possible after 1989, when the courts performed rehabilitation on the basis of Act no. 119/1990 and subsequent related laws. At the same time, efforts were launched to rehabilitate people who had been persecuted in a non-judicial manner (such as being interred in forced labour camps). By the end of 1992, some 258,618 persons had been rehabilitated on the basis of Act no. 119/1990, with another 4,819 receiving a rehabilitation ruling from the military courts. With time, additional laws were passed regarding the restitution (return) of property and the financial compensation of political prisoners and their families.

5. Has anyone ever been punished for the unjust trials and imprisonment?

In the Czech Republic, the identification and investigation of cases of illegal behaviour on the part of the communist regime is the task of the Office for the Documentation and Investigation of Communist Crimes, which is a part of the Police of the Czech Republic. The office’s website contains statistics on individual cases and on individuals sentenced for such crimes since 1989. By June 2008, a total of 192 people had been investigated and a total of eight individuals had been sentenced to prison terms. For various reasons (the health of the accused, procedural and legal obstacles), none of those convicted has spent much time behind bars. In March 2009, Ludmila Brožová-Polednová – who had been sentenced to six years in prison for her part in the judicial murder of Milada Horáková – was sent to prison. Another twenty-two cases resulted in deferred sentences – most of these cases involved crimes committed in the 1970s and ’80s. In several other cases, prosecution was halted because the statute of limitations had expired, because of the accused individual’s poor state of health, the death of the defendant or presidential pardon, or because the accused was exonerated of the charges. Generally speaking, no persons from the highest rungs of the power structure who were responsible for the existence of this unlawful system have ever been sentenced to prison. At the same time, we should emphasize that everyone prosecuted for these crimes after the 1989 restoration of democracy has been tried in accordance with the laws that were valid at the time the crimes were committed.

6. Why didn't international organizations intervene against the political trials in 1950s Czechoslovakia?

The United Nations (UN) was founded in 1945. However, the UN did not have any authority to actively intervene in the internal affairs of states. Nor did any of the democratic countries intervene in internal developments within Czechoslovakia. The political trials of the 1950s took place during the early years of the Cold War, during which Czechoslovakia was a part of the Soviet sphere of influence – the so-called East Bloc. After February 1948, the political opposition in Czechoslovakia believed that there would soon be a military conflict between the United States and the Soviet Union and that there would be change in the balance of power within Europe. This never happened. After Stalin's death in 1953, the political situation stabilized, the bi-polar division of Europe remained intact and the two blocs closed themselves off to outside influences. Representatives of the democratic countries in the so-called Western Bloc were horrified by the trials but did not make use of the possibility of ignoring Czechoslovakia on the diplomatic level or imposing economic sanctions (after Milada Horáková had been found guilty, only a few Scandinavian countries threatened sanctions). Any calls for clemency from the West were written by well-known individuals or civic organizations, but not by active politicians.

Answers prepared by:

Tomáš Bursík, historian

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INTERRUPTED SPRING: THE AUGUST HAMMER

Milan Maryška

Czech Republic, 1998, 76 min

The Prague Spring was a period of political liberalization in Czechoslovakia that began in early 1968. It is closely associated with the name of Alexander Dubček, the new leader of the Czechoslovak Communist Party. The reforms of the Prague Spring represented an attempt at beginning the partial democratisation of the country, but they met with a lack of understanding from the Soviet Union.

The Prague Spring came to a definite end on the night of the 20th to the 21st of August 1968. Three hundred thousand soldiers from the Soviet Union, Poland, Hungary and Bulgaria, supported by 6,300 tanks and 800 airplanes, crossed the country's borders and quickly occupied all of Czechoslovakia, whose soldiers had been ordered by the Minister of Defence to remain in their barracks. Dubček and other leading members of the Czechoslovak Communist Party issued a declaration condemning the intervention as a violation of international accords. This declaration strengthened the civilian population's resolve to resist the occupation, and they tried to make the occupiers' presence in the country as difficult as possible. The most serious street fighting took place in front of the Czechoslovak Radio building on Prague's Vinohrady Avenue. The dramatic archival footage from central Prague during the first two days of the occupation needs no commentary. Immediately following the invasion, the heads of the Czechoslovak Communist Party, including Dubček, were taken to Moscow in the hope that Moscow-loyal communists would quickly establish a new worker-peasant government in Prague. This did not happen, and public resistance was further heightened by journalists and television employees who continued to provide objective information about the situation in the country until their broadcasts were shut down. In Moscow, meanwhile, the kidnapped politicians were forced to sign a document that served to justify the military intervention before the international community. At an emergency meeting (the 14th party congress) in Prague, the Czechoslovak Communist Party sharply condemned the actions by the country's supposed allies. Also protesting against the invasion was a group of seven brave individuals in the centre of Moscow. For expressing their public disagreement with the occupation, they were sent into many years of exile. At the end of the film, we meet the husband and son of Marie Charousková at her memorial plaque in Prague. When she was 23, Charousková was shot by members of the occupying armies. In addition to archival footage, the documentary filmmakers also included the opinions of people who played a key role in the events of the time, such as one of the alleged authors of the "letter of invitation" requesting the intervention, and the Russian generals who to this day are convinced that their actions were justified since if they hadn't occupied Czechoslovakia, NATO would have done so. ▶

AND WHAT THEN?

The aftermath of the Warsaw Pact invasion of Czechoslovakia

OBJECTIVES:

- understand the experiences of regular citizens after the invasion
- by working with source materials, provide an understanding of the post-invasion situation in Czechoslovakia

TIME: 35 minutes

TOOLS:

- **SOURCE MATERIAL 1** – report from the Czechoslovak Ministry of Interior (page 1 and 2)
- **SOURCE MATERIAL 2** – report from the Czechoslovak State Bank (page 1 and 2)
- **SOURCE MATERIAL 3** – report from the Czechoslovak Ministry of Education (page 1 and 2)
- **SOURCE MATERIAL 4** – report from the Czechoslovak Ministry of Foreign Affairs
- a sheet of paper for each group
- writing utensils

INSTRUCTIONS:

1. After the film screening, pupils work independently to describe how they think the events of 21 August 1968 affected the lives of regular Czechoslovak citizens in the subsequent days.
2. Divide the pupils into four groups representing the Ministry of Education, Ministry of Interior, Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Czechoslovak State Bank. Each group receives the corresponding **SOURCE MATERIAL (1–4)**. The pupils work in groups to read the documents, and prepare a brief summary of their contents.
3. The spokesperson of each group (ministry or state bank) presents an oral presentation on the report of his or her organization's activities during the country's occupation by the Warsaw Pact armies. The final report will be the one from the Ministry of Interior.
4. The pupils go back to their notes. On the reverse side of the paper, they write which information from the documents surprised them the most.

DISCUSSION:

For this part of the activity, you can invite someone who experienced the time in person (a teaching colleague, a parent, etc.). The pupils ask how the country's occupation was seen from the outside – how the events were reported by the media in their country.

STORIES OF INJUSTICE	
FILM	INTERRUPTED SPRING: THE AUGUST HAMMER
TRANSCRIPT (ABRIDGED)	

Ministry of Interior Investigative Department
Ref no.: SN-017/OI-68

S e c r e t:
Copy no.: 3

R e p o r t

on incidents, criminal acts and cases of interference with the duties and authority of Czechoslovak government offices by members of the armies of the five Warsaw Pact countries

(During the period from 21 August – 28 September 1968)

Prepared for the National Assembly's defence and security committee:

The occupation of the Czechoslovak Socialist Republic (CSSR) by the armies of five Warsaw Pact countries was and remains associated with serious implications for the basic rights of Czechoslovak citizens, in particular the right to safeguarding their life and health, and the right to personal inviolability and personal property, as well as serious implications for the functioning of government offices entrusted with ensuring the public order and apprehending criminal perpetrators.

During the occupation of the CSSR by the armies of five Warsaw Pact countries – in particular during the early days of the occupation, but later as well – the members of these armies used various forms of weapons against the citizens of Czechoslovakia (machine guns, automatic weapons and artillery). In addition, they used military machinery (tanks, armoured vehicles) in such a manner as to endanger citizens' lives in public spaces and in many cases caused death or injury.

Reports from various police units indicate that, as of 28 September 1968, a total of 82 people had been killed in this manner, with almost 300 seriously wounded and more than 500 lightly wounded Czechoslovak citizens.

The deaths and injuries resulted from troops firing directly at groups of people and individuals, and from firing at buildings or into the air, with people being hit in their homes, on balconies, by deflected bullets or by bullet fragments.

The greatest number of dead and injured was in the area surrounding the Czechoslovak Radio building in Prague, where 3 people were shot dead and 52 were injured and hospitalised; 12 persons were killed by the explosion of a munitions vehicle and 2 died by jumping out of windows.

Weapons were used throughout the country, most often in connection with public displays of opposition against the advancing soldiers (for instance, by throwing various objects against their vehicles, by shouting, by posting flyers, writing slogans, etc.). There were also cases of citizens attempting to physically block the advancement of the military vehicles and being run over. In many cases, citizens were shot at without any apparent motive.

Příloha

Zpráva o činnosti Státní banky čs. a ostatních peněžních
ústavů během obsazení státu vojsky Varšavské smlouvy

1. Průběh obsazení některých budov Státní banky čs.

Při násilném vstupu vojáků dne 21.8.48. na území ČSČM
byly také některé budovy Státní banky obsazeny. Podle dosud
nedoplněných zpráv šlo o budovu ústředí Státní banky, městské po-
sedy pražské na Václavském nám., budovy pobočky Brno-město,
Frýdek-Místek, Trenčín, Nitra, Komárno, Rimavská Sobota a
Prešov.

Do budovy ústředí vstoupila dne 21.8. asi v 9.30
vojáci vedení podplukovníkem Durcovem, a spara-
provázeli české mluvčí civilisty. Pplk. Durc
násilným řediteli a přítomným členům vedení je-
tole ~~střelou~~ voják obsazení budovy a poštou
odchodu všech zaměstnanců. Pátrával, aby k tr-
mohl postavit vojenské stráž. Tento požadavek
trezory byly zabezpečeny početní SČS zaměstn-
také udržovali stráž i za přítomnosti vojáků
byla uzavřena a uvnitř zůstala jen málo veden-
ci stranického a odborového orgánu a tělné v-
té doby fungovaly nepetržitě ve dne i v no-
sících vojsk

Ve čtvrtek 22.8. na příkaz ~~vojáka~~ z
na. Byl prozatím přístup vedení a navíc nu-
ním byl vydán příkaz k zajištění výplat se-
náhradním způsobem a využitím fungujících
vyvozen operativní štáb, který zajišťoval
poboček 1 a 8 (do poboček, jež byly stov-
večer byli telefonicky vyzváni ředitelé
rů k nástupu a jejich představitelství fa-

- 2 -

V pátek dne 23.8. byla ~~dosazena~~ tobo, že byl uvolněn
vstup do budovy, avšak stráž zůstala na svých místech. Pá-
tek byl prvním pracovním dnem v ústředí, včetně poboček
Praha 1 a 8. V sobotu večer kolem 21.00 hod. byly vojenské
stráž stahovány.

V neděli dne 25.8. v 17.00 hod. se dostavili do budovy
ústředí SČS 2 ozbrojení důstojníci NKVD a zjišťovali, zda
v budově jsou zbraně. Bylo jim vysvětleno, že banka má pou-
ze zbraně používané při převozu peněz a na pokladnicích. Přesto
pátrali po skladu zbraní v podzemí budovy, kde jsou gará-
že a sklady. Své počinání zdůvodnili tím, že byl zadán výz-
podobný speciální tým pro přepravu peněz, a nákladem zbra-
ní. Po bezvýsledné prohlídce budova opustili.

V pondělí dne 26.8. ráno viděla uklízečka v 5.patře bu-
dovy ústředí sovětské vojáky, kteří při jejím příchodu se da-
lí na útek. Zjistilo se, že jde o vojáky, kteří přišli po-
středech z budovy Čes. televize na Gorkého nám. Vojáci předtím
pronikli do služebních místností v tomto patře a vycupali se
do stolu a skříní a odebrali tam nacházející se peníze, sou-
části oděvu, část potravin a jiné potřeby.

V úterý 27.8. ráno bylo zjištěno, že noční vyloupání se
opakovalo. Celková škoda činila Kčs 8.000,- a protest proti
takovému chování a požadavek o náhradu škody byl uplatněn
u velitele vojenského útvaru ozbrojených sil Sovětského ava-
zu, který obsadil budovu Čes. televize.

Styk s ~~vojáky~~ v ústředí se omezil jen na protest proti
obsazení bankovní budovy a v dalších dnech na její uzavření
a proti pohybu stráž, projednání bankovní budovy a odcitau-
tí výměny rublů za československá platidla (dne 21.8.). Poté
byla odmitnuta výměna rublů v pondělí 26.8. skupině důstojní-
ků s ozbrojeným doprovodem.

Budova městské pobočky SČS v Praze 1 na Václavském ná-
městí :

Po informaci, že budova ústředí je vojensky zabírána,
dal pokyn zástupce ředitele městské pobočky SČS ve středu
dne 21.8., aby byla ukončena služba a uzavřeny trezory.

Report on the activities of the Czechoslovak State Bank and other financial institutions during the country's occupation by Warsaw Pact armies.

I. Events surrounding the occupation of Czechoslovak State Bank buildings

The violent invasion of 21 August of this year also included the occupation of several State Bank buildings. According to incomplete reports, these were: the bank's central headquarters, branches on Prague's Wenceslas Square, and branch buildings in Brno, Frýdek-Místek, Trenčín, Nitra, Komárno, Rimavská Sobota and Prešov.

At around 9.30 a.m. on 21 August, a platoon of soldiers led by Colonel Burov and First Lieutenant Novikov entered the central headquarters accompanied by a Czech-speaking civilian. Lieutenant Colonel Burov informed the bank's director and the present members of the management that the building was being occupied and demanded the immediate evacuation of all employees. He requested that military guards be placed by the bank's safes, a request that was denied. The safes were sealed by bank employees using Czechoslovak State Bank seals, and the employees stood guard in the presence of the soldiers. The central headquarters was closed, with the only people remaining inside being the bank's higher management, members of party or union organizations and regular service personnel, who from that time on remained day and night.

On Thursday, 22 August the building remained closed upon the orders of the foreign armies. The admission of management and necessary service personnel was negotiated. The management issued an order to pay out salaries and income in an auxiliary manner using the bank's functioning branches. An emergency council was established for organizing the transfer of salaries from branches 1 and 9 (to branches that were still open). On Thursday evening, department directors were requested by telephone to report for duty; through them, many other employees were asked to return to duty as well.

On Friday, 23 August the entrance to the building was cleared, although the guards remained at their places. Friday was the first working day at the headquarters and at branches 1 and 9 in Prague. On Saturday evening around 9 p.m., the military guards were removed.

At 5 p.m. on Sunday, 25 August the headquarters of the Czechoslovak State Bank was visited by 2 armed NKVD officers, who checked whether there were any weapons in the building. They were informed that the bank had only the weapons it used for the physical transfer of money and at the bank's teller stations. They nevertheless went looking for a cache of weapons in the building's basement – its garage and storerooms. They justified their actions by saying that a vehicle similar to the vehicles used to transfer money had been stopped with a load of arms on board. After a fruitless search, they left the building.

On Monday, 26 August in the morning, a cleaning woman came across Soviet soldiers on the building's fifth floor, who fled upon her arrival. It was determined that these soldiers had come by rooftop from the Czechoslovak Television building on Gorki Square. The soldiers had made their way into rooms on that floor and broken into desks and cabinets, from which they stole money, clothing, food and writing utensils.

On the morning of Tuesday, 27 August, it was discovered that another break-in had occurred during the night. The damage came to 8,000 crowns. A formal protest against such behaviour and a demand for compensation of damages was filed with the commander of the military unit of the Soviet forces that had occupied the Czechoslovak Television building.

Contact with foreign soldiers at the bank's headquarters was limited to filing a protest against the bank's occupation, the building's closure over the course of the following days, and the presence of the guards, as well as negotiations concerning the building's re-opening and a refusal to exchange rubles for Czechoslovak currency (on 21 Aug.). The exchange of rubles was refused again on Monday, 26 August to a group of officers who were accompanied by armed soldiers.

The building of the Czechoslovak State Bank branch office in Prague 1 on Wenceslas Square:

After receiving information that the central headquarters had been occupied, the branch's deputy director issued an order on Wednesday, 21 August, that the bank be closed and safes sealed.

I n f o r m a c e
pro ministerstvo vnitra

Dne 3. srpna 1968 během dopoledne bylo navázáno telefonické spojení se všemi vedoucími odborů KMV nebo předsedy školských komisí a sekretariátem pověřence Slovenské národní rady k zjištění, zda došlo v posledních dnech v době vstupu cizích vojsk na území republiky k zadržení nebo internaci některých školských pracovníků nebo zmatečnické chodu některých školských zařízení.

Bylo zjištěno :

Národní výbor hl.m. Prahy

1. Nikdo ze školských pracovníků nebyl zadržen.
2. Byly obsazeny dále uvedené školní budovy, ale uvolněny k začátku školního roku :

- Učňovská škola v Praze 2, Vratislavova ul.
- několik učeben ZŠ v Praze 10, U vršovických
- mateřská škola v Praze 1, Gorkého nám.

3. Pavilony mateřské školy v Hlavojské Vinohradech a tělocvična, kterou užívá Střední škola na Vinohradech nelze k vyučování použít ve vstupu do těchto budov brání tlusná blízkost vojsk. Vyučovací prostory jsou však volné. Je však zajištěna v jiných prostorách.

Středočeský krajský národní výbor.

Z celé oblasti Středočeského kraje nebyl případ zadržení školských pracovníků nebo školských zařízení.

Západočeský krajský národní výbor.

Z celé oblasti Západočeského kraje nebyl případ zadržení školských pracovníků nebo školských zařízení.

Východočeský krajský národní výbor.

Z celé oblasti Východočeského kraje nebyl případ zadržení školských pracovníků nebo školských zařízení.

- 2 -

Jihočeský krajský národní výbor, České Budějovice

Z řad školských pracovníků nedošlo k žádnému zadržení, případně internaci.

Byl zvezen pouze provoz na školním poli Střední lesnické technické školy v Písku-Hůrka. Poleš byl obsazen vojskem, které způsobilo značné škody na komunikacích a porostech. Přístup do poleš nebyl dosud zcela uvolněn. Škody se zjišťují.

Severočeský krajský národní výbor, Ústí nad Labem

Z celé oblasti Severočeského kraje není znám ani jediný případ zadržení školských pracovníků nebo obsazení prostorů školských zařízení.

Jihomoravský krajský národní výbor, Brno

Z celé oblasti Jihomoravského kraje není znám ani jediný případ zadržení školských pracovníků nebo obsazení prostorů školských zařízení.

Středomoravský krajský národní výbor, Olomouc

V Olomouci je zadržán cizí vojsky Armádní dům ve kterém je umístěna Lidová škola umění. Jelikož je bráněna v přístupu osob do tohoto domu, nemůže vykonávat svou činnost ani Lidová škola umění.

SLOVENSKÉ KRAJE

Podle sdělení sekretariátu pověřence pro školství byli v době obsazování Slovenska cizí vojsky zadrženi dva učitelé ZŠ v Vrábě při vylepování plakátů, ale po prošetření ihned propuštěni.

Do 30.8. tr. byla obsazena budova Vysoké školy technické v Bratislavě od 1.9. je uvolněna.

Prostory užívané Vysokou školou výtvarných umění, která má své oddělení v Bratislavě hradě jsou nepřístupné.

Střední odborná škola v Prešově a Košicích není dosud uvolněna a vyšetřování v nich začne 9. září 1968.

Praha, 5.9.1968

Vedoucí II. odboru :
[Signature]

Information for the Ministry of Interior

On the morning of 5 August 1968, telephone contact was made with all regional national committee department heads or chairpersons of school committees and the secretariat of the commissioner of the Slovak National Council in order to determine whether, during the invasion and over the course of the past few days, any school employees had been detained or interned, and whether any educational facilities had in any way been hindered in their operations.

It was determined:

National Committee, Prague

1. No school employee was detained
2. The following school buildings were occupied but were released in time for the start of the school year:

- Apprenticeship school in Prague 2, Vratislav Street
- several classrooms of the primary school in Prague 10, “U vršovického nádraží” street
- preschool in Prague 1, Gorki Square

Pavilion 3 of the preschool in Riegr Park and the gymnasium used by the Secondary School of Economics in Prague’s Vinohrady district cannot be used for instruction because entry to these buildings is prevented by the nearby physical presence of foreign soldiers. The classrooms are empty. Substitute spaces have been found elsewhere.

South Bohemia: regional national committee, České Budějovice

No school employees were detained or interned.

Operations of the forest in Písek-Hůrka managed by the Secondary School of Forestry Management have been restricted. The forest was occupied by soldiers, who caused considerable damage to roads and vegetation. Access to the forest continues to be denied. The extent of damages is being determined.

North Moravia: regional national committee, Ostrava

In Olomouc, foreign soldiers took over the Army House, which houses the People’s School of Art. Since access to the building is denied, the People’s School of Art cannot operate.

REGIONS IN SLOVAKIA

According to a report from the secretariat of the education commissioner, during the occupation of Slovakia by the foreign armies, two teachers of the primary school in Vrábce were detained while putting up posters. After an inquiry, they were immediately released.

The Technical University in Bratislava was occupied until 30 August of this year. Since 1 September, the building has been free again.

The spaces used by the Fine Arts University, whose departments are housed in Bratislava Castle, are inaccessible.

The secondary technical schools in Prešov and Košice continue to be occupied. Instruction is scheduled to start on 9 September 1968.

Prague, 5 Sept. 1968

Head of Department II:

MINISTERSTVO ZAHRANIČNÍCH VĚCÍ

c. 011256/68-GS

V Praze dne 5. září 1968

Ministerstvo vnitra
vedoucí sekretariátu ministra
P r a h a

Tajné

Věc: Práce MZV v době mimořádných událostí.

K Vašemu dnešnímu telefonickému dotazu sdělujeme:

1. K zadržení nebo internaci pracovníků ministerstva zahraničních věcí nedošlo.

2. V důsledku mimořádných událostí byl narušen chod ministerstva zahraničních věcí na těchto úsecích:

a/ telefonické a telegrafní spojení se ZÚ, které nemají vlastní radiospojení, bylo zcela nebo zčásti přerušeno. Náhradní řešení si vyžádalo mimořádné finanční výdaje ve valutě /cca 500.000 valutových korun/.

b/ vzhledem k zastavení provozu ČSA bylo zcela ochromeno zaslání korespondence na zastupitelské úřady i opačně leteckými kurýry, leteckou poštou a citem.

Vedoucí generálního sekretariátu:

Jan

STORIES OF INJUSTICE

FILM

INTERRUPTED SPRING: THE AUGUST HAMMER

TRANSCRIPT

MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS
no. 011256/68-GS.

Prague, 5 September 1968

Secret

Ministry of Foreign Affairs
Secretariat-general
P r a g u e

Re: Ministry activities during the extraordinary situation.

In response to your telephone call today, we report that:

1. No ministry employees were detained or interned.
2. As a result of the extraordinary situation, the following ministry activities were interrupted:
 - a/ telephone and telegraph contact with embassies without their own radio receiver were completely or partially interrupted.
A substitute solution required an exceptional financial outlay of ca. 500,000 crowns
 - b/ the interruption of Czech Airlines services has completely crippled the sending of mail to embassies, including courier, airmail and cargo services.

Head of the secretariat-general:

1968 – YEAR OF GREAT CHANGES

PROJECT DESCRIPTION:

The year 1968 witnessed student riots in Paris, anti-Semitic campaigns in Poland, and the murders of Robert Kennedy and Martin Luther King. In Iraq, Saddam Hussein first came to power and in China the Cultural Revolution was just reaching its apex. In Czechoslovakia, the year began on a promising note – the gradual political liberalization was bringing new freedoms. But the new hopes did not last long. On 21 August 1968, they were crushed under the wheels of tanks, and so began the country's occupation by the Soviet army. The aim of this project is to focus on events from 1968 not only in Czechoslovakia, but to look at other issues faced by Europe and the world at the time, in order to understand the relationships between regional, national and world history.

PROJECT OBJECTIVES:

- working with source materials and historical documents
- gaining an awareness of interrelationships within a European context
- multicultural education, education in the European and global contexts

PROJECT INSTRUCTIONS:

I. MOTIVATIONAL ACTIVITY

OBJECTIVES:

- familiarize oneself with interview methods
- awaken pupils' interest in the events of 1968 both in Czechoslovakia and in their home region

TIME: 20 + 20 min (over the course of several days) + preparation outside of class

TOOLS:

- a sheet of paper for each pupil
- writing utensils
- optional: camera, recording equipment, video camera

INSTRUCTIONS:

1. Provide the pupils with a brief summary of the events of 1968 in Czechoslovakia – “Prague Spring” and “August '68”.
2. Ask the pupils what they imagine this time was like (the political situation in their own country, culture, music, habits, everyday life).
3. Let the pupils decide what they would like to learn about this time and how they might find out.
4. Explain that the pupils' task will be to interview a family member or other adult aged 50–60.
5. As a group, review the rules of the journalistic genre of the interview (see note), writing them on the board as bullet points.
6. Work together to prepare 6 to 10 questions that the pupils would like to ask their subjects. The pupils should ask their subjects whether they remember facts of everyday life from 1968 – how people lived, what they were interested in, what they were excited about when they were young (clothing, bands, movies...) and what events they remember personally. The questionnaire should also ask whether they remember the events in Czechoslovakia and what they remember.
7. The following classroom hour should begin with an in-class discussion of what interesting things the pupils learned.

II. FILM SCREENING

TIME: **90** minutes

TOOLS:

- wall map of Europe, historical atlases – 20th century
- SOURCE MATERIAL – photographs of 1968 events in Czechoslovakia

INSTRUCTIONS:

1. Before the film screening, use the maps and atlases to place Czechoslovakia within the European context. Review terms such as “Iron Curtain”, Warsaw Pact, UN Security Council. The photographs (SOURCE MATERIAL) can be used as visual aids.
2. Show the film *Interrupted Spring: The August Hammer*.

DISCUSSION:

Ask the pupils how the information from the film differs from what they learned in the interviews. The pupils can write down how the events of August 1968 were viewed differently in their country and in Czechoslovakia.

NOTE:

Interview (from the French *entrevoir*) means a conversation or meeting. In journalism, an interview is a conversation between a journalist and an important or interesting person. The journalist is the questioner. He or she is in charge of the interview and determines the topic, questions, etc. The questions – which tend to be open-ended – are prepared ahead of time, and in order to receive an accurate record of the interview, the conversation is recorded. A written transcript of the interview is not necessarily word-for-word – it is sometimes changed for stylistic reasons, but the content of the answers is never changed.

III. UNDERSTANDING 1968

TIME: 20 + 30 minutes (over the course of several days) + preparation outside of class

TOOLS:

- WORKSHEET
- writing utensils
- source materials (newspapers, photographs, culture of the 1960s and '70s)
- internet access or a school library
- blackboard or poster-sized piece of paper

INSTRUCTIONS:

1. During discussion, explain the issue of reforms in the communist regimes and discuss with the pupils what would have bothered them the most and what they would like to have changed. Towards the end of discussion time, steer the discussion towards the question of how the people in their town experienced this period and what they knew (or might have known) about the events in Czechoslovakia from the media.
2. The pupils are assigned the task of finding photographs and newspaper articles depicting this period in their home region, as well as photographs and articles about their country and about the events in Czechoslovakia and other important events in European or world history from that year.
3. Each pupil writes down what he or she found on the worksheet.
4. During the next classroom hour (or hours), the pupils put together and fill in the same table, only larger. One possible outcome could be a presentation of the information and photographs they found (either a physical presentation or on PC).

DISCUSSION:

No matter whether the pupils assemble their group overview in one hour or over time (for instance, during several historical seminars), this should always be followed by discussion and review helping the pupils to see the global contexts. At the same time, the pupils can share experiences from their “research work.”

NOTE:

It may be quite difficult to find local information from the period in question. It is thus important that the pupils receive some help on where to look. This may differ from region to region, but generally speaking, good sources of information are first-person accounts, newspapers and magazines, books about the places where they live, websites about the history of their town, old photographs and the local library or museum. The national, European, and international context of the events of 1968 can also be gleaned from encyclopaedias, the internet and textbooks.

STORIES OF INJUSTICE	
FILM	INTERRUPTED SPRING: THE AUGUST HAMMER
WORKSHEET	

1968 IN THE REGIONAL AND EUROPEAN CONTEXT

REGION	EVENTS WHAT INFORMATION CAN WE FIND IN THE MEDIA FROM THAT TIME?
TOWN	Example: Old photographs from the town, events from the local media, highlights and achievements... Pupils can present article excerpts or headlines... The same approach is applied at the other levels
REGION	
COUNTRY	
NEIGHBOURING COUNTRIES	
EUROPE WORLD	

1. What was the political situation in Europe in the year 1968? What was the Warsaw Pact?

In 1968, Europe had been divided for more than twenty years by the “Iron Curtain”, the term used by Winston Churchill in 1946 to describe the emerging border between the East and West Blocs. After World War II, Czechoslovakia had fallen within the Soviet sphere of influence, and the country had also been a founding member of the Warsaw Pact in the mid-1950s (other members included Albania, Bulgaria, Hungary, East Germany, Poland, Romania and the Soviet Union). This military pact was named after the Polish capital, where on 14 May 1955 the founding members signed the “Treaty of Friendship, Cooperation and Mutual Assistance.” Although the treaty declared that all signatories were equal, the Warsaw Pact was in fact clearly dominated by Moscow. This became apparent just shortly after its signing, when Soviet forces smashed the 1956 Hungarian uprising. In 1962, Albania halted its participation in Warsaw Pact activities. In the second half of the 1960s, Romania began to take a critical stance against the pact as well, and the country did not participate in the August 1968 invasion of Czechoslovakia. The Warsaw Pact was dissolved in 1991.

2. What was the Prague Spring and what events took place during this time?

The term is used to describe the events of the late 1960s in Czechoslovakia. This period is most frequently defined as the period from Alexander Dubček’s nomination to the head of the Czechoslovak Communist Party (5 January 1968) up to the invasion by the armies of five Warsaw Pact countries (21 August 1968). The Prague Spring involved the introduction of more liberal politics and an attempt at reforming the communist regime from above, combined with a revived civil society that welcomed most of the changes and demanded that they continue. The violent suppression of the Prague Spring represents a significant breaking point in the history of communism as an international movement, with a sharp split according to differing opinions on the August invasion.

3. When was NATO (the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation) founded and why?

NATO is a military alliance founded on 4 April 1949 in Washington, when representatives from twelve countries (Belgium, Denmark, France, Iceland, Italy, Canada,

Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Norway, Portugal, the United States and Great Britain) signed the North Atlantic Treaty. Over the years, the alliance was expanded to include other countries as well. The Warsaw Pact was a direct response to West Germany’s entry into NATO in 1955. The North Atlantic Alliance was founded on the principle of collective defence, according to which an armed attack on one member in Europe or North America would be considered an attack against all. The alliance was founded out of the West’s fears of Soviet expansion – it provided the countries of Western Europe with an assurance that, in case of a Soviet attack, they would be supported by North America.

4. Why did the Soviet Union occupy Czechoslovakia?

The five Warsaw Pact armies invaded Czechoslovakia for several reasons. The main reason was an attempt at putting an end to any further political liberalization within a country that belonged to the Soviet bloc. By this view, if developments in Czechoslovakia were to have continued unchecked, it could have threatened the entire post-war order and lead to West German revisionism. For this reason, fierce critics of Dubček included not only the Soviet regime, but also the leaders of other Soviet satellites such as Władysław Gomułka in Poland and Walter Ulbricht in East Germany, who were additionally influenced by fears of the “counterrevolution” spreading across the borders to their countries. Another reason given for the intervention has to do with the geopolitical situation of the time. Before August 1968, the Soviet Union only had a few secret groups of military specialists in Czechoslovakia. The absence of Soviet troops on the physical border to the West may have played an important role in the generals’ overall strategic plans.

5. Were there people in Czechoslovakia who wanted the Soviet army to invade?

In particular members of the conservative faction (who were called “healthy forces”) within the Czechoslovak Communist Party had an interest in a military intervention. Many of them had been forced from office in the spring of 1968, and so they saw an intervention by “friendly” armies as a tool for their return to the political stage. The conservatives were also feeling pressure from the media, which had begun publishing articles about the crimes of the

1950s. These individuals were also worried about the upcoming party congress scheduled for September 1968, at which a wide-ranging personnel shake-up was expected. Active participants in overthrowing the Dubček government included high-ranking officers in the State Security Service, who had been collaborating with the Soviet intelligence service for years. These people, guided by the Soviets, helped prepare the invasion and organized the subsequent arrests of selected reform politicians.

6. Could the so-called “letters of invitation” actually have been written by the Russians? Could they be forgeries?

Although there had been talk of such letters as early as right after the invasion, it was not until the collapse of the Soviet Union that their existence was confirmed. In July 1992, Russian president Boris Yeltsin presented his Czechoslovak counterpart Václav Havel with several newly discovered archival documents. These included two letters signed by citizens of Czechoslovakia, asking for a military intervention. The first “letter of invitation” had been written in Czech by Antonín Kapek, who had apparently passed it on to the Soviets in late July 1968. The second had been written in Russian in early August 1968 by five members of the communist party (Alois Indra, Antonín Kapek, Drahomír Kolder, Oldřich Švestka and Vasil Bílak), who apparently presented it during negotiations with the Soviets in Bratislava. The letter had been kept in the archives, sealed in its envelope and dated 25 September 1968, with the note: “Store in politburo archives. Not to be opened without approval. Konstantin Chernenko.” The authenticity of the signatures on the two letters was confirmed by forensic analysis. Historians who studied the letters have no doubts as to their authenticity.

7. How were the foreign armies able to be in Czechoslovakia so quickly? How come nobody informed the citizenry?

From a military point of view, the invasion of Czechoslovakia was perfectly implemented. Despite reports of military movements near the Czechoslovak borders and warnings from diplomats and several military officers, no one in Czechoslovakia’s political leadership – with the exception of pro-Soviet collaborators – actually expected an intervention.

8. How many soldiers from the Soviet Union and other countries participated in the invasion?

According to military historians, Operation Danube – as the invasion was called in Soviet plans – involved around 160,000 soldiers and around 4,600 tanks in the first wave of the invasion. Their numbers were gradually increased over the subsequent days. According to the chiefs of staff of the Czechoslovak People’s Army, by 25 August 1968 the country had been occupied by 27 divisions in full battle readiness, including 12 tank, 13 motorized and 2 airborne divisions; also involved was one air force division, which among other things possessed missile-based weapons. These units were armed with 6,300 tanks, 2,000 artillery pieces, 550 fighter planes and 250 transport aircraft. A day later, these forces were joined by additional Soviet troops that had been stationed in East Germany.

9. Why did the people protest against the Russians? Did the Czech army at any time attack the occupiers?

At the time, the Czechoslovak People’s Army was trained exclusively for fighting the West and was not prepared for the possibility of having to defend itself against other members of the Warsaw Pact. In addition, the army was numerically outnumbered by the invading forces – the largest movement of soldiers on the European continent since the end of World War II. Although the leadership of the Czechoslovak Communist Party officially condemned the occupation, it called upon the public to remain calm and to not put up any resistance. The leadership of the Czechoslovak People’s Army issued an order not to resist the invading armies. Nevertheless, Czechoslovak units took up defensive positions in their barracks. There also were around a hundred cases of military radio stations used for anti-occupation broadcasts. In many cases, people hid their weapons and some military units prepared for the possibility of engaging in partisan warfare.

10. Is it true that if the Russians hadn’t invaded Czechoslovakia, the country would have been occupied by NATO?

Occupation propaganda frequently emphasized the supposed threat of West German revanchism and a strengthened NATO if Czechoslovakia were to leave the Soviet bloc. This argument was made purely as a justification for the invasion and has no basis in re-

ality – as proven among other things by the fact that, in planning the invasion, Moscow and its allies clearly did not anticipate any interference on the part of the West, which respected the division of the European continent and was afraid of any conflict that might lead to a nuclear confrontation.

11. How did the situation in Czechoslovakia and Europe develop after 1968?

The invasion of Czechoslovakia on 21 August 1968 was the largest military operation in Europe since the end of World War II. The decision by the Soviet Union and four of its satellites to put down the Prague Spring by force was met with an almost unanimous resistance by the Czechoslovak public, which protested in support of the arrested Czechoslovak politicians. On 23 August 1968, the First Secretary of the Polish United Workers' Party, Władysław Gomułka, described the situation in the occupied country as follows: "We have won militarily, but politically we have been totally defeated." The August invasion had wide-ranging impacts around the globe, resulting in the fracturing of the international communist movement and seriously discrediting the idea of communism. It also led to worsened relations between the superpowers. Many cities around the world witnessed public demonstrations in support of the Prague Spring, and the invasion of Czechoslovakia was discussed by the UN Security Council. The Kremlin did not manage to pacify the resistance by the majority of the Czechoslovak public until the beginning of the 1970s.

12. What did the occupation of Czechoslovakia by Soviet forces look like?

Unlike the Polish, Bulgarian and Hungarian armies (the East German army participated only symbolically in the invasion), which left in the autumn of 1968, Soviet forces remained in Czechoslovakia for the next 22 years. In October 1968, the governments of the CSSR and USSR signed a treaty for the "temporary presence of Soviet forces within the CSSR."

Although Soviet military commanders were never officially involved in the Czechoslovak government, they exerted enormous influence. Above all, the occupying forces acted as a deterrent and potential military threat when it came to promoting Soviet interests – most visibly in the spring of 1969, when Moscow threatened to use force in case of unrest.

The Soviet forces were stationed throughout the country. The public was most affected by the presence of the occupying army during the many military exercises, and military equipment moving along local roads led to a series of tragic accidents. There also were occasional personal incidents involving soldiers and the civilian population, including rape. The Soviet army made use of extensive military training grounds, which they left in a devastated state and whose environmental cleanup has required immense financial expenditures.

13. When and under what circumstances did the Soviet army finally leave Czechoslovakia?

The possibility of Soviet troops leaving the country became a reality after the fall of communism in Czechoslovakia in November 1989. According to official Soviet sources (the true numbers were much higher), before their departure there were 73,500 soldiers and officers with their families in the country, 1,220 tanks, 2,505 infantry vehicles and personnel carriers, 1,218 artillery pieces larger than 100 mm, 77 fighter planes and 146 helicopters. In 1990, there were 67 Soviet garrisons in the Czech lands and 16 garrisons in Slovakia. After intense negotiations, the treaty for the departure of Soviet troops was signed by both countries' ministries of foreign affairs on 26 February 1990. The last Soviet soldiers left in June 1991.

Answers prepared by:

Petr Blažek, historian

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THE LOST SOUL OF A NATION

Created in 2000–2002 *The Lost Soul of a Nation* is a series of documentary films whose seven independent episodes show several different ways in which the communist regime repressed Czechoslovak citizens, in particular during the 1950s.

This kit includes four episodes, which for the purposes of the “Stories of Injustice” project were edited in 2010 from their original 59 minutes to 22 minutes in length.

Each episode captures the personal testimony and memories of victims and opponents of the communist regime. Each story presents the life of a real person, showing how these people lived originally, how they suffered at the hands of the totalitarian system, and how they managed to deal with their situation. A common thread of all the stories is the fact that these people spent time in communist prisons, although they ended up there for a diverse variety of reasons. 

	STORIES OF INJUSTICE
FILM	THE LOST SOUL OF A NATION
	QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

1. What possibilities and forms of active resistance against the dictatorship existed in the 1950s?

During the emergence of the anti-communist resistance in the early days of the communist regime (1948–1953), an important role was played by hopes for a possible change in the international situation and anticipations of a military conflict between East and West. Following the death of Joseph Stalin in 1953 and several large-scale crises in the East bloc countries, however, the international political situation became stabilized and the superpowers accepted the bipolar division of the world. Nevertheless, resistance to the totalitarian regime continued in various forms for its entire existence. It was a struggle against members of one's own nation, but without any domestic or foreign headquarters that might have coordinated armed or political resistance to the communist regime. Under totalitarian rule, with society controlled by an extensive apparatus of repression, resistance was expressed in various ways that may appear spontaneous and diverse but also (and especially from today's point of view) naïve. Some of the most significant examples of resistance include two attempts at a military coup in 1949. However, the State Security Service uncovered the conspiracies before they could take place, and the main participants were executed. At the same time, there were many anti-communist groups and individuals (estimates vary from several hundred to several thousand) of varying sizes active throughout Czechoslovakia. Their members tried to destabilize the communist regime as it worked to establish itself. Most acts were of an isolated nature, uncoordinated, and did not really threaten the regime. Also active within the country were Western intelligence services and so-called agent-walkers who collaborated with them (it is estimated that around 700 such members of the resistance were active in the country). Although the agents acquired and transferred important information from many different areas of life (such as production plans from important industrial plants, information from inside the Communist Party, reports on the public mood, etc.), their activities did not help overthrow the communist regime. Some of them managed to flee across the border and began to organize armed Czechoslovak units in the West (for instance, in the French Foreign Legion). Any assessment of the success of the resistance must take into account the activities of the State Security Service,

which was relatively effective in battling the regime's opponents and managed to stamp out many attempts at resistance in their infancy, doing so with the help of secret informants and *agents provocateurs*. Some anti-communist groups were even founded and run with the full knowledge of the secret police.

2. What methods and tools of coercion did interrogators use during questioning?

For the State Security Service (the secret police), interrogations were an important tool in the fight against the "class enemy". Historian Karel Kaplan has written that "one of the basic principles of the secret police was that anyone whom they arrested must be convicted or otherwise punished. If they were detained for questioning and then released as if they were innocent, then this would undermine the Service's credibility and authority; it would mean admitting their mistakes..." The arrest itself was considered to be the main proof of anti-government or other illegal activities, and the task was to force the necessary confession from the person. Especially in the 1950s, this involved almost any means. The interrogators combined physical violence with mental coercion. Physical violence included long interrogations or depriving the individual of food or sleep (the accused were forced to continuously walk in their cells). Another form of coercion was being beaten. There are records of people being tortured by electric shock, and in some cases the accused were apparently administered drugs. Often worse than physical violence was mental coercion, such as locking the accused into isolation, denying them contact with their family and not providing them any information about their family, threatening to persecute family members and friends, and various forms of demeaning the dignity of the accused. The aim was to completely exhaust the accused both physically and mentally in order to force them to confess to crimes that they never committed. The Ministry of Security had banned torture at the beginning of the 1950s, but in actuality it remained a basic interrogation technique for a long time afterwards. After 1989, several interrogators were tried in court, but they were few and far between. Many others denied their actions or said that they were following orders. According to court rulings, the statute of limitations on many of the violent excesses perpetrated by the secret police has run out.

3. How many political prisoners were there in communist Czechoslovakia's prisons between 1945 and 1989?

The Confederation of Political Prisoners offers an estimate of 147,000. The final number remains unknown, since without a detailed analysis it is quite difficult to differentiate between political prisoners and criminals. Under the communist regime (as under the Nazi occupation) political activities were criminalized, meaning that political opponents were sentenced under "criminal" laws. Also worth mentioning is so-called extra-judicial repression. This included the army work brigades, to which people were assigned during their mandatory military service if they were considered "unreliable." Another form of extra-judicial oppression were forced labour camps, where people were imprisoned if they had an antagonist attitude to the regime – not on the basis of a court verdict, but by a ruling of a so-called allocating committee composed of party officials. Several tens of thousands of citizens were placed in prison-like camps in this manner.

4. What was everyday life in prison like? What difficulties did the prisoners have to face?

Each prison and labour camp offered different living conditions. Generally speaking, however, prison life was physically and mentally demanding for political prisoners who were sentenced to long prison terms (sometimes life). Prisoners were used as a cheap source of labour – most prisoners (regardless of age or gender) had to perform hard manual labour and to meet high work targets. They were employed in the textile industry, the machine industry, agricultural production, on construction sites, etc. More than 70,000 imprisoned men passed through the country's uranium mine labour camps, where they mined radioactive uranium in inhuman conditions and without protective gear. Prisoners worked essentially for free. If they were ever remunerated for their work, much of their pay was deducted to pay for food, accommodation and guards, they sent some of their pay to their families, and all that remained for them was a small bit of pocket change which they could use to buy personal supplies. Political prisoners were often subjected to harsh treatment and harassment by prison guards. Even the slightest violation of rules, failure to meet work targets, or sometimes completely fabricated offences were punished by being sent to

"correction" (a kind of prison within a prison – usually a room without windows or light), having their food rations reduced, being denied certain benefits (such as letters from family members, visits or packages). Prisoners' everyday life often involved poor hygienic conditions, insufficient or entirely lacking healthcare, overcrowded cells, demeaning searches (cell inspections), poor and insufficient nutrition. Especially difficult for political prisoners – people who had been very active and social in normal life – was the monotony of prison life and having to share their cells with people who had been sentenced for criminal offences (thieves, murderers, prostitutes).

5. What did prisoners do? What activities could they engage in?

If the prisoners' state of health permitted, they had to work while serving their sentence. Opportunities for non-work activities differed from prison to prison – some activities were tolerated by the prison or camp management, but others could result in being punished. We know about most forbidden activities from the reports of former prisoners. The most common activity during free time (usually the time between dinner and lights-out) was reading books. After 1948, prisons', penal institutions' and labour units' libraries were significantly reduced, with the removal of many authors whom the regime considered "enemies of the working people". Also discarded was religious literature, foreign language textbooks and the like. New additions included literature that promoted the communist regime and its ideology. Although prisoners could not attend religious services (prison churches and chapels were closed in 1950) and the prisons' educational activities promoted atheism, we know that religious life played a very important role in prisons. Secret masses held by imprisoned priests helped many people in jail endure their suffering. Many former political prisoners have fond memories of their "prison universities", where – in very makeshift conditions – their fellow prisoners taught them foreign languages, ancient, world, Czech and Slovak history, natural sciences and so on. Many of the "lecturers" were imprisoned priests, monks, authors, journalists and university professors. There are only a few surviving copies of drawings, poems or stories created in prison. At the uranium mine labour camps, prisoners formed (mainly if the conditions were more favourable) sport-

ing clubs. Popular sports among the prisoners included football, basketball, volleyball, ping-pong and chess. An important aspect of political prisoners' time in prison was a sense of solidarity that helped them endure the most difficult moments.

6. How did the prison guards treat political prisoners?

Prison and camp guards in the 1950s tended to be fanatical supporters of the communist regime. They were often recruited from the lower social classes, and – influenced by the prevailing ideological dogma of the time – they viewed political opponents of communism as their “class enemies.” As a result, they treated them much worse than criminals or even so-called “retribution” prisoners (people sentenced after the war for having actively collaborated with the Nazi occupational regime). There are also cases of guards encouraging fights and conflicts between political and criminal prisoners. Another occurrence was that former collaborators would harass their former opponents from the anti-Nazi resistance, with the guards watching on.

7. Were any guards convicted of mistreating prisoners?

Although several guards from 1950s-era prisons went to trial after 1989, none of them ever went to jail. The prosecution of Jaroslav Duba, the former commander of the Vojna prison camp near Příbram, was halted. The same happened with the prosecution of Bohumír Vlačíha, who shot and injured political prisoner Jaroslav Lukeš during an attempted escape from the Jáchymov uranium camp. Vlačíha claimed in court that his weapon fired at the captured and immobilized prisoner on its own. The only individuals sentenced to prison were several secret police interrogators, border guards and former prosecutor Ludmila Brožová-Polednová, who played a key role in the Milada Horáková trial (see *The Case of Dr. Horáková*).

8. How many political prisoners died in Czechoslovak prisons? Did any of them commit suicide?

Unfortunately, we still do not know the precise number of political prisoners who died in communist prisons and labour camps, since we run into the same problem as in determining the total number of political prisoners. Historians estimate that some 7,000

political prisoners died as a result of the difficult conditions and poor treatment in the 1950s. These included several important members of Czechoslovak public life. Some prisoners could not withstand the tough conditions in the penal institutions and took their own lives. On the other hand, many cases officially labelled suicide are shrouded in the suspicion that interrogators and guards may have been trying to cover up their violent methods and crimes.

9. Why were some prisoners released early?

With the gradual liberalization of the communist regime, begun in 1956 when the cult of personality surrounding Joseph Stalin was “exposed” at the 20th Party Congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, it began to be clear that the use of fabricated charges and brutal methods of interrogation could no longer be sustained. As a result, the regime began the process of rehabilitating certain political prisoners. The first to be released from prison were people sentenced during trials involving members of the communist party, even though they had only recently been sentenced to long prison terms. Most non-communist political prisoners did not follow until the late 1950s and early 1960s. One important event in this regard was the amnesty announced in May 1960 on the occasion of the 15th anniversary of the liberation of Czechoslovakia, when thousands of prisoners were freed from prisons and labour camps. Even after this, however, certain political prisoners remained behind bars – for instance, those sentenced during the Milada Horáková trial were not released until 1962–1963. Even in 1968 – the year of reforms – there were still political prisoners in Czechoslovakia. During the Prague Spring, the Catholic church came forward with a call for their release. However, the process of rehabilitation begun in 1968 was halted with the Warsaw Pact invasion and was not completed until after November 1989.

10. What were prisoners' lives like after being released?

After being released from jail, political prisoners were faced with many difficulties, and the communist regime tried to make their return to society as complicated as possible. Due to the poor prison conditions and hard labour, many prisoners returned in poor physical and mental health. Some of them had

no place to return to (their property had been confiscated, many of their family members had died or been relocated). For others, their families had fallen apart while they were in prison or they found it difficult to reconnect with their partners and children after such a long period of separation. Former prisoners received no financial support after being released and had difficulties finding work – for example, people with secondary or university-level education had only a slim chance of returning to their original field of work. They were forced to perform hard manual labour, often poorly paid, and they were often the subject of insults and humiliation at their place of employment. Only very few former prisoners managed to find employment that at least partially reflected their level of education. Former students could not finish their education, and still had to perform their mandatory military service after being released. People in retirement age were denied the pensions to which they had a right, or they were afforded low pensions that did not even cover their basic financial needs. In the eyes of the communist regime, many former prisoners remained “unreeducated class enemies” and were followed for years afterwards. Even if they were released during the amnesty, their remaining sentence was not automatically waived – their release involved the condition that they remain out of trouble for several years to come. Some former political prisoners were repeatedly persecuted, with some of them preferring to emigrate in the late 1960s (in some cases, as a result of the country’s occupation in 1968).

Answers prepared by:

Petr Koura, historian (3, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9); Tomáš Bursík, historian (1, 2, 4, 10)

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THE LOST SOUL OF A NATION – LOSS OF DIGNITY

Olga Sommerová

Czech Republic, 2010, 22 min.

During 1949–1950, one half of the Czechoslovak army’s officer corps was “removed”. Thousands of soldiers were imprisoned, several dozen executed. A society that engages in the elimination of its officers and generals loses its dignity.

The film presents the fates of Colonel Luboš Hruška and Major-General Miroslav Kácha. Also appearing are Colonel Julian Slepecký and Lieutenant General Tomáš Sedláček. All four spent many years imprisoned by the communist regime. For their unyielding beliefs and aversion to the emerging totalitarian regime, they were locked up in the country’s harshest prisons. “It was a university of life. I definitely don’t regret the experience,” says Luboš Hruška, who rose above his suffering by discovering religion, and who, while on a disability pension later in life, created a large meditative garden featuring the Stations of the Cross as a “Memorial to the Victims of Evil”.

“If you have stood up to evil once in your life, you will do it a second time,” says Miroslav Kácha, whose sense of military honour prevented him from looking on idly at the injustices committed in the name of communism. At the end of the film, the main protagonists express their disbelief that nobody has been convicted for perpetrating these crimes against humanity.



AN OPINION OF ONE'S OWN

The elimination of wartime heroes in 1950s Czechoslovakia

OBJECTIVES:

- learn to formulate and defend one's opinions
- understand the text and identify the reasons why the communist regime decided to eliminate wartime heroes

TIME: 35 minutes

TOOLS:

- **SOURCE MATERIAL** – text: Regime Even Eliminated Wartime Heroes (for each pupil)
- a sheet of paper for each pupil
- writing utensils

INSTRUCTIONS:

1. The pupils all receive a copy of the **SOURCE MATERIAL**, which they read and select a sentence or passage that somehow caught their attention.
2. The pupils write their selected sentence or passage on a blank sheet of paper. On the other side of the paper, they write their commentary on this part of the text. The pupils can express themselves freely, expand on and alter the text, explain their changes, add their own opinion, or just write why they chose this passage. Their text should be formulated in connected sentences.
3. Ask the pupils to read their selected quote to the rest of the class. Afterwards, the others express their views of the text and try to guess why the pupil chose this part of the text. Then the original pupil reads his or her commentary.
4. Next comes another pupil who chose a different section of the text. This continues until all the pupils have gone or there are no more new quotes.

DISCUSSION:

During discussion, the classroom discusses as a group how the pupils understood the text, whether the preceding debate revealed anything that was unclear, whether they changed their opinion during the activity, or whether something surprised them, etc.

Source:

The activity makes use of the instructional method known as *I have the last word* (Various authors: Sborník lekcí s využitím metod aktivního učení. / Collection of Lessons for Using Active Learning Methods. Kritické myšlení, Prague 2007.)

Regime Even Eliminated Wartime Heroes

In 1949, Colonel Luboš Hruška was a young army officer who tried to cross the border to the West. He was caught and sentenced to eighteen years in prison, serving more than half his sentence at various correctional facilities. During one of his last interviews, he described his transfer from the Pilsen-Bory prison to an army prison in Opava in the early 1950s: "Suddenly I hear: Kutlvašr, Janoušek... The names of maybe seven generals. Then there came the names of lower-ranking officers and in the end the guard called Hruška. He opens the cell and says, 'Pack your things, grab your bag and get dressed.' I look and in the corridor were some forty officers, dressed in ragged uniforms with the ranks torn off. And I said to myself: What kind of regime is this that eliminates its heroes, the people who deserve our respect for liberating us from the Nazis?"

Just as an explanation: General Karel Kutlvašr was active in the wartime resistance movement and helped lead the Prague Uprising – after 1948, he was sentenced to life in prison. General Karel Janoušek led the Czechoslovak air force in France during the war, and went to Britain, where he advanced to the rank of Vice-Marshal in the Royal Air Force. He, too, was sentenced to life in prison under communism.

Hruška's story is very telling. The fate of the country's soldiers shows the cruel, ruthless and cynical manner in which the post-1948 regime established itself in Czechoslovakia – and that "higher ideals" played absolutely no role in this process. Soldiers who had shown not only extraordinary courage, but had also displayed their commitment to freedom and democratic ideals, had been slated for liquidation. Not only could they not be expected to support Gottwald and his comrades, but sooner or later they would take an active stance against the Communist Party. They were "natural enemies" – they did not fight one totalitarian regime just to sit by and watch another take hold.

The party apparatus had been preparing to strike against undesirable officers since long before the February putsch. As early as in 1945, the so-called Defensive Intelligence Service had been established, run by Bedřich Reicin, who was an agent of the Soviet NKVD. Reicin would later become a central figure in the communist reign of terror. Journalist Tomáš Vlček summarizes the events on the website www.totalita.cz: "Starting on 28 February 1948, a literal witch hunt ensues in the Czechoslovak army, whose first phase is aimed at the command (i.e. 'Western') elite of the Czechoslovak air force, using a previously prepared list of names. During four purges between 1948 and 1950, 57 generals, 207 colonels, 511 lieutenant colonels and 634 majors are dismissed from the Czechoslovak army."

The highest-ranking officers were arrested immediately after the February 1948 putsch, but the purges and criminal trials continued roughly until 1956. Prisons and labour camps were filled with soldiers accused of treason, espionage and other "crimes". The accused (who were subjected to all forms of torture) were often interrogated at the "little house" in Prague's Hradčany district – a State Security Service office ruled over by the sadistic captain František Pergl. General Miroslav Kácha, who had been sentenced to death in 1949 and whose sentence had been reduced to life in prison, remembers: "He was a well-known savage and one can even say murderer, since he had many lives on his conscience. When they brought me in after my arrest, he gave me a threatening lecture. He had a quote on the wall of his office: 'There will be no compassion for traitors.' Since it was Sunday, he left. I stayed, and I could hear the sound of the nearby chimes from the Loreta church." The song would play for General Kácha when he lay in his cell after being tortured, and it would play for dozens of other prisoners. It was a song dedicated to the Virgin Mary: "We Greet You a Thousand Times"...

In the archives of the Czechoslovak security services, we can read that Western pilots (RAF veterans) "...in Czechoslovakia were placed in the group of so-called 'former people'. This almost unbelievable term was used by the State Security Service (StB) to label those considered dangerous for the communist regime ... The StB used the term 'former people' until roughly the mid-1960s, when it was replaced with a new term, 'enemy individuals'."

Of course, it wasn't just "Westerners" such as General Pernický or young members of the resistance who ended up in prison. Many people think that soldiers who fought on the eastern front during the war were part of a communist army and thus a kind of "Red Monolith." That this was not the case is shown by the story of Pravomil Reichl, or the fate of Division General Heliodor Píka, who was executed in June 1949. Army General Ludvík Svoboda, who was the country's minister of defence between 1948 and 1950 and later even its president, did almost nothing for "his" eastern soldiers. He was afraid of Reicin, who had become a kind of "shadow minister of defence", and willingly submitted to him, which understandably had a terrible impact on the army.

Source: Drda, A: *Příběhy bezpráví, kapitoly z československých dějin 1948–1989*. (Stories of Injustice. Chronicles from Czechoslovak History, 1948–1989.) *People in Need*, Prague 2008

1. How and where did the officers depicted in the film earn their military ranks?

All the officers depicted in the film had been active professional soldiers. Lieutenant Colonel Luboš Hruška and Major-General Miroslav Kácha joined the Czechoslovak army after the end of World War II and earned their military ranks between 1945 and 1948, often after graduating from military academies. All the officers were sentenced by the communist regime to long prison sentences and were stripped of their military ranks. They were rehabilitated after the 1989 revolution, when their ranks were returned to them and they were promoted for their extraordinary services in the struggle for independence.

2. Did the communists ever “break” someone who then “lost his dignity”?

Such cases almost certainly occurred. Communist interrogators often tried not only to force the people they arrested to confess to “anti-state” activities that they had indeed engaged in, but also wanted them to confess to actions that they had never committed. One Czechoslovak officer who was involved in the anti-Nazi and the anti-communist resistance said that the Nazis tortured him so that he would tell the truth while the communists tortured him so that he would lie. Breaking someone’s personality was a fundamental part of getting them to confess to crimes they never committed. Such situations are described in detail by Russian author Alexandr Solzhenitsyn in *The Gulag Archipelago*.

Answers prepared by:

Petr Koura, historian

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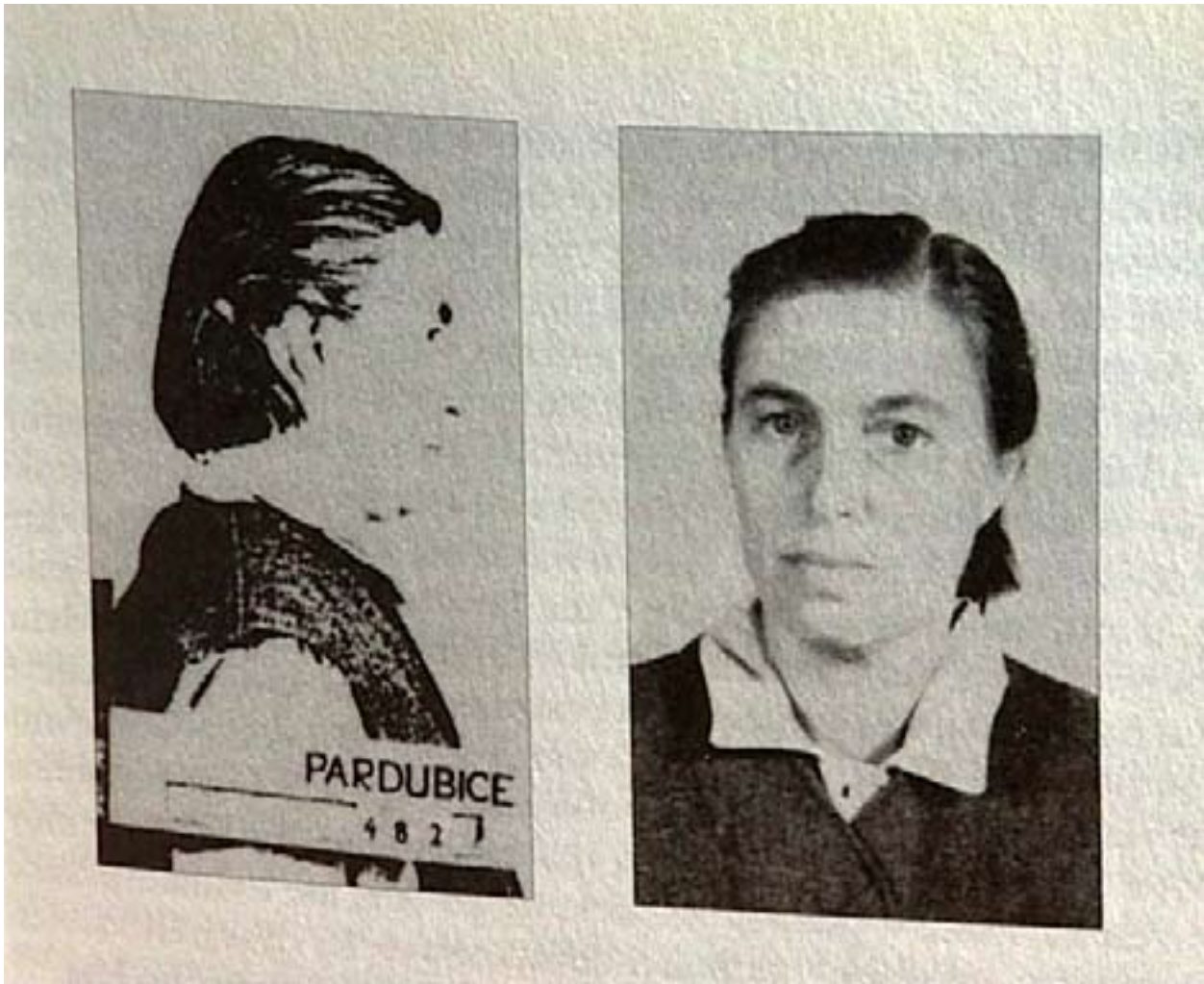
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THE LOST SOUL OF A NATION – LOSS OF DECENCY

Olga Sommerová

Czech Republic, 2010, 22 min.

The film shows the brutal manner in which the communist regime treated “class enemies” who were women. Not even the primal biological instinct that prevents most animal species from attacking a female prevented jailors from treating women as cruelly as they treated men. According to the filmmakers, a society that allows women to be harmed has lost its decency.

The film opens with the story of Dagmar Skálová. Skálová had been a member of the “Sokol” youth and physical fitness movement since her childhood, which is also where she met her future husband. The two of them later became actively involved in the Scouting movement, and in 1949 she helped to organize a demonstration by scouts against the growing communist injustice. Mrs. Skálová was arrested, and in order to protect the young scouts she took full responsibility for the entire protest. On more than one occasion during questioning, interrogators beat her until she lost consciousness. She was then sentenced to life in prison, and spent sixteen years behind bars.

Ludmila Šeflová was born in 1934 into a family of landed farmers. Her father was arrested in 1948, and she followed soon thereafter. Accused of treason and anti-state activities, she was sentenced to ten years. Her file stated that she was a “Category 1” criminal whose return to society was not desired, and she was treated accordingly in prison. Dagmar Skálová describes her jailers’ practices as follows: “I didn’t cry while being interrogated. I was ashamed for these men who were not ashamed of torturing a woman.”

p

BANISHED FOR LIFE

The fate of women unjustly imprisoned by the communist regime

OBJECTIVES:

- introduce pupils to the stories of people who were unjustly sentenced and imprisoned in communist Czechoslovakia in the 1950s
- think about the influence their imprisonment had on their lives

TIME: **30** minutes (15 minutes before the film, 15 minutes after the film)

TOOLS:

- a poster-sized piece of paper for each group
- writing utensils

INSTRUCTIONS:

1. Divide the pupils into groups of roughly five. Each group receives a large poster-sized piece of paper.
2. On the blackboard, draw the central part of the mind map that the pupils will use to develop their thoughts: What effect does life in prison have on a young woman who is unjustly imprisoned at age 21 and spends ten years behind bars? Explain how to work with mind maps (see “Methods of interactive learning”).
3. The pupils’ task is to think about how being unjustly sentenced and spending a long time in jail might affect a young person’s life.
4. Give the groups around 8 minutes for discussion and to create their maps.
5. Afterwards, each group presents its mind map.
6. Show the film.
7. After the screening, the pupils work in their original groups. Each group chooses one of the women whose life was depicted in the film (or you can assign each group one of the film’s protagonists).
8. The pupils focus on the life of the woman they have chosen. They work with their mind maps, adding information that they learned about the person from the film.

DISCUSSION:

During final discussion, the groups present their mind maps to the rest of the class. They describe whether their assumptions are similar to the stories told by the film’s subjects. The class discusses what the pupils learned about the lives of former female political prisoners, how the women came to terms with their imprisonment, and how they view their time in prison today.

1. Of what crimes were the women in the film accused? Did they engage in any activities aimed against the communist regime?

In her youth, Dagmar Skálová had joined the Scouting movement, where she held the nickname Rakša. In May 1949, she became involved in preparations for an armed coup, with the aim of overthrowing the communist regime. Her task was to bring young scouts into the movement to act as messengers, but the planned coup was uncovered just before it was set to start. To this day, it is not clear how much of a role agents of the State Security Service played in planning the coup themselves. The subsequent trials resulted in several death sentences. In court, Dagmar Skálová took all the guilt on herself, thus sparing many young people from enduring long prison sentences. She herself was sentenced to life. Because of her uncompromising and heroic actions while in prison, she was not released as part of the large-scale amnesty in the early 1960s, and so she ended up spending sixteen years in prison. In 1968, she participated in the creation of the K231 association of former political prisoners, of which she was an active member. In 1997, the president awarded her with the Order of T. G. Masaryk.

Ludmila Šeflová and her father were accused of having contact with Western intelligence agents. She was sentenced to ten years in prison, which was reduced to seven years on appeal. She was released after five years. Her father was sentenced to thirteen years. Other members of her family were affected as well – her brother was forced to join the army's work brigade and her mother was evicted from the family farm, which was confiscated and given to the local agricultural collective (which the Šefl family had refused to join). The trial of the Šefl family was one of many aimed at eliminating landed farmers and speeding up collectivisation.

Answers prepared by:

Tomáš Bursík, historian

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THE LOST SOUL OF A NATION – LOSS OF TRADITION

Olga Sommerová

Czech Republic, 2010, 22 min

In 1950s Czechoslovakia, some 5,000 families were evicted from their family farms. With time, all their property was confiscated and many of them were imprisoned. A society that destroys family farms loses its tradition.

Ladislav Křivánek was arrested in early 1949 and accused of harbouring a fugitive criminal. He eventually received 16 years for treason, and when he was released from prison after ten years, his children were grown and all his land had been given to the local collective farm. This is how he remembers collectivisation: “Farmers are joined to the land by an umbilical cord, and the communists managed to cut this cord.” After the war, Bohumil Loucký’s family owned a farm with fifty hectares of land. In 1950, the communists took the family’s tractor and all other agricultural equipment, while at the same time mandating that they make deliveries to the state that they could never meet. Loucký’s father was imprisoned for six years and Loucký himself spent two years in the uranium mines. Neither was permitted to return to the village of their birth. “Eviction is a terrible thing. Someone comes and tells you: all of this is gone, you are left with nothing”.

b

NATIONALIZED

Stories of property nationalized after 1948 and the fate of the owners

OBJECTIVES:

- putting oneself into the shoes of people whose property was confiscated by the communists in Czechoslovakia

TIME: 45 minutes

TOOLS:

- **WORKSHEET** (historical and contemporary photographs of the chateau in Zvěstov) for each group
- writing utensils

INSTRUCTIONS:

1. Divide the pupils into groups of five to seven. The pupils will work in these groups for the entire project. Each group receives one **WORKSHEET** containing historical and contemporary photographs of the chateau in Zvěstov.
2. The pupils work in groups to fill in the worksheet, after which they present their results to the other groups.
3. Film screening: The Lost Soul of a Nation – Loss of Tradition.
4. Explain to the pupils that, like the family farms in the film, the building in the picture was one of many pieces of property in Czechoslovakia that were nationalized. Ask the pupils to try to imagine that somebody has taken away some property that their family owns (house, flat) and has forced them to move to the other end of the country, where they do not know anyone.

DISCUSSION:

During discussion, let the pupils talk about how the real reasons for the chateau's desolate state (i. e., nationalization) differ from what they wrote down on the worksheet prior to seeing the film.

STORIES OF INJUSTICE

FILM

THE LOST SOUL OF A NATION

WORKSHEET



IN TEN WORDS OR LESS, DESCRIBE WHAT COMES TO MIND WHEN YOU SEE THIS PHOTOGRAPH:



IN TEN WORDS OR LESS, DESCRIBE WHAT COMES TO MIND WHEN YOU SEE THIS PHOTOGRAPH:

BOTH PHOTOGRAPHS SHOW THE SAME BUILDING, BUT AT DIFFERENT TIMES. DESCRIBE SOME REASONS WHY THE CHATEAU MIGHT HAVE ENDED UP IN SUCH A DESOLATE STATE:

1. What is nationalization and how was it carried out?

In early 1945, the Czechoslovak government confiscated the property of German and Hungarian industrialists and farmers, as well as the property of Czech and Slovak industrialists and farmers who had collaborated with the Nazis. With these nationalization decrees, the Czechoslovak state also took over all arms manufacturers, mines, ironworks, steel mills, pharmaceutical companies, sugar refineries, banks and insurance companies. Companies were also nationalized according to the number of employees – usually companies with more than 500, but sometimes with 200 or 150 employees. At the time, more than 3,000 companies were nationalized. Further large-scale confiscations and nationalization of industry took place after the communist putsch in February 1948. The communists' aim was to eliminate the private sector, which almost totally disappeared in 1951–1952. Independent and small business owners became the target of extraordinary pressure on the part of the communist regime.

2. How was the state able to “take” farmers’ and industrialists’ property?

In the 1946 parliamentary election, the communists had promised that they would not establish any *kolkhozy* (the Russian term for collective farms). After the communist putsch in February 1948, however, the rural countryside succumbed to an atmosphere of fear. In November 1948, the communists defined the main goals of their rural policy: a) limit so-called capitalist elements in the countryside; b) expand and develop collective farming; c) expand large-scale production on agricultural holdings. The communists' aim was to fully control the countryside, to break apart farmers' solidarity, to stir up farmers against each other and then to eliminate them. These objectives were hidden behind talk of increasing efficiency, helping small and medium-sized farmers, increasing productivity, promoting the ideal of cooperative farming, etc. As part of “Operation Kulak”, some 1,248 farming families were evicted by July 1953. According to other data, between October 1951 and the beginning of 1954, some 3,000 families were forcibly resettled. The farmers' children were prevented from attending secondary school or university.

Answers prepared by:

Tomáš Bursík, historian

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THE LOST SOUL OF A NATION – LOSS OF FAITH

Olga Sommerová

Czech Republic, 2010, 22 min

Immediately after coming to power, the communists attempted to weaken the position of the Catholic Church, but the Church managed to defend the right of religion under even the cruellest circumstances, emerging from its struggle with communism internally strengthened. A society that treats religion in this manner loses its faith.

The film introduces us to Václav Vašek, Anna Magdaléna Schwarzová, Ota Mádr and Archbishop Karel Otčenášek, who personally experienced the communist regime's persecution of the Catholic Church. Despite many years of imprisonment and degradation, they did not lose faith in the Christian teaching that one must love one's enemies and pray for God to forgive their sins. Ota Mádr was ordained as a priest in 1942 and worked as a parish priest. He was arrested in 1951 and convicted of espionage and treason on the basis of fabricated charges, for which he faced either the death penalty or life in prison. He was released on probation after fifteen years. Karel Otčenášek was secretly ordained as a bishop in April 1950, but just six months later he was arrested and held in custody for 20 months without any charges being filed. He was then imprisoned until 1962. "We must love the sinner even while we persecute, abhor and eradicate his sin," he says today in reference to his jailers. P

MONASTIC DANGER

Persecution of the church in Czechoslovakia after 1948

OBJECTIVES:

- working with period materials
- identify different points of view on the situation in 1948 on the basis of propaganda materials
- understand how historical and social stereotypes work

TIME: **35** minutes

TOOLS:

- SOURCE MATERIAL
- writing utensils

INSTRUCTIONS:

1. Ask the pupils to try to define a monk – what they imagine him to be like, his character, his daily life. At a certain point, move the discussion forward by posing the question: How could the residents of a monastery have been a threat to the communist regime? Write the pupils' theories from the discussion on the board.
2. Divide the pupils into groups of 4–5, with each group receiving the SOURCE MATERIAL. The groups' task is to spend 7–10 minutes working on the key questions contained on the worksheet.
3. A spokesperson from each group presents the group's answers to one question, with the groups taking turns presenting their answers.
4. Show the film.
5. After the film, write any questions the pupils may have on the board.

DISCUSSION:

Towards the end of the class, work with the pupils to try to find answers to the questions on the board, focusing on the following questions in particular: Why did the communist regime see the church as a threat? What role does the church play in today's world? What is atheism?

V Brně dne 19. června 1949.

Úřední záznam.

Dne 19. června při slavnosti Božího Těla došel průvod z Nám. svobody na Zelný trh, kde byl postaven svatostánek. Když náboženská obřady u tohoto svatostánku již končily, otevřelo se okno v I poschodí domu čis. 12/14a v něm se objevil neznámý muž v koženém plášti pod nímž měl oblečeno kněžské roucho.

Mezi tím bylo již po bohoslužbách a účastníci odcházeli směrem k Petrovu. Neznámý hlasitě pronesl asi toto: Mluví ústy našeho pana arcibiskupa Berana. Tato řeč měla být pronesena věřícím a kazatelny. Bylo to však státními úřady zakázáno a proto využívám této příležitosti a poselství Vám tlumočím z tohoto místa. Při tom měl v ruce připravený pálech potištěného papíru a počal z něho čísti.

V tom okamžiku jsem protlačil přítomnými shromážděnými občany vešel do domu a zjistil byt z jehož okna toto poselství bylo čteno. Nechal jsem dotčeného celé poselství přečísti aby se předešlo nepředvídaným možným shluknutím a slyšel při ukončení jeho řeči tyto výroky. Nevěřte tomu, že někteří kněží podepisují jmény věřících prohlášení, že souhlasí a postojem dnešní vlády. Mezi tím vyhrnul rukáv a prohlásil, že byl za okupace 3 roky v koncentračním táboře vězněn a že si nenechá nikým poroučet, jen svým duchovním představeným, kterým mu je pražský arcibiskup. Na konec jménem arcibiskupa žehnal všem přítomným. Ti, kteří jeho proalov slyšeli řečnicku tleskali. Byli však mezi přítomnými také občané, kteří jeho počinání si proti vládě a štvavého obsahu pastýřského listu odsuzovali. Většina však ~~byl~~ souhlasila s projevem, lidé se počali kupit pod okny a dveři vchodu domu a bylo pozorovati na nich odbojný postoj, jak jsem dodatečně zjistil při odchodu z domu.

V neznámém jsem zjistil Bohuslava B u r i a n a, nar. 16. 10. 1919 v Brně, kaplana církve řím. kat. ve Slavonicích, okr. Dačice, bytem ve Slavonicích, čis. 43. Při zjišťování a proti zajištění se nevzpíral.

Mezi tím přišel do téže místnosti ~~Bohuslav Burian~~ další neznámý muž u něhož jsem spatřil v ruce stejný pálech papíru, jaký jsem odebral Bohuslavu Burianovi. Žádal jsem neznámého, aby mně potištěný papír vydal, když jsem se mu před tím představil jako bezpečnostní orgán. Tento papír byl rovněž pastýřský list, který mně neznámý nechtěl vydat. Na opětovné vyzvání, aby pastýřský list odevzdal, zmačka jej v ruce a prohlásil, že se nenechá nikým znásilnovati že je ve svobodné demokratické republice. V neznámém byl zjištěn bratr Bohuslava Buriana Emil B u r i a n, nar. 3. 4. 1914 v Brně, dělník, bytem v Brně, Mendlovo nám. čis. 3. Oba jmenovaní byli předvedeni do úřadovny KVSTB v Brně. Cestou v autě mně potom Emil Burian pastýřský list vydal.

Oba jmenovaní byli předvedeni proto, protože hrozilo nebezpečí, že by ve svém trestném jednání pokračovali, případně mohli podniknouti věřící takovým způsobem k nějakým trestným činům.

Orgán č. 1299.

K. B. BRNO	K provedení
Doslo: 20. VI. 1949	oddělení: <i>ob.</i>
Č. A. 27601	<i>08/10677/2</i>
Přehy: <i>protokol</i>	

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STORIES OF INJUSTICE	
FILM	THE LOST SOUL OF A NATION
TRANSCRIPT	

Brno, 19 June 1949.

Official record.

On 19 June on the feast of Corpus Christi, a procession made its way from Freedom Square to the Cabbage Market, where an altar had been erected. After the religious services at this altar had been concluded, a window on the first floor of the building numbered 12/14a opened and an unidentified man appeared, wearing a leather coat with priest's garments underneath.

Meanwhile, the religious service had ended and the participants were leaving towards Petrov Hill. The unidentified man loudly declared something that sounded like: I speak in the name of Archbishop Beran. This speech was to have been given to the faithful from the pulpit, but this has been forbidden by the government. So I am using this opportunity to present you his message. In his hands, he held a sheet of paper, from which he began to read.

At that point, I made my way through the assembled citizenry, entered the building and determined the flat from whose window the message was being read. I allowed the person in question to read the entire message in order to avoid any unforeseen problems with the crowd, and at the end of his speech I heard the following statements. Do not believe what you hear, that some priests are signing declarations in the name of the faithful that they agree with today's government. He now rolled up his sleeves and declared that during the occupation he had been imprisoned in a concentration camp for three years and that he would not let anyone tell him what to do except for his spiritual superior – the archbishop of Prague. In the end he blessed all those present in the name of the archbishop. The people who heard his speech applauded him, but also present in the crowd were citizens who condemned his actions against the government and the seditious contents of the pastoral letter. Most, however, agreed with the speech. People began to gather under the window and by the building's entryway, and they displayed a rebellious attitude, as I subsequently determined when leaving the building.

I identified the man in question as Bohuslav Burian, born 16 Oct. 1919 in Brno, chaplain in the Rom. Cat. Church in Slavonice, Dačice county, residing in Slavonice at bldg. no. 43. He did not resist my request for identification.

In the meantime, xxxxxxx another unidentified man entered the same room, and in his hands I noticed the same sheet of paper that I had just confiscated from Bohuslav Burian. After identifying myself as a member of State Security, I asked the unidentified man to hand me the paper. This paper was the same pastoral letter, and the unidentified man refused to hand it over. When called upon repeatedly to hand over the pastoral letter, he crumpled it in his hand and declared that he would not allow himself to be imposed upon by anyone and that he was in a free and democratic republic. The unidentified man was identified as the brother of Bohuslav Burian, Emil Burian, born 3 April 1914 in Brno, worker, residing in Brno, Mendel Square no. 3. Both individuals were transferred to the offices of the Regional Committee of the State Security Service in Brno. In the car on the way, Emil Burian handed me the pastoral letter.

Both individuals were brought in because there existed the danger that they might continue in their actions or that they might incite the believers to engage in criminal acts.

Agent no. 1299

KEY QUESTIONS:

- Describe the events that took place on Brno's Cabbage Market on 19 June 1949.
- How does agent no. 1299 explain his actions?
- How did the Burian brothers behave and how did they defend their actions?
- What was the public's response?
- In your opinion, how trustworthy is this report? Give your reasoning.
- What "criminal behaviour" did the Burian brothers engage in? Which "criminal acts" might they have "incited" the believers to engage in?

1. Why did the communist regime see the church as such a threat?

The Catholic Church was the last institution to continue to resist communist rule after February 1948. The church was led by the popular Archbishop Josef Beran, a former political prisoner who had survived the Dachau concentration camp. His refusal to submit to communist demands for a “national” church that would be independent from the Vatican and that would be under the control of the Czechoslovak Communist Party placed the church in **opposition to the communist regime**. As the state increased its repression of various social and professional groups, the church found support not only among believers, but also among sympathizers, as could be seen from the increased number of people attending masses and religious feasts.

2. How did the regime go about repressing the church?

The growing international tension was accompanied by an increase in state terror against the church. The communists took several steps towards limiting the church’s activities, **totally eliminating religious schools, limiting and censoring church newspapers, arresting priests and banning any meetings of the faithful outside of church** without official permission. The wave of oppression climaxed in several **mass trials**. The first of these was held in April 1950 and involved important theologians and members of male religious orders. The purpose of the trial, which was labelled “Machalka & co.”, was to justify the subsequent “Operation K” (K for “kláštery”, the Czech word for monasteries) in the eyes of the public. The aim of this operation was to take over church buildings, evict the monks and nuns, and put an end, once and for all, to monasticism in Czechoslovakia. In just one night, twenty-eight religious orders were shut down and more than 2,300 men and women forcibly removed from monastic service.

Answers prepared by:

Stanislava Vodičková, historian

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ADVICE AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR WORKING WITH DOCUMENTARY FILM

1. Watch the film before screening

It is a good idea to watch the film before showing it to the class – in this way, you can choose the right film whose contents, length, and difficulty are best suited for the pupils' disposition and abilities. Just reading the summaries is not enough: the film's subject is often presented in a complex manner and some groups of pupils may find the film's format or length too demanding.

2. Use a teaching assistant

If the activities you are planning for the pupils require a lot of organization, it helps to use an assistant, which could also be one of your fellow teachers.

3. Be aware of your expectations

Bear in mind that, especially at the beginning, the results of the screening may not meet our expectations. There may be several reasons for this – the choice of an unsuitable film, the pupils' unwillingness or inability to engage in classroom discussion, a generally negative mood in the classroom, lack of experience etc. But even a seemingly negative attitude on the part of the pupils (aggressive comments, disparaging the situation shown in the film, etc.) represent a response and can be used for further classroom work and can be carefully redirected. Don't allow yourself to be discouraged.

4. Proper preparations prior to screening

We recommend that you not underestimate the importance of preparing for the screening – both technically (choice of classroom, making sure the equipment is working, blacking out the room, etc.) as well as pedagogically (sufficient familiarity with the subject, use of interactive teaching methods, teacher's personal input etc.).

5. Objective of the screening

The aim of the screening should not be to just present new facts and expand pupils' knowledge. More important is their ability to see contexts and to re-evaluate preconceived notions. The films do not offer a ready-made recipe; instead, they can be used to discover other points of view on a complicated issue. Try to envision the final outcome of the screening and activities by setting goals as to what you want to achieve. One important factor is talking with the pupils in order to define what exactly you expect from them. Even minor goals are very important.

6. You can use just a part of the film

If you have only a limited amount of time – for instance because of the limitations imposed by a 45-minute teaching hour – you can opt to use just a part of the film in order to still be able to work with the subject at hand. The film's subject may be too difficult, and so your pupils may respond more openly to the topic if you end the film at the right moment. If the possibility exists, you can offer to screen the full documentary during a voluntary afternoon screening.

7. Discussion

One very important aspect of working with documentary film is post-film discussion. The documentary captures certain facts and emotions, and often depicts a very harsh reality, and viewing these images can be an intense experience. Discussion allows them to respond to what they have seen immediately after viewing, to express themselves and to release tension. There exist many methods and techniques for guiding such discussion. When choosing the proper technique, keep in mind its suitability for the grade level or the specific group of students.

8. Don't force everyone to do everything

It is not a good idea to force the students to participate in the activities. Some students may find some of the activities difficult or unpleasant. In such a case, you can try to place these students into the role of "observers" who will watch the rest of the class and who can provide important feedback on the others' activities.

9. The teacher's personality

The teacher is the key to success. He or she should command natural authority, be capable of professional and personal development, be empathetic, and offer a personal example of rejecting racist, xenophobic and chauvinist attitudes. He or she should be capable of engaging in discussion with the students while respecting their opinions without moralizing. And this person is you.

GENERAL PRINCIPLES OF INTERACTIVE LEARNING

In order to make effective use of documentary film in the classroom, it is important to observe several general principles of interactive learning.

1. Don't impose the "right" answer.
2. Encourage pupils to express their own thoughts and opinion.
3. Provide positive feedback for all behaviour that helps move towards the objective.
4. Create a sense of shared responsibility for the activity.
5. Make sure that everyone is participating and that everyone is given the space to express themselves.
6. **Avoid value-based language when commenting on pupils' activities** (for instance, instead of saying, "You didn't understand what I wanted you to do," say, "In this assignment, you have strayed a bit from the original instructions.")
7. Start the discussion with something everyone is familiar with and on which everyone has something to say.
8. Formulate the subject in a way that is interesting and current. Provide examples from a familiar setting.
9. Assign the tasks in a clear and precise manner.
10. Check to see at every stage of the assignment whether everyone understands what they are supposed to do.
11. **Don't avoid conflict, but encourage the students to clarify any controversial opinions.**
12. Devote a sufficient amount of time to reviewing completed activities.
13. Lay the foundations for the formation of new opinions and viewpoints.
14. Set clear rules of discussion:
 - a) Everybody gets a chance to speak. One person at a time. Don't interrupt.
 - b) Hear out the opinions of others, even if you don't agree. No arguing.
 - c) Stick to the subject and speak briefly. Avoid long stories and examples.
 - d) Be prepared to change your opinion and to explain this change in opinion.
 - e) Don't try to convince the others. Instead, try to explain your standpoint as best as possible.

It is a good idea to write these rules on a large piece of paper and to post it in a visible location in the classroom.
15. Pay attention to what is going on inside and outside the classroom.
16. **Don't criticize** – you are not a judge. Help the students discover different points of view and to understand the complexity of an issue and the difficulty of finding a solution.
17. Be willing to say, "I don't know." Be a partner, not an "expert".
18. Acknowledge the students' efforts, praise their accomplishments.
19. **Don't forget about theory** – the use of documentary films can help you find a creative approach to preparing for class and to make use of various teaching systems and methods of instruction.

METHODS OF INTERACTIVE LEARNING

There are many interactive teaching methods available. The following techniques have proven useful when using films and audiovisual materials in the classroom:

1. Brainstorming

Brainstorming develops imagination and creativity, can help in finding a solution to many problems, and can clarify the meaning of many terms and concepts. One benefit of brainstorming is the fact that it can be used to involve even those less active pupils, to help them overcome their shyness and to strengthen self-confidence – the pupils realize how much they know even without the teacher's usual exposition. Knowledge "discovered" in this group approach also has a higher chance of being remembered.

Method and rules:

- a) **introduce the subject** that the class will work with **in a clear and understandable manner**, or choose a concept that will be discussed;
- b) as the pupils offer their comments, **immediately write down all ideas** on the board or flip chart;
- c) **don't judge or criticize** any ideas; encourage unfettered and spontaneous thinking; don't organize the pupil's comments;
- d) pupils should not comment on, make derogatory remarks about, or make fun of their classmates' ideas;
- e) continue until the pupils run out of ideas;
- f) if the class is very large, you may assign this first phase to several groups; the results of group work are then presented by the **group's spokesperson**, with the others adding any additional ideas;
- g) **categorize** the ideas and comments or **look for an optimum solution**; **evaluate** and **summarize** the topic.

2. Working in groups

There are several advantages to working in small groups: the pupils **learn how to cooperate**, they realize for themselves which member of the group holds a dominant position and what their own role is, and they develop their **communication skills**. They also learn **how to deal with differing opinions as a group**, when it is better to reach a **compromise** and when one should **defend one's opinion**. They discover the **root of conflicts**, and learn not to run from conflicts but to find ways of resolving them. This method is also another way of **involving less active pupils**.

Method and rules:

- a) **divide the pupils into groups** – either randomly (for instance, by counting) or according to some formula (girls and boys, mixed groups consisting of advanced, average and weaker pupils, etc.);
- b) you may use various **group sizes**, but the optimum number of members is **five pupils** (an odd number avoids a deadlock in opinion in case of voting); larger groups may result in not everyone getting a word in, slows down work and is less effective;
- c) should any difficulties appear in the group at the beginning of group work, help out, but otherwise **let the groups work independently**;
- d) **assign the task clearly**; make sure that everyone has understood the instructions and has **sufficient information**;
- e) announce the time limit for working in groups ahead of time; it should be sufficiently long;
- f) evaluate the group as a whole;
- g) be prepared for **increased noise levels** in the classroom;
- h) **go from group to group**, helping out where necessary, but don't take over leadership – try to **listen** instead;
- i) the group members should sit in such a way so that **they can hear and see each other**; only in this way can everyone be included;

- j) **everyone** in the group **should have a chance to speak**; the others learn to make compromises and to cooperate;
- k) one important task for the teacher is to encourage pupils to be willing to listen, to support others, and to solve any conflicts that may arise;
- l) over time, you may **gradually increase the group size**, from two to four or more.

3. Mind maps

This method can help pupils and teachers to **organize their thoughts and analyse** a specific concept or topic, and to quickly organize their opinions and viewpoints. By visually depicting various interrelated concepts, we can convincingly **present the complexity of an issue** in all its entirety. In addition, mind maps can **motivate** pupils to engage in further activities, and they promote the **acquisition of new information** on the subject at hand by giving rise to questions to which the class does not know the answer. As a result, the mind map can be used for further discussion.

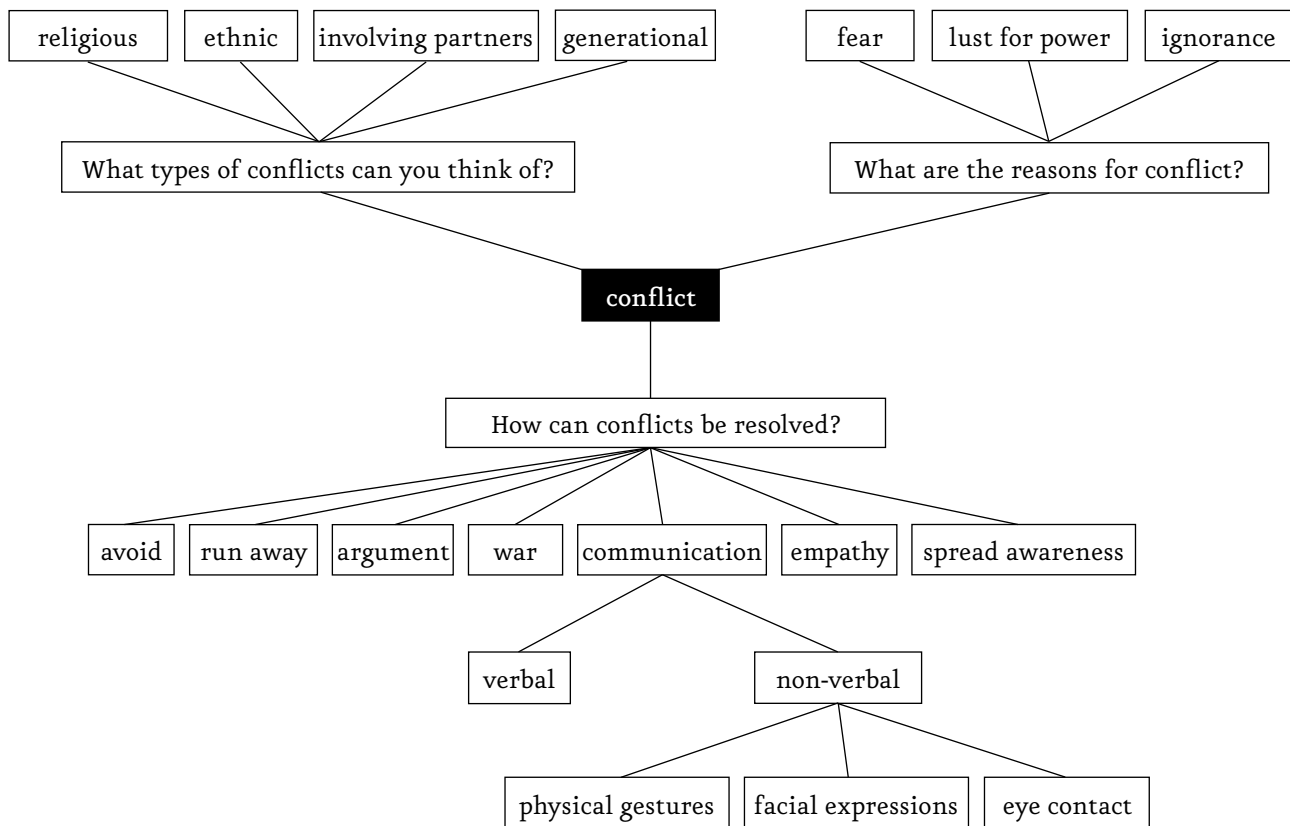
Method and rules:

- a) start out by drawing the **central part of the map** on the board = the concept that you will be talking about (example: conflict);
- b) **gradually add new concepts, ideas or questions** to this central part by having the pupils come up with them (example: What types of conflicts can you think of? How can they be resolved? What are the reasons for conflict?);
- c) on the basis of the pupils' comments, **develop these concepts further** by adding the new comments to the emerging map (for instance, to the question of "What types of conflicts can you think of?", you might add: religious, ethnic, between partners, generational, etc.);
- d) **repeat these steps for creating the map** by developing the other concepts as well;
- e) at some point, you can **interrupt the process of creating the map** and ask the pupils to only develop that part that you are planning to talk about in class. You can mark this part of the map in a different colour;
- f) **take all ideas into account**; write down everything that the pupils know or occurs to them;
- g) avoid using value-based categories such as "good" and "bad";
- h) after a pre-determined amount of time has expired, guide the pupils in **agreeing on a standpoint** (if the class is working in groups, perform this step only after the groups have presented the results of their work); this will provide you with a relatively clear **idea of what the pupils think and know about the subject**; at this stage, you can conclude working with the mind map;
- i) another option is not to set any rules at the activity's outset, but to ask the pupils to create them on their own.

Afterwards, you may:

- 1) **clarify or organize** the information collected – for instance, you may use various colours to differentiate substantiated and unsubstantiated information;
- 2) **exposition** – provide the basic facts;
- 3) **discussion** – choose a contentious standpoint;
- 4) **project** – working with the pupils, identify those part of the map containing the most unsubstantiated information. Their task will be to use available sources in order to find the missing information and prepare a presentation for the others.

Creating a mind map:



4. Role playing

This technique requires pupils to **put themselves mind and body into a predefined role** and to act out certain situations related to the subject being discussed. Sometimes, they may find it **difficult to identify** with their assigned role. This method is very useful among younger age groups or in classrooms with more advanced pupils who are used to “acting” and are not dependent on only the teacher’s exposition. The technique helps pupils to **think about how other people feel in certain situations**, and awakens **empathy and understanding** for the motives and actions of people whom they might otherwise have immediately condemned. In addition, role playing **develops fantasy**, the ability to **express one’s values, opinions and viewpoints** and the ability to think about alternative solutions.

Method and rules:

- begin with simple roles requiring less experience;
- don’t be discouraged if the first attempt at role playing does not meet your expectations – this technique requires a certain level of experience;
- try to actively involve all pupils;
- give the pupils sufficient time to discuss and practice their roles; make sure that pupils have enough information in order to be able to act out their roles;
- propose only realistic problems and situations – so that the pupils won’t have difficulties identifying with their roles;
- sometimes it is a good idea for pupils to exchange roles, so that they can experience the other point of view – this helps to remove unwanted stereotypes and improves pupils’ abilities to empathize;
- all activities should be acted out in an atmosphere of trust, a relaxed and open environment without any critical comments, so that the pupils won’t feel unnatural or embarrassed;
- try to help pupils to realize that there are many ways of embodying a role; at the close of the activity, don’t forget to engage in “getting out of character” – point out that the play is over and that the roles are nothing more than roles;

- i) the activity should **end with guided discussion** on the activity, plus a **final summary** – an analysis of what the pupils experienced and what conclusions can be drawn;
- j) this technique **requires a certain level of experience** – a less accomplished teacher could find the role-playing slipping out of his control; in such a case, even if it was meant well, the activity could do more harm than good.

5. Jigsaw classroom

This is a good activity to use if you want to introduce the pupils to new **information** or if you want to help them in **making independent conclusions**. Instead of receiving an exposition from the teacher, the pupils work in groups – using previously prepared texts, they try to find what is new and **important**, and **also try to explain all uncertainties amongst themselves**. This activity promotes independence, the ability to **analyse a text**, and to come up with new questions and issues. It is an excellent activity for introducing further assignments.

Method and rules:

- a) **prepare a text** that contains the information that the pupils should learn; **divide this text into 4–5 parts** depending on whether the pupils will be working groups of four or five, number the texts from one to four (five), and make enough copies for all the groups;
- b) **divide the class into so-called “home groups”** of four (or five) pupils and distribute the texts so that each pupil in a group has a text with a different number;
- c) immediately after this, divide the pupils into **new groups consisting of pupils with the same number** (one group will consist of pupils with text no. 1, another with text no.2 and so on); in other words, everyone in these new groups will have the same text;
- d) the pupils now **work with the text in their group**: they explain uncertainties amongst each other, pick out what is important, write down questions to which they don't yet know the answer, identify the main point of the text, etc.;
- e) after a predefined period of time (ca. 10 minutes, depending on the difficulty of the text) **the pupils return to their home groups** and **tell the others** in their group what is contained in their part of the text
- f) at the end, all the groups **write on a flip chart all the questions or assignments** that came out of their analysis, and discuss them together.

6. Guided discussion

The above-described methods can all result in difficult questions that the pupils then need to discuss. In discussion, they learn to **make decisions**, **take a position**, and **defend** their opinions and take responsibility for them. They also learn certain social skills – **empathy**, **conflict management**, **compromise**. Guided discussion is demanding both for the teacher (who should use carefully chosen questions to **channel pupils' emotions** and help them reach constructive conclusions) and for the pupils (who are just learning the rules of discussion).

Method and rules:

- a) at the outset, establish the **basic rules of discussion** (see the introduction to this section);
- b) remind the pupils that they need not be afraid of expressing controversial viewpoints;
- c) **create an atmosphere of trust** – the pupils should feel certain that each of their viewpoints will be treated equally closely and seriously;
- d) don't forget to **introduce arguments that the pupils may have missed**, and to call their attention to places where they can express their approval or disapproval or where they might (or might not) find a compromise;
- e) make sure that the discussion **does not degenerate into personal criticism**; pupils should stick to formulating opinions on viewpoints, behaviour and ideas;
- f) emphasize that the **aim of discussion is not to reach some kind of results**, but the ability to **politely present one's opinions** and listen to opposing viewpoints;
- g) conclude the activity by **summarizing** all new findings and **analysing the results** of the proposed alternatives.

LIST OF ARCHIVAL MATERIALS AND DOCUMENTS:

Activity: A letter to the UN Secretary-General

Letter to the UN Secretary-General, National Archives, collection: Board of Correctional Institutions, personal file of Dagmar Skálová

Activity: The trial as theatre

Minutes of meeting at the Czechoslovak Ministry of Interior, National Archives, collection: Ministry of Justice (the “Klos archive”)

Telegram sent to Regional Committees of the Czechoslovak Communist Party, National Archives, collection: Central Committee of the Czechoslovak Communist Party

Activity: And what then?

Information for Ministry of Interior, 5 Sept. 1968, Intelligence Services Archive, collection: Ministry of Interior Internal Affairs Dept., page 1, 2

Ministry of Foreign Affairs activities during the extraordinary situation, 5 Sept. 1968, Intelligence Services Archive, collection: Ministry of Interior Internal Affairs Dept., page 1, 2

Report on the activities of the Czechoslovak State Bank and other financial institutions during the country's occupation by Warsaw Pact armies, 5 Sept. 1968, Intelligence Services Archive, collection: Ministry of Interior Internal Affairs Dept., page 1, 2

Report on incidents, criminal acts and cases of interference with the duties and authority of Czechoslovak government offices by members of the armies of the five Warsaw Pact countries, 30 Sept. 1968, Intelligence Services Archive, collection: Ministry of Interior Internal Affairs Dept., page 1, 2

THE HISTORY OF COMMUNIST TOTALITARIAN REGIMES IN EUROPE (1945–1989)

Tomáš Bursík

The rise of Stalinism in Central and Eastern Europe

At the end of World War II in May 1945, Europe lay in ruins. Many German, Soviet, Polish and French cities and towns had been reduced to rubble and thousands of hungry people wandered the continent, people who had lost everything – their families, their homes, ancient certainties. There is no doubt that war – especially war in the 20th century – results in the breakdown of society. It wreaks havoc not only on the defeated, but also on those who feel that they are the victors. And countries suffering from destabilization, economic chaos and a disrupted economy form the perfect conditions for spreading illusions of creating a socially just world order.

Many European countries, in particular those in Central and Eastern Europe, were besieged by a deep social and economic crisis. Soviet leader Joseph Stalin did not hesitate to take advantage of this situation. In implementing his superpower ambitions, he committed first and foremost many crimes – but also mistakes and enormous errors.

The West's faith in a new Russia

For the nations of central Europe, the Sovietization of this part of the European continent began with “Yalta” – the common name for the Declaration on Liberated Europe, which was signed near the town of Yalta by the Soviet Union, the United States and Great Britain in February 1945. But the declaration does not once mention the division of the world between the superpowers. The split between the superpowers that would lead to the Cold War was the result of Stalin's failure to respect the principles contained in the declaration (holding free elections in the liberated countries without outside interference). The declaration proved to be nothing more than a scrap of paper when it came to the Kremlin's obligations. Without the slightest hint of opposition, Stalin signed a promise that the superpowers would “assist the peoples liberated from the domination of Nazi Germany and the peoples of the former Axis satellite states of Europe to solve by democratic means their pressing political and economic problems.” The Soviet leader showed himself to be equally willing to cooperate when it came to establishing the United Nations. The post-war reality proved to be completely different, however, and the Western powers had no way of forcing Stalin to adhere to these principles. They had trusted in the Soviets' good will as to the democratic process in Central Europe, but soon enough the United States, Great Britain and France realized that words such as democracy, independence and free elections meant something totally different to them than it did to the leaders of the Soviet Union.

Mainly, these ideals collided with the Soviet's “old-school” approach involving superpower ambitions, colonial domination and spheres of influence. This sphere of influence would be that part of Europe liberated by the Red Army. The Soviet Union's presence in Central Europe meant one thing only: the concept of “Central Europe” as an international political concept had ceased to exist.

Stalin's plan for the subjugation of Central and Eastern Europe

Except for Czechoslovakia and Yugoslavia, the communists were a marginal force in the countries of Central and Eastern Europe, and nowhere did they stand a chance of making it into government by democratic means. It is estimated that, in the first spring months of 1945, Hungary was home to maybe some four thousand communists. In neighbouring Romania, there were around one thousand and in Bulgaria some eight thousand communists. In Poland, the relationship to communism was influenced by the traditionally negative – even antagonistic – attitude towards Russia.

At the time, few people realized the plans being laid in the countries of Central and Eastern Europe. The region from Finland in the north to Yugoslavia in the south was home to small and relatively defenceless countries. Stalin had just one goal: the first stage would see the formation of governments in these countries that would not pose a threat to the security of the Soviet Union. According to historian Tony Judt, in working to control these countries through his minions, Stalin used tactics that he had applied in the 1930s. Communists, social democrats, socialists and other parties were joined in coalitions known as “popular democratic fronts”, which played heavily on national sentiment and spoke of total justice and the need to punish anyone who had allegedly forgotten his duties to his people.

In all these countries, the communists were guided by their lust for power, even though – with the exception of Czechoslovakia – they lost the post-war elections. In fact, they did not meet with much public support. The national front coalitions were not the primary goal, they were merely a means of achieving their goals. This involved a long-term process whose defining feature was the gradual domination of key ministries (in Czechoslovakia, the Ministry of Interior and the Ministry of Agriculture and Internal Trade; the Ministry of Industry was controlled by the social democrats), gaining control over the media (print and radio), and taking over key positions in the government bureaucracy.

The main principle of communism – class warfare

A characteristic feature of communist ideology (though it manifested itself differently in different countries) is the need to achieve legitimate control over government through the relentless struggle with the enemy, who must be eliminated. According to philosopher Tzvetan Todorov, totalitarian regimes look for enemies within their own country. For communists, this was and is the “class enemy”. Even Lenin made use of the terror that is embedded in the very essence of communism. He knew that society as a whole would not be won over to the communist way of thinking, meaning that one would have to use force from the very beginning. Communism constantly made use of the phrase “government of the people”. But the communists’ aim in Central and Eastern Europe was to force the people into a straitjacket. They knew that they would never get more than a minority of the population on their side. The majority would have to be forced into cooperation, and those who refused to submit would have to be “dealt with” through physical and mental violence.

The division of Europe

With time Roosevelt’s vision of the superpowers sharing responsibility for world events proved to be increasingly unrealistic. The West watched with increasing distrust as the Soviet Union’s military and political activities in Central and Eastern Europe solidified Soviet control over the region. The division of Europe into spheres of influence became a cruel reality of post-war international politics. The final straw was the events that took place in the first half of 1948. In February, Czechoslovakia saw the communists’ violent takeover of power (later called the “Victorious February”) and June witnessed the Soviet blockade of the western sector of Berlin. The western powers gradually became convinced that Germany must at all costs be a part of the west – regardless of whether that meant dividing the country. Stalin preferred a unified and neutral Germany that would be under Soviet control in a manner similar to the countries of Central and Eastern Europe. For this, he needed to force the other victors to the negotiating table, and so he blocked all land and water routes leading to the western sectors, thus completely blockading West Berlin. The United States and Great Britain responded with an airlift that delivered needed supplies for the survival of the suffering city until the blockade was lifted on 12 May 1949. Stalin’s decision to blockade Berlin did not appear to have been a well-thought-out step. In fact, when this piece of improvised policy failed to achieve its goal, the Soviet leader backed down.

The Western democracies realized that the Soviet Union would not settle for anything less than absolute control over the territories liberated by Soviet tanks. In March 1948, their conviction that Western Europe needed to be protected against Soviet expansionism led to the Treaty of Brussels on a “Western European Union”, and later to the creation of NATO.

Although the Berlin Blockade of 1948–1949 was “merely” an improvised policy on Stalin’s part, its impacts were significant: 1) regardless of previous promises, Europe would be home to two German states, 2) the Americans assumed the main responsibility for defence of the West, 3) the West realized the need for collective defence, based on trans-Atlantic cooperation.

Essentially, these steps meant recognizing the bipolar division of the world. The Western democracies were not strong enough to face off against the East bloc in open warfare. One important role was played by the still fresh and painful memory of World War II. The democratic powers were not interested in another conflict of such magnitude. Public opinion was equally important: the populace did not want to experience the terrors of war a second time, either. Even three years after the war’s end, many European towns still had not recovered.

Stalin realized that the countries of Central and Eastern Europe were not part of American national interests. On the other hand, Moscow was well aware of the United States’ nuclear advantage, as well as the contradiction between Soviet ambitions and the limitations imposed by the fact that it had been ravaged by war. Nevertheless, Stalin’s technique for gaining control over of this part of Europe – a combination of corruption, repression, fear and the natural human yearning for a life lived in peace – proved successful.

The communists seize power

In Czechoslovakia, the communists seized power in February 1948. Several weeks later, Yugoslavia split from the Soviet bloc. The Yugoslav communists were convinced that their undeniable contribution to defeating Nazi Germany entitled them to a privileged place in the communist world. Stalin’s plans were to subjugate Yugoslavia in the same manner as the other countries in Central and Eastern Europe. But even though the Yugoslav communists acknowledged the Soviet Union as their model and inspiration, they refused to submit to it politically. The conflict came to a head at a meeting of the Cominform (an organization of Communist parties from Central and Eastern Europe, France and Italy) in Bucharest in June 1948. On 28 June, the Cominform issued a resolution “On the Situation within the Communist Party of Yugoslavia”, in which the Yugoslav communists were accused of revisionism, Trotskyism, sectarianism, improper rural policies, nationalism and failure to observe the principles of democratic socialism. A similar process was begun in the Soviet bloc countries even while the Soviet-Yugoslav split was happening: Communist parties swallowed up the other socialist parties in Romania (February 1948), Hungary and Czechoslovakia (June), Bulgaria (August) and Poland (December). These countries thus became one-party systems which now moved towards a centrally planned economy, implemented rapid industrialisation based on the Soviet model, and put in motion the mechanisms necessary for rapid collectivisation of agriculture – all accompanied by mass terror.

Forced collectivisation of the countryside

In the majority of communist countries, the process of moving from individual private farming to collective agriculture can be divided into two phases. The first stage, roughly from 1949 to 1953, is characterised by the forced creation of agricultural collectives. This was done through violence or the threat of violence (police terror, imprisonment, threatening to prosecute family members), combined with economic pressure (confiscation of property because of the farmer’s failure to meet delivery quotas, fines, assigning impossible-to-meet quotas). In Poland, for instance, several thousand farmers from all parts of the country were imprisoned for failing to meet deliveries. People were often held in jail for several weeks without even being questioned. In Romania, there were several peasant uprisings in the early 1950s. The years 1954–1956 saw a gradual liberalisation, partially due to the death of Stalin and the first great crisis within the Soviet bloc.

In many of the East bloc countries, the farming collectives began to fall apart. Two countries where farmers left their collectives in the greatest numbers were Poland and Hungary, where events culminated in the 1956 uprising. Nor did this trend bypass Czechoslovakia, and to a limited extent it appeared in Bulgaria and Romania as well. As a result, 1957–1958 brings a second wave of collectivisation, during which collective farms that had

been abandoned are revived. The late 1950s also saw rapid collectivisation in East Germany. In contrast to the first wave, this wave of collectivisation is not accompanied by as many violent excesses and is based primarily on economic factors. Poland, however, is the exception that proves the rule. Here, there was no new wave of collectivisation after the collapse of Polish collective farms in the mid-1950s, and roughly 75% of land remained in private hands. As a result, Poland retained its small farming tradition even under communism.

Czechoslovakia – Political trials and eliminating opponents to the regime

After coming to power, the Czechoslovak Communist Party “settled accounts” with its opponents. Political trials affected all ages and social groups. Some of those who were convicted had truly decided to fight against the communist system and had even gained the support of Western intelligence agencies. Many fell victim to entrapment by the State Security Service, others were arrested trying to cross the border. Many people found themselves imprisoned solely for their membership in a social group that the communists had labelled “class enemies” – people who had been politically active before February 1948, members of non-communist political parties, so-called members of the bourgeoisie (i.e., people with a lot of property), members of the army, so-called “kulaks” (landed farmers), members of the church and intelligentsia, members of traditional organisations such as Sokol or Scouting. Their arrests were the logical consequence of the communist worldview (the Nazis operated in a similar manner): all bad (evil) social classes had to be eliminated in the name of creating a class-free society. According to communist theory, this process was an “inescapable part of historical developments” and “the future will prove us right” Essentially, these views were used to justify acts of violence perpetrated on rivals and opponents.

In 1948 alone, some 3,000 individuals were held in custody and 7,000 were accused of criminal acts against the state. Between 1948 and 1960, more than 240 people were sentenced to death for such “criminal acts against the state”. Between 1948 and 1954, some 45,000 individuals were to have been convicted of such acts on the basis of Acts no. 231/1948 and no. 86/1950 – on whose basis most people were prosecuted and convicted for “criminal acts against the state”. Some 244 people were executed for political reasons between 1948 and 1960. It is estimated that, between 1949 and 1961, roughly 70,000 prisoners passed through prison labour camps attached to uranium mines. According to available information, 21,440 persons were sent to forced labour camps on the basis of administrative decisions between 1948 and 1953. Between 1948 and 1989, around 4000 to 4200 prisoners died in Czechoslovak correctional facilities. At least 282 individuals died while trying to cross the border to the West.

The Communist Party considered it their first and foremost task to break resistance to the regime. The party’s rulers realized that systematic resistance would be impossible without a political programme, and so they focused on the persecution of members of the political parties that had been members of the National Front prior to February 1948. Many of these politicians had already opposed several of the laws proposed by the Communist Party between 1945 and 1948, such as the millionaires’ tax, the State Police Act and similar laws. In addition, thanks to its network of secret collaborators, the Communist Party had a clear idea of how certain important people viewed the Party’s policies.

In June 1949, the deputy chairman of the joint chiefs of staff, Army General Heliodor Píka, was sentenced to death in a staged trial and executed. Píka knew too much about the nature of communist totalitarian rule. His case was one of the first cases of “judicial murder” in Czechoslovakia. During 1948–1952, several waves of purges affected everyone from the highest military commanders down to individual units.

Shortly after the execution of General Píka, a “mass trial” was held against Milada Horáková – a politician with the Czechoslovak National Social Party – and several other individuals who were attempting to form a political opposition to the Communist Party. Like Píka, Horáková was executed for alleged conspiracy to commit treason. The political trials with Horáková and others can be seen as a kind of warning sent to all opponents of the communist regime who might have been considering plans to change the political situation in Czechoslovakia. This trial was followed by more than three dozen similar trials on the regional level against former members of the National Social Party, the People’s Party and the Social Democratic Party.

Religious persecution followed a similar pattern. The communists assumed that conflict with the church was unavoidable, while at the same time predicting that religion would die out naturally. In addition, communist ideology believed that God and the church were not necessary in order to transform Man into the communist ideal. In October 1949, the National Assembly approved the Church Act, through which the state deeply interfered in the essence of the church's existence. Priests performing religious services were subject to state approval, and the newly established State Office for Church Affairs began to interfere in all areas of church life. Church activities were monitored by church secretaries controlled by the communist regime, to whom the clergy was forced to submit. An important role in the battle against the church was played by trials against its members. One of the first mass trials took place in early April 1950 against members of religious orders. This trial was just a precursor to the mass closure of monasteries during "Operation K", which was carried out by the State Security Service in the night from 13 to 14 April 1950. On this night, monasteries all over the country were violently occupied by members of the Security Service and the people's militia, and many of the monks interned at the monastery in Żeliv. In late November and early December 1950, another trial took place against the clergy under the name "Zela & co." Additional trials with monks followed. Coming up with a precise number of church trials or even providing an estimate is an impossible task. Just for illustration: in July 1956 there were 433 church officials, priests and theology students in prison. After the monks had been eliminated, the nuns soon followed in an operation that took place from August to October 1950. Nuns considered the most "reactionary" were isolated from their communities, and around 2,000 nuns were forced to work in factories.

Poland – Fraudulent elections and suppressing the opposition

Poland from 1944 to 1947 was the site of a civil war, whose definitive end did not occur until the early 1950s. It was a very cruel and bloody war. It is estimated that, from 1945 to 1948, around 8,700 opponents of communism were killed. Organized resistance to communism was almost totally eliminated by the end of 1947. Before the parliamentary elections in January 1947, some 60,000 activists of the opposition Polish People's Party were arrested. Just before the elections, voting rights were significantly limited, and the results of the election were falsified.

With time the Polish communists – who received significant support from the Soviet Union – managed to pacify the resistance. And certainly the fact that the population was exhausted from the many years of war-time occupation also played a role. Now, the communists' primary task was to solidify their control over society. The security services worked overtime arresting members of the opposition and former members of the underground – pre-war officials, soldiers, politicians, etc. In 1947 alone, 13,434 persons were arrested. Trials were launched in which one of the most important accusations was spying for the West. A large number of officers who had served in the Polish army before the war were caught up in these political trials as well.

At the end of the 1940s, the purges even ensnared several hundred officials of the Polish United Workers' Party. It is estimated that in 1952 Poland was home to around 43,000 political prisoners, and three years later this figure was still around 30,000.

The Catholic Church had traditionally been a strong force in Poland. The new totalitarian regime gradually aimed at repressing the Church as well – the first bishops were arrested in 1950, in 1953 Bishop Kaczmarek was put on trial (he was sentenced to 12 years) and that same year saw the internment of Cardinal Wyszyński.

The situation in Hungary, Bulgaria and Romania

In the *Black Book of Communism*, Czech historian Karel Bartošek writes: The destructive terror of war did not end on the day of Germany's defeat. First the population underwent a "national cleansing", wherein the region took on specific features with the arrival of the Red Army, the "armed fist" of the communist regime. The Red Army's political commissars and special intelligence services – SMERSH and the NKVD – were heavily involved in purges, especially in countries that had fought against the Soviet Union, from which hundreds of thousands of people were deported to Soviet gulags. These purges instilled an atmosphere of fear among the population.

The presence of the Red Army played an important role in cementing communist rule. The Red Army remained in Bulgaria until 1947, in Hungary until the mid-1950s (only to return for good in 1956), and in Romania until 1958. In these three countries, the communists controlled the Ministry of Interior, in Romania and Bulgaria the Ministry of Justice as well. Political trials took place under the watchful eye of the Soviets.

In these countries, political trials with leading members of the opposition parties took place immediately after ratification of the peace treaties in the summer of 1947. In Bulgaria, Nikola Petkov, leader of the Agricultural Union, was arrested in early June together with several other members of parliament. Their political trial took place from 5 to 16 August; Petkov was sentenced to death and executed on 23 September 1947. Social Democratic politician Krastiu Pastukhov had already been sentenced to five years in 1946. After these trials, nothing stood in the communists' way.

In the 1945 Hungarian parliamentary elections, the Smallholders' Party won with a majority of votes. In February 1947, László Rajk's Communist Party – with the support of the Socialist Party – accused the leadership of the Smallholders' Party of conspiring against the state. The alleged leader of the conspiracy, György Donath, was sentenced to death and executed. The First Secretary of the Smallholders' Party, Béla Kovács, was accused of spying against the Red Army and deported to the Soviet Union. He was not released until 1956. Other important party members found themselves behind bars or managed to go into exile. With time, other political parties were decimated as well. In all these countries, the Social Democrats were harshly persecuted.

In Romania, a large trial was held with the leadership of the National Peasants' Party in October 1947, resulting in lifetime sentences for Iuliu Maniu, Ion Mihalache and many other party members. This trial started the persecution of other non-communist parties. Many of those convicted were sent to the infamous prison in Sighet.

Signs of a thaw? Just a brief interlude

The Korean War (1950–1953) showed that the conflict between the United States and the Soviet Union could turn hot. On the other hand, neither of the superpowers was interested in direct conflict. In addition, the balance of forces in Europe had stabilized and any interference in the other's sphere of influence could have serious consequences.

The death of Stalin in March 1953 became a catalyst for change throughout the East bloc. Historians call this period the communist bloc's first great crisis. Each country dealt with it in its own way, and the crisis was of a different course and duration in each country. In the area of foreign relations, 1953 appeared to be a chance for putting an end to the two opposing blocs' confrontational style of politics. In March, Premier Georgy Malenkov said that the Soviets should try to reduce international tension and suggested that the two systems might be able to peacefully coexist. In early April, U.S. president Dwight D. Eisenhower gave a speech called "A Chance for Peace", in which he focussed on the issue of disarmament and the need to solve certain existing problems.

The German question, however, remained unresolved for the entire decade. The West's official standpoint remained unchanged: both the German republics that had been formed in 1949 should be merged into one democratic country. This required that all Germans be able to democratically choose the political system in which they wanted to live. If this could not happen, the reunification was impossible. For its part, the Soviet Union was most afraid of a re-armed Federal Republic of Germany.

Looking back, the international alliances, treaties and accords concluded in the late 1940s and during the 1950s (NATO, the Council of Europe and the subsequent European Convention on Human Rights, the European Coal and Steel Community) would seem to have laid the foundations for a stable international political system.

In April 1954, a conference on Indochina and Korea was convened in Geneva, resulting in a peace accord for ending the war in Indochina. A year later, in July 1955, the highest representatives from the United States, the Soviet Union, France and Great Britain met at this same location. At this meeting, the leading politicians from the West showed a willingness to find a new approach to international relations between East and West (observance of disarmament treaties, a Soviet proposal for a non-aggression treaty between the NATO and Warsaw Pact countries, finding a solution to the German question etc.). Although the conference did not result in any con-

crete outcome, the proposals were acceptable to the Soviet politicians, headed by Nikita Khrushchev. Although the aim of the conference was to contribute to reducing international tension, the friendly atmosphere in diplomatic relations between the two blocs would not last the year. Factors contributing to its demise include the bloody events in Hungary, the subsequent Soviet invasion and the Suez Crisis.

With its military intervention in Hungary, Moscow made it clear that its policies had limits when it came to its satellites. The invasion showed that the countries of the East bloc still enjoyed only limited sovereignty. The Soviet Union continued to place its political and security interests above those of the individual countries.

Resistance to communist control

Armed resistance against the communist regime existed not only in Poland and Czechoslovakia, but could be found in other countries of Central and Eastern Europe as well. In the Baltic states, for instance, partisan movements represented an important form of resistance to the Soviet occupation. The Forest Brothers, as the partisans were known, hid in the forests of Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania. According to available information, until 1953 the number of people passing through partisan ranks was 30,000 in Estonia, 70,000 in Lithuania and 40,000 in Latvia. The numbers clearly show that the greatest resistance activity was in Lithuania, where the partisans formed their own central organization known as the General Democratic Resistance Movement. Until 1953, the Soviets were not very successful in dealing with the Forest Brothers. Resistance was gradually broken in the subsequent years. In Romania, hundreds of people took up arms against the communist regime, hiding mainly in the mountains. But by the early 1950s, most of the resistance had been broken.

The resistance in Czechoslovakia and currency reform

Resistance in Czechoslovakia was characterized primarily by its fractured nature and lack of organization. Most attempts at armed resistance, armed attacks on Communist Party officials and attacks on party offices were isolated, uncoordinated attacks by individuals or small groups. In part, this lack of organization reflected the bipolar division of the world, in which Czechoslovakia was a part of the Soviet-controlled East bloc and where – after some hesitation by the Soviets – another world-wide conflict was not in the cards. The Cold War had its specific rules, which differed from other conflicts such as World War II. However, the actual contents of this conflict (such as resistance activities) remained the same.

On 14 March 1953, shortly after the death of Stalin, Czechoslovakia's President Klement Gottwald died as well. His passing was a deep blow for the Czechoslovak Communist Party. Despite his poor state of health and alcoholism, Gottwald had been the greatest authority in a party shaken by internal purges and political trials, and the party was unable to find a suitable replacement.

In late May and early June 1953, the country's new president, Antonín Zápotocký, instituted a currency reform. Old currency had to be exchanged at a rate of 5:1 for amounts up to 300 and a rate of 50:1 for amounts above 300 crowns. The same unfavourable exchange rates applied to bank deposits. The reform was intended to solve several things at once: stop inflation, reduce the amount of money in circulation, harmonize people's income and savings with the market, and bring money into the empty state coffers in order to pay off government debt. Although official propaganda defended the currency reform as a blow against former capitalists, the most affected groups were workers, small depositors and large families. Some parts of the country saw large-scale protests and unrest, the largest being in Pilsen, where an estimated 20,000 people came out to demonstrate. The communist regime responded with heightened repressions, but it also learned from the Soviet example of increasing the population's standard of living. It could afford to do so thanks to the large financial reserves acquired in the currency reform, but also as a result of the favourable international situation and the temporary reduction in arms spending. In 1953–1955, there were three price reductions in the country. For two years, the most important aspect of the Czechoslovak Communist Party's economic plans was increasing the population's standard of living and satisfying their basic needs.

The East German Uprising

Far greater protests than those in Czechoslovakia took place in June 1953 just a few hundred kilometres to the north, in Berlin. Here, too, the source of unrest was the population's poor standard of living and a lack of basic goods. In addition, unconfirmed reports had begun to circulate among the population that the Soviet occupation had loosened its grip and that General Secretary of the Central Committee of the Socialist Unity Party Walter Ulbricht had been removed from office. On 17 June 1953, construction workers in Berlin protested against increased work quotas without increased pay. The protest soon spread to other East German industrial towns. A state of emergency was declared, but it soon became clear that Ulbricht's East German communist government was not capable of keeping the unrest in check. The Red Army was called up, and its tanks soon crushed the uprising. Almost 300 people were killed, 4,000 persons were arrested and 1,200 were sentenced to prison. After being saved by the Soviet army, Ulbricht further tightened the repressive regime in the country.

The Poznań June (Poland)

On the last day of the 20th Congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, held in February 1956, Nikita Khrushchev gave a speech entitled "On the Cult of Personality and its Consequences". In it, the most powerful man in the Soviet Union gave a more or less accurate account of Stalin's rise to power. Nevertheless, in focussing on Stalin's personal dictatorship, he consciously avoided addressing the nature of Soviet totalitarian rule. Khrushchev looked to Stalin's policies as an alibi for his bad conscience and as a way of discrediting his opponents within the party's leadership. On the other hand, this speech had a profound impact on the course of the 20th century.

His speech aroused an emotional response among all the communist parties within the East Bloc. For many, Stalin had been a symbol of "communist ideals, truth and justice". Meanwhile, those on the other side of the barricades demanded a radical accounting with the past. Here, it is worth mentioning parallel developments in Czechoslovakia. Khrushchev was forced to amend some parts of his speech – in Czechoslovakia, for instance, the leadership of the Czechoslovak Communist Party called for an end of discussions about crimes committed by the communist regime. In the future, these would be referred to as errors and mistakes that never threatened the path to "a brighter future".

In Poland and Hungary, on the other hand, there were significant displays of opposition to the countries' neo-Stalinist dictatorships. After the death of Bolesław Bierut in March 1956, Edward Ochab was selected to head the Polish United Workers' Party. Ochab attempted to "calm" the dissatisfied public by declaring an amnesty for political prisoners and by loosening restrictions on cultural life. However, these steps failed to satisfy the public's demands for a democratisation of the political system and an improved economic situation for Polish citizens.

The first mass protest against communist rule erupted in Poznań in June 1956, when around 100,000 workers showed up for a demonstration demanding changes in work quotas, reduced prices and increased wages. During the night and over the course of the following day, Poland's security forces bloodily suppressed the uprising with tanks and armoured vehicles. Several dozen workers were killed and hundreds were injured.

The violent suppression of the workers' protest led to a split within the party leadership, which came to a head at a meeting of the Central Committee of the Polish United Workers' Party in October 1956. Soviet leader Khrushchev intervened in the meeting, threatening a Soviet intervention but eventually supporting a group of reform politicians headed by Władysław Gomułka. Gomułka criticized the current policies of the party's Stalinist leadership, demanded an immediate end to forced collectivisation and supported a reduction of political pressure on the populace. On the other hand, he supported the existence of the Warsaw Pact, thus siding with Khrushchev. Gomułka would become a symbol of the "new Poland", although his steps were in line with the policy of a "dictatorship of the proletariat". Nevertheless, the Catholic Church continued to hold a strong position in Polish society.

The Hungarian Revolution

Even more dramatic events took place in the autumn of 1956 in Hungary, where the Stalinist leadership had been replaced, partially because of pressure from Moscow, in June 1953. The next two years were marked by an internal struggle for leadership of the Hungarian Working People's Party. Following Khrushchev's speech at the 20th Congress, the Hungarian government declared an amnesty for some political prisoners and László Rajk, the Communist politician executed after a political trial in 1949, was officially rehabilitated. Nevertheless, the party leadership continued its campaign against the Hungarian intelligentsia.

Especially after the events in Poland, Khrushchev would not tolerate the situation in Hungary. In July 1956, Matyás Rákosi was removed from his position as General Secretary of the Hungarian Working People's Party and forced into exile in the Soviet Union, where he died 1971. Rákosi was replaced by Stalinist Ernő Gerő. On 6 October 1956, the remains of László Rajk were reburied in a ceremony in Budapest. Several days later, university students in Szeged established an independent student union, which called for a withdrawal of Soviet troops, Gerő's resignation and free elections.

Soviet ambassador Yuri Andropov informed Moscow of the untenable situation. On 23 October, a massive demonstration in Budapest called for national independence, the withdrawal of the Red Army and the prosecution of those who had participated in mass repressions in Hungary. There also were skirmishes with the police. On the same day, the Central Committee of the Hungarian Working People's Party voted to establish a new government headed by Imre Nagy and also declared martial law. Gerő turned to Khrushchev with a plea for Soviet intervention. Khrushchev wanted the deal legitimised through an official invitation for military intervention. Nagy agreed orally with this approach, but the next day he refused to sign the written invitation. All the same, on 24 October Soviet tanks appeared in Budapest.

On 25 October, a peaceful demonstration in front of Parliament was dispersed by machine gun fire. Today, it seems likely that this event was an attempt by the Hungarian political police to provoke the public. Indeed, public protests took on an increasingly revolutionary character. In a speech on radio, Nagy called for a democratic, national and free Hungary. He called on Moscow to withdraw its troops and also reorganized his government, inviting former coalition partners who had been forced out nine years earlier. In a speech broadcast on 28 October, he announced that the political police had been abolished.

After reaching an agreement with communist politicians from the other Warsaw Pact countries, on 4 November the Soviet Union launched its attack on Hungary. In Budapest, several thousand rebels desperately resisted the Red Army. Around 4,000 were killed, 16,000 injured and several hundred people disappeared without a trace. A new "peasant-worker" government led by János Kádár took power. The subsequent repressions affected some 100,000 people, of which 26,000 thousand were imprisoned, thousands sent to labour camps and around 230 executed.

On the day of the invasion, Imre Nagy immediately sought refuge in the Yugoslav embassy. However, Tito's government supported Kádár and – despite a written assurance from the new Hungarian prime minister – Nagy was arrested by the Soviets on 22 November and deported to Romania, where he remained until April 1957. After this, he was returned to Budapest. In June 1958, he and his closest associates were sentenced to death; they were executed on 16 June.

The Prague Spring and August 1968 (Czechoslovakia)

In 1960, Czechoslovakia was officially declared a socialist state, but it still was a long way from the socialist ideal. Repeated attempts at economic reform had failed to halt the emergence of economic and financial difficulties. In fact, any attempt at reform was blocked by the "hardliners" in the Central Committee of the Czechoslovak Communist Party. Between 1953 and 1965, several amnesties of varying extent had led to the release of political prisoners. Nevertheless, the poorly supplied internal market increased the public's sense of dissatisfaction. The Communist Party was afraid that public rehabilitations, admitting the mistakes of the Gottwald era and economic reforms would lead to something similar to what had happened in Poland and Hungary in 1956.

Nevertheless, the 1960s in Czechoslovakia tend to be viewed in light of the liberal atmosphere that existed, among other things, in Czech culture. Foreign audiences, too, responded positively to the films of the Czechoslovak New Wave, the novels and writings of Milan Kundera, Josef Škvorecký and Ludvík Vaculík, the theatre plays of Václav Havel and Pavel Kohout, and the visiting Czech theatre companies. In June 1967, a meeting of the Czechoslovak writer's union in Prague became one of the catalysts for subsequent political developments. In October, university students took to the streets of Prague to protest student housing conditions and to express their rejection of the current political situation in Czechoslovakia. In early January 1968 the relatively unremarkable Alexander Dubček was named First Secretary of the Czechoslovak Communist Party.

The Prague Spring of 1968 began with a loosening of censorship in the final week of February. This step was the most significant change to the system, and it played a central role in revitalizing Czechoslovak civil society. The Communist Party leadership could no longer enforce absolute control over information reported in the news. During the Prague Spring, the media became a kind of opposition force that represented a political alternative to the communist monopoly on power.

A typical phenomenon of the Prague Spring were distinctive media campaigns. Of these, the manifesto entitled *Two Thousand Words*, simultaneously published 27 June 1968 in four newspapers and magazines, was the most influential. The *Citizens' Message for the Members of the Presidium of the Central Committee of the Czechoslovak Communist Party* had a similar impact: published on 26 July 1968 in a special edition of *Literární listy*, it was signed by a million people within just forty-eight hours.

It was a short step from making resolutions to implementing demands on one's own. The public used the open atmosphere created by the Prague Spring to actively participate in the "Renaissance process" in many different areas of civil society. The Catholic Church and the Jewish community also became active in the spring of 1968, demanding rehabilitation and the right to a free religious life. The Warsaw Pact invasion put an end to all these endeavours.

On 21 August 1968, several Warsaw Pact armies crossed the Czechoslovak border. Led by the Soviet Union, the invasion included troops from the Polish People's Republic, the Hungarian People's Republic and the Bulgarian People's Republic. Participating in the first phase of the invasion were around 160,000 troops, 6,300 tanks, 2,000 pieces of artillery, 550 fighter planes and 250 transport aircraft. All major towns and airports were occupied, and the Soviets took control of important government offices. The leadership of the Czechoslovak Communist Party condemned the invasion, but called on the public not to offer any resistance. Between August and the end of the year, around a hundred individuals were killed during clashes with the foreign soldiers. As a result of the invasion, some 70,000 people immediately left the country. In October 1968, the governments of the CSSR and USSR signed a treaty on the "temporary presence of Soviet forces within the CSSR" – a temporary presence that would last until after the fall of communism. The last Soviet soldiers left the country in June 1991.

In September 1968, Polish citizen Ryszard Siwiec set himself on fire at the Tenth-Anniversary Stadium in Warsaw in protest of the occupation of Czechoslovakia. On 16 January 1969, university student Jan Palach set himself on fire on Prague's Wenceslas Square. With this act, he had hoped to galvanize the Czechoslovak public in order to resist the "normalization" of society and not to resign themselves to the restriction of their rights. Although hundreds of thousands of people were moved by his death, there was no change for the better. On 25 February 1969, another young man set himself on fire – eighteen-year-old Jan Zajíc. On Friday, 4 April 1969, Evžen Plocek set himself on fire in front of the building of the Regional Communist Party Committee in the town of Jihlava; he died of his injuries several days later.

Repression in Poland and the Gdańsk shipyard massacre

To the uninitiated, Poland in the 1960s would have appeared to be a quiet country. But history and memory cannot be erased, and Poland had experienced many difficult periods over the past three hundred years. In addition, Polish society as a whole had never identified with communism. In March 1965, Jacek Kuroń and Karel Modzelewski wrote their “Open Letter to the Party”, in which they criticized the autocratic-bureaucratic regime, which was incapable of listening to the public’s needs, which looked out only for itself, and which was incapable of accepting any form of criticism. Both students were arrested and sentenced to three-and-a-half years in prison. Their case caused an uproar at Warsaw University. Along with several others, professor of philosophy Leszek Kołakowski resigned in support of the students, for which he was ejected from the Party.

In January 1968, the censors banned performances of Adam Mickiewicz’s play *Dziady*. Though the play is historical in nature (it was written in the 19th century), its anti-Russian sentiment was as relevant as ever. The public protested and students took to the streets. Adam Michnik and another student described the situation for the Warsaw correspondent of France’s *Le Monde*. The same report was later broadcast on Radio Free Europe. Gomułka’s regime responded with forceful measures. Many students were persecuted and dozens of trials were held with intellectuals in the larger Polish cities. In addition, the campaign was accompanied by strong expressions of anti-Semitism.

The explosion of revolt led the Party’s leadership to decide to significantly raise the price of basic foodstuffs just before Christmas 1970. Striking workers were attacked by the police and army. The massacre in the Gdańsk shipyards resulted in hundreds of dead and injured, and street fighting erupted in the town of Szczecin. In deciding to use force, Gomułka essentially dug his own political grave. He was soon replaced by Edward Gierek. Brezhnev’s Soviet Union did not want the situation to escalate any further.

The new opposition

After the early days of the Cold War, international relations were marked by a gradual lessening of tensions. In the first half to the 1960s, the Soviet Union was at the height of its power on the international stage, and the West respected its position. The Soviets wanted to recognize and confirm the new borders drawn in Europe after the end of World War II. The symbolic climax of this process of *détente* (the political concept of “easing of tension”) was the signature, in 1975, of the “Final Act of the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe” by most European countries, the United States and Canada. Among other things, this document confirmed the European status quo. Some people criticized the act and its recognition of the status quo as a sign of the West’s moral capitulation before growing Soviet influence in the world.

However, the Helsinki Accords, as they are known, contained a “third dimension” in which the parties to the accords pledged to observe human and civil rights. This part of the accords opened the door for new opposition groups within the East Bloc countries. In the West, the members of these groups were given the somewhat vague label of “dissidents”. These included the signatories of Czechoslovakia’s Charter 77, who in early 1977 demanded that the country’s leaders observe existing laws and called on them to engage in dialogue.

Czechoslovak real socialism and the rise of citizens’ campaigns

Following the 1968 occupation, the Czechoslovak public had slowly fallen into a state of depression. The position of the opposition changed as well. The Party’s new leadership, headed by Gustav Husák, focused on removing reformers and anyone who had supported the Prague Spring from power and from public life in general. This was done through so-called assessments, during which some 500,000 people were ejected or removed from the Czechoslovak Communist Party. Many of them suffered financially as well, and were placed on the same level as former political prisoners from the 1950s and 1960s. In 1971–1972, many opposition activists and their supporters were sentenced in a new wave of political trials.

The post-1969 regime is often referred to as “post-totalitarian”. The first to use this term was Václav Havel in his essay *Power of the Powerless*. President Husák’s regime had essentially given up on the fanatical belief in ideals and attempted to remain in power via a social contract according to which the people could more or less think what they wanted as long as, on the surface, they displayed their loyalty to the regime. This was done under the daily watchful eye of the regime.

In 1976, however, Czechoslovakia ratified the international accords on civil, political, social and cultural rights. These rights then became the platform which the opposition used in January 1977 when it issued its Declaration of Charter 77. The communist leadership’s response to Charter 77 was practically hysterical – the full media apparatus and all political tools at its disposal were used to isolate the charter’s signatories.

With Charter 77 came the idea of founding a committee that would keep track of cases of unjust persecution. The “Committee for the Defence of the Unjustly Prosecuted” was founded on 27 April 1978. Committee members helped persecuted individuals secure legal representation and provided them with financial and other support. They filed complaints with Czechoslovak government offices, demanding rectification. They smuggled news about certain legal trials out of the country, from where they were broadcast back into Czechoslovakia via radio. In December 1979, Petr Uhl, Václav Benda, Václav Havel, Jiří Dienstbier and Otta Bednářová were sent to prison for these activities; Dana Němcová was released on probation.

Poland’s Solidarity movement and other anti-governmental groups

First Secretary of the Polish United Workers’ Party Edward Gierek had an ambitious plan. He wanted to modernize Poland until it would be on a par with advanced Western countries. This plan would affect all aspects of Polish life, from company management to the natural sciences and humanities. It would involve less ideology and greater scientific and technological innovation. But similar plans always ran up against everyday reality. In June 1976, another round of price increases was announced. The public took to the streets in protest. The government had to send in the police, and several thousand people were arrested. Although the government did not raise prices, it did resort to heavy-handed repressive tactics. Around 350 people were speedily sentenced and hundreds more trials were in the works. Many people were fired from their jobs.

In order to help people afflicted by these repressions, people organized spontaneous collections of financial support for families of the persecuted and offered free legal support for the ongoing trials. On 23 September 1976, the *Appeal to Society and to the Authorities of the Polish People’s Republic* announced the creation of an opposition organization called the Workers’ Defence Committee (Komitet obrony robotników – KOR). At the time, the appeal was signed by 14 people. The election of Krakow’s archbishop and cardinal, Karol Wojtyła, as Pope (he took the name John Paul II) would prove to be a Trojan Horse for the regime. His first visit to his native Poland in 1979 provided an opportunity for massive public rallies and gatherings.

In March 1977, the Movement for the Defence of Human and Civic Rights was founded. In May, the first student solidarity committees appeared.

In July 1980, a government increase in the price of meat took effect. Over the course of July and August, the first signs of unrest began to appear in Polish towns and cities, in particular in the Baltic seaports. On 17 August in Gdańsk the Inter-Factory Strike Committee was formed to coordinate strikes and, at a union meeting on 17 September, the Independent Self-Governing Trade Union “Solidarity” (Solidarność) was founded. From this time on, Solidarity and the party and government apparatus would be in a constant state of conflict.

Government attempts at controlling Solidarity through a combination of political methods and targeted repression proved ineffective. On the night of the 12th to the 13th of December 1981, the regime resorted to the mass arrest of leading members of Solidarity, other members of the opposition, as well as several members of the ruling party. Prime Minister and Minister of Defence Wojciech Jaruzelski declared martial law, and the army put down and eliminated any hotbeds of resistance. For instance, 16 miners were shot and killed at the Wujek mine in Katowice. The imposition of martial law was a grave blow to Solidarity, since many of its active

members were interned. In the summer of 1982, Kornel Morawiecki co-founded “Fighting Solidarity”, with the aim of creating long-term alternative civic structures throughout society.

Solidarity now began its transformation from broad-based union organization into a small group looking for areas in which it could restart its activities. There followed another wave of arrests of the now-underground Solidarity movement, but in May 1982, the Jaruzelski regime released around 800 interned individuals and another 900 individuals 14 months later. Martial law was lifted in July 1983. In October 1984, three members of the state security service murdered Catholic priest Jerzy Popiełuszko. Although this act was undoubtedly carried out on direct orders from above, only the three agents who directly participated in the murder were punished.

The opposition in Bulgaria and Romania

Bulgaria had essentially been under the complete control of Todor Zhivkov since the mid-1950s, who had fared well in dealing with any intra-party opposition. Until the mid-1980s, there was no dissident movement in Bulgaria like the ones we know from Poland or Czechoslovakia. A serious problem for the Zhivkov regime in the 1980s was its attempt to forcibly assimilate the country’s nine-percent Turkish minority, which the Turkish population unequivocally refused.

The first important dissident movement by ethnic Bulgarians was the Independent Association for the Defence of Human Rights in Bulgaria, which was founded in January 1988. Its president was Iliya Minev. After Minev, the role of president was taken up by Lyubomir Sobadzhiev, who in the 1970s had been convicted three times of engaging in “activities against the state”. During 1989, the police and state prosecutors tried repeatedly to destroy the movement – without success. Other independent movements included the Public Committee for the Protection of the Environment of the Town of Ruse, and the Committee for Religious Rights, Freedom of Conscience, and Spiritual Values. In November 1988, the Club in Support of Glasnost and Perestroika was founded at the rectorate of the University of St. Clement in Sofia. Towards the end of the 1980s, these and other movements joined forces, but even so the dissident movement in Bulgaria remained weak.

Things were even worse in Romania, where Nicolae Ceaușescu had been the country’s unlimited ruler since becoming the First Secretary of the Romanian Workers’ Party March 1965. From the outset, he systematically worked to gain unlimited power and tried to strike a balance between East and West.

The first Romanian dissidents appeared in the 1970s, the best known being author Paul Goma, who had been imprisoned in the 1950s and later lived in exile. In 1971, his novel *The Door* was published in the West, after which the state security service convinced him to leave for France. However, he returned a year later and in 1977 expressed his solidarity with Charter 77 in a letter to Czechoslovak writer Pavel Kohout. In another letter directed directly at Ceaușescu, he called on his country’s leader to support the Czechoslovak dissidents. And on 14 February 1977, the New York Times published a letter by nine Romanian citizens, calling for the defence of human rights throughout the world. All signatories were immediately arrested. In the autumn, Goma left for France.

In 1978, the Christian Committee for the Defence of Religious Liberty was founded in Bucharest. Its members, too, were arrested and some were forced into exile. Starting in the 1970s, Ceaușescu’s cult of personality began to take on monstrous proportions. At the same time, however, the country’s economic problems began to worsen. In the early 1980s, the Catholic Church organized more frequent opposition activities, and the members of other religious denominations, in particular Baptists and Protestants, protested against the violation of religious freedoms as well. In the mid-1980s, anti-government flyers appeared in some cities.

In the second half of the 1980s, the non-communist opposition included people such as philosopher Doina Cornea, poet Mircea Dinescu and dissident writer Dan Petrescu. From his exile in Paris, author Paul Goma spoke out against Ceaușescu’s politics. Meanwhile, agents hired by the Romanian totalitarian regime killed Emil Georgescu, a journalist with Radio Free Europe. The international community began to exert pressure on Romania.

East Germany: Regular demonstrations in Leipzig

In the late 1980s, there were increased contacts between East and West Germany, for instance in the number of East German citizens visiting West Germany. This “voting with one’s feet” had vexed the East German communist leadership for their country’s entire existence and had been one reason for building the Berlin Wall in August 1961. In 1989, the East German public became increasingly dissatisfied with the political and economic situation in the country. One centre of regular demonstrations was Leipzig. In May 1989, a part of the public boycotted the local elections, which had been manipulated by the communist regime. Subsequently, protests were put down by the police. During the summer and autumn, ever more East German citizens sought refuge at West German embassies in East Berlin, Prague, Budapest and Warsaw. The East German regime made partial concessions and allowed trains with the refugees to pass through its territory. In September 1989, the country’s first public opposition organization was formed. The New Forum (Neues Forum) was soon followed by others – the Democratic Movement, Democracy Now, Initiative for Peace and Human Rights, and more. The protestant church also became involved, demanding internal democratic reforms. In late September, public unrest erupted in Leipzig. At the fortieth anniversary of East Germany’s founding, Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev told his East German counterparts that they had no future. On 18 October 1989, the country’s head of state Erich Honecker resigned and was replaced by Egon Krenz. But the public did not trust Krenz either. Demonstrations attended by hundreds of thousands of people continued in many East German cities.

The fall of communism in Europe

In 1989, the communist regimes in the East bloc collapsed. They were no longer able to hold on to power, and the opposition in those countries took advantage of this opportunity. An important role in the fall of the communist regimes in Central and Eastern Europe was played by Mikhail Gorbachev, a moderate reformer who was working to correct and revive the rigid Soviet system. Paradoxically, he would end up signing its death warrant.

In Poland, a government of reform communists took power in January 1989. The new government decided to enter into talks with the opposition, resulting in an agreement on the re-legalization of Solidarity and the holding of partially free elections. In June 1989, the opposition was the undisputed winner of the elections.

In Hungary, liberal communists had been gradually gaining influence since the mid-1980s. These communists were not afraid to renew political pluralism and market economics. In the late 1980s, the opposition was centred around the Hungarian Democratic Forum, which received almost 43% of the vote in free elections held in March 1990.

In Czechoslovakia, opposition activities involved an ever wider range of people. In January 1989, the so-called “Palach Week” in Prague – a series of protests to commemorate the 20th anniversary of Jan Palach’s suicide by self-immolation – was violently suppressed. During the spring, a petition entitled “Several Sentences” appeared, which was quickly signed by tens of thousands of people. Events climaxed on 17 November 1989 with the brutal suppression of a peaceful student demonstration by security forces. The students declared a strike. The Civic Forum was founded in Prague and the Public against Violence movement was founded in Bratislava. Demonstrations took place throughout the country. Mass demonstrations in Prague on 25 and 26 November were attended by 500,000 to 750,000 people. On 29 December 1989, dissident playwright Václav Havel was elected as the country’s new president. Half a year later, Czechoslovakia held its first free elections in 44 years.

In Bulgaria, long-time leader Todor Zhivkov was deposed in November 1989 in a palace putsch organized by Foreign Minister Petar Mladenov. However, the Union of Democratic Forces took a stand against attempts at merely reforming the communist party. The communists transformed themselves into the Bulgarian Socialist Party and in December 1990 a coalition government was elected, headed by Dimitar Popov.

Ceaușescu’s dictatorial regime in Romania collapsed in a pool of blood. Not even Mikhail Gorbachev had managed to get Ceaușescu to liberalise conditions in his country. The unresolved critical situation in Romania led the country to the brink of civil war, with even part of the army siding with the opposition and demonstrators. Ceaușescu and his wife were captured while attempting to flee the country, were tried in a speedy trial and sentenced to death.

In East Germany, the government resigned on the anniversary of the October Revolution on 7 November. The next day, the Socialist Unity Party's entire politburo issued its resignation. On 9 November, the Berlin Wall was "opened" and one of the symbols of European division into two opposing worlds was gone. German reunification in October 1990 was a precursor for the reunification of all of Europe.

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