

Czechoslovak history after the End of WW II

written by Ms Jana Berka
historian from Canada

1945 - The End of WW II, the End of Nazi Occupation. Most Czechs and Slovaks are ready to restart where their first democratic republic ended in 1938.

But it was not so easy. Already the pre-war Czechoslovak republic had its share of problems, be it the lack of Slovak cooperation, without mentioning the 3 million German minority who was mostly not happy to be part of the Czechoslovak state. This German minority was used by Nazi Germany to help destroy the Czechoslovak republic (Munich Agreement 1938) which led to the outbreak of WW II in 1939.

The Czechs ended up under the Nazi "Protektorat". One of its main goals was to eliminate Czech intelligentsia-partly by imprisonment, partly by executions and significantly by the closure of all Czech Universities.

This brutal occupation of the Czech lands caused the loss of human lives, robbing the country of the vast majority of its culturally and economically important groups, such as the Czech Jews.

In 1945 most of the country was liberated by the Red Army, except West Bohemia, liberated by the US.



This fact was very quickly and smartly used by the already strong Communist Party, presenting the Soviets as the only reliable friends of the Czechs, whereas the western allies (France and Great Britain) "betrayed us in Munich". Many people believed this prevarication.



The first post-war elections were held in 1946, very much under the influence of the Communist Party, who made sure that some democratic parties and individuals were not allowed to vote under the pretext that they collaborated with the Nazis which in most cases was never proven.

KSČ daleko největší stranou v českých zemích

**Komunisté vedoucí silou
národa**

Jedná se o první politický strana v historii naší republiky - V republikánském období
byla to první a největší strana v historii naší republiky - V republikánském období byla to
první strana v historii naší republiky - V republikánském období byla to první strana v historii naší republiky

**KSČ nejsilnější stranou v hlavním
městě republiky**

In 1946 began the transfer of about 3 million Czech Germans. This meant another economic loss for the country. The former German properties were given to the Czechs who, of course, voted for the communists.

Under these circumstances the communist party won the elections in the Czech lands where the democratic parties were weak, unable to work together against the communists. They believed that President Benes (a well known democrat) would somehow fix the situation. Benes was by then a very sick man who no longer had any strength to fight the communists. The situation was different in Slovakia, where the Democratic Party won 62%. This party was liquidated in 1948 by the communists who were firmly established in Prague.

It was relatively easy for the Communist Party to stage a coup d'etat "in the name of the people" in February 1948.

Since Benes died shortly afterward, Klement Gottwald (leader of the Communist Party) became president. And now the communists were free to practice what they had been preaching before.



People of democratic persuasion lost their jobs, their homes, many were forced to move to remote parts of the country. Many were jailed, accused mostly of high treason and espionage, all charges being fabricated. Many lost their lives. People who were jailed by both Nazis and Communists, often remarked that their treatment in both camps was equally terrible.

The children of "unreliable" people were not allowed to study and had to prove their allegiance to the regime by working in factories and agricultural coops.

One of the worst crimes of the regime was the collectivisation of the farms. What even the Thirty Year War in the 17th century could not accomplish, the communists did. They are fully responsible for destroying the backbone of the Czech nation, its farmers.

So in 1950's Czechoslovakia had become one big concentration camp. The memory of better times was kept alive especially by the older generation (born at the end of the 19th and the beginning of the 20th centuries). They transmitted their values to their grandchildren. Thank God for that.

After the hope of the Prague Spring came another darkness, maybe not as cruel as that of 1950's, but just as deadly for human souls and spines. For now nobody believed in communism, people just collaborated to survive, or for personal gain.

Many people left the country in 1948 and 1968, which meant loss of many productive and valuable citizens. Some came back, most stayed in their new homeland.

After 1989 there are definite signs of a renaissance of the Czech thinking, a return to the roots, old values, especially by the youth with the unselfish help of those who lived and suffered through the communist hell. They are here already helping to rebuild democratic Czech and Slovak states. May they succeed!

