

HISTORY OF CENTRAL EUROPE

End of Democracy

25TH FEBRUARY 1948

- President Edvard Beneš accepted demission of the ministers and the new government was accepted (Gottwald's proposal), majority Communists = mission completed
- Action Committee
- June 1948 merging: Communists and SD
- May 9th new constitution , E. Benes refused to sign
- End of May - parliamentary election - manipulated
- E. Beneš resigned and died
- New President Klement Gottwald, prime minister Antonin Zápotocký
- <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WNFMmgE8etY>

PERIOD OF REPRESSION AND LAWLESSNESS

- Emigration
- manifestations of discontent (Sokol festival)
- State Security - goal to end the regime's opponents, help from Soviet advisors →
wave of terror similar to the Nazi regime
- First victims: enemy of the regime →
political processes - people were prosecuted for crimes they did not commit!!!
- 1949 General Heliodor Pika was executed
- June 1950 process with the National Socialist MEP Milada Horakova

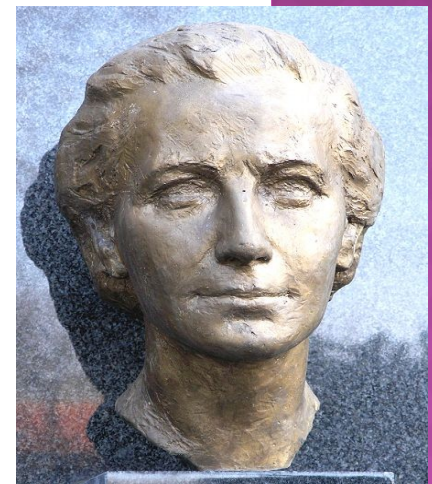


MILADA HORAKOVA

<http://www.ustrcr.cz/en/milada-horakova-en>

DR. MILADA HORAKOVÁ

- Milada Horaková along with others were sentenced to death and despite the protests of prominent foreign figures e.g. Albert Einstein, Winston Churchill or Eleanor Roosevelt, (contrived conspiracy and treason), judicial murder
- <http://www.radio.cz/en/section/special/olga-hruba-supporter-of-milada-horakova-and-campaigner-for-religious-freedom>
- Show trials: priest, diplomats, officers, Participants of resistance



1950s

- ◉ <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8tNMgCGahyM>
- ◉ Later also against Communists - Rudolf Slanský, some of trials - antisemitic, Gustav Husák
- ◉ Economy: central planning, tasks that have to be fulfilled were included in the five-year plans, collectivization, decline in living standards, 1953 monetary reform, president Antonín Zapotocký

POLAND

- ◉ After WWII - most powerful Polish Workers' Party (*Polska Partia Robotnicza*; PPR) under Władysław Gomułka and Bolesław Bierut
- ◉ 1946 a national plebiscite, known as the "3 times YES" referendum, was held first, instead of the parliamentary elections
- ◉ The Communists consolidated power by gradually whittling away the rights of their non-Communist foes, particularly by suppressing the leading opposition party - Mikołajczyk's Polish People's Party (PSL).

POLAND

- In some widely-publicized cases, their perceived enemies were being sentenced to death on trumped up charges – among them Witold Pilecki, the organizer of the Auschwitz resistance; and numerous leaders of Armia Krajowa and the Council of National Unity. Many resistance fighters were murdered extrajudicially, or forced to exile

POLAND

- ◉ By 1946, all rightist parties had been outlawed, and a new pro-government Front of National Unity was formed which included only the forerunner of the communist Polish United Workers' Party and its leftist allies.
- ◉ January 19, 1947, the first parliamentary elections took place featuring PPR candidates and a token opposition from the Polish People's Party already powerless due to government control. Results were adjusted by Stalin himself to suit the Communists. Through rigged elections, the regime's candidates gained 417 of 434 seats in parliament (*Sejm*), effectively ending the multi-party system in politics.
- ◉ Many opposition members, including Mikołajczyk (threatent), left the country.
- ◉ Western governments did not protest, which led free-spirited Poles to speak about a continued "Western betrayal" regarding Central Europe. In the same year, the new Legislative Sejm created the Small Constitution of 1947.
- ◉ Over the next two years, the Communists monopolized their political power in Poland

POLAND

- ◉ In 1948, the Communists and Cyrankiewicz's own faction joined ranks to form the Polish United Workers' Party in power for the next four decades.
- ◉ Poland became a *de facto* single-party state, and a satellite state of the Soviet Union.
- ◉ Only two other parties were allowed to exist legally, a small one for the farmers (United People's Party) and a token one for the intelligentsia, called the Democratic Party
- ◉ A period of Sovietization and Stalinism started

STALINIST ERA (1948-1956)

POLAND

- 1948 September, Communist leader Władysław Gomułka, who opposed Stalin's direct control of the Polish party, was charged with "nationalistic tendency" and dismissed from his posts of First Secretary. He was arrested by the Ministry of Public Security.
- W. Gomułka was put under house arrest without typical show trial, and released unharmed a few years later, in 1954 or 1955.
- Bierut replaced him as party leader until his own sudden death
- The new government was controlled by Polish Communists aided by the Ministry of Public Security, and the Soviet "advisers" who were placed in every arm of the government as guarantee of the pro-Soviet policy of the state

STALINIST ERA (1948-1956)

POLAND

- ◉ The most important of them was Konstantin Rokossovsky Defense Minister from 1949 to 1956, former Marshal in the Soviet Armed Forces, backed by a slew of well-trained Russian Commissars in control of Polish state security.
- ◉ The Soviet-style secret police and UB grew to around 32,000 agents as of 1953. There was one UB agent for every 800 Polish citizens. The MBP ministry was also in charge of Internal Security Corps, the Civil Militia, Border guard, prison staff and paramilitary police used for special actions (with 125,000 members). For many years, the public prosecutors and judges as well as functionaries of MBP, engaged in acts recognized by international law as crimes against humanity and crimes against peace, such as the torture and execution of seven members of the 4th Headquarters of anti-Communist organization in the Mokotów Prison in Warsaw after the official amnesty and their voluntary disclosure. All executed members of WiN took active part in anti-Nazi resistance during World War II. The postwar Polish Army, intelligence and police were full of Soviet NKVD officers who stationed in Poland with the Northern Group of Forces until 1956.
- ◉ Mass arrests continued during the early 50's - in October 1950, 5,000 people were arrested in one night, in so called "Operation K"; in 1952 over 21,000 people were arrested . According to official data, there were 49,500 political prisoners in the second half of 1952

STALINIST ERA (1948-1956)

POLAND

- ◉ The government control over art and artists deepened. The Soviet-style Socialist Realism became the only formula accepted by the authorities after 1949. Most works of art and literature presented to the public had to be in line with the voice of the Party
- ◉ persecuting the Catholic Church ("PAX Association") created in 1947 worked to undermine grassroots support from Roman Catholicism and attempted to create a Communism-friendly Church
- ◉ 1953 the Cardinal Primate of Poland Stefan Wyszyński, was placed under house arrest, although before that he had been willing to make compromises with the government
- ◉ In the early 1950s, the war against religion by secret police led to the arrest and torture of hundreds of Polish religious personalities, culminating in the Stalinist show trial of the Kraków Curia.

STALINIST ERA (1948-1956)

POLAND

- Polish Constitution of 1952 officially established Poland as a People's Republic, ruled by the Polish United Workers' Party, which since the absorption of the left wing of the Socialist Party in 1948 had been the Communist Party's official name.
- The post of President of Poland was abolished, and Bierut, the First Secretary of the Communist Party, became the effective leader of Poland

STALIN'S DEATH

- ◉ J. V. Stalin died in 1953.
- ◉ 1953 and 1958 Nikita Khrushchev outmaneuvered his rivals and achieved power in the Soviet Union.
- ◉ March 1956 Khrushchev denounced Stalin's cult of personality at the 20th Congress of the Soviet Communist Party
- ◉ The de-Stalinization of official Soviet ideology left Poland's Stalinist hard-liners in a difficult position
- ◉ In the same month as Khrushchev's speech, as unrest and desire for reform and change among both intellectuals and workers was beginning to surface throughout the Eastern Bloc, the death of the hardline Bierut in March 1956 exacerbated an existing split in the PZPR.
- ◉ Bierut was succeeded by Edward Ochab as First Secretary of the PZPR, and by Cyrankiewicz, brought back as Prime Minister

HUNGARY

- ◉ August 1949 the parliament passed the new constitution of Hungary (1949/XX.) modeled after the 1936 constitution of the Soviet Union
- ◉ The name of the country changed to the People's Republic of Hungary, "the country of the workers and peasants" where "every authority is held by the working people,,
- ◉ Socialism was declared as the main goal of the nation. A new coat-of-arms was adopted with Communist symbols, such the red star, hammer and sickle

STALINIST ERA (1949-1956)

- Mátyás Rákosi, Hungarian Working People's Party was de facto the leader of Hungary, possessed practically unlimited
- His main rivals in the party were the 'Hungarian' Communists who led the illegal party during the war in Hungary, and were considerably more popular within party ranks.
- Their most influential leader, László Rajk, who was minister of Foreign Affairs at the time, was arrested in May 1949. He was accused of rather surreal crimes, such as spying for Western imperialist powers, L. Rajk was found guilty and executed.
- In the next three years, other leaders of the party deemed untrustworthy, like former Social Democrats or other Hungarian illegal Communists such as János Kádár, were also arrested and imprisoned on trumped-up charges

STALINIST ERA (1949-1956)

- ◉ The showcase trial of L. Rajk
- ◉ Mátyás Rákosi now attempted to impose totalitarian rule on Hungary. The centrally orchestrated personality cult focused on him and Joseph V. Stalin soon reached unprecedented proportions. Rákosi's images and busts were everywhere, all public speakers were required to glorify his wisdom and leadership.
- ◉ Secret police persecuted all 'class enemies' and 'enemies of the people'. An estimated 2,000 people were executed and over 100,000 were imprisoned. Some 44,000 ended up in forced-labor camps, where many died due to horrible work conditions, poor food and practically no medical care. Another 15,000 people, mostly former aristocrats, industrialists, military generals and other upper-class people were deported from the capital and other cities to countryside villages where they were forced to do hard agricultural labor.
- ◉ These policies were opposed by some members of the Hungarian Working People's Party and around 200,000 were expelled by Rákosi from the organization

STALINIST ERA - SHOW TRIAL

- ◉ Preparations for a show trial started in Budapest in 1953 to prove that Raoul Wallenberg had not been dragged off in 1945 to the Soviet Union but was the victim of cosmopolitan Zionists
- ◉ For the purposes of this show trial, three Jewish leaders as well as two would-be "eyewitnesses" were arrested and interrogated by torture. The show trial was initiated in Moscow, following Stalin's anti-Zionist campaign.
- ◉ After the death of Stalin and Lavrentiy Beria, the preparations for the trial were stopped and the arrested persons were released.

IMRE NAGY AND REFORMS

- ◉ As Hungary's new Prime Minister, Imre Nagy slightly relaxed state control over the economy and the mass media and encouraged public discussion on political and economic reform.
- ◉ In order to improve the general supply, he increase the production and distribution of consumer goods and reduced the tax and quota burdens of the peasants.
- ◉ Nagy also closed forced-labor camps, released most of the political prisoners - Communists were allowed back into Party ranks
- ◉ Gábor Péter, was convicted and imprisoned in 1954
- ◉ All these rather moderate reforms earned him widespread popularity in the country, especially among the peasantry and the left-wing intellectuals.

RÁKOSI'S SECOND REIGN

- ◉ 1955, the Central Committee of the Hungarian Working People's Party condemned Nagy for "rightist deviation". Hungarian newspapers joined the attacks and Nagy was accused of being responsible for the country's economic problems and on 18 April he was dismissed from his post by a unanimous vote of the National Assembly. Nagy was even excluded from the Party
- ◉ Rákosi once again became the unchallenged leader of Hungary.
- ◉ Rákosi's power was undermined by a speech made by Nikita Khrushchev in February 1956, in which he denounced the policies of Joseph Stalin and his followers in eastern Europe and the cult of personality
- ◉ Ernő Gerő, as his successor, who was unpopular and shared responsibility for most of Rákosi's crimes.
- ◉ The fall of Rákosi was followed by a flurry of reform agitation both inside and outside the Party. László Rajk and his fellow victims of the showcase trial of 1949 were cleared of all charges, and on 6 October 1956, the Party authorized a reburial, which was attended by tens of thousands of people and became a silent demonstration against the crimes of the regime. On 13 October it was announced that Imre Nagy had been reinstated as a member of the party.