

Slovakia

in the 20th Century



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Early 20th Century

- The Slovaks lands were part of the Kingdom of Hungary since 10th Century
- Austro-Hungarian Empire
- Triple Alliance (WW1)



Czechoslovakia

- October 28, 1918 – Independence
- Incorporated into the new Czechoslovakia
 - Bohemia, Moravia, Silesia, Slovakia, Ruthenia
 - Treaty of Saint Germain, Treaty of Trianon



- Parliamentary democracy
 - President Tomáš G. Masaryk

Interwar Czechoslovakia

- Development
 - Political and economic stability and growth
- Joined League of Nations
- Leading industrial-agrarian country
 - Inherited industrial base (Czech) from Austria
 - Among the 10 richest countries in the world
- Hit hard by economic crisis in 1930s and began decline

Growing discord in the 1930s

- Differences between Czechs and Slovaks
 - Cultural, linguistic, religious
- Dissatisfaction between perceived inequalities
- Emergence of nationalist movement in Slovakia
 - Andrej Hlinka, Jozef Tiso – Slovak People's Party
 - Called for greater equality for Slovaks, autonomy

Beginning of WW2

- 1938 – Czechoslovakia was forced to cede the Sudetenland to Hitler's Germany
- Afraid of German forces and a weakened federal government
- Slovakia withdrew from the federation and declared independence

Jozef Tiso and wartime Slovakia

- Jozef Tiso
- Heavy German, fascist influence
 - policies aligned with Nazis
- Entered WW2 as Germany's ally
- Holocaust in Slovakia
 - 1942-1944 – approx. 70,000 Slovak Jews, Roma, and others sent to camps

Slovak National Uprising

- Popular support for Tiso's regime waned toward the end of the war
- Armed insurrection
- Banská Bystrica – 1944
 - Began waging a guerilla war against Tiso and military that continued until Soviet Army arrived in 1945

End of WW2

- 1945 – WW2 ended
 - Tiso ousted, executed in 1947
- Reunited with the Czech lands
 - Czechoslovak Republic
- Ruled by a coalition government that included Communist party members in high positions
 - Communist party amassed popular support progressively through 1948

The early Communist era

- February 1948 – Communists definitively took over the government in Prague
- Economy and government modeled after the socialist policies of the Soviet Union and fell under Soviet influence
 - Nationalization of private property
 - Centralized economy
 - Collectivization of farms
 - State control of factories and businesses
 - Total control of Communist Party

Reform

- 1960s – Movement to reform Communism
 - Party leaders and intellectuals
 - Slovak Alexander Dubček
 - Became head of the Communist Party in 1968
- “Socialism with a Human Face”
 - Lifted censorship and called for liberalization of socialist policies

Prague Spring Uprising

- August 21, 1968 – USSR did not approve of reforms, did not want liberalization to spread
- USSR and Warsaw pact countries invaded Czechoslovakia and put down the uprising
 - E. Germany, Poland, Bulgaria, Hungary
- Uprising was short-lived

After Prague Spring

- Gustáv Husák (Slovak) replaced Dubček in April 1969
- Program of “normalization” was initiated to return to pre-reform policies
 - Censorship was reimposed
 - Purged reform-oriented leaders of government and social organizations
- Federalization
 - Czech Republic and Slovak Republic

Velvet Revolution

- 1989 – Communism collapsed across Central/Eastern Europe
- Dissent from both Czech and Slovak Republics
 - Civic Forum (Czech)
 - Public Against Violence (Slovakia)
- November 17, 1989 – “Velvet Revolution”
- First Communist regime in Central/Eastern Europe to vote for new democratic leadership
- Returned to parliamentary democracy, led by President Václav Havel

1990-1993

- Less control, less centralization
- Inequalities
 - Czech Republic had 20% higher GDP
 - Seat of government in Prague
 - Cultural, linguistic differences
- Slight majority of Slovak politicians advocated sovereignty
 - Economic, political advantages

The Velvet Divorce

- July 17, 1992 – Slovak Parliament declared independence from the Czechoslovak Federation
- Full dissolution was negotiated and went into effect on December 31, 1992
- 37% of Slovaks, 36% of Czechs supported the division
- “Velvet” Divorce
 - Like the “Velvet” Revolution, it was negotiated and non-violent

Consequences of Separation

- Federal assets divided 2:1 (population ratio)
 - Many property disputes lasted for years
- Slovakia adopted new currency (Slovak koruna)
 - Both economies suffered initially, then stabilized
- Dual citizenship not initially allowed
 - Both constitutions later amended
- Positive relations maintained
- No attempts at reunification

The 1990s

- Vladimir Mečiar, Prime Minister 1992-1998
 - HZDS (Movement for Democratic Slovakia)
- Semi-authoritarian state
 - Rule of law inhibited
 - Democratic practices abandoned
 - Liberalization proceeded slowly
 - Corruption among high-ranking officials

Reform

- 1998 – Mikuláš Dzurinda led coalition of 5 opposition parties to replace Mečiar as Prime Minister
- Economic reform and growth
 - Attracted foreign investors
- Began processes of integration and international cooperation
 - EU, NATO, OECD

Slovakia Today

- Member of European Union and NATO (2004)
- Schengen area country (2007)
- Use EURO currency (2009)
- Fastest growth rate in EU
- Popular tourist destination

