

50 years have passed since the first UC missionary came to Czechoslovakia

Juraj Lajda
October 6, 2018



It is unbelievable that 50 years have already passed from the moment the first missionary crossed the border from Austria to the former communist Czechoslovakia.

On the occasion of this anniversary, FFWPU Slovakia prepared a special celebration to remember this important event as a part of the national Unification Family meeting in Dunajská Lužná on 6th October 2018. The celebration had a very rich, intense and colorful program. We had speakers, video messages and written greetings. A full hall counting over 100 people welcomed brothers and sisters from both Slovakia and the Czech Republic.

The celebration was opened by Rev. Miroslav Rybár, national leader of Slovakia. The MC was Mr. Miloš Klas.

Dr. Dieter and Ana Schmidt, the regional presidents, participated and delivered a very inspiring speech: Dr. Schmidt compared human life and the different generations to a tree. Each tree has roots, trunk, branches and leaves. Each part of them has its own function and role so that the tree can exist. All these parts of the tree have to cooperate. The tree without roots will decay soon. On the other hand we cannot expect that the trunk has the same role as the leaves. We should never forget our roots.

A very strong moment was the presence of the first national leader of Czechoslovakia Alžbeta Danišková who, during the persecution in the 1970s, spent 4 years and 4 months in prison. She spoke about the first years when she joined the movement as a 21-year-old student and very soon became national leader, without any prior experience. Until now, even despite many physical and health difficulties, she is loyal to True Parents.

In a video message Mrs. Martine Masnerová, national leader of the Czech Republic, greeted the participants, wishing them a joyful celebration.

Mrs. Christel Werner the wife of Paul Werner, who sent the first missionary (Emi Steberl) to Czechoslovakia, wrote how Paul Werner was hesitant to send Emi into a very dangerous environment (at the time, Soviet-led troops were occupying Czechoslovakia). But Emi was determined to follow her calling and bring salvation to Eastern Europe. Paul brought her to the border.

He wrote: "As I saw her disappear, tears came to my eyes and I prayed to heavenly Father for her protection and guidance".

Gertud Koch, national Messiah to Slovakia greeted the participants and wished them to maintain the pioneering spirit. She wrote about the Blessing of the first members in 1982 who could not directly participate in Korea. Her husband Peter Koch made a Holy wine ceremony with them in a secret place in Brno.

A video message was sent by Mr. Julian Gray from the IHQ, who has compiled a book about the Czechoslovak mission. A few years ago he was appointed by True Mother to collect and record the

testimonies of the first members. This text is a very good reference for the history of the Czechoslovak mission.



Mrs. Brunhilde d'Alberti, who was a missionary who visiting several times from Germany after Emi Steberl had to leave Czechoslovakia in 1971, expressed her surprise how the young Czechoslovak people at that time were eager for truth and love. They had a great desire to change something. It was love that brought them to True Parents.

Dr. Lubomír Morbacher, AFP and a special advisor and researcher, spoke about the persecution of people and groups under communist regime. He mentioned the case of the "Principled People" (as the members of our Unification movement were called by the police) as the biggest case of the Communist secret police, when 25 people were sentenced to prison. He mentioned that, at that time, the secret police were upset that it took them 2 years to discover our movement.

After his speech, a letter of apology from the President of Comenius University in Bratislava was presented to Mrs. Alžbeta Danišková. In the early 1970s, due to her activities with the movement, she was expelled from her course at the university. Similar letters were also received by other brothers and sisters whom the university expelled.

Dr. Michael Balcomb sent a video message from Kosovo, where he was participating in the Peace Road. He mentioned that True Mother deeply thinks about the sacrifice and hard work of all those from Europe and especially Eastern Europe and how they worked in the old days. She said that because of these members blood, tears and sweat and love for True Parents, Europe has been protected. The next few years are important, and if we unite with True Mother everything is possible: this was his conclusion.

A very important message came from Dr. Young-ho Yun from the International Headquarters. Dr. Yun mentioned that it was True Father who was the first missionary to the communist world, in 1946. He was persecuted and tortured. Even though the first members in Czechoslovakia had no chance to meet True Parents, they overcame their difficulties and went onto the streets to witness and bring God's love to the people. Dr. Yun expressed his hope that we will be successful to fulfill Vision 2020.

Juraj Lajda, one of the first members, gave a short history of the movement. He explained the events of the year 1968 when the Prague Spring started as a reformation movement in the country and prepared the way for the first missionary to come. He pointed out the courage of Emi Steberl who came in spite of the fact that the country was occupied by soviet troops. After 5 years of quick development, the persecution started and 25 members were sent to prison. There were 24 church centers and, all together, we were witnessing every day to 400 – 500 people. After the prison only few remained with the church, and they had to work underground.

Anton Uhnák, one of the first members spoke about the first members determination to bring change in society. The truth of the Principle was very strong and inspiring, so that the first members were ready to sacrifice everything. We should have this spirit even now and build up Heavenly Slovakia, Czech Republic and Europe.

Then we heard 3 testimonies of the first members. Dorota Šimeková and Erika Lajdová shared their motivation to join the movement. Štefan Jakubáč explained historical parallels in the past 50 years.

Finally our brother, Martin Slezák who joined the movement in the early 1990s shared his inspiration from reading the historical book (compiled by Julian Gray).

The celebration was very successful and could bring together the older and younger members, and second generation together. It brought the spirit of the early years and inspiration for the future to fulfill Vision 2020.

