

The spontaneous resistance of the citizens of the Czechoslovak Socialist Republic made headlines at home and abroad. The invasion was also discussed at the meeting of the UN Security Council. The entire society opposed the violent occupation of the country, expressing their discontent through non-violent protests at public gatherings and in individual gestures. Laco Bielík's photograph entitled 'The Bare-chested Man in Front of the Occupiers Tank' has become a symbol of the Slovak resistance to the invasion that is recognised around the world.

A public protest to support Czechoslovakia in Bergen, Hordaland, Norway, against the occupation



A memorial plaque on the façade of the Law Faculty building of Comenius University in Bratislava



Coin details

Denomination: €10

Composition: 900 silver, 100 copper

Weight: 18 g

Diameter: 34 mm

Incuse edge lettering:

• 21. AUGUST 1968

Issuing volume: limited to a maximum of 11,000 coins in either brilliant uncirculated or proof quality

Designer: Patrik Kovačovský

Engraver: Dalibor Schmidt

Producer: Kremnica Mint (Slovakia)

The obverse design of the coin depicts barriers of barbed wire with the number '68' positioned behind them, representing the period of oppressive 'normalisation' that followed the invasion of Czechoslovakia by armed forces of the Warsaw Pact in August 1968. The Slovak coat of arms appears at the top of the coin. At the bottom are the name of the issuing country 'SLOVENSKO' and the year of issuance '2018', together with the coin's denomination and currency '10 EURO' separated by a horizontal line. To the left of Slovakia's coat of arms is the mint mark of the Kremnica Mint (Mincovňa Kremnica), and to the right are the stylised letters 'PK', the initials of the coin's designer, Patrik Kovačovský.

The reverse features a fragment of Laco Bielík's photograph 'The Bare-chested Man in front of the Occupiers' Tank' placed in front of the number '50' and the word 'výročie' (anniversary), symbolising the 50th anniversary of the invasion of Czechoslovakia by the Warsaw Pact armed forces. At the top of the coin is the inscription 'AUGUST 1968'.



Published by Národná banka Slovenska, August 2018
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Photographs: Múzeum TASR, SITA, L. Bielík, Wikimedia (Jozef Kotuli, Hordaland, Ladislav Luppa, Eirik Sundvor), Progress Promotion
<http://www.nbs.sk/en/banknotes-and-coins/euro-coins/collector-coins>



**Spontaneous, non-violent
civic resistance
against the Warsaw Pact
invasion of August 1968**

Silver collector coin

The invasion of Czechoslovakia by armed forces from the Warsaw Pact countries is one of the most important milestones in the modern history of Slovakia. Not only did it make headlines all around the world, it also triggered the spontaneous resistance by citizens who were shocked to witness their sovereign country being invaded in a single night by three hundred thousand foreign soldiers, more than six thousand tanks and combat vehicles, four thousand artillery pieces and a thousand planes. The invasion was the largest military operation in Europe since World War II.

By the late 1960s a broad social movement had begun working towards the system's democratisation and modernisation. In Slovakia, the liberalisation process was intensified by an emancipation movement for equal national status which rallied around the demand for a federal government. On 30 October 1968, the entire process was finalised with the representatives of party and state bodies meeting at Bratislava Castle to sign a constitutional law establishing the Czechoslovak



Signing of the Constitutional Act on the Czechoslovak Federation

federation. Civil society's growing agitation for democracy under Alexander Dubček was viewed with concern in Moscow from its inception. Any sign of weakness or inactivity would jeopardise the USSR's interests as a world power. Czechoslovakia could set off an avalanche in other countries of the Eastern Bloc. The Soviet leadership issued a flurry of statements over a period of months urging Prague to resolve the 'counter-revolutionary situation' in its own capacity

quickly and effectively. In early August 1968 representatives of the communist countries met in Bratislava and signed a declaration, which stated, amongst other things, that the 'support, consolidation and protection of socialist gains was a common internationalist duty of all socialist countries' (Brezhnev's doctrine of limited sovereignty). At the meeting, the Communist Party of the Soviet Union also received a 'letter of invitation' signed by representatives of the ruling Communist Party of Czechoslovakia. The purpose of this 'letter of five' was to give the impending military invasion an appearance of legality and legitimacy.

Armed forces from five Warsaw Pact countries (the Soviet Union, Poland, Hungary, East Germany and Bulgaria) invaded Czechoslovakia on the night of 20-21 August 1968. This intervention brought the democratisation reform process to a halt and prepared grounds for its results to be reversed. The communist regime in Czechoslovakia entered a period of what was called 'normalisation' which, in the end, brought about not only its own downfall, but the downfall of the communist experiment in Europe as well.

Demonstrators in SNP Square in Bratislava



This pamphlet criticising the Warsaw Pact invasion was one of many dropped from an aeroplane over Lučenec

Photograph entitled 'The Bare-chested Man in front of the Occupiers' Tank'

