

Speech by Prime Minister M. Topolánek at the International Conference on the Resistance

We have lived in the free world for 20 years now. In a world where politics are not decided by the will of a single party. In a world where everyone can read and say what they please. In a world in which we can freely travel, shop, do business. One entire new generation has grown up in that time. A generation of children who have only known freedom, who have not experienced that incessant schizophrenic pressure where one thing is said at home and something else in public. What do we want to tell those children? What do we want them to know and be familiar with about communism? What about the past should not be forgotten, so that it does not have to be repeated, so that hope for a happier future is preserved?

I think the most important of all is to remember that there is no era and no system that absolves a person of their personal responsibilities. Responsibilities of how they live up to absolute values, how they manage to differentiate freedom and slavery, good and evil, and how they behave at the moment they must choose between the two. Because in the end, it is our personal choices, not some decreed objective necessity, which decides the shape of the world we live in.

Communism had all the outlines of a devilish system. It was enslavement by power. It was morally relativistic. It was devoid of values. Only a small few managed to see its monstrous outlines at the time it was just being born. Only a minority actively fought against it ruling our country. But very few could overlook its bloody and suffocating essence, which showed itself in the 1950s and in the era of normalisation. Today we remember with honour all those who openly fought against it at various times and through various means. But each of us had to come to terms with it in our own way. And each of us who experienced that time must now how to answer to himself how he stood up to it at the time.

The battle with communism, therefore, started within. It would be good if we were able to hand over this experience to a new generation that would not have to carry out this fatal battle with evil. Because slavery, relativism and emptiness are always threats, in capitalism as in totalitarianism. Our elections are free today, but must be so much the more responsible. So much the more must we refuse so-called objective necessity and excuses of bad circumstances. So much the more must we not fall to devilishly tempting populism.

We must pay close attention so as not to replace the dictatorship of totalitarianism with a dictatorship of majority opinion. As is well-known, the majority is always wrong. Who else should tell about this than those who warned in time about the coming of communism? Besides, it appears to many today as well that those who have the law on their side are right, and that they frequently see the fighters against totalitarianism as "disturbers of the peace," someone who threatens the status quo. But such a view is hypocritical and completely rules out one's own conscience from activity.

It would be good if the new generation remembered from communism that everything that silences our own conscience is bad. Whether it's that false apology from the straitjacket of totalitarianism or the comfortable pillow of majority opinion. It is always a dangerous weakness, to play to evil, one which we will pay for dearly.

When we again allow the barriers of fear, prejudice, populism and weakness to grow in our heads, it won't take long for a real wall to come up. It may not be directly an iron curtain with barbed wire and obstacles. But in any case our world will not be as free, as open, as equal as we would wish.

We must know the past and learn from it in order to have a future. You here will discuss various forms of resistance and rebellion against totalitarianism, both at home and abroad. I believe that this conference as well will do its part so that our past is not repeated in a different form. That it contributes to an understanding of the motives of those who, in various times and with various weapons, fought against the regime. That it will contribute to a refusal of moral relativism and a legalistic view of the communist era. To understand good and evil, to know how to distinguish under all circumstances, even extreme ones, is the first step toward a real freedom, not just a formal one.

Hell is not lurking outside, but inside. Because what Seneca said still holds true: "He who is dependent on external circumstances should never be considered fortunate."