

**The Slovak Republic:  
A Curriculum Guide for Secondary School Teachers**



Created by the **Center for Russian and East European Studies**  
University Center for International Studies  
University of Pittsburgh  
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# INTRODUCTION

*The Slovak Republic: A Curriculum Guide for Secondary School Teachers* was created to provide information on the historical and contemporary development of the Slovak nation, and in so doing, to assist teachers in meeting some of the criteria indicated in the Pennsylvania Department of Education's Academic Standard Guidelines ([http://www.portal.state.pa.us/portal/server.pt/community/state\\_board\\_of\\_education/8830/state\\_academic\\_standards/529102](http://www.portal.state.pa.us/portal/server.pt/community/state_board_of_education/8830/state_academic_standards/529102)). To fulfill the fundamental themes for many of the disciplines prescribed by the state guidelines, this curriculum guide provides the following information:

- A description of the unique traits of Slovak culture.
- A description of the effects of political, economic and cultural changes and how these changes shaped the present Slovak nation.
- Identification and explanation of the contributions of key historical individuals and groups in politics, science, the arts, and religion in the Slovak Republic.
- Examination of the changing economic and political system of the Slovak Republic, and how these changes have affected Slovak society.

These and other areas of Slovak society and culture are explored in an attempt to assist the secondary school teacher in fulfilling the Academic Standard Guidelines. As the unique transitions in the Slovak Republic provide a laboratory for studying political, economic and cultural change, this guide may be additionally useful as a means for comparison with our own country's development. Whether as a tool for meeting the Academic Standard Guidelines, or as a means to explore issues affecting a society in transition, we expect that this guide will be useful in your classroom preparation.

Each section of this guide is designed to be suitable for classroom use either independently, or as part of a comprehensive study of the Slovak Republic covering the entire guide. Therefore, you may tailor your use of the guide to fit the amount of time that you have available and the specific topics that are most relevant to your subject area. The guide also contains references to sources of additional information.

This guide was prepared by the Center for Russian and East European Studies at the University of Pittsburgh, with funding from the U.S. Department of Education. It is part of a series of curriculum guides on post-communist countries in East Central Europe that have entered the European Union in 2004. Due to the interconnection of Slovakia's history with that of the Czech Republic, we recommend that you consider using this guide in conjunction with our guide to the Czech Republic.

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## About the Center for Russian and East European Studies

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REES offers undergraduate and graduate certificates to students who complete a multi-disciplinary study of the area and attain proficiency in a language of the region. The Center coordinates the collection of materials on its world region in the University of Pittsburgh's library system, publishes the *Carl Beck Papers in Russian and East European Studies*, maintains academic exchanges with 26 overseas partner institutions, and sponsors lectures and special events on a weekly basis. REES also sponsors study abroad programs and, since 1986, a Summer Language Institute for students throughout the U.S., offering intensive courses in nine Slavic and East European languages.

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## Photographs of Bratislava, Capital of the Slovak Republic



(Area around central town square)





## SLOVAK REPUBLIC



## Slovak Republic in a Nutshell

### Government

- Government type:** Parliamentary democracy
- Capital:** Bratislava
- Independence:** January 1, 1993 (Czechoslovakia split into the Czech and Slovak Republics)
- Constitution:** Ratified September 1, 1992; fully effective January 1, 1993; changed in September 1998 to allow direct election of the president; amended February 2001 to allow Slovakia to apply for NATO and EU membership
- Legal system:** Civil law system based on Austro-Hungarian codes; has not accepted compulsory International Court of Justice jurisdiction; legal code modified to comply with the obligations of the Organization on Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) and to expunge Marxist-Leninist legal theory
- Executive branch:** Cabinet appointed by the president on the recommendation of the prime minister
- Legislative branch:** Unicameral National Council of the Slovak Republic or Narodna Rada Slovenskej Republiky (150 seats; members are elected on the basis of proportional representation to serve four-year terms)
- Judicial branch:** Supreme Court (judges elected by the National Council); Constitutional Court (judges appointed by the president from a group of nominees approved by the National Council)
- Political parties and leaders:** Christian Democratic Movement (KDH); Democratic Party (DS) ; Direction (Smer); Movement for a Democratic Slovakia-People's Party (HZDS-LS); New Citizens Alliance (ANO); Party of the Hungarian Coalition (SMK); Real Slovak National Party (PSNS); Slovak Communist Party (KSS); Slovak Democratic and Christian Union (SDKU); Slovak National Party (SNS)
- Political pressure groups and leaders:** Association of Employers of Slovakia; Association of Towns and Villages (ZMOS); Confederation of Trade Unions (KOZ); Metal Workers Unions (KOVO) and METALURG

*Source:* <http://www.cia.gov/cia/publications/factbook/geos/lo.html>

## Economy

**Economic overview:** In 2001-02 the government made excellent progress in macroeconomic stabilization and structural reform. Major privatizations are nearly complete, the banking sector is almost completely in foreign hands, and foreign investment has picked up. High unemployment remains the economy's Achilles heel.

**GDP:** Purchasing power parity - \$66 billion (2002)

**GDP - real growth rate:** 4.5% (2003)

**GDP - per capita:** Purchasing power parity - \$12,200 (2002)

**GDP - by sector:** Agriculture: 4.5%; industry: 34.1%; services: 61.4% (2003 est.)

**Inflation rate:** 3.3% (2002)

**Labor force - by occupation:** Industry: 29.3%; agriculture: 8.9%; construction: 8%; transport and communication: 8.2%; services: 45.6%

**Unemployment rate:** 16.5% (2003 est.)

**Industries:** Metal and metal products; food and beverages; electricity, gas, coke, oil, nuclear fuel; chemicals and manmade fibers; machinery; paper and printing; earthenware and ceramics; transport vehicles; textiles; electrical and optical apparatus; rubber products

**Agriculture - products:** Grains, potatoes, sugar beets, hops, fruit; pigs, cattle, poultry; forest products

**Exports:** \$12.9 billion (2002 est.)

**Exports - commodities:** Machinery and transport equipment: 39.4%; intermediate manufactured goods: 29.5%; miscellaneous manufactured goods: 11%; chemicals: 8% (est.)

**Exports - partners:** European Union: 59.9% (Germany 27.0%, Italy 8.8%, Austria 8.1%); Czech Republic: 16.6% (2002)

**Imports:** \$15.4 billion (2002 est.)

**Imports - commodities:** Machinery and transport equipment: 37.7%; intermediate manufactured goods: 18%; fuels: 13%; chemicals: 11%; miscellaneous manufactured goods: 9.5% (1999)

**Imports - partners:** European Union: 49.8% (Germany 24.7%, Italy 6.4%); Czech Republic: 15.1%; Russia: 14.8% (2001)

**Debt - external:** \$9.6 billion (2002 est.)

**Currency:** Slovak koruna (SKK)

**Exchange rates:** Koruny per US dollar - 45.3267 (2002); 48.3548 (2001); 46.0352 (2000); 41.3628 (1999); 35.2334 (1998)

*Source:* <http://www.cia.gov/cia/publications/factbook/geos/lo.html>



## **Slovak History in a Nutshell**

5<sup>th</sup> Century – Slavic tribes settle in present day Slovakia and are eventually united under the Slavic kingdom of Greater Moravia.

10<sup>th</sup> Century – Magyar tribes invade present day Slovakia and form Greater Hungary under King Stephen. A thousand years of foreign domination begins.

1526 – Hungary's defeat by the Ottoman Turks allows the Hapsburgs to seize Upper Hungary (Slovakia). Pozony (present day Bratislava) becomes the Hungarian capital as Buda falls to the Turks.

1867 – The dual monarchy of Austria-Hungary is formally established after the Habsburg emperor Franz Josef compromises with the constantly rebelling Hungarian nobles. Slovakia is incorporated into the Hungarian part of this kingdom.

1918 – Dissolution of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, after defeat in World War I, sprouts numerous new states including Czechoslovakia. Although Czechoslovakia is nominally a parliamentary democracy, Slovaks have a weak voice in the Republic's affairs.

1939 – Establishment of the First Slovak Republic; in reality a Nazi puppet state run by fascist cleric Josef Tiso, who collaborates with German policies that include the deportation of Jews.

1945 – As a member of the defeated Axis powers Slovakia's fate is again determined by foreign powers. Czechoslovakia is re-established, without the province of Ruthenia, and an unstable democratic government dominated by Czech Communists moves onward.

1948 – The Soviet Union tightens control over Czechoslovakia under the guise of restoring political stability, and thereby reduces Eastern Europe's last fledgling democracy to a satellite state.

1968 – Alexander Dubček, a Slovak and leader of Czechoslovakia, introduces a new governing philosophy dubbed "socialism with a human face". Threatened by his reforms the Warsaw Pact countries invade, depose Dubček, and install another Slovak, Gustav Husák, as the head of Czechoslovakia. Progressive reforms are no longer considered.

1989 – Following similar movements across Eastern Europe, mass protests and demonstrations bring down the Communist regime and the resignation of Husák. The Velvet Revolution brings democracy and formerly jailed dissident Václav Havel assumes the Czechoslovak presidency.

1992 – After coming in second in the summer elections, Vladimír Mečiar becomes Prime Minister of the Slovak part of the newly reworked Czech and Slovak Federal Republics. However, he soon starts a dialogue with Prague that will lead to the disbanding of the confederation.

1993 January – The first day of the year marks the birth of the Second Slovak Republic and Europe’s youngest state. The peaceful split of the former Czechoslovakia into the Czech and Slovak Republics is dubbed the Velvet Divorce while Mečiar proclaims himself “Father of Slovakia.”

1993 March – Mečiar resigns as Prime Minister after receiving a vote of no confidence from parliament. A caretaker government lead by Josef Moravcik starts privatization and other economic reforms in earnest.

1994 – Mečiar’s new political party manages to win the elections and he resumes his position as Prime Minister. For the next four years Mečiar is often criticized for his demagoguery, corruption and hostility toward the Hungarian minority. Labeled a “black hole” in Europe by the US, Slovakia becomes increasingly isolated from its neighbors and the West.

1998 March – A constitutional crisis materializes after the end of the President’s term and the parliament’s failure to agree on a successor.

1998 September – The defeat of Vladimír Mečiar by a motley coalition in parliamentary elections brings hope of a more democratic era. Fears in the Western media that Mečiar will hold on to power by force do not materialize. The new Prime Minister, Mikulas Dzurinda, embarks on clearing Slovakia of its pariah state status.

1999 – Rudolf Schuster, a member of the coalition government, defeats Vladimír Mečiar to become Slovakia’s second president after a constitutional amendment changes the presidency to a directly elected position.

2000 – Slovakia is invited to join the OECD and is formally invited by the European Union to begin the lengthy accession process.

2004 – Slovakia joins the European Union.

*Source:* <http://www.slovakia.org/tourism>

## **Key Moments in Slovak History**

### *Prague Spring and Normalization*

Towards the end of the 1960s, the strict regime of Communist Czechoslovakia began to relax a little. In January 1968 Alexander Dubček, a Slovak born in Uhrovec, became the first secretary of the Communist Party. Under his leadership, Czechoslovakia entered a period of liberalization known as the “Prague Spring.”

For about half a year, Dubček’s Czechoslovakia and his “socialism with a human face” were the focus of Central Europe, as well as the rest of the world. Censorship was abolished, which was unheard of in a Communist state, and Czechoslovakia enjoyed a limited democracy.

However, Moscow frowned upon Dubček’s actions, fearing that his liberalization policy could spread throughout the Eastern bloc. The Soviet reaction was one of force, sending in tanks from the USSR and from other Warsaw Pact countries to restore “order” by re-establishing the rule of hard-line communists in Czechoslovakia.

In the 1970s and 1980s, to ensure there would never be a repeat of the Prague Spring, the Communist government adopted a policy of “normalization” – a modern version of Stalinism – which meant that in the 1970s Czechoslovakia had the most severe regime of all of the Warsaw Pact countries, including the Soviet Union.

### *The Velvet Revolution*

During the 1970s and 1980s, Czechoslovakia suffered under normalization, and while some of the other Warsaw Pact countries enjoyed a little more freedom, there was no lessening of Communist repression in Czechoslovakia.

In the Czech lands, where normalization was at its most severe, the dissident group Charter 77 was created in protest of the strict regime. Meanwhile, dissent in Slovakia mainly took place through the Catholic Church. The Slovaks, a highly religious people, gathered annually for various pilgrimages such as the Marianske Pilgrimage near Levoca, where thousands met to demonstrate their faith in God.

By the mid-1980s, and especially with the appointment of Mikhail Gorbachev as General Secretary of the Soviet Communist Party, a transition began to take place. The transition, called “perestroika,” spread from Moscow to the other Warsaw Pact countries. However, while change was present in Russia, Hungary, Poland and eventually East Germany, it was slow in coming to Czechoslovakia. Not until November 1989, after the Berlin Wall had fallen, did the Czechs and Slovaks rise up against the Communists in mass protest. Without the support of Moscow, the Czechoslovak Communist government knew that it could not continue in power and resigned less than a month later.

Due to the fact that the Czechs and Slovaks rose up against the Communists without bloodshed, the 1989 uprising was dubbed the “Velvet Revolution.” A vivid account of this event may be found in a book by Timothy Garton Ash, titled The Magic Lantern.

### *The Velvet Divorce*

Four decades of defense-oriented industrialization had left Slovakia ill prepared for the new market economy. This resulted in a rise in unemployment in Slovakia and other economic hardships. Meanwhile, the Czech lands fared much better, with a more diverse economy able to benefit from the mass privatization program that was underway.

These economic differences, as well as disagreements about the division of power between the federal level (Czechoslovakia) and republic level (Slovak Republic and Czech Republic), led to politicians in both republics debating the possibility of the two republics becoming two separate sovereign states.

The idea of two separate sovereign states was especially championed by the Czech politician Václav Klaus and the Slovak politician Vladimír Mečiar. As the Prime Ministers of their respective republics, Klaus and Mečiar negotiated the disbandment of Czechoslovakia. On January 1, 1993, the two republics amicably split, and Slovakia became an independent nation-state.

It is worth noting, however, that polls taken at the time indicated that if there had been a voter referendum on the proposed split, the majority of people in both the Czech lands and Slovakia would have opposed the breakup.

*Source: <http://www.slovakia.org>*



Slovak National Theater, Bratislava, Slovakia

# I. Slovak History

## A. *A brief summary of Slovak History*

The Great Moravian Empire (833–907) was one of the most important cultural, historical and political milestones of Slovak history, defining the country's development for generations. After the empire's collapse, Slovaks became part of the Hungarian Kingdom for approximately 1,000 years. In 1918, after the collapse of the Austro-Hungarian monarchy, Slovaks and Czechs created the Czechoslovak Republic. In 1939, the first Slovak Republic was created under pressure from Adolf Hitler, and then after World War II in 1945 the Czechoslovak Republic was restored.

At the end of the war, when the Communists took power, Slovak society dramatically changed. For more than 40 years, Slovakia endured an imposed political and economic system. Throughout much of this period, there were attempts to reform the totalitarian Communist regime, but in 1968 these efforts ended with the invasion of troops from the Warsaw Pact countries. Also during this time, the Czechoslovak Socialist Republic changed into the Federal Czech and Slovak Republics. Following the 1968 invasion, a period of "normalization" came about, which had more of a symbolic rather than practical significance for Slovakia as the country remained under strict Communist control.

Eventually in November 1989, with the onset of the Velvet Revolution, the Communist regime came to an end. Political, economic and social reforms began to move the country toward democracy and a market-oriented economy. Coinciding with this national movement were efforts by Slovakia to gain more economic and political autonomy. As tensions grew between leaders of the Czech and Slovak Republics, they agreed to peacefully split. In September 1992, the Constitution of the Slovak Republic was adopted, followed by the constitutional division of the Czech and Slovak Federal Republic into two independent successor countries on January 1, 1993. Soon afterwards, the Slovak Republic began the process to re-enter Europe by applying for membership in the European Union.

## B. *Slovak history in detail*

### 1. The Slovak National Movement

In the 18th century, while Slovakia was still under the control of the Habsburg Empire, the Slovak national movement was founded with the aim of fostering a sense of national



identity among the Slovak people. Mainly created by Slovak religious leaders, this movement grew throughout the 19th century. A key ingredient was the codification of a Slovak literary language by Anton Bernolák in the 1700s, and the reform of this language by L'udovít Štúr in the following century. New signs of national and political life appeared at the very end of the 19th century, when the Slovaks allied

themselves with others in a struggle to establish their own identity. In this struggle, the Slovaks received a great deal of help from the Czechs. In 1896, the concept of Czecho-Slovak Mutuality was established in Prague to strengthen Czecho-Slovak cooperation. The Slovaks were seeking to achieve independence from the Habsburg Empire.

At the beginning of the 20th century, a growing democratization of political and social life threatened to overwhelm the Habsburg monarchy. The main rallying call was for universal suffrage (in Hungary only 5% of citizens could vote). In the trend towards democracy, Slovaks saw the possibility of easing ethnic oppression and a breakthrough into politics. At the beginning of the century, the Slovak political camp split into different factions. The leaders of the Slovak National Party, based in Martin, expected the international situation to change in the Slovaks' favor, and they put great hope in Russia. The Catholic faction of Slovak politicians, led by Father Andrej Hlinka (pictured above), focused on small undertakings among the Slovak public and, shortly before the war, established a political party named the Slovak Public Party. The liberal intelligentsia rallying around the Hlas (Voice) journal followed a similar political path, but attached more importance to Czecho-Slovak cooperation. Eventually, an independent Social Democratic Party was founded in 1905.

In 1906, the Slovaks made some progress when seven Slovaks managed to get seats in the Assembly. This alarmed the Hungarian-led government, and measures were taken to limit the development of Slovak independence. One method used was the passing of a new education act known as the Apponyi Act, named after education minister Count Albert Apponyi. This was a key component of the Magyarization process (the movement to promote the Hungarian way of life). The new Act required four years of compulsory schooling, with the Hungarian language being the medium of instruction. In another example, local residents wished their new church to be consecrated by the popular priest Andrej Hlinka; however, the Hungarian authorities decreed that the church should be consecrated by their own nominee. The public uproar over this decree was put down by the police with guns, and 15 Slovaks lost their lives. Resistance toward Hungarian rule grew.

## 2. The Federation of Czechoslovakia

During World War I (1914-18), Czechs, Slovaks, and other national groups in Austria-Hungary were joined by Czechs and Slovaks living abroad in campaigning for an independent state.



The decision originated among people of Slovak descent in foreign countries. There were many Slovaks in the US. These, and other organizations in Russia and neutral countries, backed the idea of a Czecho-Slovak republic. The most important Slovak representative was Milan Rastislav Štefánik, a French citizen of Slovak origin who, as a French general and leading representative of the Czecho-Slovak National Council based in Paris, made a decisive contribution to the

success of the Czecho-Slovak cause by promoting this cause worldwide. Political representatives in Slovakia gave their support to the activities of Czech leader Tomáš Masaryk and Štefánik.

In October 1918, at the end of the war, Slovakia announced its independence from the Habsburg Empire. Finally, after many protests in the country, the Prague National Committee proclaimed an independent republic of Czechoslovakia on October 28, 1918, and two days later, the Slovak National Council at Martin acceded to the Prague proclamation (a copy shown above). Slovakia then was incorporated into the new republic of Czechoslovakia. The new republic included the Czech lands of Bohemia and Moravia, a small part of Silesia, and Slovakia; within these boundaries were areas inhabited by hundreds of thousands of Hungarians. A parliamentary democratic government was formed, and a capital was established in the Czech city of Prague.

The Slovaks, who were greatly outnumbered by the Czechs, differed in many important ways from their Czech neighbors. The Slovak economy was more agrarian and less developed than its Czech counterpart; the majority of Slovaks were practicing Catholics while the Czech leadership believed in limiting the power of the church; and the Slovak people had generally less education and experience with self-government than the Czechs. These disparities, compounded by centralized governmental control from Prague, produced discontent among Slovaks with the structure of the new state.

Between the two world wars, the Czechoslovak government attempted to industrialize Slovakia. These efforts were not successful, however, due in part to the Great Depression, the worldwide economic slump of the 1930s. Slovak resentment over what was perceived to be economic and political domination by the Czechs led to increasing dissatisfaction with the federation and growing support for extreme nationalist movements. Father Andrej Hlinka and his infamous successor, Father Jozef Tiso, were joined by many Slovaks in calls for equality between Czechs and Slovaks and greater autonomy for Slovakia.

### 3. World War II

The federation was short-lived. The rise of Nazi Germany in the 1930s and the aggressive policies of German dictator Adolf Hitler led to the demise of the Czechoslovak federation. In 1938 the leaders of Great Britain, France, and Italy were trying to avoid another war with Germany and were willing to negotiate with Hitler. On September 28, 1938, Prime Minister Neville Chamberlain of England appealed to Hitler for a conference. Hitler met the next day, at Munich, with the chiefs of government of France, Italy, and Great Britain. The Czechoslovak government was neither invited nor consulted. On September 29, the Munich Agreement was signed by Germany, Italy, France, and Great Britain. The Czechoslovak government capitulated on September 30 and agreed to abide by the agreement.



The Munich Pact resulting from these negotiations forced the government of Czechoslovakia to cede the Sudetenland, an area inhabited largely by Germans, to Germany. Fearing that the federal government would not be able to protect Slovak interests, the Slovak leadership nominated an autonomous provincial government and approved a new constitution, creating the short-lived Second Republic of Czechoslovakia. Faced with the threat of being divided between Germany, Poland, and Hungary, the Slovak government decided to withdraw from the federation and declare its independence. On March 14, 1939, the first independent Slovak Republic was established, and Father Tiso was chosen as head of government (Father Tiso is pictured with Nazi officials).

A clerical nationalist, Tiso opposed the Nazification of Slovak society and hoped instead to establish Slovakia as a nationalist, Christian, corporative state. His plan conflicted with that of Slovak radicals, who were organized into the paramilitary Hlinka Guards. The latter cooperated closely with the Nazi-oriented German minority led by Franz Karmasin. Radicals dominated the Slovak government. Vojtech Tuka, recently released from prison, became prime minister; his associate, Ferdinand Durcansky, was named foreign minister. Alexander Mach, head of the Hlinka Guards, was propaganda minister. German “advisory missions” were appointed to all Slovak ministries, and German troops were stationed in Slovakia beginning March 15, 1939.

The conflict between Tiso and the radicals resulted in the Salzburg Compromise, concluded between Slovakia and the Reich in July 1940. The compromise called for dual command by the Slovak Populist Party and the Hlinka Guards. The Reich appointed storm trooper leader Manfred von Killinger as the German representative in Slovakia. While Tiso successfully restructured the Slovak Populist Party in harmony with Christian corporative principles, Tuka and Mach radicalized Slovak policy toward the Jews, who had numbered 130,000 in the 1930 census. In September 1941, the Slovak government enacted a “Jewish code,” providing a legal foundation for property expropriation, internment, and deportation. In 1942 the Slovak government reached an agreement with Germany on the deportation of Jews. The same year, when most of the deportations occurred, approximately 68,000 Slovak Jews were sent out of Slovakia to German-run concentration camps. However, many Jews escaped deportation under a provision that allowed Tiso to exempt Jews whose services were considered an economic necessity.

Tiso’s power was strengthened in October 1942, when the Slovak Diet proclaimed him leader of the state and Slovak Populist Party, giving him rights of intervention in all affairs of state. The Hlinka Guards were effectively subordinated to party control. The new German representative, Hans Elard Ludin, concentrated his energies on war production. German banks acquired a controlling interest in all Slovak industries. With the aid of German investments and technical advice, Slovakia experienced a considerable economic boom, especially in the armaments industry, which had been controlled by the German government since December 1939. To some extent, Slovakia served as a showcase for Hitler’s new order.



Slovakia entered World War II as Germany's ally. Governmental policies were closely aligned with those of Germany's ruling Nazi Party. Although some Slovaks supported the state, an underground resistance movement also gained strength. In 1944 this movement organized the Slovak National Uprising against German control.

#### 4. Slovak Resistance

Slovak politicians from the democratic parties (Republican Party of Farmers and Peasants, Czechoslovak Social Democratic Party, and Czechoslovak National Socialist Party) organized a resistance movement. Individual underground cells sprang up in towns and villages throughout Slovakia. A campaign of "whispering" propaganda was initiated to alert the acquiescent Slovak population to the true nature of the Tiso regime. The goal of the democratic resistance was the restoration of the Czechoslovak Republic, but with greater participation in government for Slovakia. In the spring of 1939, the "Zeta" headquarters were established in Bratislava to coordinate with the Czech resistance and to transmit intelligence information to the liberation movement abroad. Party Communists remaining in Slovakia formed the underground Communist Party of Slovakia (Komunistická strana Slovenska – KSS), and until 1943 favored the creation of an independent "Soviet Slovakia."

The shortage of qualified personnel enabled resistance members to infiltrate all levels of the Tiso administration, where they promoted economic sabotage. Mutiny within the Slovak army (marshaled by the Axis powers for combat against Poland and, later, the Soviet Union) was encouraged and became commonplace. On September 15, 1939, approximately 3,500 Slovak soldiers abandoned their transport train at Kremnica and marched into the city. Members of the underground Slovak Revolutionary Youth set fire to machinery in factories, emptied the fuel tanks of locomotives, and exploded munitions in warehouses. Slovak youth turned increasingly against the Tiso regime.

In his Christmas broadcast of 1942, the Czechoslovak president-in-exile Edvard Beneš called for resistance groups in Slovakia to increase their activity in preparation for a seizure of power. The groups worked to unify their efforts. The following November, negotiations between democratic and communist resistance leaders culminated in the signing of the Christmas Agreement of 1943. This agreement called for the creation of the Slovak National Council to represent the political will of the Slovak nation. The Slovak National Council would act in concert with the Czechoslovak government and liberation movement abroad. The Christmas Agreement also provided for a close association with the Soviet Union in foreign policy and military affairs. Beneš endorsed the agreement on March 27, 1944.

The Allied powers agreed that Slovakia would be liberated by Soviet armies. In March 1944, with Beneš's approval, the Slovak National Council authorized Lieutenant-Colonel Jan Golian to prepare for a national coup to be coordinated with the arrival of Soviet troops. Golian organized a secret military center at Banská Bystrica and created Slovak partisan units composed of escaped prisoners of war and army deserters. The Slovak National Uprising of August 29, however, was premature. The Soviet government,

regarding the Slovak resistance as politically suspect, failed to inform the Slovaks of a change in Soviet strategy. They did not provide them with military assistance as expected. Despite American efforts to assist the uprising, the German Wehrmacht occupied Slovakia, and Banska Bystrica fell on October 27. Nonetheless, local partisan warfare continued up to the liberation. When the country was eventually liberated, it became a Soviet protectorate and a communist state.

When the war ended in 1945, the Republic of Czechoslovakia was resurrected, with the exception of Ruthenia, a small area in the east that was taken over by the Soviet Union. Prime Minister Tiso was hanged for treason and collaboration with the Nazis, and other high party officials were also punished. Between 1945 and 1948, Communists and representatives of other political parties ruled the country in a coalition government, and a free press existed. Although the Communist Party controlled many important positions, it had less support in Slovakia than in the Czech lands.

## 5. The Communist Regime

In February 1948 the Communists provoked a political crisis and took over the government in Prague. Under the leadership of Klement Gottwald, and later Antonín Novotný, the Communists patterned Czechoslovakia's economy and government on those of the Soviet Union. The state took control of the country's factories and many businesses; private property was nationalized; and farmers were forced to join collective farms in which all land and equipment were jointly owned. The government prohibited opposition to the Communist Party and made efforts to decrease the influence of churches. The Communist Party became the only effective party in Czechoslovakia.

In the 1960s, party leaders and intellectuals in Slovakia and the Czech lands created a movement to reform the Communist system. The movement, which came to be known as "socialism with a human face," was led by Alexander Dubček, a Slovak who became the head of Czechoslovakia's Communist Party in January 1968. The USSR feared that the reforms would threaten its influence in Czechoslovakia, and on August 21 of that year, the Soviet military, assisted by troops from other Communist countries of Eastern Europe, invaded Czechoslovakia. As a result, nearly all of the reforms that had been introduced were eliminated. Dubček was replaced by another Slovak, Gustav Husák, in April 1969 and ultimately was expelled from the party. Many other leaders and intellectuals who supported liberalization also lost their positions. The Husák government reestablished tight party control and censorship of the press.

During the 1970s and 1980s, dissent took different forms in the two republics of Czechoslovakia. In the Czech lands, political organizing brought forth a powerful dissident movement called Charter 77. In Slovakia, subversive activity was confined largely to the private sphere. Historically a religious people, Slovaks turned to the practice of Catholicism to express their opposition to the Communist regime. During this period a number of mass pilgrimages and religious celebrations took place in Slovakia; because these events brought large numbers of people together, they effectively became nationalist demonstrations.

## 6. Slovakia after Communism

In 1989 an uprising against the Communist governments swept through many eastern European countries, including East Germany, Poland, Romania, and Czechoslovakia. In November 1989, Slovaks joined with Czechs in mass protests against the Communist government. Less than one month later, the government resigned and non-Communists took control of the country. A new movement called Public Against Violence (PAV) was formed in Slovakia, bringing together political dissidents, intellectuals, and Catholics to lead the transition to an open democratic society. The federation's first free elections since 1946 were held in June 1990, and were won by PAV in Slovakia and Václav Havel's Civic Forum in the Czech lands. Havel was chosen as president of Czechoslovakia, and Marian Calfa, a Slovak, became vice-president. Within Slovakia, the new non-Communist government was led first by Vladimír Mečiar, then a member of PAV, and then in 1991 by Jan Carnogurský, leader of the Christian Democratic Movement.



One of the major tasks facing the new government of Czechoslovakia was the reestablishment of an economy based on free enterprise. The country began a mass privatization program, with the goal of shifting hundreds of state-owned companies into private hands and encouraging foreign investment. However, as these and other reforms got under way, tensions developed between the two republics. Because Slovakia had industrialized during the Communist period, it inherited an inefficient, defense-oriented industrial base; the transition to a market economy thus resulted in greater unemployment and economic hardship in Slovakia than it did in the more economically advantaged Czech Republic. Because of their economic differences, Czechs and Slovaks held opposing views about the appropriate pace and nature of economic reform; they also disagreed about how power should be divided between the federal and republic-level governments. These differences complicated the reform process and prevented the adoption of a new federal constitution.

## 7. The Breakup of Czechoslovakia

The results of the elections of June 1992 reflected the growing split between the two lands. The liberal Movement for a Democratic Slovakia (HZDS), led by Slovak Vladimír Mečiar, and the conservative Civic Democratic Party, led by Czech Václav Klaus, won the two largest representations in parliament; each leader became the prime minister of his own republic. Disagreements between the republics intensified, and it became clear that no form of federal government could satisfy both. In July 1992 Slovakia declared itself a sovereign state, meaning that its laws took precedence over those of the federal government.

Throughout the fall of that year, Mečiar and Klaus negotiated the details for disbanding the federation. In November the federal parliament voted to officially dissolve the

country on December 31, despite polls indicating that the majority of citizens opposed the split. On January 1, 1993, Czechoslovakia was replaced by two independent states: Slovakia and the Czech Republic.

## 8. Independence

Under Mečiar's leadership, the process of privatization slowed in Slovakia. In February 1993, Michal Kováč was elected president of the country. Although a fellow member of the HZDS party, Kováč was not a Mečiar ally, and conflicts soon developed within the government. Mečiar's position was further undermined by the resignation and defection of a number of party deputies in early 1994. In March of that year, Mečiar resigned from office after receiving a vote of no confidence from the Slovak parliament. An interim coalition government comprising representatives from a broad range of parties was sworn in, with Jozef Moravčík of the Democratic Union of Slovakia Party as prime minister. Moravčík's government revived the privatization process and took steps to attract more foreign investment to Slovakia.

In elections held in the fall of 1994, the HZDS Party, led once again by Mečiar, received 35% of the popular vote and announced its plans to form a government with the support of the ultranationalist Slovak National Party. The two parties did not control enough parliamentary seats to command a majority, but this situation was resolved in November when the left-wing Association of Slovak Workers joined Mečiar's coalition. The new government took office in December, and Mečiar became prime minister again. In an effort to reverse Moravčík's liberalization policies, the Mečiar government returned radio and television communications to state control and blocked the privatization of state-owned companies. These and other measures aimed at centralizing power in Mečiar's hands were met with concern by a number of Western governments.

The move away from democracy under Mečiar's leadership led to criticism from the West and to an increasingly inferior position among their neighbors in the race to enter the European Union (EU). Eventually, after pressure from the West and political controversy, Mečiar was removed from office in 1998 and new leadership took his place, moving the country back on track to enter the EU. Today, the Slovak Republic is an independent state with a parliamentary democracy. The National Council of the Slovak Republic (parliament) has a single chamber of 150 members. The current President, Rudolf Schuster, was elected in 1999 for a period of five years, in the first direct presidential election in the history of the Slovak Republic. He appoints and dismisses the prime minister and other members of the government. The present government has four vice-prime ministers and 15 ministers. It represents a broad coalition supported by a constitutional majority in the parliament. From the 1998 election, six parties are now represented in the parliament, with four of them supporting the coalition government and two in the opposition.

## **II. Slovak Society**

### *A. Slovak administrative areas*

Since 1996, the Slovak Republic has been administratively divided into eight regions and 79 districts. The state administration operates mostly at the regional and district levels. The heads of the regional offices are directly appointed by the government. The system of municipalities as self-governing bodies at the local level was reinstalled after 1989. The mayors and members of municipal councils are elected directly in local elections for four years. There are 2,879 municipalities in the Slovak Republic, including 136 towns and cities.

### *B. The economy*

In 1991, a radical transformation from a centrally planned and controlled economy toward a free market-oriented economy started with four introductory steps:

- 1) price liberalization
- 2) internal convertibility of the currency
- 3) a policy of macroeconomic stabilization
- 4) extensive privatization.

The reintroduction of a market-based economy has been a difficult process in Slovakia. Because much of the country's industrialization took place during the Communist era, many Slovak industries were inefficient and produced goods that were not competitive in the world market. To modernize these industries and retrain workers has required foreign investment, but this has been slow in coming, due in part to perceived political instability in the country. Compounding the problem of outmoded industry was the Czechoslovak government's decision in the early 1990s to drastically reduce the country's defense industry. The production of weapons and other military equipment had been based largely in Slovakia and had employed as much as 10% of the Slovak workforce in the 1980s. This reduction led to a decline in overall industrial production and a significant rise in unemployment. A fundamental part of the conversion to a market economy is the return of state-controlled enterprises to private ownership, which has been marred by a non-transparent privatization process.

After a severe economic downturn at the beginning of the transition, the Slovak economy has developed relatively well. In 1997, real GDP per person in Purchasing Power Parity reached US\$7,910. The private sector has become a major contributor to GDP growth. The inflation rate decreased from 25.6% in 1993 to 5.6% in 1998, and unemployment decreased from 14.4% in 1993 to 11.6% in 1997. However, unemployment has grown since 1998 to 13.7%, exceeding 25% in some districts.

An important component of Slovakia's economy is foreign trade. Crude oil, natural gas, machinery, and transportation equipment are Slovakia's main imports. Exports include machinery, chemicals, fuels, steel, and weapons. The Czech Republic, Slovakia's main

trading partner, supplies about 30% of Slovakia's imports and purchases approximately 40% of its exports. Austria, Germany, and Russia are Slovakia's other leading trade partners.

According to a UNDP report, the country's remaining economic problems may be caused by the strong influence of interest groups over economic policy, low transparency, insufficient application of bankruptcy laws, the shortage of foreign direct investment, and political instability. The Slovak Republic is still in a stage of change, during which the political environment significantly determines the socioeconomic development of the country. As the government further stabilizes, so should the economy.

### *C. Healthcare*

The transformation in Slovak society did not only affect the government and economy; it also dramatically affected social programs. The social sphere shifted away from a paternalistic social state policy based on a comprehensive social security scheme, moving instead to a system of social insurance, state social support and social assistance. The Constitution of the Slovak Republic lays down the basis for the organization, management and financing of the health care system in the Slovak Republic. It ensures universal coverage and access to free-of-charge health care services through compulsory health insurance. The latter has been built on the principles of solidarity and plurality. In addition, the Constitution provides everyone with the right to protection of his/her health. Thus, although the principles of universal coverage and comprehensive free-of-charge services originally laid down in 1966 have remained the same, the organizational structure, management and financing of these services have changed substantially as a result of the health system reforms launched in the early 1990s.

#### 1. Health care reforms

Health care reforms in the Slovak Republic were initiated by the radical political, social and economic changes following the Velvet Revolution in 1989. They were influenced by the overall desire to move toward a democratic society with a market-oriented economy, which resulted in a strong political decision to replace the socialist health system with a regulated market-like system based on health insurance. The process of reform in the health sector has been mainly driven by medical doctors, with the main objective of improving the health status of the population. With the changes of post-Communist governments, different priorities have been emphasized, but the main strategies – health care financing through insurance, as well as privatization and decentralization of provision of health services – have not changed.

#### 2. Reform implementation

The implementation of health care reforms in Slovakia has been largely driven by the government. Changes have been recommended following consultation with Expert Groups, which comprise representatives of health professionals (the Slovak Medical Chamber, the Slovak Pharmaceutical Chamber, the Slovak Chamber of Dentists, the Slovak Chamber of Nurses and representatives of

other health workers), the health insurance companies (through their association) and the Hospitals Association. Health care reforms in Slovakia have been implemented without significant adverse effects on the population. Slovakia has managed to shift from a tax-based state monopoly financing system to a pluralistic and decentralized health insurance system, with the aim of making financial flows transparent.

The transformation process in Slovakia is not yet complete, however. Many problems still have to be solved. While in 1995, public health experts had concluded that Slovakia had achieved a relatively painless transition from socialist, central planning to a pluralistic, health insurance-based health system, today the health sector is facing severe financial and organizational difficulties.



Kosice, Slovakia

[http://Europa.eu.int/comm/enlargement/slovakia/pictures/slovakia\\_pictures.htm](http://Europa.eu.int/comm/enlargement/slovakia/pictures/slovakia_pictures.htm)

### **III. International Affairs**

The Slovak government considers the integration of the country into European political and economic structures to be a prerequisite for ensuring the democratic development of Slovak society and the country's economic prosperity. The signing of the Europe Agreement concluded between the European Union (EU) and its member countries on the one hand, and the Slovak Republic on the other, played a significant role in promoting this goal. This Agreement, which became effective in February 1995, assumed the establishment of a free-trade zone between the Slovak Republic and EU countries.

In addition, since the end of communism, Slovakia has actively pursued and gained admittance to the International Monetary Fund (IMF), the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development (World Bank), and the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD). In October 1993, the Slovak government signed an association agreement with the European Union, and in 1995 the country applied for EU and OECD membership. Slovakia became a member of the EU on May 1, 2004.

#### **The Referendum on the European Union**

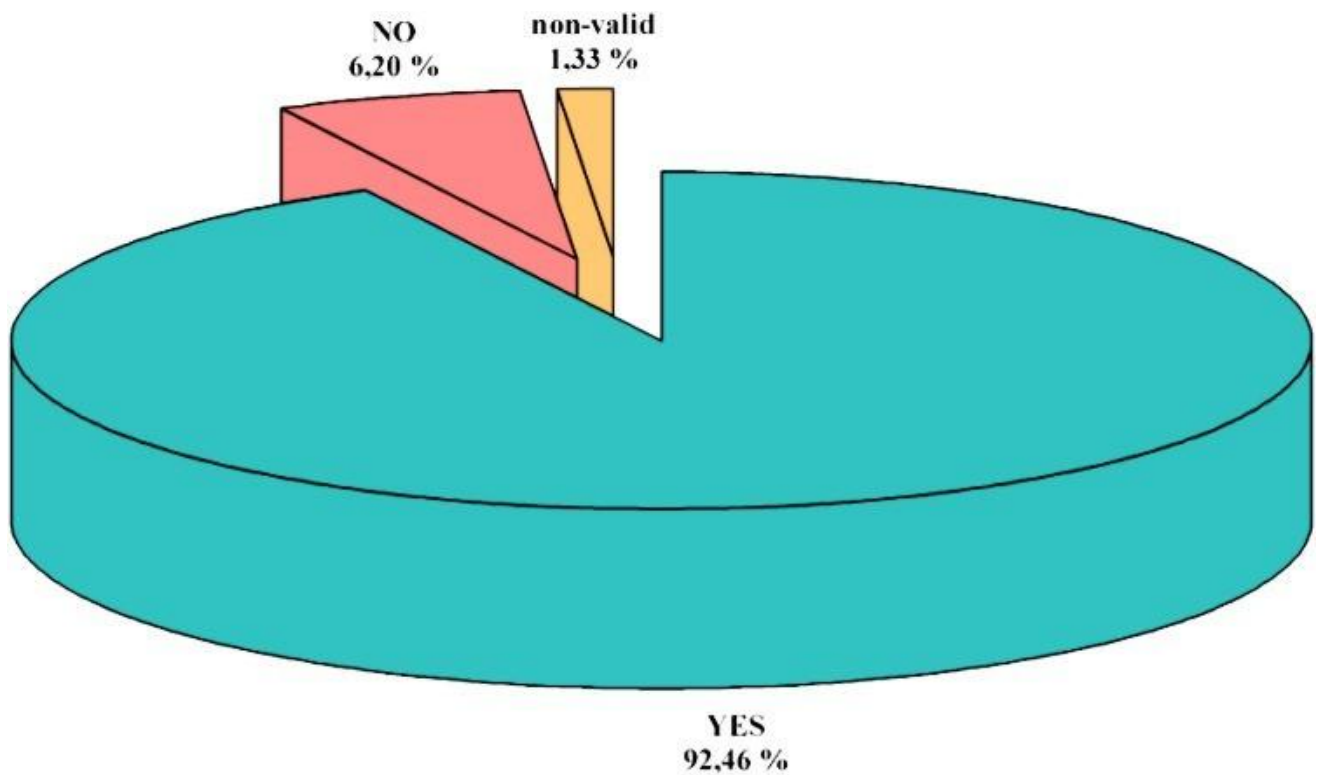
In May 2003, 92.4% of Slovak voters said YES to the question of whether or not Slovakia should join the European Union (see chart on the following page). Up to this time, all previous attempts to hold a referendum in Slovakia had failed. Never before had the required 50% of voters plus one vote been achieved – the minimum number of votes necessary for a referendum to be valid.



Courtyard in Bratislava



**Results of voting by citizens participating in referendum**



May 16-17, 2003

Source: Statistical office of the Slovak Republic.

## **IV. Miscellaneous Facts**

### *A. Slovak inventors*

Slovakia has been responsible for a number of important inventions over the years. Below are a few of these inventions, together with the corresponding Slovak inventors:

Motor-driven helicopter

**Jan Bahyl** (1865-1916)

Wireless telegraph (forerunner of the radio)

**Rev. Jozef Murgas** (1864-1929)

Parachute

**Stefan Banic** (1870-1941)

Speaking machine and a special typewriter for the blind

**Wolfgang von Kempelen** (1734-1804)

Water pump machine (water-pillar)

**Jozef Karol Hell** (1713-1789)

Camera zoom lens

**Jozef Maximilian Petzval** (1807-1891)

### *B. Famous Slovaks*

The Slovak people are extremely proud of their culture and of their traditions, which are kept alive today through food, music, poems, dance and song. There are many Slovaks who have played a major role in helping Slovakia to survive as a nation throughout the last millennium. There are also many Slovaks who have contributed to Slovakia and to the world in terms of art, music, literature, poetry, science, mathematics, politics, and sport. Those listed on the following page are but a few.

### *Andy Warhol*

Born in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania in 1928, Andy Warhol was one of the most famous artists of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. He introduced Pop Art to the world, and was the first artist to use a photographic silk-screen technique in his work.

His parents, originally from the village of Medzilaborce in the northeast of Slovakia, came to America to seek their fortune, like so many other Slovaks at that time. As Medzilaborce is located in a remote area that could be viewed as “the middle of nowhere,” you could say that Warhol’s famous quote that he came “from nowhere” was not too far off the mark.



Starting as an illustrator in the 1950s, Warhol produced many different advertisements and illustrations, and was extremely successful. In 1960 he produced his first set of paintings, and for the next eight years he created works such as the Campbell Soup Cans, Marilyn Monroe, and the Coca Cola cans, which made him famous.

On June 3, 1968, Andy Warhol was shot three times in the chest by a crazed, failed actress, Valerie Solanis. He was pronounced dead in the hospital, but then shortly afterwards doctors managed to get his heart working again, and he miraculously survived. Warhol continued to paint through the 1970s and 80s, until his death in 1987 after a gallbladder operation.

### *Alexander Dubček*

Perhaps the most famous Slovak of all, Alexander Dubček, was born in Uhrovec, Western Slovakia, to Communist parents. Dubček first came to the attention of the West when he created his own brand of limited democracy, called “socialism with a human face,” as the leader of Communist Czechoslovakia in 1968.

For about half a year Dubček’s Czechoslovakia was the focus of Central Europe, as well as the rest of the world. Censorship was abolished, which was unheard of before in a Communist state, and Czechoslovakia enjoyed a limited democracy. This period became known as the “Prague Spring.”

Moscow frowned upon Dubček’s actions, afraid that his liberalization policy could spread throughout the Warsaw Pact countries. The Soviet reaction was one of force, sending in tanks from the USSR and other East European countries to restore “order.”

Following the Prague Spring, Dubček was ousted as First Secretary of the Communist Party and sent into a sort of internal exile, as a forestry commissioner. However, almost 20 years later, after the Velvet Revolution in 1989, he returned once more into the public eye, becoming the Chairman of the Federal Assembly. Tragically, Dubček died in a car accident in 1992, at age 70.

### *Andrej Hlinka*



Known as the “father of the Slovak nation,” Andrej Hlinka was born in the village of Cernova in 1864.

A Catholic priest, in 1905 he co-founded the Slovak People’s Party, the goal of which was to gain rights for the Slovak people that had so far been denied them by the Hungarian rulers.

Hlinka was an excellent speaker and skilled politician, and in 1906 he was elected to the Hungarian Assembly.

He fought hard to gain independence from Hungary, but did not favor a Czechoslovak nation but rather an independent Slovak state. He died in 1938, a year before Slovakia finally attained independence, albeit as a puppet state to the Nazis.

### *Juraj Janosik*

The Slovak Robin Hood, Janosik was born in the village of Terchova in the north of Slovakia. He is Slovakia’s greatest folk hero, an outlaw who robbed from the rich and gave to the poor.

Janosik became an outlaw because he witnessed his father being beaten to death by a landowner. To avenge his father, Janosik gave up his studies and took to the mountains, where he became the leader of a band of outlaws.

Janosik’s adventures are legendary, but his status as Slovakia’s greatest folk hero is perhaps due to the circumstances surrounding his death. Janosik was only captured because he was deceived by his girlfriend’s mother.

Once captured, Janosik was tortured so that he would tell the Hungarian authorities who the other outlaws in his band were. However, Janosik was extremely brave and told the authorities nothing. He was then hung on a meat hook by his ribs until he died.

C. *St. Katarina and the Witches' Days*

Traditionally in Slovakia, the first of the witches' days falls on the 25th of November, St. Katarina's Day. In ancient times people believed that from then until the 21st of December, evil powers in the form of demons and witches ruled the Earth (hence the name "The Witches' Days").

The idea of increasing activity of these unfavorable powers was connected to the fact that the days were getting shorter and the nights longer at this time of year. So it was believed that the evil powers gained the upper hand over the good, and harmful demons prevailed over the life-giving sun.

During these days, people tried to face up to the evil powers by using various means of protection and magical ways. They also eagerly awaited the winter solstice (the 22nd of December), when the sun slowly began to gain its powers back, since the day before was in fact the shortest day of the year. The winter solstice was celebrated with loud parties, dances and games.

Protection against evil spirits began as early as St. Katarina's day. Cloves of garlic were eaten, as this was long believed to protect against all evil powers. Another tradition was that a woman should not be the first visitor to enter into a house on this day, because if she did, there was the possible danger that the dishes in that house would break throughout the next year.

It was traditional for the young men of the village to engage in mischievous tricks on St. Katarina's night, such as taking and hiding the working tools from the houses where girls lived. The next day the people would say that it was in fact the witches who had made this mischief.

The young men would also often change into women's clothes and then, in the early morning, would go around to their girlfriends' houses. Here they would dance with every woman in the house, and earn some money and food, which they would then use to prepare Katarina's ball afterwards.

D. *The Slovak national anthem*

Lighting flashes over the Tatra, the thunder pounds wildly,  
Lighting flashes over the Tatra, the thunder pounds wildly.  
Let them pause, brothers, they will surely disappear, the Slovaks will revive,  
Let them pause, brothers, they will surely disappear, the Slovaks will revive.

This Slovakia of ours has been fast asleep until now,  
This Slovakia of ours has been fast asleep until now.  
But the thunder and lighting are encouraging it to come alive,  
But the thunder and lighting are encouraging it to come alive.

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The High Tatra Mountains, Slovakia



(Central Bratislava street scenes)

