

My Life with Marie Živná in Communist Czechoslovakia during the Cold War

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Past National Leader of Czechoslovakia



Marie Živná's grave

In 1968, Ema Steberle came to Slovakia. She was sent from Austria to establish the group of Divine Principle followers. Thanks to her patience and endurance, I accepted the Principle on January 25, 1969. After she had left Czechoslovakia, Ema Steberl appointed me to lead our family. We were working illegally and our work was successful. We succeeded in sending missionaries to other countries and to eighteen cities in Czechoslovakia.

After receiving many reports, the secret police started to observe us, so from 1971 we had to work very carefully. Printed materials had to be destroyed immediately. I would visit missionaries in the cities and on December 25, 1972, after a long journey I had a bad car accident. My backbone was broken and my spinal cord damaged. Since then, I have been immobile, so the closest members of the family decided that Marie Živná would be my helper. Her spiritual father, Michal Glonda, called her God's child.

Marie was living with me in a hidden apartment on Mojmirova Street in Bratislava, where only a close circle of members would visit us. She helped me with physiotherapy, prepared food and took care of hygiene. She also maintained contacts with others. But the apartment owners -- probably because of a request by the police -- asked us to leave the flat. We decided to live with other sisters on Agatova Street. We were continuing our work until September 1973 when we were arrested, interrogated and imprisoned.

While in pre-trial custody we were interrogated separately, and interrogations could last many hours. In order to meet Marie, I asked for a confrontation¹ with her. Marie knew very well that it was just a pretext. Marie embraced me and asked me if I was cold and if I had warm clothes. To the great surprise of the investigators, we were laughing out of joy. They quickly ended the confrontation.

I met Marie several times in the prison corridors. We always had to stand facing the wall. During the last meeting she turned her head and smiled at me. She did not mind being scolded by the policeman for that. When my lawyer told me that Marie had died, it struck me so much that I could not stop crying and my handkerchiefs were never dry. I knew surely from her responses during the interrogations of her that I was acquainted with that they did not contain any doubt about the teaching of the Principle. Her pure, crystal clear and direct answers were proof of her clear mind.

To this day, I cannot think about what happened to her in a peaceful way, because even the passing of years has not taken away my pain.

Notes:

1 Juraj Lajda explained, "Confrontation" refers to a process of interrogation when two people claim something contradictory. A policeman asks them to meet face to face. Each should say his version to the other while the police gauge their reactions to try to find out who is speaking truthfully. Usually, the police initiate a confrontation. That Betka requested it was quite unusual. The two women's behavior was another shock for the police. Usually each person tries to blame the other in order to appear innocent, but Betka and Marie embraced each other, and did not blame each other as a means of reducing their punishment. The policemen ended the meeting immediately. They could not understand such behavior in a life-or-death situation. They both showed a very high moral standard in a difficult situation. They were above it.