

*Czechoslovakia: A State of Perceived Bias*

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## *Abstract*

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This thesis explores the circumstances behind the dissolution of the state of Czechoslovakia. Unlike previous works, this paper contends that the *Velvet Divorce* was not simply a result of the expulsion of Communism, but rather the end product of a multitude of forces, both interior and exterior to the state's boundaries. The transition from Communism was merely the catalyst.

In examining the attitudinal and eventual physical division between the majority of Czechs and Slovaks, this paper extends the criteria for consensus articulated by George Schöpflin (1993) into the context of Czechoslovakia. Schöpflin contends that support for the state in the post-Communist period is based on three characteristics: faith in the nation, belief in economic reform, and hatred for all things Communist. This thesis contends that most Czechs and Slovaks in Czechoslovakia were divided on the basis of whether they believed that their nation's right to self-determination had been fulfilled, whether they advocated more socialist or capitalist policies, and whether they benefitted from the experience of Communism. These fundamental differences contributed to the failure to reach agreement in 1992 concerning the shape of the "new" or "revived" Czechoslovakia.

Furthermore, this paper will show that the *Velvet Divorce* was not merely a product of internal disagreements. The creation, existence, and even dissolution of the state were influenced by global forces. Events such as the French Revolution, World War II, and even the Independence of Croatia had an impact in Czechoslovakia. The state was not born into a bubble; its borders were chronically permeable.

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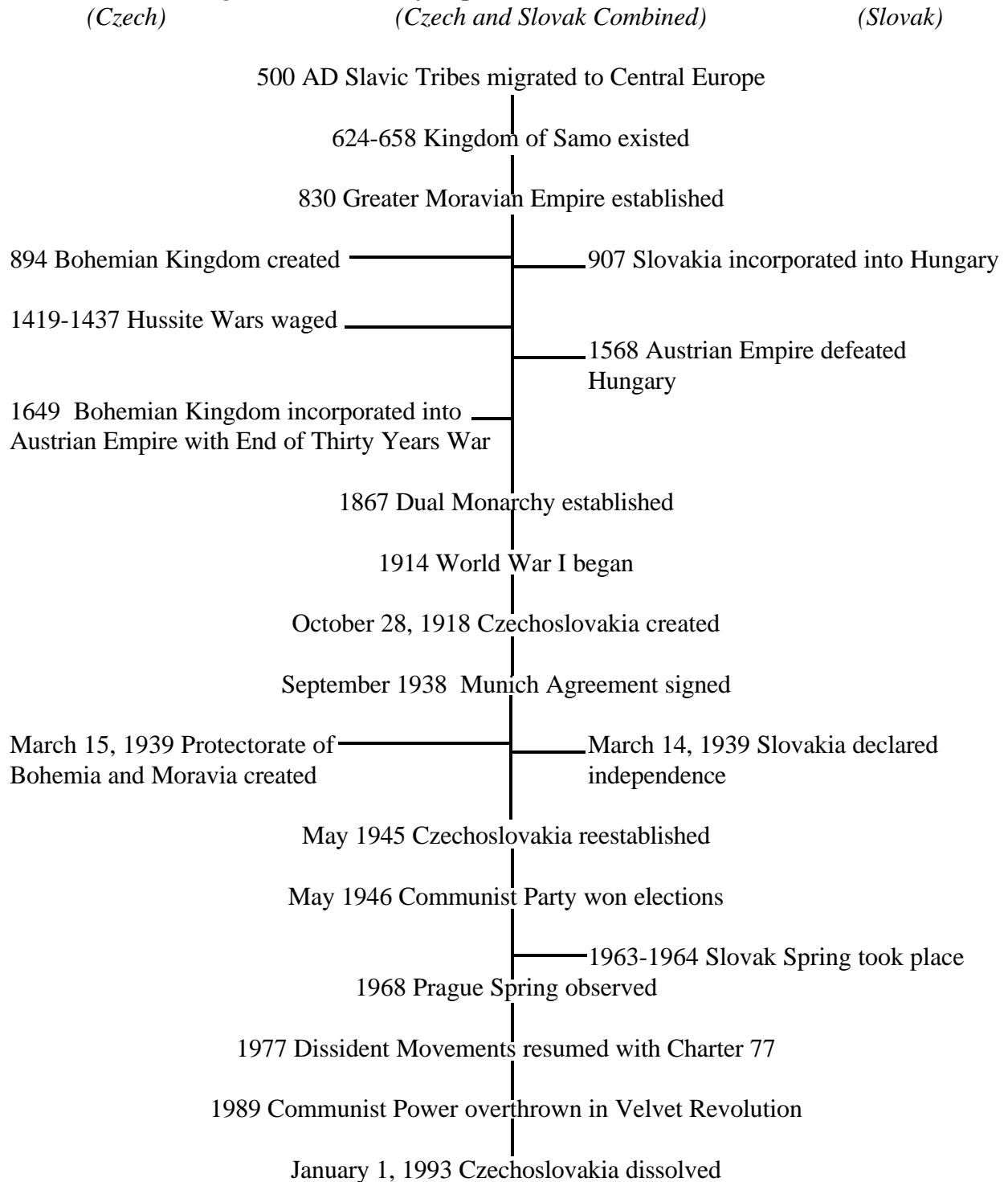
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**Figure 1: Timeline of Important Czech and Slovak Events<sup>1</sup>**




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<sup>1</sup> Data are compiled from Bradley (1971), Oddo (1960), Mikus (1963), Leff (1997), and Kirschbaum (1995).

## ***A Brief Introduction***

Situated in the heart of Europe, Czechoslovakia was born in 1918. Its neighbors have included, at various times, Poland, Romania, the Ukraine, Austria, Germany, and Hungary. Throughout its lifespan, Czechoslovakia went through many physical (geographical) changes from losing its “tail,” Ruthenia, to temporary “dismemberment” during World War II. The final transformation, however, occurred on January 1, 1993. On this date, Czechoslovakia ceased to exist; it officially and peacefully separated into two states, the Czech Republic and Slovakia, in an event which has been labeled the *Velvet Divorce*.

This paper will investigate the circumstances behind the dissolution. The contention will be made that the *Velvet Divorce* was not simply a result of the loosening of the Communist reigns, as some authors contend, but that it was due to an on-going process. Forces within and outside the boundary of Czechoslovakia shaped and molded the state prior to its birth and during the span of its entire existence. Actors such as Adolf Hitler, T.G. Masaryk, and even Béla Kun impacted the process; events such as the French Revolution, World War I, and the War in Bosnia also had repercussions in the Czech and Slovak state. The *Velvet Divorce* was not an overnight phenomenon, but rather the end product of a roughly century-long affair.

In order to examine this process, this paper will use criteria established by George Schöpflin. In his article, “Culture and Identity in Post-Communist Europe,” Schöpflin contends that consensus in the post-Communist period in East and Central Europe is built upon three characteristics: belief in the “magical properties” of the nation, the desire for economic improvement, and the dissatisfaction and disapproval directed at the prior Communist system (Schöpflin, 1993: 25). These three characteristics provide the “backbone” for the state during the difficult transition from Communism. The nation adds sustenance or faith, economic reform provides a tangible purpose, and the Communist past is an outlet for blame. Schöpflin’s argument is useful because it establishes the building blocks for the revived governments in East and Central Europe. Applying Schöpflin’s criteria, this paper will examine how the Czechs and the Slovaks failed to agree upon the shape of Czechoslovakia and its government in the 1990s, and how they subsequently decided to dissolve the state.

First of all, this paper will show how two different conceptions of the nation developed

among the people of the country. Because of these contrasting perceptions, the members of Czechoslovakia were divided on the basis of whether they believed that their right to self-determination had been met by the state, or whether they felt that they were still fighting for recognition of their identity. These beliefs concerning the shape of the nation split the state of Czechs and Slovaks in half figuratively, and in the post-Communist period, literally.

Besides different notions of the nation, disparate economic ideologies developed among the Czechs and the Slovaks. While many Czechs propagated and benefited from economically liberal policies, the Slovaks tended to prefer the socialist policies of economic equalization. Different economic policies were pursued by the government of Czechoslovakia at various times, and as a result, the members viewed the state as biased towards one ethnic group or the other. The Czechs and the Slovaks each sought to remedy the situation in the 1990s; the fallout was divorce.

Due to the different visions of the nation and the appropriate economic policies of the state with regards to that nation, the country was deeply divided concerning the experience of Communism. Because the Communists established a federal system and socialist economic policies, the situation of many Slovaks improved. These same policies, however, hurt the status of many Czechs. As a result, the memories of the Communist period separated the members of the state.

In summary, this paper will show that the failure to fulfill Schöpflin's criteria for consensus in Czechoslovakia not only resulted in discord, but also contributed to the state's dissolution. At no point in time were the Czechs and Slovaks united in common purpose and expectations. When the Communist period ended, the Czechs and Slovaks were left with the job of creating a foundation for their "new" or "revived" state, and their fundamental disagreements encouraged physical separation.



## ***Chapter 1: A State of Conflicting Nations***

In Czechoslovakia, conflicting conceptions of the nation developed among the people. While the majority of Slovaks viewed Czechs and Slovaks as inhabitants of different nations, the Czechs tended to believe that a combined nation of Czechoslovaks existed, at least until 1968. These differing perceptions of the nation resulted in disagreement concerning the appropriate way for the government to reflect the needs of the nation(s) and the people. Since the majority of Czechs favored the opinion that Czechoslovakia was or was becoming a nation-state, they believed that the “one person, one vote” concept would mirror the needs of the people (Leff, 1988). Ultimately, since the Czechs outnumbered the other ethnic groups, this resulted in a Czech-dominated system. Many Slovaks, on the other hand, believed that their unique nation was not allowed its right to self-determination, and therefore they held that the notion of “one nation, one vote” would more accurately demonstrate the will of the people within this multinational state (Leff, 1988). Basically, this “multinational” argument yielded that only Slovaks could represent Slovak interests, and that a federal system was necessary; it also framed issues as either Czech or Slovak, so that what benefitted the Czechs was automatically anti-Slovak. Although the shape of Czechoslovakia changed throughout its existence, these two opposing views concerning the nation, and the state’s responsibility to that nation, ultimately contributed to the *Velvet Divorce* in 1993.

### ***An “International” Context of Nations***

Any discussion of Czechoslovakia’s contrasting nations must first examine what a nation is, how one develops, and why the concept is important to the situation in Czechoslovakia. It will be shown that the concepts of nation and state, and the interaction between them, greatly influenced the birth of Czechoslovakia. The concept of the nation-state was projected by the international community into the foundation of Czechoslovakia and it was the justification for its existence (Bakoš, 1994).

The formation of nations can be traced to the eighteenth century when the international climate exhibited a downfall of dynastic regimes. With the justification of God, these dynastic regimes had been endowed with the right to rule the people. So, the kings and queens held the

right to create statutes, enforce laws, and expand their empire's boundaries through war, and not the states per se. As Louis XIV said, "L'état, c'est moi." With the Enlightenment's emphasis upon rationality, religion began to be questioned, and consequently the notion of divine right was rejected. Examples of this "dynastic downfall" could be seen with the beheading of King Charles I in 1649, Enlightened France, and the establishment of parliaments across Western Europe including Sweden (Anderson, 1994).

To fill the void left by the rejected idea of divine order, the narrative of nationalism evolved. "For many of the French - and many other Europeans too - by the second half of the eighteenth century, there was a yawning emotional void, left by the discredited notions of God and king" (O'Brien, 1989: 19). People needed a force in which to believe and find truth, and they *discovered* this force within themselves and within the other members of their nation. The emotional ties they once experienced with their God, they now experienced through their nation. Nations consisted of and developed among people unified on the basis of common language, literature, history, territory, economic life, etc (Seton-Watson, 1977; Anderson, 1994). These people could identify with each other because they lived in similar situations and experienced similar events. Also, if they were not first hand witnesses to the events, then common language and literature<sup>1</sup> allowed them to experience the occurrences in the same way. A sense of community developed.

The justification for the monarch's right to rule no longer came from God, but rather from the people. Although the source of sovereignty was evolving from God to the nation, the political form of the government remained unchallenged for the moment. The people did not pose any serious threat to the empires, yet. Basically, there still existed multiple nations within the empires. All of this changed however, in 1789 with the French Revolution (O'Brien, 1989).

The French Revolution was accomplished by the French bourgeoisie on behalf of the nation itself. "The revolutionaries were indeed deeply concerned with the state, and bent on making a new kind of state. But they had first to get rid of the old one: that archaic complex

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<sup>1</sup> Prior to the eighteenth century, access to literature was restricted to those who could read Latin, or usually the religious community. Printers, however, saw the opportunity to reach a greater audience and reap larger profits, and so they began publishing books and newspapers in the vernaculars (Anderson 1994).

formed around three discredited institutions: the church, the ‘absolute’ monarchy, and the privileged nobility” (O’Brien, 1989: 23). The French Revolution created the First Republic with a National Assembly to represent and rule in the interests of the nation. This Revolution spawned the fusion of the nation and the state, or a combination of a sociological entity with a political entity. It set a precedent for other nations to follow; each nation, or community of people unified on the basis of common history, language, religion, territory, etc., began to strive for its own state, or legal and political organization (Seton-Watson, 1977).

Furthermore, it is the contention of Hugh Seton-Watson that nations developed in two different ways: one prior to the advent of the French Revolution and the other by building off the ideas legitimized by the Revolution. The first way of forming a nation, the “old” way, was reserved to those nations which developed without ever being conquered; the nation-building process was “slow” and “spontaneous” (Seton-Watson, 1977: 8); these “old” nations, such as the British and the Iberian nations, were also usually located in Western Europe. Although this process occurred prior to the eighteenth century, it was only through the ideas of the Enlightenment that the “old” nations were “rediscovered,” valued, and endowed with sovereignty.

On the other hand, the second way of forming a nation, the “new” way, relied solely on the direct intent of “small educated political elites” to create national consciousness and national movements (Seton-Watson, 1977: 6-7). The French Revolution had set an example of a successful overthrow of an illegitimate regime, and the leaders of the peoples conquered by the Great Empires aspired to follow in the same footsteps as those revolutionaries. They needed to *revive* a nation or to *imagine* the community; then they could overthrow their suppressors and obtain their freedom. The intellectual leaders of these “new” nations were directly responsible for the shape that these “new” nations took. They established their power through nationalist language and literature (Censer, 1994).

“New” national movements evolved were not merely constrained to the Western sectors but evolved throughout Europe, and around the Czechs and Slovaks, after the French Revolution. In the nineteenth century, a movement for Polish independence arose from the territories which had been partitioned by the three empires; Polish nationalists, within the three

empires, imagined their nation as “the Christ among nations” to arouse support among the people and the international community for an independent Poland (Seton-Watson, 1977: 89). Leaders also arose in Romanian, Ukrainian, Greek, and “Yugoslav” territories who promoted their own nationalist causes. Nationalism was a wave spreading throughout Europe legitimizing new states -- a wave that Czech and Slovak leaders eagerly rode (Seton-Watson, 1977).

In summary, nations grew in response to the rise of rationality, they grew out of a common language and literature, and they grew to strive for the ultimate in recognition: the nation-state ideal. Benedict Anderson summarizes the characteristics of a new nation as follows: the nation is an *imagined* entity because one will never meet all of the members of her nation; it is *limited* because it has borders which other peoples have difficulty crossing; the nation is *sovereign* in that it is the new source of legitimacy with the collapse of the dynasties; and it is a *community* because of the people’s ability to relate and empathize with one another, regardless of class affiliation (Anderson, 1994: 6-7). After the French Revolution, nations became the basis of power, in that states derived their legitimacy from them. Nation-states became the norm in expectations, at least in Europe.

### ***Imagining the Czech and Slovak Nations***

As contended by Seton-Watson, the intellectuals played the vital role in creating and consolidating the “new” nations formed in the aftermath of the French Revolution. Due to their history of subordination to different Empires, Czech and Slovak writers and leaders imagined the nation in various ways. The nation was conceived as either Slavic, Czechoslovak, or Slovak. These separate conceptions of the nation evolved from the divergent histories, languages, religions, and even economic structures<sup>2</sup> among the Czech and the Slovak peoples. So, even though the Czech and Slovak leaders both strove to obtain a nation-state, their visions of this nation-state differed dramatically. These disparate perceptions of the nation would impact the state of Czechoslovakia throughout its existence, and ultimately contribute to its dissolution.

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<sup>2</sup> The economic differences will only be briefly mentioned in this chapter. The second chapter addresses the different economic structures and ideological outlooks among the Czechs and the Slovaks more fully.

An imagined common history, as Benedict Anderson explained (1994), is necessary to the development of a nation. However, the history of the Czech and Slovak peoples was both common and uncommon, depending on the span of time involved. Beginning together,<sup>3</sup> Czechs and Slovaks were both Slavic peoples who had migrated from the east and settled in Central Europe around 500 A.D. (Kirschbaum, 1995). Moreover, the Slavic tribes,<sup>4</sup> including the Czechs and the Slovaks, were united under the Kingdom of Samo for one short period of time in the seventh century. However, with the death of Samo in 658, all of the Slavic tribes broke apart and would never again be completely united under the same ruler (Kirschbaum, 1995).<sup>5</sup>

These Czech and Slovak tribes however, were reunited in common history with the founding of the Greater Moravian Empire in the ninth century. That regime had two basic political centers: Morava and Nitra. Morava consisted of some of the territories of Western Slovakia and the Czech Moravia. Nitra, on the other hand, spanned Western and Central Slovakia. A third principality, Pannonia with its Hungarian population, also had interest in the state. During this period of history, Cyril and Methodius became two great figures because they developed an alphabet for the Slavic language and because they taught and preached in the vernaculars. This shared history between the Czechs and Slovaks ended however, and a large amount of time would pass before the Czechs and Slovaks were reunited (Kirschbaum, 1995).

A common history would be difficult to find after the fall of the Greater Moravian Empire, because the experiences of the Czech and Slovak peoples diverged. Around the tenth century, the Slovaks fell under the Hungarian domain with the rule of King Stephen (Leff, 1997). While the Slovaks became subjects, the Czechs and Germans in Bohemia, Moravia, and Silesia formed a kingdom of their own. Bohemia, an independent “Czech” Kingdom, existed from roughly the tenth century until it was absorbed into the Habsburg Empire due to its defeat during

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<sup>3</sup> It is unknown where the Slavs came from exactly, and that further indicates the argument that history is subjective, and in the eyes of the beholder.

<sup>4</sup> Other Slavic tribes were the Poles, Slovenes, Croats, Serbs, Macedonians, Bulgarians, Ukrainians and Russians.

<sup>5</sup> In between the empire “episodes” the history of the Czech and Slovak peoples is vague. Mostly, the individual tribes formed the basis of rule.

the Thirty Years' War in 1649.

Nonetheless, the histories of the Czechs and Slovaks once again crossed paths within the Habsburg Empire; the Slovaks were included in the empire with the absorption of Hungary in 1568 and the Czechs joined them in 1649 (Kirschbaum, 1994). Although the Czechs and Slovaks were both under Austrian rule, the Slovaks still fell under the administration of mostly Hungarian officials. The separation of the Czechs and Slovaks under Austrians and Hungarians, respectively, became official with the *Ausgleich*, or Dual Monarchy, in 1867. It is within this context of the Austrian Empire and later Austro-Hungarian Empire that ideas concerning nationhood among Czechs and Slovaks began to solidify.

The Czech and Slovak leaders, forming their “new” nations, looked at the span of history from 500 A.D. till the Austro-Hungarian Empire and emphasized the period which would apply to their conception. So, an intellectual such as T.G. Masaryk who supported the idea of a common Czechoslovak nation would stress the shared history of the Czechs and the Slovaks within the Greater Moravian Empire. An advocate of a Greater Slavic nation, however, would reminisce over the Kingdom of Samo. Furthermore, a champion of the uniqueness of the Slovak nation, such as Ludovít Štúr, would emphasize the different experiences of the people in the past, and at the present moment, with their on-going separate histories in the Austrian and Hungarian administrations. The common history necessary in order to unite the people of a nation was imagined in many different ways among the Czech and Slovak leaders.

Besides the differing versions of history that the nationalists propagated, the leaders themselves tended to have different religious preferences. While the nationalists in the Slovak regions were either Catholic or Lutheran, the overwhelming majority of Czech leaders were Protestant. These differing religious affiliations also contributed to the advocacy of contrasting versions of the nation.

In the Czech lands, the Protestants formed the base of the nationalist movement, although the majority of the population was Catholic. From the time of Jan Hus,<sup>6</sup> the Protestant leaders

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<sup>6</sup> Jan Hus was the Czech leader who inspired the Hussite Movement in Bohemia. Hussitism was an offshoot of Protestantism and “it provoked the wrath of the pope, who summoned Catholic rulers to crusades against it” (Seton-Watson, 1977: 150).

have struggled against the “powers that be.” The Protestant leaders in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries viewed the Catholic Church as an obstruction to progress because it owned one-third to one-half of the property within Bohemia, and the Protestants advocated a redistribution of the means of production (Bradley, 1984: 32). Furthermore, within the Austrian Empire, the Habsburgs saw it as their obligation to convert the Czech Protestants to the Catholic religion. From the Protestant viewpoint, the Catholic Church was tied to the out-dated regime; the Protestant nationalists believed they had to struggle to promote their nation, their beliefs, and their religion against it (Bradley, 1984).

The Catholic Church played a minimal, if any, role in the development of the Czech nationalist movement. Because Vienna controlled the appointment of Catholic bishops, mostly German bishops served in the Czech regions (Bradley, 1984). Thus, the Catholic leaders in the Czech areas were often German and unwilling to support any Czech nationalist cause. Some Catholic leaders, however, tried to develop a nationalist movement “parallel” to the mainstream Protestant one, but this did not attain much support because many Czechs believed that they had to “keep priests out of politics” (Bradley, 1984: 76). Nationalism, as it developed among the Czechs, was distinctively Protestant and non-Catholic.

In Slovakia, however, nationalist leaders arose from both the Protestant and the Catholic sectors. Catholics amounted to eighty percent of the Slovak population (Anderle, 1979: 90), and many nationalist leaders were actually priests, such as Andrej Hlinka and Jozef Tiso. Carol Skalník Leff explains why the Catholic leaders were such central figures in the nationalist movement: “Because there were fewer educated Slovaks, and because the path to education often led through conversion to Hungarian language and values, the priest was often the most educated and nationally conscious person in the village -- a teacher and spokesman as well as a priest” (1997, 8). Unlike the case in the Czech regions, the Catholic Church was deeply involved in the Slovak nationalist movement; Catholic priests played a prominent role in shaping and defining Slovak nationalism.

Although the Lutheran community was only twenty percent of the entire Slovak population (Anderle, 1979: 90), nationalists did originate from within its ranks. According to Seton-Watson, the Lutheran community tended to place a greater value on education (as

compared to the Catholics), and therefore they tended to be more nationally conscious (1977). Furthermore, the Lutherans also developed ties to the Czech Protestants and emulated their fight for national rights. The Slovak Lutheran community, although outnumbered by far, still made a valuable contribution to the nationalist movement within the Slovak lands.

These differences in religious affiliation among the Slovak nationalist leaders resulted in the temporary adoption of different written and spoken languages during the crucial time when intellectuals were envisioning their nations, and therefore contributed to the spread of contrary versions of the nation within Slovakia. The Slovak Catholic community refused to accept the Czech language as its own, and instead converted the West Slovak dialect into its own “cultural Slovak” (Bodnár, 1994: 26). The Slovak Protestants, however, had no reservations in adopting Czech as their own literary language (Bodnár, 1994).<sup>7</sup> Thus, the Catholics wrote in the literary language named *berňolákovčina* (derived from the West Slovak dialect) while the Protestants wrote in the *bibličtina* language, one derived from the Czech *Kralická Bible* (Pichler, 1994). The bonds of religion encouraged two different spoken and literary languages to evolve and gain acceptance between and even within the Czech and Slovak communities.

In the 1840s, however, the Slovak Protestants were “persuaded” by the Hungarians to merge languages and nationalist ideas with the Slovak Catholics. A more direct threat to the Slovak Protestants (writing and speaking Czech), as opposed to the Catholics, came in an attempt to “Calvinize” them by requiring all Lutheran services in the Hungarian kingdom to be conducted in the Hungarian language; “The onslaught of linguistic Magyarization threatened the culture whose roots had originally been in church life” (Pichler, 1994: 39). According to Pichler, the Lutheran Slovaks pushed for a more acceptable Slovak dialect, and the “confessionally neutral” Central Slovak dialect was finally made the “official” Slovak literary language (1994, 39). As a result, the Lutheran and Catholic nationalist leaders began to fight together for a nationalist cause, and the Lutherans now distanced themselves from the Czech Protestant leaders due to the use of different languages.

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<sup>7</sup> In the Czech regions, Josef Dobrovský, a Catholic priest, developed the first written system of Czech grammar in the late 1700s (Seton-Watson, 1977: 151). The Protestant nationalists used this grammar to unify the Czech nation.



In fact, Ludovít Štúr, a man who has been called the “founder of Slovak folk-oriented, folk-emancipating, democratic nationalism,” was a Lutheran (Pichler, 1994: 40; Seton-Watson, 1977). He declared that he had the “need” to write in Slovak because “language, conceived as a means not only of communication for a given language community, but of the expression of a *unique Slovak national character*, substantiated the right of the Slovak ethnic community to constitute itself as a separate nation” (Pichler, 1994: 40). Primarily, Štúr believed that it was necessary to write in Slovak because a unique language was the only way to express the unique characteristics of the Slovaks as a people, unique and different from the Czechs and Hungarians alike. The Slovak Catholic nationalist leaders had separated themselves from the Czech nationalist movement when they adopted a different language, and as the example of Štúr indicates, the Lutheran Slovaks were joining this Catholic cause.

Essentially, language was the means by which intellectual leaders spread their versions of the nation and its history to the people. When the Slovak Catholics adopted a different written and spoken language from the Czechs and the Slovak Lutherans, different conceptions of the nation were bound to be spread. Although the Catholics and Lutherans merged languages in the 1840s, they had only just begun to merge nationalist ideas. However, if language was the glue of the nation, then the Czechs and the Slovaks were only loosely connected.

Other than history, religion, and language, the different surroundings of the Czech and Slovak leaders had a great influence on the way the nation was imagined. Basically, the Czech and Slovak leaders faced diverse social and political situations when they were in the process of imagining the nation. Slovaks had to deal with the policies of Magyarization while the Czechs had more freedom, comparatively. Whereas the Slovaks were surrounded and suffocated by the Hungarians, the Czechs had to deal only with their German neighbors, and both were subject to Austrian rule. Due to these differences, the Czechs viewed the nation as growing and developing, while the majority of Slovaks viewed their nation as something that needed to be shielded and protected.

Under Austrian rule, the Czechs were allowed to grow, administratively and socially. “At the end of the 1840s almost the whole population of school age children in Czech-speaking districts went to school. [Soon] the cities became Czech, and after a time-lag city government

too passed into Czech hands” (Seton-Watson, 1977: 154). Besides this growth, the Czech language flourished with the development of museums and specific Czech literature. Publishing books in the Czech language became a very lucrative business (Bradley, 1984). Czech nationalism was developing rather easily, with few objections or obstacles from the Austrians. In fact, according to John F. N. Bradley, “Thus, Czech language demands, for example, had been satisfied in the early days of the [national] revolution. This was the basic nationalist objective and they simply ran out of ideas” (1984, 13). The only obstacle which stood in the way of completing the process of Czech nationhood was political: the need to govern its own people.

The situation in the Slovak lands was completely different from the situation in the Czech regions. Slovak leaders had to face harsher official (Hungarian) opposition to their nationalist agenda.

The reforms of Maria Theresa in 1777 and Joseph II in 1781 and especially the language laws passed by the Hungarian Diet in 1844 altered the balance between Magyars and Slovaks that the medieval order had been able to maintain. The reforms had slowly brought about the national awakening of both the Slovaks and the Magyars. The latter realized that the new [Slovak] consciousness... had the potential of becoming a threat to their survival. (Kirschbaum, 1995: 114)

Thus, the rise of nationalism threatened the existence of the Hungarian ruling class. The Hungarians realized this and proceeded with an attempt at official nationalism: Magyarization. The Slovak language and literature were outlawed because the Hungarians wanted to obtain the legitimacy of a nation-state by converting the other cultures into Hungarian. Clearly, the Slovak nationalist cause did not have the freedom that the Czech cause enjoyed; Slovaks were placed in the position of having to defend or protect their presumed nationhood.

Due to this onslaught of Magyarization, the Slovak peoples were limited socially and politically. As Ján Bodnár shows in “Philosophy and National Identity in Slovakia” (1994), Slovak literary works were entitled “apologies” and could only be published overseas, outside the Empire. All administrative work and education were conducted in the Hungarian language, further suppressing Slovak nationalism. Basically, the Czechs were more productive members of the Austrian Empire (as will be seen in the study of the economic systems in the next chapter) and therefore had to be placated, while the Slovak demands could be suppressed without too much difficulty. Essentially, the Slovaks were not encouraged to grow, socially or politically,

and therefore the intellectuals were placed in the position of defending a unique culture, one that had to resist change.

Thus, the idea of a unique “Slovakian nation”, originally developed around the two centers of intellectual thought found in the Catholic Church and the Slovak nobility, but was later adopted by some Lutheran Slovak nationalists, as demonstrated by Štúr’s writings. The Western ideas of democratization and liberalism boded well with neither the Slovak clergy nor the nobility, because the ideas were antithetical to their power. The Slovak nobility advocated national consciousness because it wanted to secure its old privileges against modernization and the Hungarians (Pichler, 1994). The Catholic Church, like the nobility, also feared modernization and industrialization because an increase in these processes would lower the Church’s support, which was centered in the peasantry (Wallace, 1976). (Western modernism and liberalism focused on the separation of church and state, ideas advocated by the Enlightenment.) Instead, the conception of the nation in Slovakia often embraced hierarchy and Catholic values; the promotion of Catholic schools and the elimination of civil marriages, were intertwined with the nationalist agenda (Kirschbaum, 1995). In opposition to the Magyars and the “modern” Czechs, the Slovak Catholic nationalists argued that their culture was unique and had the right to be protected, and in the 1840s it appeared that the Protestants had joined the once purely Catholic cause. It seemed that the notion of a single Slovak nation began to “win out” in Slovakia and these Slovak national ideas were later embodied in Hlinka’s Slovak People’s Party.

The landmark year of 1848 exemplified the differences between the Czech and the Slovak nationalists within the regime. During the “Spring of Nations” (Walters, 1988: 46), a series of revolts occurred in the Austrian lands, one of which was an attempted Hungarian Revolution. In opposition to the Hungarians and their nationalist cries, the Slovak leaders supported the Austrian Empire. Furthermore, the Slovak nationalists published and released their first national program: *The Demands of the Slovak Nation* (Pichler, 1994). Czech leaders, on the other hand, positioned themselves against the Austrian rule and sent the Habsburgs lists of demands to further their national development. The Czechs wanted more freedom from the Austrians, while the Slovaks wanted the freedom that the Austrians could grant them, freedom from

Magyarization. Nonetheless, the nations involved in this Spring, allies and opponents alike, all walked away feeling dissatisfied and dejected.

The Czech regions, however, were not as free as one may think. The Czech intelligentsia did face some opposition to their nationalist agenda, but this opposition came from the Germans living with them, not the Austrians ruling them. This was why the idea of a common Slavic nation gained more momentum in the Czech regions than in the Slovak lands.

The Czechs were surrounded by the far more numerous German nation. They badly needed a powerful friend, and the assurance that they were part of a great and irresistible force. This friend and this force most of their leaders thought that they had found in the notion of united Slavdom, led by the mighty Russian Empire. (Seton-Watson, 1977: 152)

Thus, in order to justify their separateness from the mighty German nation, many Czechs imagined a powerful nation of numerous Slavs, each contributing to the greater culture. Also, during the Napoleonic Wars, the peoples of Bohemia and Moravia could hear the similarities between their language and that of the Russian Soldiers, and therefore they felt some sort of kinship (Bradley, 1984). In fact, the idea gained so much credibility that the Czechs organized a “Slavonic Congress in Prague” for every year from 1820 through 1830, and at this meeting the different Slavic intellectuals would meet and exchange ideas (Bradley, 1984). Even a political party arose, led by Karel Kramář, which advocated a union of Slavs under Russia (Seton-Watson, 1977). Essentially, the notion of a Slavic nation attained greater credence in the Czech areas, while some Slovak nationalists viewed this notion of “natio Slavica” as merely a “transitional state to the development of a general Slovak consciousness” (Pichler, 1994: 39).

A second Czech conception of the nation to form in the pre-1918 period was the view that Czechs and Slovaks were close relatives; they were side by side components of one nation. This is the view that was supported by T.G. Masaryk, the intellectual leader and son of “mixed” parents, Slovak and Czech (Bradley, 1971). For similar reasons to those mentioned earlier, this idea also gained greater acceptance among the Czech public than among the Slovak masses, but it also achieved the endorsement of many Lutheran Slovaks and Slovaks with more liberal ideas.

Due to the temporary Protestant Slovak adoption of the Czech literary language, the Czechoslovak ideas gained recognition in the Slovak regions. Ján Kollár, a Lutheran Slovak and leading advocate of the dual Czech-Slovak nation, made the connection between language,

cultural, and national unity. Kollár believed that keeping the old idea of the Slavic nation alive was the best way to escape Magyarization, even though it meant the sacrificing of individual Slovak identity. He maintained that the Slovaks were only a “part” of the Slavic “whole”, a “whole” that would be completed through a “united” culture of both Czechs and Slovaks (Bodnár, 1994: 27).

Although supporters of the Czechoslovak nationalist ideal in Slovakia became less in number as the Slovak nationalists were growing due to the (Calvinist) Magyarization efforts, there still remained some Slovaks who supported the idea of the Czechoslovak nation due to the draw of the more liberal and more Western flow of thought that was finding listeners in Prague. Many of the Slovak intelligentsia studied in Bohemia, and they were attracted to these more modern ideas of democracy and capitalism (Bodnár, 1994). One strain of Czechoslovak supporters appeared in Slovakia in the form of the “Hlasists”. The Hlasists believed in national revival, but they did not believe in the romantic traditionalist ideas that the Slovak nationalists were propagating. Instead, they professed in their newspaper, *Hlas*, the idea that “Slovakia needed economic, social, and educational development: it could be helped, not by a backward half-feudal and conservative East, but by alliance with the prosperous Czech countries” (Bodnár, 1994: 32). The advocates of the dual nation concentrated on the formation of the nation around more Western and liberal ideas (flowing from Prague), while the advocates of the separate Slovak nation focused more on the protection (from the Hungarians and the influence of the West) of their traditional culture and ideas.

Thus, many Slovaks believed that the Czechs were anti-religious and anti-Catholic due to their “modern” views, while many Czechs and even Hlasists labeled the Slovaks as backward and traditionalist because they wanted to protect their culture. The majority of Slovaks believed their culture was distinct (from the Hungarians and the Czechs) due to their Catholic values and language, while the Czechs merely believed that the Slovaks were simply less advanced. After all, the Czechs mainly envisioned a Czechoslovak culture, and not a separate Czech one (Leff, 1997).

Basically, because of the different histories, religions, languages and surroundings, three different versions of the nation emerged from the Czech and Slovak lands. These promoted

notions of the nation included: an umbrella Slavic nation, a union of Czechs and Slovaks, and a unique Slovak nation. These three versions, although in both lands, had various degrees of support in the regions. Most Czechs preferred the idea of a large Slavic or Czecho-Slovak nation in order to counterbalance the influence of the Germans. Many Slovaks, however, strongly supported the notion of a unique Slovak culture due to their suppression by the Hungarians and the Catholic beliefs present in the majority. Although the three notions were present in the early twentieth century, only one could emerge as the victor after World War I.

### *Masaryk's Victory*

The circumstances surrounding World War I and its conclusion led to the adoption of Masaryk's *Czechoslovak* conception of the nation as the foundation for the new *nation-state* in East and Central Europe. This section will explore why this conception of the nation as dual Czech-Slovak received validation at this time. An argument will be made that many Czechs felt that they had to protect their disadvantaged Slovak relatives. The majority of Slovaks, on the other hand, had no audience in the international arena in which to express their opinions. They simply chose the least harmful of the available options. Most Czechs believed the new state was the realization of their nationalist aspirations, while Slovaks tended to view it as merely a *step* towards their ultimate goal of self-determination.

At the beginning of World War I, neither the Czechs nor the Slovaks entertained ideas of independence. Their nationalist objectives were to merely attain greater autonomy within the Habsburg and Hungarian administrations, respectively. As the war progressed, however, the objectives of the nationalist movements began to change. The creation of Czechoslovak fighting forces on the Allied side, the convictions of treason at home, and the political movements of Czech and Slovak immigrants in the United States and other countries contributed to the emergence of an overwhelmingly Czech movement, with Masaryk at the helm, dedicated to the liberation of the Czechs and the Slovaks into a new nation-state status. Masaryk's one conception of the nation, a *Czechoslovak* nation, received recognition and was awarded nation-state status in 1918 through the creation of Czechoslovakia.

The alliance of Austria-Hungary and Germany against France, Great Britain, and

especially Russia at the start of World War I posed problems for the Czech and the Slovak peoples. “Because the war was fought against the Slavs, and because of nationalist tensions, the Czechs and Slovaks began to be suspected by their fellow German citizens, politicians and soldiers, of all sorts of crimes” (Bradley, 1971: 141). Basically, the Central Powers did not trust their Czech and Slovak allies due to their ties with Russia, Serbia, and the other Slavic nations. The Czechs and Slovaks did not want to be fighting their Slavic friends, and the Czechs did not want to be forced into an alliance with the Germans, against whom they had been previously battling for their nationalist rights at home. Czechs and Slovaks were enemies on the home front. Although many Czechs and Slovaks did fight for the Habsburgs, some deserted to join the Allied forces and others abandoned the Austro-Hungarian forces as the war progressed. The fighting Czechoslovak Legion was established in Russia<sup>8</sup> and Company Nazdar developed from Czech and Slovak volunteers in France (Mamatey, 1979). These soldiers demonstrated their allegiance to their Russian comrades and against their German dictators. Besides fighting on the Allied side, “From the spring of 1915 onwards, Czech and Slovak soldiers on the eastern front, and later in Italy, began to desert in increasing numbers” (Wallace, 1976: 107). Clearly, many of the Czechs and the Slovaks did not want to fight for a side towards whom they felt no particular loyalty.

By creating Czechoslovak legions in the Allied Forces and by deserting their positions in the Austro-Hungarian armies, the Czechs and the Slovaks demonstrated that they should not be punished at the end of the war, even though they were technically joined to the Germans. Furthermore, the Czechs and Slovaks formed *unified* fighting forces against their former rulers. This lent credence to the claim that they were unified in common nationhood, and should be unified in common statehood at the close of the war.

Also on the home front, Czech leaders continued to preach for Czechoslovak independence. Due to the suspiciousness of the Germans, these claims were driven underground. A secret committee known as the *Czech Mafia* developed in the Czech lands to continue pressing for nationalist claims (Mamatey, 1979). In the Slovak regions, however, no such

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<sup>8</sup> This Russian legion proved to be a productive political playing card for Masaryk after the Bolsheviks gained power.

organization or group developed; “the police were more active in Slovakia than in the Czech lands” (Wallace 1976, 103). Although the Czech nationalist ideas were repressed, they endured; the Slovak nationalists faced tougher suppression, once again.

In addition to “keeping the home fires burning,” many Czech leaders such as Masaryk and Beneš responded to the fear of arrest for treason by taking their nationalist claims overseas. As Masaryk saw it,

Czechs and Slovaks should not wait for others to ‘do it for them,’ but must try to seize their destiny with their own hands. He believed that they themselves must take the initiative toward their liberation and employ all means at their disposal, political and military, to achieve it. They should not depend on Russian liberation alone but should also try to enlist the support of the Western Allies. (Mamatey, 1979: 80)

Many members of the Czech intelligentsia, Masaryk in particular, saw it as their duty to rally support for their independence from the Allies, especially from the Americans, the British, and the French. They were not content in sitting back and letting fate guide them.

On the Slovak front however, the nationalists tended to rely on a Russian rescue (Wallace, 1976). In fact, according to Wallace, “No important Slovak politician had come to the West... [Consequently] in the circumstances of 1916, with Russia on the defensive, all the spirit had gone out of the Slovak national movement” (1976, 107). Russia was not going to advocate the Slovak nationalist cause. The Slovaks were neither able to fight for their national cause at home, nor did they seem willing to travel abroad. Who would advance any claims for the self-determination of the Slovak nation?

Due to the efforts of Czech politicians such as T.G. Masaryk and Eduard Beneš overseas, the discourse was overwhelmingly framed in terms of the liberation of the entire *Czechoslovak* nation. Their conception of the nation was the main view that was advocated. The idea that the Slovaks possessed a special national identity went unheard. In fact, the one Slovak politician who made pleas abroad, Milan Štefánik, was an ally of Masaryk and a supporter of the idea of the Czechoslovak nation. The Czechs assumed that “it was up to those Czechs who were in the West to stake out a future for the Slovaks” (Wallace, 1976: 107), and this was envisioned as a shared future, one merging destinies with the Czechs.

In competition with Masaryk and Beneš promoting their idea of the Czechoslovak nation



in the West, another Czech leader promoted a different version of the nation in the Russian lands. Josef Dürich, leader of the Czech Agrarian Party, went to Russia to promote the conception of a greater Slavic nation, one with Czechs falling under the wings of the Russians. Dürich's movement differed in that it consisted of "pro-Russian, conservative, anti-democratic, anti-Western exiles to challenge Masaryk's leadership; [the movement] set up a rivaling national council in Petrograd" (Mamatey, 1979: 85). With the Russian Revolution in 1917, however, Dürich's Petrograd National Council dissolved, as did the only promoted alternative conception of the nation (Mamatey, 1979). The Slovak conception went unspoken and the Greater Slavic conception was soon silenced.

Although the continuation of the movement at home and the appearance of Czechoslovak nationalists abroad were both important to the Czechoslovak independence movement, another vital contribution came from many Czech and Slovak immigrants living within the United States. In fact, the first cries of freedom came from within this American Czech community. Jan Janák, publisher and journalist for the Czech paper *Osvěta*, wrote in an article as early as August 12, 1914, "It is up to us living outside Austria to take the first step and send the Russian, English, and French governments petitions or our personal representatives to press for Czech independence.... Long live the United States of Bohemia, Moravia, Silesia, and Slovakia!" (Mamatey, 1979: 82). Like Masaryk and Beneš, not only did most Czech immigrants work for the independence of those at home, they also believed they had the right, duty, and obligation to speak for the Slovaks. In fact, in September, 1914, the Bohemian National Alliance of America formed in Chicago for the express purpose of promoting *Czechoslovak* independence (Mamatey, 1979: 82). Not only did most Czech leaders support a common Czechoslovak national independence, the immigrant communities did also.<sup>9</sup>

The Slovak immigrant communities and the Slovaks at home, however, tended to be rather weary of aligning their fate with that of the Czechs. "They all agreed that Slovakia should become autonomous, but only a small group was convinced from the start that it should end up

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<sup>9</sup> It is interesting to note that although they made claims for a single *Czechoslovak* nation, even the Czech and Slovak immigrant communities developed apart. Czechs belonged to Czech organizations and Slovaks belonged to Slovak groups. If there was this overwhelming tradition of a singular nation with simply two branches, then why did these branches stay separate in the U.S. for so long?

within some kind of Czechoslovak state” (Wallace, 1976: 108). As mentioned previously, the Slovaks believed that the Czechs were unsupportive and even antagonistic towards their Catholic values.

[They] were openly suspicious that the leading Czechs associated with Masaryk, and Masaryk himself..., were clearly hostile to the Catholic Church. Czech agnosticism, Masaryk’s ‘Realism,’ and Czech free-masonry, they feared, would always be the dominant elements of Czech political life. Because of this, Czechs could easily encumber and seriously endanger the Catholicity (sic) of the out-numbered Slovaks. (Oddo, 1960: 167-168)

Slovaks, at home and abroad, were looking for their best option, and this did not automatically appear to be an alliance with the Czechs.

Nonetheless, in October 1915, the Slovak League signed the Chicago Pact with the Bohemian National Alliance that called for “independence” and the “union of the Czech and Slovak peoples in a *federal* union of states with *full national autonomy* for Slovakia” (Mamatey, 1979: 83). These Slovak communities aligned themselves with the Czech immigrants, but only with the guarantee that Slovakia would have autonomy. It seemed to be the best option that they had, given their lack of choices (Wallace, 1976). While they felt that dreams of independence were futile (due to their lack of a legacy of self-rule), the immigrants were determined to prevent their comrades in Slovakia from being dominated again. To protect their relatives from the Hungarians, the Slovak immigrants joined the Czech movement; to protect the Slovaks from the Czechs, the immigrants required a promise of autonomy.

Even though the Czechs promised the Slovaks autonomy, they did not broach the subject to the Allied leaders. The majority of Czech nationalists, at home and abroad, argued in terms of the unified nation of Czechoslovaks; they sold the international community the idea of Czechoslovak nationality. In 1917 the French government included Czechoslovak liberation as a specific Allied goal, and Wilson agreed to the liberation of this suppressed, *singular* nation in January of 1918 (Mamatey, 1979).<sup>10</sup> The Allies accepted Masaryk’s notion of one common Czechoslovak nation, and propagated the program that one state should be created for and ruled

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<sup>10</sup> It is interesting to note that at first Wilson only wanted more autonomy for the Czechs and Slovaks, and this was the point ten of his fourteen.

by that one nation.

Switching tactics, Masaryk and his allies guaranteed Slovak autonomy when they negotiated with the Slovak immigrants. On May 30, 1918, the Pittsburgh Agreement was signed between the Czech and the Slovak immigrant organizations in the U.S. (Mamatey, 1979).<sup>11</sup> Although President Wilson was present at the signing, the ideas introduced in this agreement were different than those that Wilson had promoted. This agreement, like the Chicago Pact, promised a federal structure. The Slovak immigrants strove to protect the *separate* Slovak nation by obtaining this commitment to a federal structure (Mamatey, 1979).

This posed the major problem to be resolved by the new government: *If the Czechoslovaks were one nation as the international community believed, then why would they need a federal structure of government? In other words, what exactly did Czechoslovak mean? Was it an alliance of two nations, or was it one nation as the Allied Powers assumed?* These questions waited to be resolved during the formative years of this newborn Czechoslovak state.

### ***Creating a 'Nation-State'***

Over the course of the First Republic (1918-1938), the Czechs would establish the state of Czechoslovakia without confirming a separate nation of Slovaks; they believed that granting the Slovaks any measure of autonomy would result in a tumble down the “slippery slope of disintegration” due to the ethnic heterogeneity of the new country (Leff, 1997: 39). Instead, they ruled the country by the mandate of Czechoslovak nationhood, and through the organs of a centralized government and democratic processes. Czechs controlled the government on the basis of their population, but they justified their policies by saying that they were the will of the voters, and that they were beneficial to the entire nation, Czechs and Slovaks alike. In general, they believed that their policies would ultimately benefit the entire state by helping the Slovaks to “catch up” to the more advanced Czechs. The official Czechoslovak nationalism, however, had the opposite effect: it alienated the Slovaks even further. Many Slovaks, Catholics in particular, concluded that their specific nationalist agenda was being ignored since it was not

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<sup>11</sup> Ironically, Masaryk signed this agreement.

“Czechoslovak.”

Czechoslovakia, officially recognized by insiders and outsiders alike, came into existence on October 28, 1918, with a statement by the Prague National Committee (formerly the *Czech Mafia*) that the “independent Czechoslovak state has come into being” (Mamatey, 1979: 88-89). Some Slovak politicians, indicating their late arrival to the scene, pledged their support for a Czech and Slovak alliance two days later with the Declaration of Turčianský Sv. Martin; they did not know that their *independence* had already been accomplished for them. Once again, the Czechs were taking the lead and looking out for their “kin.”

The new Republic consisted of the territories of Bohemia, Moravia, Silesia, Slovakia, and Ruthenia.<sup>12</sup> It was inhabited by a diverse population of Czechs, Slovaks, Germans, Hungarians, Poles, and Ruthenians (Ukrainians).<sup>13</sup> According to a 1921 census, the Czechs amounted to approximately six million of the inhabitants; Slovaks numbered a little under three million; Germans counted 3.1 million; Hungarians tallied 750,000; Ruthenians (Ukrainians) registered 500,000; and the Poles were 76,000 in number (Anderle 1979, 93). The total population of the “Czechoslovak” nation comprised only about 65.5% of the population of the entire state (Anderle 1979, 93). This First Republic, as it came to be known, would face major challenges over its lifespan, most of them due to the diverse nature of its inhabitants.

In order to stabilize the new state, Czech political leaders embarked on a policy which ultimately had two goals. First of all, to establish a state where one had not previously existed, they had to secure the territory and establish a system of government. Secondly, this state had to justify its “nation-state” status by representing and serving the needs of its people, the nation specified by its name; clarification of what it meant to be Czechoslovak and what Czechoslovak goals were had to be established. Conflict would result from trying to simultaneously satisfy

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<sup>12</sup> The exact boundaries would be established through treaties over the first few years of Czechoslovakia’s existence. Although claims of self-determination were the basis of this state, the German and Hungarian irrendenta could not benefit from the same claims. After all, how could Germany lose the war and yet gain territory?

<sup>13</sup> Ruthenians were promised an autonomous self-government through treaties. Later the territory was given to the Soviet Union after World War II, but during the interwar period, the Soviet Union was so unstable that Ruthenia voluntarily joined Czechoslovakia on the basis of guaranteed autonomy. Slovakia had no such guarantee, except in the Pittsburgh Agreement which was ignored.

these two needs.

The uncertainty surrounding the shape of the new Czechoslovak government became apparent within the first few weeks of its existence. After the Prague National Committee declared independence on October 28, it developed a provisional constitution and elected Masaryk as president (Mamatey, 1979). Parallel to this, Slovak leaders were making their own strides towards self-governance. On November 4, a provisional government was established in Turčianský Sv. Martin, with Vavro Srobár as the President (Wallace, 1976: 140). The Slovak leaders who established this government were not separatists; in fact, Srobár was an advocate of Czechoslovak unity for over twenty years (Wallace, 1976: 140). The Slovaks who created the provisional government simply believed that they needed to secure their own autonomy and help forge the new Czechoslovakia: a state established in the name of *both* Czechs and Slovaks.

However, this provisional government was short-lived, and the dissolution of it signaled to Prague that it had practically absolute freedom in creating the structure of Czechoslovakia. The Slovak government dissolved within ten days due to the overwhelming presence of the Hungarians still within the borders of the Slovak regions. The Slovaks could not control the Hungarians by themselves and had to ask Prague for military assistance in securing their territorial integrity (Wallace, 1976). This indicated to both the Czech and the Slovak leaders the relative helplessness of the Slovaks. They could not defeat the remaining Hungarians; the Czechs had to come and do it for them.<sup>14</sup>

Once again, many Czech politicians believed that they had to save the future of the Slovaks. In general, since the Czechs were better experienced in politics and more educated, it seemed only right that the Czechs would retain their positions of leadership concerning the Czechoslovak cause. “The obvious political and cultural superiority of the Czechs at this stage... encouraged Czech politicians to assert excessive claims to the leadership of the whole Czechoslovak state” (Wallace, 1976: 141). The Czechs would protect and govern in the interests of the entire nation since the Slovaks proved they were unable.

On November 13, 1918, the Prague National Committee held a meeting to adopt a

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<sup>14</sup> This pattern would be repeated with the invasion of Slovakia by the Hungarian Communist, Béla Kun in 1919 (Bradley 1971, 148).

constitution. At this meeting to determine the governmental structure of Czechoslovakia, the Czechs claimed that the Slovak ideas were taken into consideration. The Czech delegates were chosen on the basis of the parliamentary elections which were held in the Czech lands in 1911 (Anderle, 1979: 89-90). Because the Slovaks did not have similar political power in the Hungarian administration, their 40 delegates amid the assembly of 254 were hand-picked by the Czech leaders, and these supposedly “representative” Slovaks were overwhelmingly Protestant *and* former Hlasists (Kirschbaum, 1995). “Out of these forty deputies, the Catholics number ten and the Protestants thirty, although Slovakia is made up of eighty percent Catholics and only twenty percent Protestants” (Mikus, 1963: 12). Basically, this “representative” assembly was representative of the Czech ideas, and those Slovaks who agreed with the Czech ideas; the Catholics were already neglected. It confirmed the Catholic Slovaks’ fear of the Czech anti-Catholic bias.

The best course of action for the new government, as determined by this mostly Czech assembly, was to develop a unitary parliamentary democracy. A unitary system would display their unity as a nation to the international community that had fought for the establishment of this new *nation-state*. Furthermore, if they had given autonomy to the Slovaks in a federal system, what would justify not giving it to the equally numerous Germans (Leff, 1997)? The committee members concluded that a federal system would only provoke more problems. Equal access to all the people through a parliamentary system was the most viable solution, since decentralization would only result in disintegration. Thus, the efforts of the Czech and Slovak immigrants to guarantee autonomy for the Slovaks were discarded in favor of stabilizing the state.

Like the assembly which decided the structure of the state, mainly the Slovaks who were Hlasists, or considered themselves Czechoslovaks, democratically obtained positions of power in the new government of Czechoslovakia. Due to the proportional representation system and the number of different ethnic groups, there was an explosion of parties within the country:

There were parties that represented the Catholics and virtually all shades of political ideology - except for the defaced monarchism - from the Communists on the extreme left to the Nazis and the Fascists on the extreme right. Many of these political trends split along national lines. Thus there was originally not only a Czech Agrarian Party, but also Slovak, German, Hungarian and Ruthenian Agrarian Parties. (Anderle, 1979: 100-101)

Parties were formed on the basis of ideology and nationality.<sup>15</sup> Besides the growth of ethnic parties, Czechoslovak parties were also created along the lines of ideology. Czechs and Slovaks alike were encouraged to join these parties on the basis of ideology and shared nationality; the parties professed to represent the common Czechoslovak interests.

Because the Czechs could clearly outvote the minorities, these Czechoslovak parties were frequently the only parties involved in the formation of the governing coalitions. Slovak parties were specifically ignored in the democratic process.<sup>16</sup> However, as Table 1 indicates, Slovaks were more likely to vote for the specifically Slovak parties, even though they rarely joined the coalitions. They would rather “throw away their vote” and register their disapproval of the Czechoslovak governing system. However, 32.4 and 34.5 percent of the population in the Slovak lands did vote for specifically Czechoslovak parties in 1925 and 1935, and so there was some Slovak support for the regime. Nonetheless, the Slovak opposition to the new government remained as consistent as Czechoslovak support (Leff, 1988).

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<sup>15</sup> Ironically, the only party to evolve without any nationality ties was the communist party.

<sup>16</sup> Hlinka’s Party briefly joined the governing coalition in 1929. It soon left, however, because of the dramatic drop in its support due to the widespread perception that it was “selling out” to the Czechs (Leff, 1988).

Table 1: Electoral Strength of Governmental and Opposition Parties in Slovakia (Percentage of Total Vote)

	Election Year		
	1925	1929	1935
Government Parties	32.4	41.3*	34.5
Opposition Parties	67.6	58.7	65.5
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0

Source: Leff's *National Conflict in Czechoslovakia* (1988), p. 72.

\* Much of this rise in support can be attributed to the inclusion of the Slovak People's Party within the coalition for a brief span of time.

In order to create a broad base of support among Czechs and Slovaks for the new government, the Czechs established "Czechoslovakism." A nation of Czechoslovaks could rationalize having its own unitary, centralized state, because it would clearly outnumber the other ethnic groups. Without the notion of a Czechoslovak nation, Czechoslovakia was truly a multi-national state, with the majority ethnic group of Czechs consisting of only 44.8% of the population (Anderle, 1979: 93). Czechs also needed the union with the Slovaks in order to downplay the autonomy claims of the minority groups, especially the Germans. A unified front of Czechoslovaks had to be established.

In order to *reconstruct* or *create* the Czechoslovak nation, the Czech leaders professed that new programs would *merge* the Czech and Slovak branches. However, some readily apparent factors worked against the fusing of the two societies. First of all, the Czechs and Slovaks had completely different experiences in recent history; the Czechs experienced a relatively easy time under Austro-Hungarian rule, compared with the Slovaks fighting for cultural survival. How could they relate and empathize with one another? Furthermore, "orthographic and lexicographical differences between the two literary languages erected walls against the melding of the two tongues in a way that subsequent 'Czechoslovaks' would rue" (Leff, 1995: 124-125). The distinct Slovak literary language, which served the purpose of uniting Slovaks against Magyarization, now kept the Slovak culture apart from the Czech.



History and language were considerably large barriers that had to be overcome in the creation or extension of the official nationalism.

Soon, though, it was apparent that the process would not *merge* the cultures into a common Czechoslovak culture, but that the Slovaks were more or less supposed to become Czechs. According to Leff, Masaryk spoke of his policies to a French journalist in 1921:

There is no Slovak nation.... The Czechs and Slovaks are brothers. Only cultural level separates them - the Czechs are more developed than the Slovaks, for the Magyars held them in systematic unawareness. We are founding Slovak schools. We must await the results; in one generation there will be no difference between the two branches of our national family<sup>17</sup>. (1997, 26)

Basically, Masaryk saw the Slovaks as uneducated Czechs who merely needed to develop or “catch-up” to the Czechs. Slovaks simply had to learn how to become Czechoslovaks [Czechs] by dropping their backward, traditional ways.

First of all, through “Czechoslovakism,” the Czechs exported teachers to Slovakia to educate the Slovak children. The Slovaks found this education, however, to be biased against the Slovak culture. For example, the Czech teachers would downplay the accomplishments of their “hero” Štúr because he did not support the concept of Czechoslovak nationality. Also, the Czechs did not allow Catholicism to be taught in the new schools. Furthermore, while Czech history and accomplishments were taught in the Slovak regions, there were no similar Slovak programs in the Czech lands. As a result, “The next generation of Slovaks that emerged in the 1930s was more radical in nationalism than its elders... They tended to see the educational effort - and ‘Czechoslovakism’ itself - as carrying out a thinly disguised project of assimilation or Czech colonization” (Leff, 1997: 26).

Besides antagonizing the younger generation, many Slovaks resented the appearance of Czech administrators within Slovakia. Because of the limited experience that the Slovaks had in politics, the Czechs exported their experts to establish the bureaucracy in Slovakia. However, these Czech civil servants exuded an attitude of cultural superiority; “All were equally convinced of the importance of their mission as ‘bearers of culture and progress’ to the clerical and backward country” (Mikus, 1963: 29). Resentment flourished and stimulated the Slovak

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<sup>17</sup> Cited in T.G. Masaryk, *Spisy*, vol 2. Prague 1934, p.78.

opposition to the state.

All of these instances indicated to the Slovaks that the Czechs were biased against their Catholic values. The President of the temporary government located in Turčianský Sv. Martin, Srobár, who supported the idea of the Czechoslovak nation and later became a member of the new Prague government, recognized the anti-Catholic nature of the regime. “Although [Srobár] cautioned the Czechs about taking lightly the religiosity of the Slovaks, he also knew that the mood in Prague was anti-Catholic and that he risked the opposition of his Czech colleagues if he relied on Slovak Catholics” (Kirschbaum, 1995: 162). Appointing Catholic Slovaks to the government was discouraged. Nonetheless, Slovak demands increased and included: Catholic schools, the establishment of a Slovak ecclesiastical province under a Slovak bishop, and the elimination of civil marriages (Kirschbaum, 1995). The Catholic Slovaks wanted to see their Catholic values reflected in the structure of their state.

The proportional representation system provided the outlet for Slovak autonomy claims. Father Andrej Hlinka, the founder of the Slovak People’s Party, watched his party grow and increase its demands. “[Proportional representation] protected Slovak separatism and enabled Hlinka’s People’s Party to get a fair return from the votes cast for it, so that it *increased* its number of deputies in the chamber each election” (Wallace, 1976: 147). Slovak opposition to the regime increased as Czechoslovak identity was perceived by the Slovaks as fiction, or simply an excuse for Czech political and cultural hegemony. Many Slovaks had changed from defending their nation against Magyarization to defending against “Czechoslovakism.”

Although some Slovaks claimed that the programs of the state were biased against them, they ultimately benefited from them. Unlike their existence under Hungarian rule, they used the Slovak language in their administration and in their schools. Furthermore, comparing a census taken in 1921 to a census in 1930, Slovak illiteracy dropped from fourteen percent to six percent (Wallace, 1976: 173). They were allowed an equal vote in the state, along with the freedom to practice their religion. All in all, “The Slovaks advanced rapidly in national consciousness, education, and political organization, and were given an increasing share in the political and the economic life of the state” (Anderle, 1979: 102). Thus, some Slovaks were socially and politically advanced by the Czechoslovak state, but many still felt that the equal opportunity to

participate was not enough; they wanted recognition and equal status for their nation.

Essentially, the Prague National Committee established a unitary parliamentary government to address the needs of the entire population of the state while *coincidentally* Czech political leaders, capitalists in particular, were able to control the government because they held the majority proportion of the population. Since they did not grant autonomy to the Slovaks, the Czech politicians justified their rule on the basis of Czechoslovak nationality. The Czech political leaders believed that the democracy did what it was supposed to do: operate by majority rule. After all, the Slovaks had many opportunities through the electoral system to play a role in the government, as long as they accepted the premise of Czechoslovak rule. “Czechs and some Slovak leaders tended to see these [Slovak] complaints as gross ingratitude for Slovakia’s rescue from Hungary and for the Czech ‘subsidization’ of the weaker Slovak partner” (Leff, 1997: 26). In the opinion of many Czechs, the Slovaks should have forgotten their backward ways and have participated in the Czechoslovak state.

Many Slovaks, however, believed that they deserved their own right of self-determination. They believed that the Czech politicians’ claims of ruling in the best interests of the entire Czechoslovak nation were unfounded. They asserted that only Czech interests were promoted and justified as Czechoslovak; thus the policies hurt and even harmed the Slovak nation, which was not being recognized. “Czechoslovakism” was merely a more subtle Magyarization.

### ***A Mixed Blessing***

The period just prior to and during World War II confirmed the opinion in Slovakia that the Slovaks could and should have some degree of autonomy. Separated from the Czechs once again, Slovakia became a puppet state of Hitler. Even though they were not completely independent, the majority of Slovaks realized that they could survive and prosper without the Czechs. Once they received this confirmation of their nation through its statehood, they vowed never again to lose their autonomy. Many felt that there would be no turning back, even though they eventually did.

Many Czechs, however, had not relinquished their belief in the common Czechoslovak

nation. Beneš rallied support overseas, once again, to return Czechoslovakia to its pre-Munich status and shape. Although some of the Czechs viewed the Slovaks as deserters and traitors, Beneš still believed in his right to speak for them. He wanted the Czechoslovak nation restored, and because Slovakia's "independence" was tied to the outcome of the war, the German loss resulted in the Allied preference for the resurrection of the combined Czechoslovak state.

Late in the First Republic (1937-38) and during the Second Republic (post-Munich, pre-Protectorate), the Slovak autonomists saw their dreams of recognition come true through the maneuverings of the Sudeten German minority. The Sudeten Germans had a major playing card that the Slovaks lacked: the support of an outside leader in Hitler. In a desperate attempt to pacify Hitler's demands and maintain the cohesiveness of the state, Beneš granted more and more autonomy to both the Germans and the Slovaks. It was never enough though, and the Germans kept pushing for, and were encouraged by Hitler to keep pushing for, more.

The Sudeten Germans were finally granted their ultimate demand with the Munich Agreement in September 1938. At Munich, Germany annexed the Sudetenland and Hungary absorbed Southern Slovakia. The Slovaks viewed the Munich Agreement as a personal offense; the government failed them and so they strengthened their autonomy claims even more (Wallace, 1976). The Slovaks finally won their fight for autonomy with the creation of the Czech-Slovak federation in late 1938. "A new government and assembly were established, autonomous in everything except defense, foreign policy, and national financing" (Wallace, 1976: 217). So, the situation that the Czechs feared had come true in reverse order; the granting of independence to the German minority resulted in the federalization of the republic. This federal system, however, was barely tested before it was destroyed.

The Slovak demands, moreover, were not like the German demands in this one regard: they had a strong inclination to support the state and resist its further disintegration. The Slovaks still feared Hungary and its "revisionist" claims (Wallace, 1976). If Czechoslovakia were to fall completely apart, then the Slovaks would have no one like Hitler to protect them from being consumed by Hungary. So, although the Slovaks wanted more autonomy, their demands stopped there. They supported a federalized Czechoslovakia.

Nonetheless, Josef Tiso, the leader of the Slovak People's Party after Hlinka died, found

himself agreeing to and contributing to the disintegration of the state, a treasonous and unforgivable offense in the minds of many Czechs. The Slovaks claimed, however, that their leader had no choice. On March 13, 1939, Hitler summoned Tiso to Germany for a meeting. In the context of this meeting, Hitler gave Tiso an ultimatum: "Either Slovakia would declare its independence and become Germany's ally, or else it would refuse - an act which would be a reason for the Reich's leaving Hungary's hands free to reconquer the former territory of the crown of Saint Stephen" (Mikus, 1963: 76). This threat persuaded Tiso to declare Slovakia's independence on March 14, 1939. On March 15, Emil Hácha (the president of Czechoslovakia after Beneš went into exile), sent the troops into Slovakia and Hitler used the opportunity to invade the Czech Lands and rename them the Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia (Taborsky, 1979). The Czechs and Slovaks were separated once again and would be for the duration of the Second World War; the Czechs fell under total German control while the Slovaks attained technically an "independent" status.

Although Hitler had a strong influence in the new state, the Slovak leaders were still able to develop their own national programs. Led by Tiso, the state adopted many policies aimed at separating itself from Czech domination, satisfying the Catholic majority, and bolstering Slovak cultural awareness. One of the first accomplishments of the new government was the expulsion of Czechs from their administrative positions and the replacement of them with Slovaks (Kirschbaum, 1995). Besides eliminating the Czechs' physical presence, their ideas were also banished. "A nationalist political socialization process was given free reign in the mass media and in an educational system that was thoroughly and rapidly revamped to inculcate the glories of the Slovak language (purified of Czech 'barbarisms'), culture, and history" (Leff, 1988: 90). Slovak identity was propagated, revived, and embraced. Rapidly, they were exposing the *fiction* of Czechoslovak identity in the new Slovak state.

Outside the borders of Slovakia, however, Beneš was still fighting for the idea of common Czechoslovak identity and the reinstatement of it in a revived Czechoslovak state. Some factors worked against him though. For one thing, it was not immediately recognized that Beneš had a right to set up his Czechoslovak government in exile. After all, he resigned his position as president after Munich. What right did he have to speak for the people of the defunct state? In

late 1939, however, Beneš obtained recognition from the British Allies of his right to speak for the “Czechoslovak peoples;” this recognition, nonetheless, made no mention of the “Czechoslovak state” (Taborsky, 1979). Once again, Beneš won the right to speak on behalf of the Slovaks.

Another stumbling block to Beneš’ goal of recreating Czechoslovakia was the fact that the dismemberment of the state occurred in a time of peace. Beneš had even agreed to the Munich decision. Essentially, “besides Czechs, no one protested the establishment of independent Slovakia” (Oddo, 1960: 263). In fact, Slovakia was granted recognition, *de jure* or *de facto*, from 28 countries (Kirschbaum, 1995: 191). The state and nation of Slovakia were recognized as equals in the realm of international politics by many states, and to revive the Czechoslovak state meant both convincing the world leaders that they were wrong at Munich, *and* convincing the Slovaks to return to their minority status. Basically, it was an uphill battle for Beneš.

Finally, Beneš believed that he could drum up the same support among the immigrant communities that had once helped the idea of the Czechoslovak state become a reality during the First World War. However, the Slovak immigrants were not going to follow the Czech lead this time. After all, the negotiated Pittsburgh Agreement during World War I had no effect on the subsequent Czech-led policies. Furthermore, any support for the Allies and Beneš would indicate that they wanted to restore the pre-Munich Czechoslovakia and renounce Slovakia’s claims for independence (Oddo, 1960). Also, Beneš seemed unwilling to compromise the Czechoslovak state in any way in the postwar period. “Beneš in London steadfastly refused to commit himself to a specific blueprint, even at the price of increasing the distrust that existed between him and the Slovaks, both the Slovak politicians in exile and the Slovak population at home” (Leff, 1988: 88). All in all, Beneš offered no concessions and found little support from the Slovak immigrant communities.

Many Czechs in the Protectorate and overseas, nonetheless, resoundingly *supported* the legitimacy of Beneš’ London government, and they fought to restore the Pre-Munich state. Besides smuggling German plans to the Allies, some Czechs agreed to participate in Beneš’ plan to assassinate the supervisor of the Protectorate: Reinhardt Heydrich. Although the plan

succeeded and Heydrich was killed, the German repercussions for the assassination secured international support more than the murder itself. German retribution for Heydrich's death was the utter destruction of the Czech town of Lidice; all of the women, children, and men were either executed or sent to the death camps. This incident drew international attention and international sympathy for the Czechoslovak cause (Bradley, 1971).<sup>18</sup>

Though born in a time of peace, Slovakia's and Czechoslovakia's fate was to be determined by the outcome of the war. As the span of the war continued, some Slovaks realized more and more the limits to its "independent" status. German troops were stationed in Slovakia; Slovak troops took part in the USSR invasion; Slovak Jews were being sent to concentration camps; and German "advisors" were installed in the Slovak government (Taborsky, 1979). "Thus, as Slovak 'independence' was turning more and more into an empty shell and as the eventual defeat of Nazi Germany was coming ever closer, Slovak resistance against the Germans and Tiso's puppet regime began to increase" (Taborsky, 1979: 127). This resistance coalesced in the form of the Slovak National Council, a left-wing opposition consisting mainly of Hlasists and Communists.

In 1944, the Slovak National Council instigated an uprising in Slovakia which Beneš and the international community interpreted as anti-Nazi, anti-Tiso, and pro-Czechoslovakia.

However, Joseph A. Mikus describes the diverse goals of this insurrection:

The few Catholics who had participated in the insurrection desired to chase the Germans out, while preserving the Slovak State; the Protestants wished for the reestablishment of Czecho-Slovakia. As for the Communists, while pretending at times to be partisans of the Czecho-Slovak State, they desired the creation of a Slovak-Soviet Socialist Republic within the bounds of the USSR. (1963, 145)

Although this uprising was crushed, it was the only saving grace of the Slovaks; because of it, they did not have to pay war retributions. The Slovak Uprising indicated in the aftermath of the Second World War that the Slovaks were unwilling collaborators who wished to be reunited with the Czechs in common statehood.

The World War II period was significant to the growth of Slovak nationalism and to the exposure of the fiction of Czechoslovak nationalism. Slovaks, taking the best, or only,

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<sup>18</sup> This incident was also used to justify the expulsion of the Sudeten Germans after the war.

alternative, found themselves relatively free for a short period of time. The Czech politicians could depend on few, if any, loyal Czechoslovaks in Slovakia to help in the reconstruction of the state. This experience of “freedom,” although brief, left an impression not soon to be forgotten.

In summary, during the first twenty years of Czechoslovakia’s existence, the Czechs and the Slovaks battled over the structure of the state. While many Czechs believed that this democratic, unitary state reflected the needs of the people of the nation, many Slovaks argued that the state only propagated the Czech ideas; the Slovak right of self-determination had not yet been achieved. During World War II, however, many Slovaks felt that they had a taste of freedom. The Nazi Period, in effect, radicalized the Slovaks and eliminated any Czechoslovaks from within the state.



## ***Chapter 2: A State of Contrasting Economic Agendas***

In Czechoslovakia, the members of the country developed different economic beliefs parallel to their different versions of the nation. Due to the freedom that most Czechs experienced within the Austrian administration, they became educated and exposed to Western ideas advocating classical liberalism, such as those proposed by Adam Smith. Besides greater freedom, the Austrians also promoted industrialization in the Czech regions. As the Czechs experienced the economic growth that is associated with higher degrees of industrialization, they adopted capitalist views, themselves, and enacted their beliefs during the First Republic. Because of the negative effects of the unrestrained competition upon some Slovak enterprises in particular, however, many Slovaks equated economic liberalism with economic bias. As a result, included among the Slovak cries of self-determination was the right to institute their own national economic agenda.

### ***Differing Empires, Differing Economies***

Besides the various religions worshiped and the histories remembered by the Czechs and the Slovaks, industrial capacity also separated the Czech and Slovak regions prior to the creation of the common state. While the Czech lands were more modern or industrial, the Slovak areas were abundantly agricultural. This difference contributed to the paternalistic attitude of many Czechs towards the Slovaks, and it also resulted in their adherence to divergent economic ideologies. During different spans of Czechoslovakia's existence, capitalist and socialist policies were enacted, and seen as beneficial by either the majority of Czechs or the majority of Slovaks.

The growth of enterprises in the Czech regions both contributed to and resulted from the relative freedom that the Czechs experienced under Austrian rule. In essence, as the Czech lands developed industrially, the Austrians acknowledged this asset to their regime by placating Czech demands through granting greater exposure to the Western world; with greater exposure to the Western world, many Czechs became more adamant capitalists and thus advocated greater economic growth. Soon, "A class of small businessmen was formed, among whom brewers and millers were especially important. Textile, mining, and metallurgical industry developed steadily.... Industry created a large Czech working class" (Seton-Watson, 1977: 154). Thus, a

circular process involving the growth of the nation and the growth of the economic system evolved. Eventually, the process increased the demands for Czech autonomy due to the exposure to Western, nationalist ideas.

Though Slovakia was one of the most industrialized regions in the Hungarian half of the Dual Empire (Mikus, 1963), the area paled in comparison to the Czech lands. The Magyarization policies not only suppressed nationalist development; they also inhibited economic growth. As contended by Leff (1988), education and exposure to modern ideas meant the acceptance of Hungarian culture; only religious leaders were exposed to enlightened ideas without the necessary cultural conversion. Due to the determination to remain Slovak, the Slovak lands were slow to modernize and develop. “Although Slovakia’s natural resources were always abundant, after the Turkish occupation of Hungary they were never fully exploited. The population of Slovakia remained basically agricultural, and subsistence farming was the lot of the overwhelming majority of people” (Kirschbaum, 1995: 152). The protection of the Slovak way of life included a barrier against education and economic growth, the tools of Magyarization and modernization.

Although both the Czech and Slovak lands advanced industrially, the Slovaks progressed at a much slower rate due to their lack of education and exposure to Western ideas. Table 2 indicates the total the amount of agriculture and industry with respect to the Czech and Slovak regions in 1918. Clearly, the Czechs out-industrialized the Slovaks by a margin greater than two to one. So while Czechoslovakia gained over 60 percent of the industrial capacity of the entire Austro-Hungarian Empire when it was born in 1918, the overwhelming majority of this economic ability was concentrated in the western half of the state, or the Czech regions (Dědek, 1996: 8). The state’s lopsided economic structure coincided with its “biased” political structure, and Prague not only shaped the political foundation, but the ideological tilt of the new state as well.

Table 2: Economic Structure With Respect to Regions in 1918 (Percentage of Total Population)

Economic Sectors	Territory	
	Czech	Slovak
Agricultural	30	60
Industrial	40	18
Other*	30	22
Total	100	100
(N)	(9.1 million)	(4.3 million)

Data are taken from Leff's "Czech and Slovak Nationalism in the Twentieth Century" (1995), p. 121; and Anderle's "The First Republic, 1918-1938" (1979), p.93.

\* Other denotes the unemployed, retired, or those working in other capacities.

### *Economic Bias or Survival of the Fittest*

While efforts were made to integrate the Czech and Slovak cultures in the new Czechoslovak state after the First World War, few if any, policies attempted to integrate the two economies. Whereas the cultural policies were labeled Czechoslovak, (even though many Slovaks saw them as simply a justification for Czech hegemony), the Czech economic policies were not even disguised as Czechoslovak. The Czech politicians instituted economic liberalism, or "survival of the fittest" in the industrial realm because they believed that the competition would benefit the consumers and the Czechoslovak state as a whole. The result of these policies, however, was the advancement of Czech industries apparently at the expense of the Slovak enterprises, which remained underdeveloped. Instead of merging the two economies in the common state, the Czech-led economic policies created greater ideological distance between the two cultures.

In 1918, Czechoslovakia inherited not only a lopsided economy, but also a poor infrastructure. The Czech lands were geared towards Vienna while the Slovak regions faced Budapest. There were few transportation lines between Prague and Bratislava. Also, the Czechs had a clear trade route to the West while the Slovaks encountered many obstacles. "Trade

between Slovakia and the Czech Lands was underdeveloped due to high and erratic transport tariffs. Access to Slovakia's traditional markets in the south and southeast was further limited by the introduction of border control and other barriers restricting trade" (Dědek, 1996: 8). The higher costs incurred in transportation and tariffs were passed on to the consumer; this made the Slovak products less competitive in the market. Thus, the Slovak lands were less industrialized in the beginning, and the Slovaks also met greater difficulties in developing and cultivating markets for their products.

Not only did the poor infrastructure of the new state discourage the growth of Slovak industry, the actual policies of the new government were also deterrents. Because most of the industry in the Austro-Hungarian Empire was used to furnish domestic goods, the dissolution of that mercantilist market meant that Czechoslovakia had to develop its export market (Dědek, 1996).

Since Czechoslovakia as a whole already had more industry than it knew how to handle, there was little incentive to develop more in Slovakia. Indeed, the pressure was really the other way round. Slovakia was much less competitive and its labor force much less highly skilled; the rational thing was to run it down. (Wallace, 1976: 155)

After all, only the best quality and most cheaply produced products could compete on the international market, and these products clearly came from the Czech regions. It was easier to encourage the Czech industry to continue its expansion abroad, than to spend and invest in the infrastructure and second-hand Slovak factories. The Slovaks were more beneficial to the state when they used their "comparative advantage" to supply raw materials, cheap uneducated labor, and agricultural products to the more developed Czech regions.

Furthermore, with this greater dependence on the export market, the depressions of the 1920s and 1930s affected Czechoslovakia, although the effects were varied by region. During the depressions, especially the Great Depression, the goal of the Czechoslovak government was to strengthen the surviving companies, and expressly not to bail out those that were in serious trouble (Wallace, 1976). Because the Slovak enterprises were younger, less mature, and generally weaker, they were hurt the most by the depressions, but received little, if any, of the government aid (Wallace, 1976). As a result, the government policies appeared clearly biased

towards the growth of the Czech industries; the Slovak enterprises were seemingly sacrificed.

Nonetheless, “Between the two world wars, the Czech lands were listed among the ten most developed states of the world” (*Central Europe Online*, 1998). Furthermore, over ninety-two percent of the country’s industrial output in this time period was produced by the lands of Bohemia, Moravia, and Silesia (Dědek, 1996: 8). While this explosion of growth was occurring in the Czech regions, the Slovak lands appeared to be suffering.

In the republic’s first decade and a half, 260 enterprises in various industrial branches in Slovakia were shut down as a result of the competitive pressure from Czech industries; by 1937, another 680 enterprises in heavy industry experienced the same fate.... By 1930, Slovakia’s share of industrial labor was only 19.4 percent compared to 42.1 percent in the Czech Lands.” (Kirschbaum, 1995: 173)

But, according to Table 2 (on page 37), in 1918 the Czech lands were forty percent industrialized while the Slovak regions were only eighteen percent industrial. During the interwar period, the industrial capacity of the Czech regions grew approximately 2.1 percent, and it grew 1.4 percent in the Slovak lands. Although the Slovak lands were still underdeveloped, they did progress during the First Republic; they just did not progress as quickly as the Czech growth, and they did not appear to be “catching up.” Two economies continued.

All in all, the economic policies of the First Republic were perceived to sacrifice the weak to the strong. Because many Slovaks viewed the Czechs and Slovaks as members of two separate nations, they believed that Slovak economic interests were hurt, inhibited, or even crushed by the unfair Czech competition; many believed this “common” Czechoslovak state ignored the economic interests (protection and equalization) of the Slovak people. The Czech politicians, on the other hand, tended to profess that as a result of their economic policies the entire Czechoslovak nation, state, and economy became stronger and more competitive on the world market. Depending on the perspective, the economic policies were either biased or beneficial.

### ***Chapter 3: A State of Competing Communist Experiences***

Due to their disparate histories and economic perspectives, the Czechs and the Slovaks perceived Communism differently. During the rule of the Communists, the Slovak leaders eventually achieved the federalism that they had been battling for. Through federalism, the Communists finally recognized the separate Slovak nation. Political power flowed from Prague into Bratislava, as did a measure of self-determination. At the same time, the Communists also granted the Slovak requests for a preferential economic policy. Many Slovaks and Communists believed that in order for the society of Czech and Slovaks to become equal, special attention had to be paid to the under-industrialized Slovak regions. This special consideration resulted in the transfer of funds from the Czech lands to the Slovak areas. While the Slovaks profited from the Communist federalism and socialism programs, the non-communist Czechs were actually disadvantaged;<sup>1</sup> political power and economic profit relocated from Western to Eastern Czechoslovakia. Thus, the experience of Communism divided the country.

#### ***Federalizing, For Better or For Worse***

Although the Slovaks experienced “independence” during World War II, it took over twenty years for the Slovak leaders to achieve merely federalism in the Czechoslovak state. At first, the Communists pushed the Czechs towards the recognition of Slovak autonomy. However, the Communist takeover of the country required a centralized system; so the Slovak demands were placed on the back-burner. Nevertheless, the Slovak petitions were granted due to the political action in the 1960s. But, federalism did not *solve* the disputes between the Czechs and the Slovaks; in some ways it even contributed to the problems.

Prior to the end of World War II, Beneš became more and more dependent on the Soviet Union in order to attain his goal of a reconstructed Czechoslovakia. First of all, after the Munich Agreement, Beneš was reluctant to trust the Western Allies. Secondly, “American interest was heart-warming, but Russian proximity stark reality. Roosevelt or no Roosevelt, Beneš had no

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<sup>1</sup> The Communist Czechs believed that all would benefit from the economic equalization of the society due to the transfer of resources from the Czech lands to the Slovak regions. Socialism was their goal, not economic growth.

option but to seek an accommodating alliance with the Soviet Union” (Wallace, 1976: 232). So, even though Beneš had his agenda, he also had to deal with the Soviets.

In bargaining with the Soviets, Beneš was *forced* to make some concessions to the Slovaks, although he did not go as far as promising federalism. Both the Soviets and the Czechs wanted to recreate Czechoslovakia, and the Soviets realized that the Slovaks needed some incentive to support the Czechoslovak cause. Beneš promised the Slovaks a renegotiation of their “partnership;” after the war; they would proceed to determine the structure of the restored state on the basis of “equals with equals” (Leff, 1988). However, “not one Czech politician, with the exception of the Communists... accepted the idea that Slovakia was a national unit and not merely an administrative region” (Steiner, 1973).

In the aftermath of the Second World War, the Košice Agreement sealed the status of the Slovaks for the next twenty years. Brokered by the members of the Slovak National Council and Beneš, the Košice Agreement ultimately resulted in a system known as “political asymmetry.” The Slovak National Council became a regional government for Slovakia, but the Czech regions did not establish their own regional government; unlike the Slovaks, most Czechs felt that their needs were represented adequately by the central government in Prague. Also, the Czechs did not have to worry about the German minority which had been a problem under the old regime and had spurred their nationalism.<sup>2</sup> This system of political asymmetry, however, did not have the effects that the Slovaks intended. Without parallel regional institutions in the Czech areas, the central government had to defend so-called Czech interests against the Slovak National Council (Leff, 1988). Although originally advocated by the Communists, the Slovak National Council had few powers.

The politics surrounding the election of 1946 in Czechoslovakia also indicated the subordinate position of the Catholic Slovaks in the new regime. In the postwar period, the only parties permitted in Czechoslovakia had to be in or supportive of the National Front. In the Slovak regions, this meant that only the Slovak Communist Party and the Slovak Democratic

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<sup>2</sup> The Czech lands contained ninety-four percent Czechs and the Slovak regions were populated by eighty-seven percent Slovaks (Wallace, 1976: 281). The heterogeneity which plagued the First Republic virtually disappeared due to the eviction of the Sudeten Germans and the population transfers between Hungary and the Slovak regions. The Czech reasons for rejecting Slovak autonomy also disappeared.

Party existed; both parties were on the Slovak National Council and participated in the 1944 uprising, with the Slovak Democratic Party consisting of mainly Protestants and Hlasists. The vast majority of the Catholic Slovak population was not permitted representation in the party system due to its activities during World War II and its questionable allegiance to the Czechoslovak state afterwards. Nevertheless, the Slovak Democratic Party courted the Catholic Slovaks by promising lenience towards Tiso and by emphasizing the strongly anti-religious position of the Slovak Communist Party (Bradley, 1971; Leff, 1988 and 1997).

The outcome of this election confirmed simultaneously the Communist-control of the government and the inferior and ineffective position of the Slovak National Council. In the Czech regions, Klement Gottwald and the Czechoslovak Communist Party *democratically won* the majority of the votes and headed the governing coalition.<sup>3</sup> In the Slovak areas, however, sixty-two percent of the population voted *against* the Slovak Communist Party with a vote for the Slovak Democrats (Bradley, 1971: 171). Although the Slovak Democratic Party clearly won the election in the Slovak lands, the Slovak Communists joined the governing coalition and the Slovak Democratic Party did not. So, even though they won the elections in Slovakia, the Slovak Democrats had no power in the government.

Furthermore, one of the first measures that this new governing coalition passed restricted the power of the Slovak National Council.

A new agreement of June 1946 gave the government in Prague the almost unrestrained right to decide which matters lay within the competence of the National Council... Slovaks were left with the guarantee that there could be no constitutional change affecting Slovakia without the agreement of a majority of their sixty-nine representatives. (Wallace, 1976: 255)

Prague, once again, confirmed its dominant and superior status, even though the Communists had originally supported Slovak autonomy. Obviously, any decentralization of power would have weakened the control that the Communists had over the state because of the strong Catholic anti-communist attitudes. The Slovak National Council was clearly subordinate to Prague.

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<sup>3</sup> Various explanations are given for the democratic victory of the Communists in Czechoslovakia, and these range from gratitude for the rescue from the Nazis, to the promise of leniency for “passive” collaborators, to even a revival of Greater Slavic nationalism (Bradley, 1971).



Between the 1946 and the 1948 elections, the Communists lost popular support among the people in both the Czech and the Slovak regions, for different reasons. In the Slovak regions, the conviction and execution of Tiso did not endear the Communists to the public. Furthermore, the Communists incarcerated Slovak bishops and priests, and they confiscated Catholic property (Oddo, 1960). In the Czech regions, the nationalization of industries and the rejection of the Marshall Plan garnished greater opposition to the Communist government (Bradley, 1971). It proved too late however; the Czechoslovak People's Party was fully entrenched in the government, and it secured its status by manipulating the 1948 elections and swallowing the separate Slovak Communist Party within its structure.

After 1948, the Communists completely controlled the state of Czechoslovakia, and they proceeded to purge the opposition, mostly the nationalists. Many of the purges occurred within the Slovak Communist Party because Klement Gottwald, the General Secretary, labeled the members "Titoists" or accused them of "bourgeois nationalism" (Bradley, 1971: 192). The most prominent of these "bourgeois nationalists" was Gustáv Husák, a champion of Slovak autonomy; he was thrown in prison. By purging the government and the party, Gottwald showed that he was a good Stalinist and that he also allowed no room in Czechoslovakia for Slovak autonomy claims.

However, with the death of Joseph Stalin and the ascension of Nikita Khrushchev, Slovak nationalist claims resurfaced. Khrushchev denounced the purges prominent in the Stalin period and declared a general easing of Communist policies. While this change of power and practices transpired in the Soviet Union, a leadership change also happened in Czechoslovakia; Gottwald died and Antonín Novotný ultimately<sup>4</sup> took his place. In order to demonstrate his loyalty to the new regime in the Soviet Union, Novotný released the purge victims from prison. While they did not resume their old positions in the party apparatus, they were able to renew their Slovak national claims for federalism (Bradley, 1971).

Nonetheless, most Slovaks were still disturbed that the purges had been committed against the members of their nation. Although many nationalists were released, some of those

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<sup>4</sup> At first, the Communist Party in Czechoslovakia attempted a triple leadership similar to the structure in the Soviet Union when Stalin died.

that were convicted either died in prison or were executed. Many Slovaks wanted to see that the perpetrators of the purge trials were brought to justice. In May 1963, the Congress of Slovak Journalists ignited the events of the *Slovak Spring*. At this meeting, Miroslav Hysko spoke against the leaders of the Communist Party, an unprecedented action in Czechoslovakia. “He claimed that the term ‘bourgeois nationalism’ should be dropped altogether from the political vocabulary because it was only a Stalinist pretext for suppressing the just aspirations of the Slovak people” (Steiner, 1973: 116). The entire conference turned into a celebration of Slovak nationalism and a storm of accusations against the Prague Communists. The proceedings of this meeting reached the public and sparked an outpouring of Slovak literature and petitions dedicated to the promotion of Slovak nationalism and autonomy. The *Slovak Spring* was a specifically Slovak event (Steiner, 1973).

In the events surrounding the *Prague Spring* of 1968, however, the Czechs and the Slovaks alike supported democratization *and* federalization. However, they definitely supported each goal in differing degrees.

A public opinion survey confirmed the overwhelming (73 percent) support of the Slovaks for a federal system. For them it was the top demand whereas among the Czechs it dropped to seventh place in urgency. The notion that the two nations’ equality was *the* most important matter was maintained by only five percent of Czech respondents.<sup>5</sup> (Ulč, 1996: 336)

Although the Czechs and Slovaks both joined in the political revolt of 1968, they participated for different reasons. The Action Program, compiled by Alexander Dubček and the “new” Communist Party, listed the demands for democratization and federalization that were to be the goals of the new government. The Soviets objected, however, and the tanks rolled into Czechoslovakia in August of 1968.

Even though the *Prague Spring* was crushed, not all of the hopes went unfulfilled. The Slovak demands for a federal system were realized in January, 1969. The Communists *granted* their requests, finally, but all of the Czech pleas for democratization were ignored. Obviously, this new Communist government appeared to be biased towards the Slovaks, especially when the Communist Party leadership fell into the hands of the Slovak, Husák, after Dubček fell from

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<sup>5</sup> Cited as *Lidova demokracie*, May 4, 1968; *Rude pravo*, May 5, 1968.

grace.<sup>6</sup> The Slovak political leaders also obtained their new positions in the government from the ousted Czech instigators of the *Prague Spring*. While the Prague Spring ended in disappointment and frustration for many Czechs, the Slovak nationalist cause actually benefitted.

This federalism, in structure and in practice, however, was incomplete. First of all, while the state structures adopted some national parity, the Communist Party structures did not. As Eugen Steiner acknowledges, “[The Slovaks] were fully aware that federalization of the Party was at least as important as, if not more important than, federalization of the state; that without the former the latter was in practice something of a sham” (1973, 201). The major decisions were discussed within the Party, and the apparatchiks were mostly of Czech nationality. Thus, the Czechs still controlled the state, even with a federal structure. So, although placated for the moment, some Slovaks still felt unsatisfied.

As the new system was practiced, the government also leaned towards greater centralism. As mentioned, the Communist Party was still controlled by the Czechs (barring the General Secretary, Husák), and the Communist policies ruled the government. Leff claims that the Communist system actually *required* the centralization of the government in that: “Soviet-type systems [had] their centripetal tendencies: the need for coherent policy planning, the depression of factional tendencies, and the leading role of the party” (1988: 248). In practice, the government was much less federalized than expected, especially in the implementation and development of economic policies.

Furthermore, not all of the institutions were completely split between the Czechs and the Slovaks. Czechs still remained in control of some of the branches of the government.

In the first place, the parity principle of equal Slovak representation was at its strongest in just those institutions that tended to be weakest in traditional Communist systems: the constitutional court and the national legislature. On the other hand, in the federal ministries, where bureaucratic decision-making and implementation have such a pronounced impact on policy, it was the majority principle rather than parity, that was accepted as procedural norm. (Leff, 1988: 245)

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<sup>6</sup> Those Czechs that viewed the government as biased because Husák was in power tended to forget that Dubček was also a Slovak.

The “Czech” idea of rule on the basis of population and the “Slovak” idea of rule on the basis of nationality were combined in this system. It was not truly federalized, nor was it completely majority rule. Thus, many Czechs and the Slovaks were displeased with their new government, as created by their new Constitution.

In summary, the events delineating the Communist Period in Czechoslovakia left major issues to be resolved by the Czechs and the Slovaks. No consensus had been obtained concerning the responsibility of the government to the people, even though the Slovak nationalists were finally granted the recognition of their status as a separate nation. Furthermore, the Czechs and the Slovaks remained separated and issues were framed as either beneficial to either the Czechs *or* the Slovaks.<sup>7</sup> These issues concerning the shape of the Czechoslovak government would ultimately lead to its disintegration in 1993.

### ***The Economic Flip Side***

With the coming of the Communists after World War II, a different official approach was taken towards the economy. Corresponding to the eventual recognition of the two separate nations within Czechoslovakia, the Communists also acknowledged the needs of the distinct Slovak economy. The Communist programs aimed for the establishment of a classless society and also sought to destroy the Czech and Slovak economic distinction by territorial industrialization programs; through socialism the funds flowed from the western half to the eastern half of the state. Thus, many Slovaks actually benefited by the Communist policies, and benefited at the expense of the Czechs who were concerned with economic growth and not equalization.

With the fall of the “independent” state of Slovakia after World War II, not only did the Slovak leaders work towards the recognition of their equal status among nations, they also promoted the equal recognition of their economic needs. In other words, they wanted the state to acknowledge the apparently biased policies of the First Republic, and to enact a new agenda

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<sup>7</sup> Their separation was even apparent in the protests against the Communist system. While the Czechs engaged in political protests such as the Charter 77 movement, the Slovaks protested the lack of religious freedom within the country (Leff, 1988).

that would better benefit the Slovak nation. Their pleas, however, fell on deaf ears in the first few years after the war because of Beněs' determination to return to the condition of pre-Munich Czechoslovakia.

Nonetheless, the Communists, Czech and Slovak alike, consolidated their power in 1948 and enacted their agenda of equalizing the members of the Czechoslovak society. Through collectivization and forced industrialization, the Communists planned to achieve their goal. Collectivization would eliminate private property (as a source of inequality) and the need for the peasant farmers; the farmers would be free to work in the factories. Forced industrialization would build up the state's profits so that they could afford the equalized society.

"Czechoslovakia launched its own Five Year Plan (1949-1954) and industrial expansion was spectacular: in 1951 industrial production increased by 15 per cent, in 1952 by 18 per cent" (Bradley, 1971: 186). Furthermore, the Slovak industry, which was perceived by the Slovaks to have been stifled under capitalist rule, also improved. From 1948 to 1960, "Overall industrial production [in the Slovak regions] increased to more than five times what it had been" (Wallace, 1976: 282).

Even though they progressed in the first decade or so of Communist reforms, many Slovaks still pushed for the recognition of their *special* economic needs. Although the Slovak industrialization progress improved, so did the Czech; Czech industrial output continued to outpace Slovak accomplishments. The Slovaks tended to believe that they needed to fight for equal representation within the Communist Party in order to *equalize* the economic structure of the entire state, and not just improve it. Not only did the Action Program (developed during the *Slovak Spring* and *Prague Spring*) insist on federalization, it demanded that "the Slovak economy... be developed *faster* than the Czech, exploiting intensively its natural advantages" (Wallace, 1976: 319). Through the Communists, the Slovak political leaders hoped finally to attain the economic help which the Czech capitalists had denied them. Once again, through the revolution in 1968, the Slovaks achieved *both* of their goals of federalism and a territorial economic agenda, while the Czech demands for democratization were ignored by the Communists.

In order to develop the Slovak areas "faster," the Communists redirected funds from the

western portion of the country to the eastern. With the state in control, the Slovaks generally benefited from the revenue generated by the more advanced Czech industries. As a result, these money transfers “contributed to the narrowing of the per capita income gap between the Czech lands and Slovakia from about 40 per cent in 1948, to 20 per cent in 1968, to near parity in the 1970s”<sup>8</sup> (Carpenter, 1997: 210-211). Under the guidance of the Communists, the two areas’ economies were converging. Furthermore, not only were the Czech and Slovak economies gradually reaching parity, but because of this, less and less money was required by the Slovak regions over time. Table 3 (below) indicates this process; however, it does not explain whether the decrease in transfers was completely due to the increase in Slovak resources.<sup>9</sup> Nonetheless, the gap between the industrial development in the Czech and the Slovak lands diminished, even though it did not disappear.

**Table 3: Transfer of Resources from the Czech Lands to Slovak Regions**

Period	Total*	Relative**
1950-60	48.4	14.7
1961-70	80.4	14.1
1971-80	124.0	10.3
1981-88	86.1	6.8

\* Current values estimated in billion CSK.

\*\* Proportion of the Slovak national income.

Data are taken from Dědek et al. (1996, 25) and J. Krovak and J. Zamrazilova (1990).

Although the Communist policies clearly contributed to the economic growth in the Slovak regions, this growth was dependent on *continuous* Communist support. While some of the state’s functions were federalized in 1969, the fiscal policies were not. This was due to the

<sup>8</sup> Cited in the *World Bank Report* (1994), p.2.

<sup>9</sup> This decreasing gap seems to be due to an increase in Slovak production coupled with a decrease in Czech production. Kohák states, “While the Czech lands visibly disintegrated, life in Slovakia was reasonably good” (1992, 443).

systemic imperatives of the Communist systems. Referring to economic policies as the “Achilles heel of federalism,” Leff contends that the Communist goals of societal change required centralized control, especially concerning the monetary agenda (1988, 277). The Slovak industrial achievements remained contingent on the support of the centralized government.

These benefits that the Slovaks obtained from the hands of the Communists did not go unnoticed by the Czech capitalists. Not only did the Slovaks capture their goal of a federal system; funds were also being funneled away from the Czech lands to subsidize the Slovak way of life. “Despite the limits on power in the federalization years, Czech resentment regarding Slovakia, and Czech perceptions that Slovaks run the show, are rife” (Leff, 1988: 251). These “reforms” were employed by the Slovak Communist leader Husák<sup>10</sup> and benefited the Slovaks to the detriment of the Czech capitalists. So, while the Slovak socialists viewed the policies of the First Republic as biased towards the Czechs, the Czech capitalists believed the policies of the Communist government were in favor of the Slovaks.

All in all, the economic policies of the First Republic and the Communist Republic were seen as either biased by the Czechs or the Slovaks. The monetary policies were framed as beneficial to the one group at the expense of the other. What helped the Czechs, hurt the Slovaks, or vice versa.

Furthermore, even though the Slovaks achieved a federal system, the economic policies were still controlled by the Communist *Czechs* in the central government. Basically, the Communists granted the Slovaks political power to express their Slovak beliefs in most realms, excluding the most important realm, the economic. With the rejection of the Communist agenda in 1989, the Czechs remained in power, but these Czechs were now capitalists. The Czech capitalist agenda presumably had hurt the situation of the Slovaks once before, during the First Republic, but now the Slovaks had been given the political power to fight back; they had equal representation in the national legislature and the constitutional court, powerless institutions during the Communist period, but powerful in democracies.

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<sup>10</sup> The Capitalists seemed to neglect the fact that the majority of Communists were also Czechs.

### *Communist Repercussions*

During the Communist period, two important differences between the Czechs and the Slovaks crystallized. By instituting a federal system, the Communists officially recognized the separation of the Czech and Slovak societies. Nationality was not just a characteristic; it became a political factor. Issues that were pro-Slovak were also anti-Czech. Additionally, the redistribution of resources that occurred further clarified the positions of the majority of Czechs and the majority of Slovaks with regards to economic policies. In essence, most Czechs focused on economic *growth* while the majority of Slovaks benefited more from economic *equalization*. These differences that were confirmed during Communism were still reflected in the *World Values Survey* conducted in Czechoslovakia in September of 1990.

The variance in the conceptions of the nation, which finally received recognition in 1968, was still reflected in the Czech and the Slovak opinions in 1990. (See Table 4). While 35.9% of the Czechs (the majority) pledged loyalty to the ‘Czechoslovak’ nation, only 23% of Slovaks felt the same way.<sup>11</sup> The Slovaks were more likely to pick their hometown or Slovakia as the region with which they identified the most. Furthermore, the Czechs were more likely than the Slovaks to identify with broader identities, such as Europe and the world. Even a year after the fall of Communism, the Czechs and Slovaks did not form a unified society.

Besides different perceptions of the nation, different approaches to economics also characterized the Czech and the Slovaks, even after Communism was gone. In the *World Values Survey*, Czechs and Slovaks were asked to clarify the direction that they believed the country should take in the future. The respondents were specifically asked whether business and industry should be controlled by the state or by individuals. Respondents ranked themselves on a scale from one to ten, where one equaled the belief in capitalism and ten equaled the belief in socialism. (See Table 5). The mean rating of the Slovaks on this issue was 5.16, while the mean rating of the Czechs was only 3.66. Clearly, the Slovaks were in the middle of this issue: slightly more than the average tended to believe that *government* ownership of business should

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<sup>11</sup> This also tends to confirm the belief that Czechs did not have a separate identity outside Czechoslovak.



Table 4: Identity by Nation

Identity	Nation	
	Czech (%)	Slovak (%)
Town	28.9	36.9
Region*	20.2	30.7
Country	35.9	23.0
Europe	6.3	4.5
World	8.7	4.9
Total	100	100
(N)	(924)	(466)

$\chi^2 = 44.54$ , D.F. = 4,  $s < .000$

\* Region is the Czech lands for the Czechs, and the Slovak regions for the Slovaks.

Table 5: Analysis of the Variance Concerning Socialist and Capitalist Views

Source	D.F.	Sum of Squares	Mean Squares	F Ratio	F Probability
Between the Czechs and Slovaks	1	690.50	690.50	104.25	.0000
Within the Czech and Slovak Groups	1381	9146.56	6.62		
Total	1382	9837.07			

N = 1382

be increased. On the other hand, Czechs were *significantly* more likely to indicate that *private* control over business and industry should be expanded. These findings corresponded to the Czech and Slovak support for the economic policies of the past and the present; while the Czechs believed adamantly in economic liberalism, more Slovaks tended to favor the economic equalization from state control, or socialism.

But, was this distinction between beliefs concerning the direction of economic reforms due to nationality and not other factors such as education, socioeconomic status, and generation? In order to confirm that there was an association between nationality and a person's agenda for economic reform, a series of chi-square tests were performed. The first hypothesis tested was that those with lower educations may be more likely to express socialist beliefs due to the guarantee of a job. It was necessary to rule out this factor. The chi-square tests between nationality and economic opinions when education was controlled are listed in Table 6. The relationship between nationality and economic direction remained significant for those with high school, college, and post-graduate educations. The only exceptions were those with less than twelve years of education. Only six of the 1375 respondents had the equivalent of a grade school education or less, probably due to the extensive literacy programs within Czechoslovakia during Communist rule.<sup>12</sup> Basically, this undereducated group was an outlier in both the Slovak and the Czech societies, and was in no way indicative of the opinions of the great majority of the population. Nonetheless, a larger sample of this low education group is needed to see if the relationship between culture and economic direction is maintained for *all* Czech and Slovak citizens. All in all, Czechs were more prone to favor capitalist ideas, regardless of their education.

Following this, it was necessary to confirm that generation did not play a factor in the relationship. After all, those who remember the pre-communist past may prove to be more socialist; the younger generations may simply desire what they've never experienced. Furthermore, those who experienced the Prague Spring and the Dissident Movements (Charter 77 and the religious protests in the Slovak areas) may also tend to prefer capitalism to socialism. In order to confirm that the relationship between nationality and economic direction existed, regardless of generation, chi-square tests were performed. (See Table 7). The relationship between nationality and economic outlook held, regardless of generation.

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<sup>12</sup> A main priority of the Communists was educating the public. According to *Central Europe Online*, in 1993 the literacy in the Czech Republic was 99% (<http://www.czech.cz/infosrc/ff/economy>). As cited in *Geocitizen's Unofficial Guide to Slovak Politics*, the World Almanac and Book of Facts 1997 lists Slovakia as having 100% literacy (<http://www.geocities.com/CapitolHill/7502/slovinfo.html>).

Table 6: Relationship Between Economic Outlooks and Nationality Among Those With Differing Educational Levels (in Percentages)

	Education	Grade School		High School		College		Post-Graduate	
	Nation	Czech	Slovak	Czech	Slovak	Czech	Slovak	Czech	Slovak
Economic Outlook	Capitalist	0	0	48.6	24.4	59.2	34.9	66.9	35.4
	Moderate	50	50	38.4	41.7	34.0	46.7	26.9	50.6
	Socialist	50	50	13.0	33.9	6.9	18.5	6.2	13.9
	Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
	(N)	(2)	(4)	(393)	(180)	(377)	(195)	(145)	(79)
	$\chi^2$	0		45.52		36.18		20.65	
	D.F.	1		2		2		2	
	s	1.00		<.000		<.000		<.000	

Table 7: Relationship Between Economic Outlooks and Nationality Among Those From Different Generations (in Percentages)

	Generation	Young Adults/ Communist		Dissident		Prague Spring		Pre-Communist	
	Nation	Czech	Slovak	Czech	Slovak	Czech	Slovak	Czech	Slovak
Economic Outlook	Capitalist	61.9	37.7	60.5	34.3	53.4	27.8	46.8	21.1
	Moderate	31.4	47.5	31.8	43.5	35.9	43.7	40.3	46.5
	Socialist	6.7	14.8	7.7	22.2	10.6	28.5	13.0	32.4
	Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
	(N)	(223)	(122)	(195)	(108)	(348)	(158)	(154)	(71)
	$\chi^2$	19.50		23.42		38.73		18.28	
	D.F.	2		2		2		2	
	s	<.000		<.000		<.000		<.000	

A third and final relationship was tested. This was the relationship between socioeconomic status and economic reforms. The lower class may prefer the socialist programs because of the guarantee of an income. Wealthy people, on the other hand, may be more willing to take risks with their money, and so prefer capitalism. Once again, a series of chi-square tests were performed in order to test the relationship. The results are provided in Table 8. As can be seen in this table, the relationship between nationality and economic views remained significant, independent of socioeconomic status. For example, while 65.3 percent of upper class Czechs expressed capitalist views, only 36.7 percent of upper class Slovaks felt the same way. Czechs were more likely to express capitalist views, regardless of their income level.

Table 8: Relationship Between Economic Outlooks and Nationality Among Those With Differing Socioeconomic Status(in Percentages)

	Socio-Economic Status	Lower Class		Lower-Middle Class		Upper-Middle Class		Upper Class	
	Nation	Czech	Slovak	Czech	Slovak	Czech	Slovak	Czech	Slovak
Economic Outlook	Capitalist	46.4	28.8	56.9	28.7	55.1	30.7	65.3	36.7
	Moderate	36.6	42.4	34.8	45.7	36.0	45.7	29.0	46.7
	Socialist	17.0	28.8	8.3	25.6	8.9	23.6	5.6	16.7
	Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
	(N)	(153)	(66)	(339)	(164)	(303)	(140)	(124)	(90)
	$\chi^2$	7.01		45.86		29.55		18.65	
	D.F.	2		2		2		2	
	s	.03		<.000		<.000		<.000	

Furthermore, how much of the variation between socialist and capitalist outlooks was explained by whether one was a Czech or a Slovak? A linear regression provided the answer to this question (See Table 9). Besides a Czech/Slovak dummy variable (where Czech equals one

and Slovak equals zero), the other independent variables added into the regression were age (measured in years), education (measured in years), and income (grouped on a scale from one to ten). As can be seen in Table 9, most of the variables, *excluding income but including nationality*, were found to be significant and explained 10.8 percent of the variation in the opinions concerning the direction of economic policies. The Czech/Slovak distinction alone produced an  $R^2$  value of 7 percent. Although whether one was a Czech or Slovak did not completely explain the differences in belief concerning the control of business and industry, it did account for some of the variation. Nationality did not cause a predisposition towards capitalism or socialism, but it *was* the largest tested factor in the opinion.<sup>13</sup>

Table 9: OLS Regression Concerning the Direction of Economic Reforms in Czechoslovakia

Variable	B	Standardized Beta	T	Sig T
Nationality	-1.54	-.27	-10.62	.000
Education	-.16	-.14	-5.14	.000
Age	.02	.12	4.37	.000
(Constant)	5.35		16.05	.000

N=1368,  $R^2=.108$

The attitudes towards economic policies, which were expressed verbally during the First Republic and the Communist Period, registered in the *World Values Survey* in 1990 and distinguished the Czechs from the Slovaks. As the analysis of variance and the chi-square tests indicated, there were significant differences between Czechs and Slovaks involving economic outlooks even after education, generation, and socioeconomic status were taken into consideration. Although the regression analysis indicated that one cannot *completely* predict a more capitalist or socialist outlook from one's ethnic status as either Czech or Slovak, it did indicate that the distinction explained some of the variance. Many Czechs still advocated

<sup>13</sup> The only variable that has a questionable interval-level status is income, due to the ordinal groups created by the interviewer, and it drops out of the equation anyway.

capitalism and economic liberalism, while more Slovaks preferred public control of the economy, as associated with socialism. Their different versions of the nation *and* their differing ideological outlooks separated the two peoples within the state; what started as an imagined difference, in the opinions of the Czechoslovak advocates, registered as a significant separation.

### ***Chapter 4: A State No Longer***

The differences between Czech and the Slovak views concerning the structures of the government and its responsibility to the people surfaced in the 1990s. When the Communists lost control of the government in 1989, the people of Czechoslovakia had to determine the structures of the new state. The attitudes prevalent in the population, nevertheless, indicated that a consensus could not be reached. These differing opinions were reflected in the party platforms surrounding the election in 1992. As a result of the disagreement accompanying the issues of economic growth versus equalization, federal versus regional power, and other matters, the state of Czechoslovakia dissolved in the *Velvet Divorce*. Irreconcilable differences were the causes.

#### ***The Crumbling Consensus***

In 1989, a new era began for the Czech and the Slovak peoples. Gorbachev's reforms of *glasnost* and *perestroika* spread throughout the Soviet-style systems; political activity returned or surfaced in the Central and Eastern European countries; and the people of Czechoslovakia were united in the reformation of their own Communist system. Soon after the downfall of the government in 1989, however, the consensus collapsed. Although the Czechs and Slovaks both condemned the Communist system, they disliked it for dissimilar reasons. Most Czechs denounced it due to the lack of political and economic freedom, while most Slovaks despised the lack of religious freedom and advocated even greater federalization.<sup>1</sup> Because of the incongruity in the past, a common future could not be forged.

In November, 1989, the Communist system was overthrown by representatives of *both* the Czech and Slovak peoples, who later formed the broad-based Civic Forum and Public Against Violence Movements.<sup>2</sup> In June of the following year, the first free elections were held in Czechoslovakia at both the regional and the federal levels, and the Civic Forum and Public Against Violence won in their respective Czech and Slovak districts. Although the coalition won

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<sup>1</sup> This is indicated by the goals of the different Czech and Slovak dissident movements.

<sup>2</sup> This indicates, once again, the separateness of the two societies. One social movement was not good enough for the Czech and Slovak peoples; they each had to have their own component, or different party.

these elections, its victory was based on its opposition to Communism, and not upon some coherent vision of the future in Czechoslovakia; it ran on the vague platform of “democratic and pluralistic values” (Kirschbaum, 1995: 253). The coalition was basically a marriage of convenience based on the combined Czech and Slovak celebration of the defeat of communism (Wolchik, 1993 and 1994).

One of the first issues to be construed as Czech versus Slovak and to challenge the strength of this new governing coalition was the enactment of economic reforms. Almost immediately, the Czechs began to implement their liberal economic agenda through the policies of the central government. Because the Communist system had required the centralization of the economic agenda, the economic reforms fell under the (Czech) guidance of Vaclav Havel, the President of Czechoslovakia, and Vaclav Klaus, the Prime Minister.<sup>3</sup> Klaus began a program of rapid privatization through the “coupon method” (Olson, 1993: 304). In this method of reform, individuals were given the opportunity to buy shares in factories which the state was selling; since the shares were usually cheap, foreign corporations tended to buy controlling interests. According to statistics compiled in the Czech and Slovak lands from 1990 through 1992, these economic reforms created a greater “shock” in the Slovak regions, especially concerning unemployment.<sup>4</sup> (See Table 10). So, as in the First Republic, the Czech control of the economic agenda had resulted in the perception of biased effects.

While evidence of the maintenance of two separate economies within Czechoslovakia, the difference in the economic indicators also reflected the inferiority of the heavy industry that the Communists had imported into Slovakia. The industries which were promoted by the Communists in Slovakia were neither competitive nor efficient (Carpenter, 1997: 211). This

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<sup>3</sup> While Petr Pithart was named the Prime Minister of the Czech regional government, Vladimir Mečiar became the Prime Minister of the Slovak National Council until ousted and replaced by Ján Čarnogurský in April 1991 (Wolchik, 1994; Havel, Klaus, and Pithart, 1996).

<sup>4</sup> The differing inflation rates indicate that prices are rising faster in the Slovak areas as compared to the prices in the Czech regions, for two out of the three years covered. The higher inflation rates can be due to a number of causes, some of which include a shorter supply of Western goods or the less competitive nature of the goods produced in the region.



Table 10: A Comparison of Economic Indicators

Indicator	1990	1991	1992
<i>GDP Growth Rate</i>			
Czech Areas	-1.2	-14.2	-7.1
Slovakia	-2.5	-14.5	-7.0
<i>Unemployment Rate</i>			
Czech Areas	0.8	4.1	2.6
Slovakia	1.6	11.8	10.4
<i>Inflation Rate</i>			
Czech Areas	9.6	56.6	11.1
Slovakia	10.4	61.2	10.0

These data are taken from the *World Bank* (1994: 21); *OECD* (1996: 26 and 28); *Economist Intelligence Unit* (1996a, 1996b, 1996c, 1996d, 1996e); and *PlanEcon Report* (1996), and is presented in Carpenter's *Slovakia and the Triumph of Nationalist Populism* (1997, 210).

was due to the fact that they were reliant on Soviet consumption. The Soviets, in a mercantilist way, encouraged the growth of mining, paper production, petrochemical industries, power generation, and especially the weapons industries, to supply products to the Soviet Union (Mikula, 1996). When the Soviet Union dissolved, however, so did the market for the Slovak products. They could not compete on the world market, and so the shift away from mercantilism and towards the export market, once again, had greater detrimental effects for the Slovak economy, as compared to the Czech economy (Mikula, 1996). Havel's decision to "phase out" the armaments industry was a mirror of the past; like Masaryk and the leaders of the First Republic, Havel and the leaders of the new Czechoslovakia advocated programs to better the economic competitiveness of the state as a whole, even though the policies seemed to hurt the Slovak sectors.

The reestablishment of the Czechoslovak state resulted in the reestablishment of the Czech capitalist economic policies. The same policies which the Slovaks believed hurt them

during the First Republic, were re-instituted in the post-Communist period. Czech politicians believed they were reestablishing their freedom and economic prosperity, while many Slovaks regarded it as the resumption of biased practices.

### ***The Climax: Constitutional Crisis***

Unlike their situations in the First Republic, dissatisfied Slovaks in the 1990s had the political power to express their displeasure with the government's economic agenda, and they did so by pushing for greater autonomy to implement *their own* economic agenda. Although the Communists had not completely federalized the government, the Slovaks possessed enough power in the legislature for their consultation and consent to be *mandatory* in the adoption of a new constitution. As the deadline for the 1992 elections drew near, it was clear that most Czechs and Slovaks had different and incompatible visions of the future. These visions involving the structure of the government and its economic policies were reflected in specifically Czech *or* Slovak party platforms. When the population elected these parties to the parliament, it signed the death certificate of the common state.

The legislature of Czechoslovakia was inherited from the Czech and Slovak Communist past and consisted of two Chambers: the Chamber of People and the Chamber of Nations. Somewhat similar to the system in the United States, one Chamber was elected on the basis of population (Chamber of People), while the other was evenly divided between the Czechs and the Slovaks (Chamber of Nations) (Olson, 1993). Since a new constitution had to pass through *both* chambers, it was impossible for either the Czechs or the Slovaks to create a new constitution without consulting the representatives of the other nation.

During the span of time between the elections of 1990 and 1992, the coalition between Public Against Violence and the Civic Forum attempted to adopt a new constitution, but no acceptable version was found. The members, although against Communism and for economic reform and restructuring of the government in theory, did not agree on the shape of the new state. This was due to the fact that the parties did not form platforms on the issues before they gained power; the Czech and Slovak parties simply joined together in a social movement *against* the Communists. So when the parties actually tried to govern and address the issues, there were

problems. While the Slovak members advocated greater autonomy for the Slovak regions, the priority of the Czechs was privatization (Wolchik, 1994). However, even within the parties, themselves, the Slovak members did not agree on the degree of autonomy necessary, and the Czech associates did not agree on the time frame for the privatization process.

Thus, problems occurred between the Czech and the Slovak coalition partners, and they occurred within the Czech and Slovak parties themselves as political positions began to crystallize. The Civic Forum dissolved in 1991 with the departure of Klaus to form his own party, the Civic Democratic Party (ODS) (Wilson, 1992). He left because he believed that the Forum was too “wishy-washy” with respect to economic reforms. Mečiar also exited the Public Against Violence Party when he was ousted from his position as the Slovak National Council’s Prime Minister; he created the Movement for a Democratic Slovakia (HZDS), which was dedicated to the preservation and extension of Slovak autonomy. Over twenty parties were spawned by Public Against Violence and the Civic Forum, and over forty parties participated in the 1992 elections (Olson, 1993).

The flimsy consensus holding the country together did not go unnoticed by Havel. He was determined, as Masaryk once was, to create or maintain a unified Czechoslovak country. Havel spent the two years between elections trying to create a suitable constitution, or attempting to amend the current Communist one (Wilson, 1992). But, Havel’s solutions to the constitutional dilemma were to increase the centralized power through the position of the presidency (Pehe, 1992). He believed that his popularity and the respect that people had for him could “smooth over” this constitutional stalemate. However, the Slovaks had been fighting against these “solutions” of centralization for the past seventy years. It is no wonder that Havel’s proposals never passed in the parliament.

Emerging as a major contender as the election approached was Mečiar’s HZDS. Mečiar’s party appealed strictly to Slovaks and it ran on the platform of a “more decentralized confederal state” (Leff, 1996: 130). Mečiar also promised a slower dismantling of the old communist system. Bruce Wallace and Susan Morgan contend that Mečiar “rose to power” due to “vague promises to revive the country’s heavy industries, especially weapons production, in order to reverse rising unemployment” (1993, 20). Clearly, Mečiar exemplified the distinction

between the Czech and Slovak approaches to economic growth. Mečiar's solution was for greater governmental support for the weapons industry, an industry which had been hurt by the Czechs' economic liberalism. In order to accomplish this, Slovakia needed the greater autonomy inherent in a confederal system.

In the Czech lands, however, the leading party had the opposite approach. The main policy of Klaus' ODS was the continuation of the *rapid* privatization programs. Erazim Kohák summarizes the platform of the ODS: "The Czech government of Vaclav Klaus is committed to a radical Thatcherization of both our economy and our society. ...The prime minister told us that our task is to combat socialism, not primarily in its crude Soviet form but in the insidious creeping form poking up its horns in countries like England, Sweden, or Austria" (1992, 443). Clearly this agenda contrasted with the economic policies espoused by Mečiar. Furthermore, Klaus promised to "take a hard line on Slovak nationalism" (Wilson, 1992: 58), which implied that his party did not support the Slovak decentralization efforts.

The ODS later formed a coalition with the Christian Democratic Party (KDS), a group with a similar "conservative" platform, but one that was specifically Catholic. The KDS was small and almost identical to the ODS concerning the issues. In fact, after the 1992 election, the ODS absorbed the KDS completely (Kettle, 1996). The ODS-KDS coalition, prior to the election, also attempted to cross the border into Slovakia by accepting the Slovak-based Democratic Party/Civic Democratic Union (DS-ODS) as a coalition member. As will be seen in Table 11, however, the DS-ODS failed to break the five percent barrier in the regional *and* federal elections.

Thus, the leading contenders in the 1992 election ran on opposite agendas. The Czech parties, as a whole, presented platforms involving the role of the government in economic and social policy. For example, the Civic Democratic Alliance (ODA) was "similar to the ODS but more radical in its advocacy of tax cuts and less government involvement in the social sphere" (Kettle, 1996). While the Czech parties evolved on the basis of issues, the Slovak parties were more concerned with the actual structure of the government. The parties rarely proposed concrete alternatives to the economic reforms, except for the communist-turned-socialist Party of the Democratic Left. They were more concerned with the national makeup of the government as

opposed to its actual policies.

Also, these parties in Czechoslovakia drew their support from within their respective republics, and not on a state-wide basis. One institutional factor encouraged republic-based as opposed to state-based parties: the five percent threshold. Developed in order to protect against extremism, the five percent threshold was the proportion of the vote which had to be obtained in *each Republic* and not on a state-wide basis in order for a party to gain representation in Czechoslovakia's Parliament. As a result, the majority of the parties which received over five percent of the vote were geared towards the specific values of only *one* of the nations.<sup>5</sup> "The immediate consequence [of the five per cent threshold] was that the most moderate parties, with many of the leaders of Czechoslovakia's first post-communist government, were eliminated from parliament and from public office" (Olson, 1993: 312). The winning parties, listed in Table 11, reflected the goals of *each* nation, and not the state as a whole.

The winning parties of the 1992 elections in the Slovak areas further propagated the disintegration of the state. Besides running on different issues than the Czech parties, the parties actually ran against the state. In Slovakia, the Movement for a Democratic Slovakia (HZDS), the Slovak National Party (SNS), and the Christian Democratic Movement (SKDH) all advocated confederation or separation as their *main* political platform. "Close to 70 percent of the Slovak electorate voted for parties bent on quitting the federation or at least restructuring it beyond recognition" (Ulč, 1996: 342). The only leading contender in the Slovak regions which was not in favor of greater decentralization, was the former Communist Party, the current Party of the Democratic Left.

So, while the republic-based parties won the elections, the more moderate, compromising parties, such as the Civic Movement and Democratic Party, failed to win *any*

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<sup>5</sup> Furthermore, if the parties wanted to form inter-Republic coalitions, they would still have to surpass the five percent threshold in *each* Republic. So, while one of the Republics may agree on the political stance of its particular party, the allied party in the other Republic was likely to be seen as "too Czech" or "too Slovak", and only half of the coalition would win election, as had happened to the DS-ODS. .

Table 11: 1992 Election Results in Czechoslovakia

<i>Czech Lands</i>	<i>Chamber of People</i>	<i>Chamber of Nations</i>	<i>National Council</i>
	% (seats)	% (seats)	% (seats)
Civic Democratic Party, Christian Democratic Party	33.9 (48)	33.4 (37)	29.7 (76)
Left Bloc (Communist Party of Bohemia and Moravia, DLCSFR)	14.3 (19)	14.5 (15)	14.1 (35)
Czechoslovak Social Democratic Party	7.7 (10)	6.8 (6)	6.5 (16)
Republican Party	6.5 (8)	6.4 (6)	6.3 (15)
Christian Democratic Union/People's Party	5.8 (7)	6.1 (5)	6.3 (16)
Liberal Social Union	5.9 (7)	6.1 (5)	6.5 (16)
Civic Democratic Alliance	4.98 ---	4.8 ---	5.9 (14)
Association for Moravia-Silesia	4.9 ---	4.2 ---	5.9 (14)
Civic Movement	4.4 ---	4.7 ---	4.6 ---
<i>Slovakia</i>	<i>Chamber of People</i>	<i>Chamber of Nations</i>	<i>National Council</i>
Movement for a Democratic Slovakia	33.5 (24)	33.9 (33)	37.3 (74)
Party of the Democratic Left	14.4 (10)	14.0 (13)	14.7 (39)
Slovak National Party	9.4 (6)	9.4 (6)	7.9 (15)
Christian Democratic Movement	9.0 (6)	8.8 (8)	8.9 (18)
Coexistence/Hungarian Christian Democratic Movement	--- ---	--- ---	7.42 (14)
Coexistence/Hungarian Christian Democratic Movement/Hungarian People's Party	7.4 (5)	7.4 (7)	--- ---
Social Democratic Party	--- ---	6.1 (5)	--- ---
Civic Democratic Party	4.0 ---	4.0 ---	4.0 ---
Hungarian Civic Party	2.3 ---	2.4 ---	2.3 ---
Democratic Party/Civic Democratic Union	3.7 ---	3.4 ---	2.3 ---

Sources: Wolchik, (1994): 185; Olson, (1993): 310-312; Jiří Pehe's "Czechoslovakia's Political Balance Sheet, 1990-1992," *RFE/RL Research Reports* 1:25, (June 19, 1992): 29; "Volby 1992," *Respekt*, (June 8-14, 1992); *Svobodne Slovo*, (June 8, 1992); *Federal Election Commission*, "1992 Report Disk"; and *Rude Pravo*, (June 1992).

representation in the new government.<sup>6</sup> Basically, there were two different elections within the one state. The majority of the Czech population voted to improve the state through specific policies, while the majority of the Slovak population voted against the structure of the state, itself. The election of 1992 demonstrated the divergent goals of the partner nations *and* their refusal to compromise (Olson, 1993; Wilson, 1992).

After the people elected incompatible parties, the state deteriorated rapidly. The ODS-KDS alliance decided not to negotiate with the Slovaks for many reasons. For one thing, Klaus did not believe that one state could have opposing economic systems, as the Slovaks advocated in their confederal proposal. Secondly, “[The Czechs] view Slovakia as an economic drag” (Morrison, 1993: 202). Without the relocation of funds to Slovakia, the Czechs could invest in their own future. Furthermore, they could enter the European Union more quickly if they did not have the Slovaks to pamper. Overall, both the Czechs and Slovaks could not and would not compromise. Negotiations proved ineffective, stalemate was reached, the central government was paralyzed.

The political agenda was now being decided in the republics and not in the parliament (Olson, 1993). In fact, “The two leading parties agreed to form a federal government for one purpose-to divide the state” (Olson, 1993: 313). The country, as a whole, had the authority to govern in theory only. So, “On July 17, one month after the general election, the Slovak National Council with 113 of the 147 deputies present adopted The Declaration of Independence - *svrchovanost* (sovereignty) of Slovakia. Fifteen minutes thereafter, Havel, President of the federation, announced his abdication” (Ulč, 1996: 343). Slovakia officially embarked on the road to independence, and the only political figure to adamantly oppose the path resigned.

Before he resigned, however, Havel made one last-ditch effort to hold the state together by campaigning for a referendum. He believed that the people did not support the dissolution that the politicians were advocating. “Oddly enough even on the eve of a ‘velvet divorce’ it was hard to argue that there was a broad, popularly based secessionist impulse. Popular support for independence failed to surmount the 20 per cent threshold even after the 1992 elections” (Leff,

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<sup>6</sup> These parties also comprised of mainly the intellectuals involved with the Civic Forum and Public Against Violence movements.

1995: 152). So, even though the people had voted for opposing parties, opinion polls indicated that they did not support the parties' "solution" of dissolution.

Nonetheless, as Jiří Pehe explains in "The Referendum Controversy in Czechoslovakia" (1992), there were too many problems with holding a referendum. First of all, the referendum had to be held in both republics, or the Czechs could impose their will on the smaller population of Slovaks. Secondly, what would happen if one republic decided to secede while the other chose to stay? Furthermore, even if the people in both republics voted to keep the union, they then had to agree upon the form of government, which they had been unable to do in the first place. Basically, although the Czechoslovak state could only dissolve constitutionally through a referendum, the politicians felt that a referendum would only continue the stalemate, provide vague answers, and even lead to physical combat (Pehe, 1992).

There was no turning back after the election of 1992. The Slovaks had declared their independence and even ratified a new constitution. On November 25, 1992, the federal parliament approved the dissolution (Ulč, 1996). All that remained was to divide the assets. On January 1, 1993, Czechoslovakia ceased to exist.

### ***An "International" Trend of Devolution***

As the spread of nationalism affected the birth of Czechoslovakia, a trend of devolution occurring in East and Central Europe in the 1990s influenced the death of the common state. While the Slovak nationalists ideologically advocated the disintegration of Czechoslovakia, their neighboring states physically crumbled. Almost ironically, the Communist countries which had adopted federal structures in order to placate the minorities, (ie., Czechoslovakia, the Soviet Union, and Yugoslavia), all experienced dissolution movements in the 1990s. The events transpiring in the Soviet Union and Yugoslavia affected the situation in Czechoslovakia, and in some ways, these events contributed to the peacefulness of the *Velvet Divorce*.

The disintegration of the Soviet Union in the early 1990s inspired the Slovak autonomists in Czechoslovakia. Beginning in the Baltic regions, the Soviet Republics vied for greater sovereignty and even independence. In March 1990, Lithuania almost prematurely declared its independence from the Soviet Union and Russia (Hyde-Price, 1996: 148). It was not until the



abortive August coup in 1991, however, that the Soviet Union finally fell apart. As the world watched these events transpiring in the Soviet Union, it is hard to believe that the Slovaks were not affected. Small new states such as Armenia and Azerbaijan emerged from the ruins of the Soviet Union, and lent greater credence to the belief that small nations, such as the Slovak nation, could attain their own states in the aftermath of Communism. The generally peaceful creation of these new states in the CIS also indicated to the Slovak nationalists that they too could achieve their ultimate goal: their right to self-determination through their own nation-state (Hyde-Price, 1996).

Furthermore, the violent disintegration of Yugoslavia had repercussions in the Czech and Slovak state. Croatia and Slovenia both declared their independence from Yugoslavia in June of 1991, one year prior to the fateful elections in Czechoslovakia (Rusinow, 1995). In Croatia, however, fighting erupted due to the Serb minority within the country. While Serbs were the majority in Yugoslavia, they would only have a minority status in Croatia and therefore be subject to Croat revenge. This, however, was not the situation in Czechoslovakia; there was little irredenta or ethnic overlap. While Slovakia possessed a minority population of Hungarians, few Czechs lived in the Slovak lands. Likewise, few Slovaks resided in the Czech regions. The respective Czech and Slovak governments did not have to worry about the possibility of revenge upon the members of their nations who were located across the border. This certainly contributed to the peacefulness of the divorce (Gotovska-Popova, 1993; Kaplan, 1996).

The fighting in Croatia, however, spread to the neighboring territory of Bosnia-Herzegovina and the onslaught of the war, a few hundred miles away, impacted the Czech and Slovak separation. Perhaps more negotiations would have taken place if international pressure had been applied, but in the age of Bosnia, the world leaders were willing to accept this minor instance of instability. In fact, the United States actually congratulated the Czechs and the Slovaks for the *peaceful* resolution of their problems, and recognized the two new states on the day of their births.

Both leaders provided assurances that the new states will fulfill the obligations and commitments of the former Czechoslovakia and will abide by the principles and provisions of the UN Charter, the Charter of Paris, the Helsinki Final Act, and subsequent CSCE (Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe) documents...[Furthermore] we commend both republics for the peaceful means by

which their separation was carried out. (Fitzwater, 1993: 35)

Essentially, there were no outside objections to the dissolution of the state, as was the case in 1938, because international attention was diverted elsewhere.

All in all, the dissolution of the state of Czechoslovakia did not draw international intervention, nor did it draw internal aggression. The international climate of the time accepted and even promoted these dissolutions, as the international recognition granted to the CIS states, Slovenia, and Croatia indicated. The international community would much rather accept the new countries instead of being dragged into another war, such as the one waged in Bosnia. Basically, few contested the disintegration of the Czechoslovakia, inside and outside.

### ***Concluding Remarks***

The *Velvet Divorce* on January 1, 1993, was the result of a long, arduous process. Events occurring within and outside the borders of Czechoslovakia impacted the state during its entire existence. These events and activities contributed to the Czech and Slovak failure to meet Schöplín's criteria for consensus in the post-Communist period (1993); subsequently, the state dissolved.

Although the Czechs and the Slovaks both believed in the “magical” properties of the nation, they had various visions of the nation (Schöpflin, 1993). Due to the different Czech and Slovak histories, religions, languages, and surroundings (ie., Habsburg versus Hungarian), the Czech intellectuals tended to promote the idea that the Czechs and Slovaks were relatives in one nation, while the majority of Slovak nationalists advocated the belief that the Slovaks were members of a *unique* nation, separate from the Czechs. So, while many Czechs believed that their fight for self-determination and recognition had come to an end with the creation of Czechoslovakia, many Slovaks felt that they were still fighting for their national rights. Although the creation of Czechoslovakia in 1918 supported the Czech conception of the nation, the “independence” of Slovakia under Hitler and the establishment of a federal state under the Communists confirmed the Slovak notion that the Slovaks were a separate nation. When Communism collapsed in 1989, the Czechs and the Slovaks had to form a new state, and the Slovak nationalists believed that this was their opportunity of self-determination. Consequently, the Czech and Slovak political leaders did not agree on the shape of this new state, and the country disintegrated.

Besides different versions of the nation, different economic ideologies evolved among the majority of Czech and Slovaks. While most Czechs supported the capitalist policies of economic growth, most Slovaks tended to favor socialist policies in order to advance and “catch-up” to the Czech regions. When the Czechs controlled the economic policies during the First Republic, they advocated free competition and comparative advantage. These policies appeared to be biased against the Slovak population because the Czech industries were more advanced and more productive. During the Communist period, however, many Czechs viewed the socialist programs as biased toward the Slovaks because money was funneled away from the Czech regions and into

the Slovak lands. The Czech tendency to support capitalist policies and the Slovak tendency to prefer socialist programs registered in the *World Values Survey* in 1990. The reinstatement of Czech capitalist-led policies after the fall of Communism seemed to many Slovaks to be a reappearance of economic bias, but unlike the situation during the First Republic, the Slovaks now had the political power to change their position. So, although the Czechs and Slovaks agreed on the necessity of economic reform, they could not agree on the direction of this reform.

Finally, the experience of Communism deeply divided the Czech and Slovak peoples. During the Communist period, the majority of Czechs were denied their demands of democratization. Furthermore, the Czech capitalists watched as the profits from their factories and businesses flowed to the Slovak regions. Thus, Communism was a negative experience for most Czechs. The majority of Slovaks, on the other hand, actually benefitted from the Communist experience. The Slovak nationalists received the recognition of their identity through the institution of a federal system and territorial economic policies. The Slovak dissident movements were mainly concerned with the lack of religious freedom and not the lack of democratic processes. Schöpflin's contention that the experience of Communism united the people of a country because it provided an outlet for blame was not true for the members of Czechoslovakia (1993); although many Czechs and Slovaks disliked Communism, they dislike it for dissimilar reasons.

All in all, Schöpflin's criteria for consensus proved useful in the examination of the dissolution of Czechoslovakia. Because the Czechs and Slovaks did not agree on the shape of the nation and the state's responsibilities toward that nation(s), the direction of the economic reforms, and the reasons to blame the Communists, the state dissolved in 1993. The Czechs and Slovaks displayed fundamentally different opinions concerning the nation and economic goals, and the end of the Communist period stimulated these differences. It was only due to the economic and political upheaval associated with the Communist transition, and the new political rights that were granted to the minorities (Slovaks) during the Communist period, that these differences surfaced, were vocalized, and proved to be politically destructive. Thus, Schöpflin's criteria for consensus are not applicable to all multinational states, but rather are only applicable when the minorities obtain the vital political power to change their situations, as was the case in

the former Communist countries.

### ***Future Prospects***

Although the *Velvet Divorce* “solved” the problems of the Czechs and Slovaks with respect to the state’s structure, the solution was only temporary. In current Slovakia, the government under Mečiar continues to restrict the rights of the Hungarian nation; the Hungarian population, nonetheless, continues to vie for autonomy. Furthermore, Mečiar clashes regularly with the Slovak parliament and the media as he attempts to increase his power; Mečiar believes that he (one Slovak) can represent the needs of all Slovaks. Brigita Schmognerova, a leader of the Party of the Democratic Left, summarizes the situation in current Slovakia: “On one level, we’re a nation between Mečiar and anti-Mečiar forces. On a broader level, it’s a difference in opinion over what makes a democracy” (Spolar, 1988). Contrasting beliefs concerning the relationship of the government to the people continue to plague Slovakia, even though the Czechs are gone.

Likewise, the Czech Republic has had its own share of difficulties. Although the state freed itself of Slovak complaints, the Moravians have been striving for autonomy; pressure to decentralize has not disappeared (Leff, 1997). Thus, a population within the Czech state is pushing for national rights and further devolution. Also, the “Economic Miracle” in Czechoslovakia was stunted. Klaus’ ODS government was recently dismissed due to the fast pace of and the alleged corruption surrounding the economic reforms (*Central Europe Online*). So, the Czech political leaders’ capitalist economic policies still face some opposition, even from within the Czech community. This reduced Czech-led state is neither free from minority problems, nor free from differing economic ideas. The ideological cleavages which were present in Czechoslovakia are still present in Slovakia and the Czech Republic.

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### ***Appendix 1: A Brief Note on the Data***

The *World Values Survey* was conducted in Czechoslovakia in September of 1990. A sample of 1390 surveys were taken from 303 randomly selected sampling points, and they were stratified on the basis of sex, age, education, region, and size of community. Based on the population of Czechoslovakia at the time of the survey, the original data consisted of .0089 percent of the population. The Czech section amounts to 924 of the samples, and represents .0090 percent of the population of the separate Czech Areas. Also the 466 samples collected in the Slovak regions consists of .0088 percent of the population. Since the 1390 samples were considered representative of Czechoslovakia, the 466 from Slovakia and the 924 from the Czech areas should be considered representative of their respective regions.

The biggest problem with the data from the *World Values Survey* was the failure to ask the subjective ethnic group question in this country. In order to remedy this situation, I divided the data on the basis of geographical region. Basically, the Czech sample is a compilation of the following areas: Prague, the Middle, South, North, West, and East Czech Regions, South Moravia, and North Moravia. The Slovak category consists of Bratislava, West Slovakia, Middle Slovakia, and East Slovakia<sup>1</sup>. The assumption is made that Czechs are the prominent majority of those sampled from the Czech regions, and that Slovaks are the majority from the Slovak regions. In reality, both countries are relatively homogenous as can be seen from Table 12. Slovakia has a small minority population of Czechs, Hungarians, and Romanies (Gypsies), while the Czech regions have an even smaller proportion of Slovaks.

According to other research concerning the study of Czechs and Slovaks, this assumption is not an outlandish one to make. The study entitled *Czechs and Slovaks Compared* makes the same assumption, although not explicitly (Rose, 1992). The data in this study were similarly collected as the data from the *World Values Survey*, and they recorded a sample size of 1260. Furthermore, the geographical areas which were classified as either Czech or Slovak are the same as those in the *World Values Survey*. As can be seen from Table 13, 97 percent of those classified as Czech by their geographical region also picked Czech or Moravian as their

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<sup>1</sup> The classification of these geographical areas as either Czech or Slovak is the same for Table 12.

Table 12: Minority Distribution in Czechoslovakia

Subjective Ethnic Group	Region	
	Czech <sup>1</sup> (%)	Slovak <sup>2</sup> (%)
Czech	94.4	1.0
Slovak	3.0	85.7
Hungarian	.2	10.0
Gypsy	.3	1.5
Ukrainian	-	.3
Polish	.6	.1
German	.5	.1
Other	1.0	.3
Total	100	99*

Data taken from *Central Europe Online*, which used 1993 population statistics.

<sup>1</sup> Czech Republic's Page: <http://www.czech.cz/infosrc/ff/economy.htm#e2>

<sup>2</sup> Slovak Page: <http://www.centraleurope.com/ceo/slovakia/slkhome.html>

\* Do not equal 100 due to rounding

subjective ethnic group. In the Slovak areas, the correlation was 92 percent. Basically, the assumption is not unusual.

Some minor problems with the data set included the under-sampling of those from rural regions and those who were illiterate. However, the under-sampling of those who live in rural regions occurred mainly in countries such as Nigeria, which have poor infrastructures. The under-sampling of those who are illiterate is not a major problem in the Czech and Slovak regions due to the reason mentioned earlier, the Communist goal of education. Literacy rates in the Czech and Slovak areas are close to 100 percent.

### ***Data Disclaimer***

The original collector of the data, ICPSR, and the relevant funding agency bear no responsibility for uses of this collection or for interpretations or inferences based upon such uses.

Table 13: Subjective Ethnic Identity

Group Identified With	Region		
	Czech %	Slovak %	Total %
Czech	70	-	48
Slovak	2	92	30
Moravian	27	-	18
Hungarian	-	6	2
Gypsy	-	1	1
Other	1	1	1
Total	100	100	100
(N)	840*	420*	1260

(-) = .5% or less

(\*) = approximate values due to the author's rounding.

Data are taken from Rose's study, *Czechs and Slovaks Compared* (1992).

## ***Appendix 2: The Specific Questions and Procedures***

In order to gauge the Czech and Slovak identifications with specific nations, a variable from the *World Values Survey* was utilized. The specific question posed to the Czech and Slovak respondents was “Which of the following geographical groups would you say you belong to first of all?” The responses from which to choose were: “Locality or town where you live, state or region of the country where you live, Czechoslovakia as a whole, Europe, and the world as a whole.” The Czech and Slovak responses to this question are logged in Table 4 in chapter 3.

The second examined variable attempted to measure the capitalist or socialist disposition of the respondent. Specifically, the phrasing of the question stated, “Now I’d like you to tell me your views on various issues. How would you place your views on this scale? 1 means you agree completely with the statement on the left, 10 means you agree completely with the statement on the right, or you can choose any number in between.” Then the Likert scale had the statement, “Private ownership of business and industry should be increased” on the left with the number 1, and the statement, “Government ownership of business and industry should be increased” on the right below the number 10. So, the closer the respondent’s ranking was to 1, the greater the capitalist disposition. The differences between the Czech and the Slovak opinions were analyzed and the results were reported in Table 5.

In order to clarify that the relationship between nationality and economic direction was not spurious, a series of chi-square tests were performed controlling for education, generation, and socioeconomic status of the respondents. First of all, the responses from the economic direction scale (the dependent variable) were collapsed into categories and recoded. The rankings of 1 through 3 were recoded as capitalist; rankings 4-7 were classified as moderate; and rankings 8-10 were renamed as socialist. Czech and Slovak nationality was gauged through a dummy variable in which Czech equaled 1 and Slovak equaled 0.

In order to rule out the possibility that education, or the lack of it, may be causing the relationship between nationality and economic beliefs, a chi-square analysis was constructed. Those with lower educations may be more likely to express socialist beliefs due to the guarantee of employment and income. It is necessary to rule out this factor. As measured by the *World*

*Values Survey*, education was recorded through the question, “At what age did you or will you complete your full time education, either at school or at an institution of higher education? Please exclude apprenticeships.” The respondents wrote in the age, and the interviewer grouped the responses in the following categories: “Not available; Completed formal education at twelve years of age or earlier; completed education at thirteen years of age; completed education at fourteen; ...at fifteen; ...at sixteen; ...at seventeen; ...at eighteen; ...at nineteen; ...at twenty; ...at twenty-one years of age or older.” Due to the excessive information and small number of responses in some of the categories, I collapsed them into four divisions: one equaled those that completed their education by age twelve, or grade school equivalence; two signified those who had some “high school” experience, or who were thirteen through seventeen when their education ended; three was defined as “college”, or eighteen to twenty years; and four was the “post-graduate” education, or those who were still in school when they were twenty-one or older. The chi-square tests between nationality and economic opinions when education was controlled, are listed in Table 6. The relationship between nationality and economic direction remained significant, except for those with less than twelve years of education.

The second control, generation, was generated by an age category, measured in years. It was necessary to make sure that the relationship between nation and economic views was not spurious due to the possible correlation between the pre-communist generation and socialist opinions. The *World Values Survey* asked the respondent her date of birth, and then posed the “follow-up” statement, “This means that you are \_\_\_\_ years old.” The responses were then collapsed into the following categories. Those who were eighteen or older in 1948, or those at above the age of sixty, were classified as the “Pre-Communist Generation” due to their experiences of non-communist systems. The respondents who were forty to fifty-nine, or eighteen by 1968, were grouped into the “Prague Spring Generation” due to the political action and political impact concerning that year. Furthermore, those between the ages of thirty-one and thirty-nine were placed in the category of “Dissident Generation” due to the growth of the Charter 77 Movement and religious protests in 1977. Finally, the eighteen through thirty year olds were the “Young Adult/Communist” Generation due to their fresh views and lack of any other experiences other than communist. The chi-square analyses concerning the relationship

between nation and economic views, while taking generation into consideration, still proved to be significant, as indicated by Table 7.

Finally, in order to rule out the possibility that socioeconomic status was causing the relationship between nationality and economic opinion, one last chi-squares analysis was undertaken. After all, those with greater incomes may be more prone to express capitalist opinions, as compared to those with lower incomes due to the socialist promise of a fixed income. The *World Values Survey* posed the question in the following way: "Here is a scale of incomes and we would like to know in what group your household is, counting all wages, salaries, pensions and other incomes that come in. Just give the letter of the group your household falls into, before taxes and other deductions." The interviewer showed the respondent 24 cards with different levels of income ranging from 1,000 Koruna per month to 50,000 Koruna or more per month. Then, the interviewer regrouped these into ten ordinal-level categories ranging from the lowest to the highest income. I collapsed these ten categories into four: 1-3 equaled "Lower Class"; 4-5 equaled "Lower-Middle Class"; 6-7 equaled "Upper-Middle Class"; and 8-10 equaled "Upper Class". The results of the chi-square analyses are given in Table 8. The relationship between nationality and economic opinions held, regardless of the respondent's level of income.

After the series of chi-square analyses were completed, a linear regression was attempted to determine the strength of the relationship between nationality and economic views. The Likert scale measuring the capitalist/socialist views was the dependent variable, and was assumed to be interval-level data. The Czech and Slovak category was added as a dummy variable. The original education variable was used; each category differed by one year. Also, the original age variable was used, and the responses differed by one year. Income level, although included in the regression analysis, proved to be insignificant. The results are reported in Table 9.

*Vita*

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