

THE POLITICAL DISINTEGRATION

OF

CZECHOSLOVAKIA

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ABSTRACT

This thesis examines the political disintegration of the former state of Czechoslovakia on 1 January 1993. The break-up of the state into two new independent Republics ended seven decades of attempts to satisfy the nationalist aspiration of the Czech and Slovak peoples in a common state. The study will focus on the major historical, political, and economic factors responsible for the centrifugal tendencies which undermined the integrative process in Czechoslovakia's brief, but turbulent history. Each of the state's reconfiguring and restructuring phases, from its inception in 1918, prompted new concerns of the balance of power and the role of the two nationalities -- Czechs and Slovaks-- within the common state. The persistence with which the Slovaks pursued their nationalist aims is a telling instance of the vitality of twentieth century nationalism.

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To

Donald Melbourne Gillies

who continues to sustain me in life,

and
in memory of

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who, in his lifetime, fostered me.

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PREFACE

This thesis will explore and analyze the factors which contributed to the peaceful dissolution of the state of Czechoslovakia on 1 January 1993 into two new successor states - the Czech Republic and the Republic of Slovakia. The study will focus on the major historical, political, and economic factors responsible for the centrifugal tendencies which undermined the integrative process in Czechoslovakia during the state's seventy-four year existence. In its brief history, Czechoslovakia suffered a series of abrupt political reconfigurings and reconstructions: the liberal multi-party state 1918-1938; the bifurcated rump states under Fascist dictatorship 1938-1945 (occupied Bohemia and Moravia, and the independent state of Slovakia); a communist regime from 1945-1989; and finally the transition period before the so-called 'velvet' divorce 1989-1993. The evolution of the state through these various phases and regime types makes Czechoslovakia a particularly interesting case study or laboratory in which to assess the factors and processes of integration and dissolution.

The study will attempt to evaluate the political framework of each of the restructuring phases of the Czechoslovak state by concentrating on the factors which either enhanced or impeded the growth of state cohesion. Chapter two will provide a brief history of motivations and interests which led the Czech and Slovak élites to create a single political unit for their respective ethnic constituents. Chapter two will also explore political life during the inter-war years including the political interests which framed the debates over the Slovak 'national question' and the perspective and policies of constituting a unified state as advanced by the central government in Prague. A special concern of the thesis will be the shift in the power structure which occurred during the wartime experience of the Czechs lands as a protectorate, and the Slovak lands as a state under Nazi tutelage.

Chapter three will explore the radical reconfiguration of the country as a communist state in 1948. The political context in which Slovak nationalism manifested itself throughout this period will be explored as well as the concession to Slovak demands which culminated in the federalization of the state after the Prague Spring in 1968. Chapter three will also analyze how the extent of Czechoslovak cohesion was influenced by the adoption of a federal solution during the immediate post 1968 'normalization' policy. Chapter four examines the impact of Soviet inspired *Perestroika* on the political framework which existed until 1989. The 'velvet' revolution and the rebirth of another renaissance of the Slovak question will be the focus of the immediate post-communist era. Particular interest will be devoted to the dynamics of the Czech and Slovak inter-relationship having been liberated from one of the most repressive communist regimes in Eastern Europe. Chapter five will explore Czechoslovakia's gradual slide toward disintegration. Each of the issues will be discussed as they relate to the disintegration of the state: the impact of ethno-nationalism, the rise of the sub-units, and the strain of economic transition. The concluding Chapter six will attempt to derive some general insights into the issues of integration and disintegration of multi-national states and to what extent the Czechoslovak experience provides lessons for other states which are facing the strains of colliding nationalisms, separatism, and secessionism.

The great achievement of Western civilization since the Enlightenment is to make many of us peer over the wall and grant some respect to people outside it ; the great failure of Western culture is to deny that walls are inevitable or important.

James G. Wilson

CHAPTER ONE

STUDYING INTEGRATION: A SURVEY OF THEORIES AND CONCEPTS

INTRODUCTION

The subjects of "integration" in general, and "political integration" in particular, have been long standing concerns of social scientists. Generally speaking theoretical and empirical theories of integration can be found in abundance throughout social science literature, and there are a myriad of definitions of what integration means and how best to study integration processes. Most discussions of integration are interdisciplinary, and the political scientists who employ the concept of integration can be found in each of the discipline's sub-fields.

Many studies of integration endeavor to highlight the conditions under which different entities -- either groups of states as parts of a regional system, or the territorial components of individual states -- manage to live in peace and security. Other studies examine the manner in which individuals transcend their parochial loyalties and endorse broader forms of identity. For example many studies explore the way citizens change their attitudes and behaviours toward their neighbors in order to create new social or political entities at the sub-national, national, and international levels. The subject of integration covers a vast range of human relationships and attitudes. But as diverse as integration studies may be they are united by a common thread - they attempt to define what it is "*which holds a society and a political system together.*"¹

This chapter will review the principle theories and literature on state dissolution and state cohesion, including an examination of various contending theoretical treatments of the subject. The discussion will present an overview of the 'integrative approach' and the political analysts who have utilized various bodies of social science's theoretical and empirical knowledge in the hope of improving the depth and scope of

¹ Myron Weiner, "Political Integration and Political Development" *The Annals of the American Academy* (1965) 52. Emphasis in the original.

investigations into the phenomenon of integration. Next, selectively drawing on a broad range of theories of political integration studies,² the chapter will highlight the conclusions of the most important and useful concepts posited by major theorists in the areas of federalism, consociationalism, nationalism and the studies of self-determination and secessionism. The chapter will conclude with a review of some of the inquiries concerning the issue of political secessionism, a sub-field of integration theory (or perhaps better put dis-integration theory) which is a relatively new area of research and political thought. The chapter will be particularly concerned with identifying specific concepts and analytical factors that can be profitably employed in the case study of Czechoslovakia's dis-integration and eventual break-up in 1993.

INTEGRATION: DEFINITIONS AND THEORIES

Integration is a term or word found in practically every discipline of inquiry. As a concept, it has received substantial attention from social scientists, but is also frequently used in the applied sciences. Although there are a variety of definitions used to explain the meaning of integration, there are also many facets which the different discussions of the concept share. The commonality of meaning includes notions such as connectedness, relatedness, cohesion. Most analysts recognize that integration is a process rather than a condition. The process of integration does not remain constant. Moreover it is bi-directional. It is a process which may involve a putting together, pulling apart, merging and dissolving. Thus change is intrinsic to the concept.³ In addition, the concept -- in its most primitive form, meaning, a connectedness -- infers that there is an emergent causal relationship between two or more objects. These objects must be defined in terms of events, the intensity and degree of relatedness, and behavior over

² These include theories of nationalism and national unification, regional (international) integration, regional (subnational) integration, political development and nation building, political stability (in democratic systems) and political federalism

³ Henry Teune, COCTA - Committee on Conceptual and Terminological Analysis: International Political Science Association, *The Concept of Integration* (Washington Working Paper prepared for COCTA Special Session, American Political Science Association September 1977).

time - two objects, one relationship and two points in time are the minimal conditions for the formation of an 'integrated' system.⁴

Political scientists employ a more restricted and somewhat different concept of integration than studies in other fields. Henry Teune posits six criteria for delimiting the notion of a politically integrated system: First, there is the nature of the object being integrated. This would mean defining a political unit and speaking of the integration of political systems. Second, there is the consideration of the groups being integrated. For example, is the process among equals or among unequals? Third, there is the nature of the relationship. Is it one of influence or dependency, based on authority, shared decision-making or constitutional rules, highly centralized or de-centralized? Fourth, there is normative integration where the concepts of consensus, legitimacy, and nationality are associated with political integration. Fifth, there are differences in political integration that derive from how the process was begun. Was the process initiated because of shared attitudes? Was the process the result of consent or coercion, calculations of interests, evolution of habits, population migration, or the circulation of élites. Sixth, there is the issue of political integration's consequences used either as indicators of the process, or aspects which define the concept. For example, shared values generate political integration and in turn political integration expands the sharing of values.⁵

What Teune seeks is conceptual clarification of political integration. To this end he and other authors suggest that the "complexity of the phenomenon of political integration, the difficulty of research, the long time spans of changes in integration have, among other things, contributed to the reliance on models for knowledge."⁶ Further these theorists contend efforts to elaborate the concept of political integration can benefit significantly from existing theories, concepts or generalizations in other

⁴ *Ibid.*, 3-8. Teune argues that the "concept of system is a pre-condition for either federal or power relationships and for a system to obtain empirically, there must be some integration of relationships, indeed even in conflict ... if two parties are unconnected, there can be no war ... wars are highly integrated ... involving almost everything each party has." 9-10

⁵ *Ibid.*, 14-18

areas of social science inquiry. "Using the propositions of one area of inquiry in a seemingly different area of inquiry demonstrates . . . the interchangeability of research findings of all those concerned with behavior whether that of laboratory animals, of local governments or of nations."⁷ For example, Teune when attempting to explain how people acquire the dispositions which contribute to, or inhibit, political integration, focuses on the psychological factors of learning theory. He claims such factors are pertinent to the process of political integration at any level.

Phillip E. Jacob a close collaborator of Teune, focuses on individual policy makers and the norms which weigh on their decisions to integrate or not to integrate. Jacob relies heavily on the concepts of cognitive psychology's field and social role theory. Jacob argues that for integration to occur between two or more existing communities "shared values within each must become shared with each other."⁸ Karl W. Deutsch, one of the principle scholars addressing the concept of political integration, focuses on communications theory and cybernetics in order to analyze the processes of social mobilization in countries which are moving from traditional to modern ways of life. Deutsch argues that interaction among people and widespread communication networks should gradually break down people's 'parochial' ethnic identities and replace such attitudes with loyalties to larger communities. Integration in this sense depends on wide and effective social communication habits. Conversely, severe discontinuities in communication and transaction habits lead to disintegration.⁹ Each of the theorists discussed above set the context and also contribute to, elements for the subsequent analyses in the field of political integration. The levels of analysis -- international, national, or subnational -- of course, differ from study to study.

⁶ Teune, suggests that 'many theories share a similar form and the better known theory can be called a model for the less well-known theory' "Models in the Study of Political Integration," in *The Integration of Political Communities*, eds Phillip E. Jacob and James V. Toscano (Philadelphia: Lippincott and Company, 1964), 285.

⁷ Teune, "The Learning of Integrated Habits," in *The Integration of Political Community*, ed Phillip E. Jacob and James V. Toscano (Philadelphia: Lippincott and Company, 1964), 282.

⁸ Phillip E. Jacob, ed., "The Influence of Values in Political Integration," in *The Integration of Political Community*, 209-210.

⁹ Karl Deutsch, *Nationalism and Social Communication: An Inquiry into the Foundations of Nationality* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1954), 70-74.

For example, Deutsch's *Political Community at the International Level*, further elaborates the concepts and theories first developed in his classic 1954 study *Nationalism and Social Communication*.¹⁰ In the 1957 *Political Community and the North Atlantic Area* Deutsch and his collaborators analyze both, international and national cases of integration and disintegration.¹¹ Relations between or among nation-states may be used as a model for the study of relations between or among governmental units within nation-states and vice versa, although much of the early work of integration evolved out of the international relations model.

For Deutsch, his colleagues, and their disciples, integration means "the attainment of a sense of community, accompanied by formal or informal institutions and practices, sufficiently strong and widespread to assure peaceful change among members of a group."¹² The 'community-model' conceptualized by Deutsch and his followers stresses the character of the relationships between peoples whose states have been involved in a process of integration. The Deutschian school of integration is concerned with the emergence of common political institutions, but generally regards the emergence of political structures as less important to the process of integration than the development of certain common values, perceptions, and habits in the political community. Thus theories of integration advanced by Deutsch and related authors posit a close link between cultural and value homogeneity (indigenous or induced), and political integration.¹³

There is one important exception, among students of integration, to the Deutschian value consensus approach, namely theories of federalism. Deutsch contends that federalism is a particular form of integration based on concerns for security, and as

¹⁰ Karl Deutsch *Political Community at the International Level: Problems of Definition and Measurement* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1954)

¹¹ Karl Deutsch et al., *Political Community and the North Atlantic Area: International Organization in the Light of Historical Experience* (Princeton: University of Princeton Press, 1957).

¹² *Ibid.*, 5

¹³ It is alleged that the political facts of the last three decades, the mounting tide of nationalism, and the salient role of élites in moderating or intensifying ethnic conflict, have contradicted much of this theoretical literature. For example, Deutsch and many other theorists are accused of being guilty of not taking into consideration what Charles Pentland terms the 'pragmatic test.' That test, which is particularly relevant for the social sciences and especially to the studies of integration where the object of study is a process of political change often consciously

such it should be referred to as a special type of amalgamation.¹⁴ But, as we will see below theories of integration in the so-called 'community-model' concept are of special interest to students of federalism who attempt to explain the "cohesion and persistence of a federal pattern of government" or the way a "federally amalgamated community" becomes or remains integrated.¹⁵ The next several sections of this chapter will examine the way Deutch's ideas have been associated with several important and subsequent theoretical approaches.

STUDIES OF FEDERALISM: MAJOR ISSUES AND APPROACHES

Theories of federalism may concern themselves with the merger of independent states into a federation and with the continuation of the federal state as a cohesive entity working at the international level and the national level respectively.¹⁶ Classic writers on federalism emphasize the need to arrive at a particular type of constitutional arrangement before a system can be described as integrated. They take issue with the concept of common culture as a prerequisite for unification. The popularity of the concept of federalism increased significantly following the end of the Hapsburg, Romanov and Ottoman empires, and gained further momentum with the growth in the number of states after World War I.¹⁷ Federalism was conceived as a political device for establishing viable institutions and flexible relationships capable of facilitating intra-state linkages (representation of the units at the central level), inter-state relations (division of powers between orders of government), inter-community cooperation (safeguard for minority nationalities), and extending to supra-national units (world

being engineered by international organizations, governments or individuals. Charles Pentland, *Integration Theory and European Integration* (New York: The Free Press: MacMillan Publishing, 1973), 20.

¹⁴ Deutch, et al., "Political Community," 5-7

¹⁵ Arend Lijphart, "Cultural Diversity and Theories of Political Integration," *The Canadian Journal of Political Science* (March 1971) 3

¹⁶ Pentland, "International Theory." In Part I Pentland gives a comprehensive overview of the approaches to international relations theories - functionalist, neo-functionalist, pluralist and federalist - as they relate to integration

¹⁷ Teune argues that consistent, severe, and widespread deprivations serve as important conditioners for changes in political identification. As examples he notes that the League of Nations and the United Nations were attempts at large scale political integration which followed the devastation of the world wars. Both of these attempts were based on the principles of federalism "The Learning of Integrative Habits," 277-278

government and international organizations). Federalism's major appeal was its capacity to establish varying balances between centripetal and centrifugal forces within a political system.

Federalism is premised on a contractual arrangement between the political units who decided to join together to form a new political space. The federalist concept rests on two principles: autonomy and union. This implies a system of divided sovereignty. Neither of these two principles can take precedence over the other without endangering the maintenance of the federal system. Fundamental to the system's survival is a written constitution which cannot be amended unilaterally by simple acts of legislation or by the constituent units. It is the constitution that apportions the spheres of jurisdiction between the units. This distribution of powers is the primary feature which distinguishes a federation from a unitary state or a confederation.¹⁸ As such federalism accepts the possibility of multiple levels of political orientation: individuals can participate in, and feel loyalty to, several sets of political institutions at the same time, and in the same space without experiencing conflict. An individual's attitudes to the local community, the state/province/*Länder*, the nation-state, or international organizations, while not possibly of similar intensities in a particular federal system, are essentially multiple facets that are not mutually exclusive.

Thus the concept of federalism could be described as one of division, divided sovereignty, divided powers, divided loyalties. Indeed the theoretical approaches to federalism are also divided by various features. Most classic prescriptions of federal systems focus on the formal division of powers between different levels of government. Other theorists have challenged this formalistic and legalistic approach, and suggest that one must also consider the dynamics of federalism in modern societies. For most

¹⁸ In the unitary state governing power is exercised by one final authority that of the central government. This government can change or destroy the powers of the local units or alter their boundaries. England's Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher used this capability of the central government to enact legislation to disband the Greater London Council and six other municipal councils in 1986. See Margaret Thatcher, *The Downing Street Years* (New York: Harper Collins, 1993), 284, 305, 642-667. Also see Mark Fischer and R. Rogers, *A New London* (London: Penguin, 1992). A federal state also contrasts with confederation where the central government is the delegate of the sub-units who retain the right to resume the delegated powers should they wish. It was the conditions of the *Articles of Confederation of 1777* that preceded the United States and the *Confederate States of America* formed the league of eleven southern States that seceded from the United States during 1860-1861.

analysts of federalism the allocation of powers in a state must be flexible, and inter-governmental cooperation should cross these lines of demarcation if a modern society is to function effectively. Further, it is argued that the classical federalist approach does little to shed light on the social conditions and processes which come together to form and sustain a federal system. Disagreements regarding the best manner of conceptualizing federalism have resulted in two major strains of federalist theory: the 'classical approach' and the 'community-model' of federalism.

The important work of federalism contributed by K. C. Wheare has been hailed as pathbreaking, and magistral. Wheare's contribution is perhaps the most influential of the classic formulations of federalism. Wheare's analysis is institutional in the sense that he views federalism as a form of government that embodies what he calls the 'federal principle,' i.e. "the method of dividing power so that the general and regional governments are each, within a sphere, coordinate and independent."¹⁹ Wheare draws a distinction between federal governments and federal constitutions, positing that "It is not enough that the federal principle should be embodied predominantly in the written constitution of a country . . . what determines the issues is the working of the system."²⁰ Federalism according to Wheare is a principle of both organization and practice.

Most classic descriptions of federal systems are variations on Wheare's theme regarding the formal division of powers between levels of government. For example, in order for federalism to exist A. W. Macmahon identifies five core criteria : a distribution of power between central and local governments, not subject to legislative change; 'substantial' rather than 'trivial' local powers; contact between the central government and individual citizens; some freedom for the member-states as to their own internal organization; and legal equality of the member-states.²¹ Many other definitions of federalism share this perspective. R. L. Watts, for example, sees the federal concept as

¹⁹ K. C. Wheare, *Federal Government*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1964), 11. This work was first published in 1946, references in this paper will reflect the Fourth Edition

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 33.

²¹ A. W. Macmahon, ed., "The Problems of Federalism: A Survey," *Federalism: Mature and Emergent* (New York: Russell and Russell Ltd., 1955), 4-5

entailing "two coordinate levels of sovereignty within a single country."²² Alexander Hamilton -- to consider an early American effort at theorizing -- concluded, that the only essential rule in a federal system was that there must be a "constitutional distribution of powers between the central establishment and the members of the system."²³ As a model for integration, classic federalism's prescriptions and analyses stress formal institutional requirements as the minimum prerequisite to successful operation of a federation. They do so at the cost of some rigidity and insensitivity to many sociological variables which other authors feel are essential "to measure and perhaps predict the gradual emergence or decay of a federal system."²⁴

Major criticism of Wheare's scholarly work emanated from analysts studying newly independent nations in the second half of the twentieth century, many of which formally established federal arrangements and proudly claim to be federal. For example, W. S. Livingstone, argues that a legalistic definition of federalism is too narrow. Instead he offers a sociological definition: "the essence of federalism lies not in the institutional or constitutional structure, but in society itself. . . . The essential nature of federalism is to be sought for, not in the shadings of legal and constitutional terminology, but in the forces - economic, social, political, cultural - that have made the outward forms of federalism necessary."²⁵ Livingstone goes on to state that a federal society is one whose diversity is reflected territorially, and that a federal government is merely a "device by which the federal qualities of the society are articulated and protected."²⁶ In 1964, William H. Riker pointed out that employing Livingstone's criteria "well over half the land mass of the world was ruled by governments that, with some justification . . . describe themselves as federalist."²⁷ Thus, Riker was implying that where Wheare is too restrictive in his concept of federalism, Livingstone is far too broad in his approach.

²² R. L. Watts, *New Federations: Experiments in the Commonwealth* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1966), 10.

²³ Alexander Hamilton, especially Federalist 16 and 17 in *American Government: Readings and Cases*, Ninth Edition, ed. Peter Woll (Boston: Little, Brown and Co. 1987), 57.

²⁴ Charles Pentland, "International Theory," 151

²⁵ W. S. Livingstone, *Federalism and Constitutional Change* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1956), 22.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 14.

²⁷ William H. Riker, *Federalism: Origin, Operation, Significance* (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1964), 1.

Riker claims to expand on Wheare's concept without going as far as Livingstone. He describes federalism functionally as "the main alternative to empire as a technique of aggregating large areas under one government . . . and structurally as a system with a constitution which has these basic characteristics; two levels of government rule the same land and people; each level has at least one area of action in which it is autonomous, and there is some guarantee (even though merely of statement in the constitution) of the autonomy of each government in its own sphere."²⁸ Further Riker views the federal process as essentially a 'federal bargain.' He theorizes that there are two circumstances which encourage a willingness to strike such bargain: the expansion condition, characterized by territorial expansion other than by conquest; and the military condition, characterized by the need for protection against a military-diplomatic threat. Riker's hypothesis is that these "two predispositions are *always* present in the federal bargain and that each one is a necessary condition for the creation of a federalism"²⁹ These preconditions must prevail for both actors in the bargain. Those who offer the bargain desire to expand their territory and those who accept the bargain must be willing to sacrifice some independence in order to gain protection from some external threat.

C. J. Friedrich takes issue with Riker's approach and his claims. Though Riker presents his approach as if it were "a wholly new treatment of a subject hitherto monopolized by the 'institutional approaches,'" Friedrich views Riker's approach as essentially re-stating the old contractual theory of federalism"³⁰ thus failing to live up to his claim of innovation. Friedrich's view of a federal system is "a union of groups, united by one or more common objectives, but retaining their distinctive groups character for other purposes,"³¹ Federalism is "the process of federalizing a political community, either through the differentiation of a hitherto unitary state or through a process of integration where separate political organizations (not necessarily territorial

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 5-11.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, 13. Emphasis in the original

³⁰ C. J. Friedrich, "Book Review," *The American Political Science Review* Vol. 60 (March 1966) 404

states) come to make joint decisions.”³² In this instance federalism is taken to be a general principle of social organization.

This implies that sociological rather than legal criteria must be applied in assessing the degree of federalism in a system. This ‘community-model’ or ‘sociological’ perspective broadens the consideration of federalism by focusing on the social causes and conditions of federation, and treats the legalistic/structural emphasis of the classical federalist studies as a secondary factor. Sociologically inclined theorists suggest the necessity and feasibility of measuring the growth and decay of federal systems against more expansive standards than simply the constitutional division of jurisdiction, when attempting to determine the degree of federalism within a political system. Alternatively, while the classical federalists do not ignore the importance of community of language, religion, race, and nationality as factors conducive to the “capacity for union”, they generally assert that these traits cannot be regarded as “essential prerequisites of the desire for union.”³³ Both leading approaches argue that federalism can be an appropriate form of government to offer to members of a multi-national community who wish to form a common government and to behave as one people for some set of purposes, but who also wish to remain independent and retain their own distinct nationality. “They must desire union, and must not desire unity.”³⁴ But, a federal union implies that those who join will be expected to develop some common nationality *in addition* to their separate ethnic nationalities, and that such loyalties can co-exist as alternating facets of a single citizen’s belief system. Without a sense of this common nationality a federation provides little in the way of a unifying system.³⁵

³¹ C. J. Friedrich, “New Tendencies in Federal Theory and Practice,” paper presented to the Sixth World Congress of the International Political Science Association, (2), quoted in A. H. Birch, ‘Approaches to the Study of Federalism,’ *Political Studies* (January 1966): 18.

³² C. J. Friedrich, “Federal Constitutional Theory and Emergent Proposals,” in *Federalism: Mature and Emergent*, ed. A. W. Macmahon (New York: Russell and Russell Ltd, 1955), 514.

³³ Wheare, “*Federal Government*,” 38-9.

³⁴ A. V. Dicey, *Introduction to the Study of Law of the Constitution*, Tenth Edition (London: Macmillan, 1915), 137.

³⁵ For an overview of failed inter-state federations see Thomas M. Frank, *Why Federations Fail: An Inquiry into the Requisites for Successful Federalism*, ed. Thomas M. Frank (New York: New York University Press, 1968).

The preceding overview of the theoretical approaches to federalism illustrates that the discussions of the concept are concerned with the issue of balancing order with diversity in operating federal systems in an attempt to obtain or maintain political stability. The role which federalism is expected to play in the making of nations is to manage situations of social heterogeneity. Because federations are more likely than unitary systems to be the consequences of a deliberate choice, there must exist a desire for union on behalf of the constituent communities. To some theorists the existence of a common culture is not a necessary condition for federation. Others, in contrast, argue that fostering a sense of 'community' is necessary if the national loyalty is to gradually replace loyalty to the individual units in politically fragmented systems. By focusing on the causes, conditions and structures of federation, federalist theoretical approaches "differ from other theories of integration because they have to explain not only the *cohesion* of the federal state as a whole but also the persistence of *division* within the federation."³⁶

THE CONSOCIATIONAL ALTERNATIVE

Can federalism successfully operate in countries that are deeply divided in sub-cultural terms? In such cases the federalist principle of divided sovereignty may be rendered insufficient as an arrangement to bring about political stability. Where no 'community' or common nationality has emerged to replace nationalist loyalties within the sub-units an alternative theoretical perspective has recently been explored. Theorists of a model known as 'consociationism' assert that political stability and peaceful conflict resolution can be maintained if the leaders of these types of federations engage in cooperative efforts to counteract the centrifugal tendencies of cultural fragmentation.

In the 1950s, as discussions of federalism revealed, there were significant changes in the way political organization was viewed. The study of politics shifted away from a traditional concern with formal institutions, and theorists focused increasingly

And for a recent intra-state failure see Lenard J. Cohen, *Broken Bonds: The Disintegration of Yugoslavia* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1993)

on the dynamics of the political process. This new emphasis challenged the simplistic and traditional classification of Western style democratic regimes. Conventional typologies, such as classic federalism, with stable two-party systems based on alternating majority governments, were contrasted with the more fragmented multi-party systems in divided societies. For example in 1956, Gabriel A. Almond in what was to become a classical typology of political systems distinguishes three types of Western democratic systems: Anglo-American (Britain and the United States), Continental European (France, Germany, and Italy), and a third category consisting of Scandinavia, the Benelux countries, Austria, and Switzerland. This third type appeared as more or less a mixed system which "combined some of the features of the Continental European and Anglo-American political systems, and stood somewhere between these two patterns,"³⁷ as such it was not given its own distinct label and largely neglected or treated as "isolated phenomena mainly of folkloristic interest."³⁸

But, in the late 1960s Arend Lijphart applied the expression "consociationalism" or "politics of accommodation" to the patterns and processes of pluralism which existed within Almond's third category of democratic systems.³⁹ This new perspective challenged liberal democracy's approach to cultural diversity and divided loyalties. In particular it challenged the ability of majoritarian democracy to successfully cope with the political strains exhibited in multi-national societies. Theorists of consociationalism contend that democracy and majority rule are incompatible in deeply divided or plural societies. Instead of social and political interaction among citizens of diverse cultural backgrounds, consociationalists prefer that members of potentially antagonistic groups remain relatively isolated from one another, "because good social fences may make good political neighbors, a kind of voluntary *apartheid* policy may be the most appropriate solution for a divided society."⁴⁰

³⁶ Lijphart, "Cultural Diversity," 8

³⁷ Gabriel A. Almond, "Comparative Political Studies," *Journal of Politics*, XVII (August 1956), 392-93

³⁸ Hans Daalder, "The Consociational Democracy Theme," *World Politics* XXVI, No. 4 (1974): 604.

³⁹ Arend Lijphart, *The Politics of Accommodation: Pluralism and Democracy in the Netherlands* (Berkeley University of California Press, 1968)

⁴⁰ Lijphart, "Cultural Diversity," 11

Consociational democracy, or consociationalism, has been approached from three principal standpoints.⁴¹ First as a pattern of social structure, emphasizing the degree of religious, ideological, cultural or linguistic segmentation in the society itself.⁴² Secondly, as an underlying characteristic of political culture arising from historical circumstances, ie, the existence of older patterns of élite cooperation in the pre-modern period which paves the way for a politics of accommodation in an age of mass politics.⁴³ Thirdly, as a pattern of élite behavior and mass- élite relationships, emphasizing the processes of decision- making and conflict regulation.⁴⁴ It is the last approach, most directly associated with the work of Arend Lijphart, which will be the focus of attention for the following discussion of consociationalism below.

Almond's two-fold typology, previously mentioned, focused on the relationship between political culture and social structure on the one hand, and political stability on the other. Almond's theoretical departure point is the phenomenon of 'overlapping memberships' or 'cross-cutting cleavages' discussed in the work of Seymour Martin Lipset. Lipset argues that "the chances for stable democracy are enhanced to the extent that groups and individuals have a number of crosscutting, politically relevant affiliations" which encourage individuals to adopt moderate positions.⁴⁵ In Almond's democracies cultural diversity is invited, and the political system should provide adequate procedures for conflict resolution. The emphasis on a cultural pluralist approach was at the heart of the liberal democratic principal strategy utilized during the post-World War II period. However, when the political landscape is deeply sub-culturally fragmented and the pressures toward a moderate middle course are absent, other sources of democratic stability may become necessary. In the mid 1960s the Dutch political scientist Arend Lijphart argued that in deeply divided societies a third variable

⁴¹ Kenneth D. McRae, ed., "Introduction," *Consociational Democracy: Political Accommodation in Segmented Societies* (Ottawa: McClelland and Stewart, 1974), 2-32

⁴² V. R. Lorwin, "Segmented Pluralism," *Comparative Politics*, Vol. 3 (1971), 141-174

⁴³ Hans Daalder, "On Building Consociational Nations: the Case of the Netherlands and Switzerland," *International Social Science Journal*, Vol. 23 (1971), 355-370.

⁴⁴ Arend Lijphart, *Democracy in Plural Societies: A Comparative Exploration* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1977). Lijphart based this comparative work on his earlier case study of Dutch democracy "The Politics of Accommodation."

⁴⁵ Lipset, *Political Man: The Social Bases of Politics* (Garden City: Doubleday, 1960), 88-89.

can account for political stability and democracy, namely, the deliberate efforts aimed at 'overarching élite cooperation' among the leaders of rival sub-cultures inhabiting a common state. As a result of such overarching cooperation at the élite level, a country can "achieve a degree of political stability quite out of proportion to its social homogeneity."⁴⁶

To turn a fragmented cultural democracy into a stable democracy Lijphart argues that four requirements are necessary. The élites: 1) have the ability to accommodate the divergent interests and demands of the sub-cultures; 2) be able to transcend cleavages and join in a common effort with élites of rival sub-cultures; 3) demonstrate a commitment to the maintenance of the system and to the improvement of its cohesion and stability; and finally, 4) understand the perils of political fragmentation.⁴⁷ Thus the "essential characteristic of consociational democracy is . . . the cooperation at the *élite level* with the deliberate aim of counteracting disintegrative tendencies in the system."⁴⁸

But, consociational democracy entails more than the cooperation of the sub-culture élites. Lijphart's view is that majority rule is inappropriate for deeply divided societies. In contrast his consociational thought emphasizes the following basic principles of governance: 1) grand coalition government, or the need for consensual decision-making by élites representing the various sub-cultural groups; 2) mutual veto, that is the right of each group to obstruct major issues which affect them (a protection for minorities being outvoted by the majority); 3) the principle of proportionality, a proportionate sharing of state expenditure and political patronage; and finally, 4) extensive self-government, a prerogative which allows each group to regulate and control its affairs. For the system to operate successfully there must be strict adherence to a set of tacit 'rules of the game.'⁴⁹ The paramount rule is that politics should not be regarded as simply a game. Rather politics is a serious business. In a consociational system the

⁴⁶ Arend Lijphart, "Consociational Democracy," *World Politics*, Vol. XXI, No 2 (1969), 208

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 216

⁴⁸ Arend Lijphart, "Typologies of Democratic Systems," *Comparative Political Studies*, Vol.1 (1968), 21
Emphasis added.

⁴⁹ Lijphart outlines seven rules that have been inferred from the actions of leaders in conditions of political tension: The Business of Politics, Agreement to Disagree, Summit Diplomacy, Proportionality, Depoliticization, Secrecy, and the Government's Right to Govern. "*The Politics of Accommodation*," 123-135

stakes are too high to flirt with zero-sum 'game' situations. There must be no major winners or losers and all the actors must be committed to the maintenance of the system, as well as the improvement of its cohesion and stability.

What conditions are most conducive to the above consociational requirements, and what factors encourage adherence to the system's basic principles? For Lijphart the crucial conditions are associated with inter - sub-cultural relations at the élite level, inter - sub-cultural relations at the mass level, and élite-mass relations within each of the sub-cultures. Briefly, there are three factors conducive to the establishment or maintenance of cooperation among élites of the sub-culture. First, the existence of *external threats* to the country are helpful. Such threats strengthen the ties among the sub-cultures at the mass level, and also the links between leaders and followers within the sub-culture. Second, are factors which help the élites to recognize the necessity of cooperation, and particularly a *multiple balance of power among the subcultures* rather than a dual balance of power or a clear hegemony by one sub-culture. Finally, a consociational democracy presupposes not only a willingness on the part of élites to cooperate, but also a capability to solve the political problems of their countries. Thus inter-élite cooperation is associated with *a relatively low total load on the decision-making apparatus*. In this respect size is an important factor. Smaller states are more easily managed and generally do not experience imposing external demands to the political system.⁵⁰

At the mass level Lijphart feels that inter - sub-cultural relations in consociational countries must exhibit *distinct lines of cleavage*.⁵¹ These cleavages facilitate the peaceful coexistence of the divergent sub-cultures; conflict arises only when they are in contact with each other. This counters the hypotheses of the 'community-model' theorists, discussed above,² who postulated that ethnic cleavages and sub-cultural differences would decrease with increased contacts, and that this in turn would lead to an increase in mutual understanding and further homogenization. Consociationalists, similar to the classical federalists, take the view that cultural homogeneity is not a

⁵⁰ Lijphart, "Consociational Democracy," 218-219. Emphasis in the original

necessary condition to the maintenance of a stable political system. The criticism leveled at the 'community-model' theorists is that they do not distinguish between essentially homogeneous political cultures and essentially heterogeneous cultures. Walker Connor makes this point when he argues, "... if one is dealing not with minor variations of the same culture, but with two quite distinct and self-differentiated cultures, are not increased contacts between the two apt to increase antagonisms?"⁵² At the mass level in culturally fragmented democracies Lijphart emphasizes that political stability is dependent, in part, on minimizing transactions between the various sub-cultures. In short a certain degree of distance fosters cooperation, while too much familiarity breeds contempt and conflict.

Finally, distinct lines of cleavage foster a high degree of *internal political cohesion of the subcultures*. They do so in two ways, in their cooperative and compromising role élites must not lose the allegiance and support of their own rank and file. When the sub-cultures are cohesive blocks such support is more likely to develop. Second, the cultures must be distinct enough so that parties and interest groups will be the organized representatives of the political sub-culture. Thus *adequate articulation of the interests of the sub-cultures* is assured.⁵³ Aggregation of clearly differentiated and articulated interests enable the élites to perform.

A final factor which favors consociational democracy, overall, is *widespread approval of the principle of government by élite cartel*. As has been shown, an important pre-condition for consociational accommodation is the willingness on the part of sub-cultural élites to form a grand coalition. Equally important is the willingness of the masses to defer to the leaders which form this coalition. The masses must accept their position in the social hierarchy and on the scale of political authority. To do so they must have respect for, and submit, to their superiors.⁵⁴

In summary according to the consociationalist perspective the viability of a democratic system must not be evaluated solely against the criteria of pluralistic

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 219-210

⁵² Walker Connor, "Self-Determination: The New Phase," *World Politics* XX, No. 1 (October 1967): 49-50

⁵³ Lijphart, "Consociational Democracy," 221-224.

democracy. The consociational theorists draw attention to some important facts influencing the political development of multi-ethnic states, arguing that "deep mutually reinforcing social cleavages do not form an insuperable obstacle to viable democracy . . . the politics of accommodation opens up the possibility of a viable democracy even where the social conditions appear unpromising."⁵⁵

Consociational democracy theory has been subjected to a number of serious criticisms.⁵⁶ Some attacks on consociationalism derived from its allegedly anti-democratic nature. For example, it is alleged that the theory falls short of the liberal democratic trinity - liberty, equality and fraternity. Consociationalists are more concerned with the equal or proportional treatment of groups than with individual equality; the theory is premised on the level of peaceful coexistence rather than "positive and fraternal peace;" and consociationalism allegedly tolerates the subjugation of and deferential role of all non-élites.⁵⁷ But are these criticisms warranted or are they simply based on a facile comparison with the democratic practices of majority rule and government-versus-opposition politics which prevail in culturally homogeneous societies? Moreover it can be suggested that the charge that consociationalists are élitist is rather naive in view of the fact that most democratic regimes are themselves élitist in many ways. The debate continues.

THEORETICAL APPROACHES TO NATIONALISM AND ETHNICITY

Federalist and consociationalists present differing and important solutions to the problem of 'managing' inter-group hostility and accommodating divergent interests in multi-cultural states. However, the search for conflict resolution in multi-ethnic societies has continued to challenge social science theorizing in recent years as the magnitude of ethnic violence, separatism, and cultural turbulence has continued to

⁵⁴ Lijphart, "Politics of Accommodation," 145

⁵⁵ Lijphart, "Democracy in Plural Societies: A Comparative Exploration, (New Haven, Yale University Press, 1977), 211

⁵⁶ See Brian Barry, Review Article, "Political Accommodation and Consociational Democracy," *British Journal of Political Science*, V (1975) 477-505 and Barry's "The Consociational Model and Its Danger," *European Journal of Political Research*, III (1976) 393-412, also Hans Daalder, "The Consociational Democracy Theme," 604-621

grow costly and violent scenarios of dis-integration have frequently developed in culturally divided societies. Theories of nationalism and ethnonationalism have focused on such increasing violence and conflicts, particularly in relation to intra-state political instability. These theories will be reviewed as they relate to intra-state conflict.

Nationalism arose in nineteenth century Europe as an exercise in matching a 'people' with a 'state.' Whether as an ideology, a policy program, or a basis for state formation the idea of the right to national self-determination and national sovereignty has engendered politically powerful emotions. In its peaceful form nationalism is a positive sentiment devoted to the recognition and maintenance of cultural difference; in its negative form nationalism has the potential for generating manic behavior including an exaggerated collective egoism manifested in the intense belief that one's own nationality has an imperial mission to fulfil. During the nineteenth and twentieth centuries both Marxist and liberal ideologies discounted and underestimated the power and persistence of nationalist appeals. Marxist élites, despite their tremendous efforts, failed to produce a 'socialist man' while liberalism has not produced a 'national man' concerned solely with material goods. Scholarly literature has dismissed nationalism as 'irrational', 'tribal' or a symptom of 'less civilized' nations - ethnic conflict would subside with the emergence of 'modern societies.' But modernization has not always eroded nationalism's potent appeal. Indeed, modernization is a two edged sword that can eliminate old identities, but can also encourage awareness of one's own ethnic identity in relation to other ethnic group

In broad terms nationalism, arising from heightened ethnic consciousness, has been increasing, not decreasing. Multi-ethnic states at all levels of modernity are experiencing challenges to their presently delineated borders.⁵⁸ The slogan 'one world' which captivated the minds of scholars in the 1960s now appears to be an anachronistic relic. More often than not the 'vanishing ethnic' only vanished from the minds of the scholars. Such scholarship developed theories of nation-building and

⁵⁸ Lijphart, "Democracy in Plural Societies," 47-52

theories of supra-internationalism which gained in consensus and influence. Ethnic diversity has continued as an important basis for political mobilization, as a motive for loyalty, and as a moral social psychological basis for the 'us-them' syndrome. This persistence of nationalism has had, throughout the late twentieth century, serious implications for national and international political stability.

Explaining Nationalism: Some Contending Classical Approaches

The conventional Marxist prediction asserts that national identity is a retrograde phenomenon destined to disappear. Social class, an economic category, is the most salient based political cleavage between people, and as with modernization gradually erases lines of tribal, linguistic, religious and other form of nationality. Indeed with the rise of 'proletarian internationalism' even these class divisions would, in the Marxist scheme, eventually disappear.⁵⁹ Nationalism, for most Marxists, constituted an ephemeral phenomenon which appears at a certain stage of economic development, when the bourgeoisie and its capitalist mode of production are in the ascendant. What nationalist ideology asserts or denies becomes of no interest, since it is a product of false consciousness, which must itself fade away as capitalism inevitably succumbs to its own crisis: the bourgeoisie will be deposed and the structure which maintained it destroyed.⁶⁰

The liberal view, though not as extreme or definitive as Marxism in its assertions, is similarly uncomfortable with nationalism. Because the ultimate assumptions of liberalism are closely bound to material interest, liberal thought was unable to cope with

⁵⁹ Technologically and economically advanced regions of Western Europe and North America are troubled by ethnic unrest. These include Spain Basques and Catalans, Swiss, Berne French, South Tyroleans Italian, Breton French, Scottish, Welsh, Irish British, Walloon and Flemish Belgium, and Québécois Canada.

⁵⁹ See Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*, (London Verso Editions, 1983). Also Eric Hobsbawm's *Nations and Nationalism Since 1780: Programme, Myth, Reality* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990). For a critique see Anthony D. Smith, "The Nation: Invented, Imagined, Reconstructed?" in *Reimagining the Nation*, eds Marjorie Ringrose and Adam J. Lerner (Buckingham Open University Press, 1993), 9-28.

⁶⁰ Elie Kedoune, *Nationalism*, Fourth, expanded edition (Oxford: Blackwell, 1993), 141-142. This work was first published in 1960.

a set of ideas that regularly place non-material interest above others.⁶¹ The liberal expectancy assumes that with modernization ethnic loyalties will erode through a diffusion of cultural values, and also that the features dividing one group from another would recede as a result of the introduction of common systems of education, increased communication, and uniform economic and political systems.⁶² Under these circumstances the 'primordial' (or antecedent) differences between groups was expected to diminish in significance. What both the Marxist prediction and the liberal expectancy failed to take into account was that "nationalism and nationhood operate on their own criteria and impose their own rationality - separate and at variance to these other ideologies."⁶³

Exactly what nationalism is, why it had failed to disappear, and why national identity has continued to be such a significant faction in modern politics, have been widely debated issues in contemporary social and political thought. Scholars such as John Stuart Mill described exclusive nationalism as barbaric as it "makes men indifferent to the rights and interests of any portion of the human species, save that which is called by the same name and speaks the same language."⁶⁴ In Ernest Renan's view a nation is a great solidarity based on the consciousness of sacrifices made in the past and willingness to make further ones in the future. In his often quoted characterization "the existence of a nation is an everyday plebiscite."⁶⁵ More contemporary historical writers continued to struggle for a definition of the concept. To Hans Kohn, nationalism is "first and foremost a state of mind, an act of consciousness, ... the individual's identification of himself with the 'we-group' to which he gives

⁶¹ George Schofflin "Nationalism and National Minorities in East and Central Europe." *Journal of International Affairs*, Vol. 45 No. 1 (Summer 1991) 51

⁶² Karl W. Deutsch, first posited the 'modernization' approach in *Nationalism and Social Communication: An Inquiry into the Foundations of Nationality* (Cambridge Cambridge University Press, 1954) This work was followed by the 'conflictual modernization' theorists such as Walker Connor, Anthony Smith and Joseph Rothschild

⁶³ Schofflin, "Nationalism and National Minorities," 51

⁶⁴ John Stuart Mill, *Considerations on Representative Government* (London, 1872), 120, in *The Dynamics of Nationalism. Readings in Its Meaning and Development*, ed. Louis Snyder (Princeton D. Van Nostrand Company, 1964), 2. Initially opposed to the absolute application of the principle of national self-determination, Mill later argued for the independence of the nation-state (a fusion of nationality and state) which became a basic theme of nineteenth and twentieth century liberalism

⁶⁵ Ernest Renan, *Qu'est-ce qu'une nation?* (Paris, 1882), 26-29. Translated by Ida Mae Snyder, *Ibid.*, 10

supreme loyalty."⁶⁶ He goes on to trace the nature of group consciousness as the basic element in nationalism. Carlton J. H. Hayes sees the concept as "a fusion of patriotism with a consciousness of nationality . . . It is a product combining a common language and . . . a community of historical traditions."⁶⁷

By the mid-twentieth century scholars from other areas of the social sciences were contributing to the growing literature devoted to nationalism. Sociologist Ernest Gellner described nationalism as "primarily a political principle, which holds that the political and national unit should be congruent."⁶⁸ Anthony Smith makes the observation that "nationalism is first and foremost a political doctrine," which fuses three ideals: collective self-determination of the people, the expression of national character and individuality, and finally the vertical division of the world into unique nations each contributing its special genius to the common fund of humanity.⁶⁹ In a philosophical approach Elie Kedourie, reinforces Smith's assertion by examining the metaphysical foundations of national ideology:

Nationalism . . . pretends to supply a criterion for the determination of the unit of population proper to enjoy a government exclusively its own, for the legitimate exercise of power in the state, and for the right organization of a society of states. Briefly, the doctrine holds that humanity is naturally divided into nations, that nations are known by certain characteristics which can be ascertained, and that the only legitimate type of government is national self-government.⁷⁰

What is evident from these three perspectives is a subtle shift from studies which view nationalism as a condition of mind, to other works that regard nationalism as a political principle, doctrine or an ideology. Kedourie's analysis of nationalism is highly critical: "The attempts to refashion so much of the world on national lines has not led to greater peace and stability." On the contrary, Kedourie stresses "it has created new conflicts, exacerbated tensions, and brought catastrophe to numberless people innocent of all politics."⁷¹ This harsh critique of nationalism is consistent with the bulk of the

⁶⁶ Hans Kohn, "The Idea of Nationalism: A Study of its Origins and Background," *Ibid.*, 10

⁶⁷ Carlton J. H. Hayes, "Nationalism: Historical Development," *Encyclopedia of the Social Sciences* (New York: Macmillan, 1937), Vol. 6, 240-248, *Ibid.*, 36-44

⁶⁸ Ernest Gellner, *Nations and Nationalism*, (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1983), 1

⁶⁹ Anthony D. Smith, *Theories of Nationalism* (London: Duckworth, 1971), 19 and 23-4

⁷⁰ Kedourie, "Nationalism," 1

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, 133

scholarly literature which followed World War II ; nationalism was rarely portrayed as being anything other than evil and its eventual demise was not only predicted but welcomed. Edward H. Carr, a political scientist and a committed internationalist, in his mid-century critique of nationalism saw nationalism as a corrosive force in the international order.⁷² He was also critical of national self-determination, a principle that "identified self-determination with nationalism, and treated the nation as the natural basis of the state."⁷³

Recent Approaches to Ethno-Nationalism

Concerned with the deleterious effects of nationalism, some scholars posited the 'modernization approach' to political integration. As discussed above the 'liberal expectancy' claims that modernization undermines ethnic identity, primarily through processes of communication, education and the building of new national historical myths and realities which can replace ethnic loyalty. Loyalty to one's own 'tribe' would gradually atrophy and states would emerge as 'melting pots' or 'mosaics'.⁷⁴ When such benign solutions failed to occur, and ethnic conflict assumed greater importance in the political life of modern industrialized countries, these 'melting pot modernization' theories were replaced by 'conflictual modernization' theories.⁷⁵ Rather than abandoning an analysis of the modernization process scholars sought to rework the theories dealing with the influence of modernization on ethnic political relations. As a result of such theoretical discussion, theories of ethnicity diverged into what Anthony Smith has respectively described as the "primordial" and the "instrumental" schools.⁷⁶

The first task, for these 'conflictual' modernization theorists was to re-introduce the role of ethnicity in nationalism. In a seminal article Walker Connor took to task

⁷² Edward H Carr, *Nationalism and After* (London: Macmillan, 1945), 38-70

⁷³ Edward H Carr, *Conditions of Peace* (London: Macmillan, 1942), 38

⁷⁴ Clifford Geertz, "The Integrative Revolution: Primordial Sentiments and Civil Politics in the New States," in *Old Societies and New States: The Quest for Modernity in Asia and Africa*, ed. Clifford Geertz (New York: Free Press, 1963).

⁷⁵ Walker Connor, "Nation-Building or Nation-Destroying?" *World Politics*, Vol. XXIV, #3 (1972), A. D. Smith, *The Ethnic Revival* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981), and Joseph Rothschild, *Ethnopolitics: A Conceptual Framework* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1985)

much of the 'melting pot' literature for failing to recognize the strength of ethnic identity. "To the degree that ethnic identity is given recognition, it is apt to be as a somewhat unimportant and ephemeral nuisance. . . . one of a number of minor impediments to effective state-integration."⁷⁷ For Connor true nationalism was ethnic identity, and the confusion of the two loyalties state and nation, and the inappropriate inter-utilization of the two terms led him to reason that the modernization approach's "true goal is not 'nation-building' but 'nation-destroying.'"⁷⁸ Destroying, in the sense of the state becoming the primary focus of allegiance by the members of the 'nations' which inhabit a common geographical territory.

Expanding on this theme, Connor argues that the processes of economic modernization do not undermine ethnic divisions but, rather invigorate them.⁷⁹ Modernization does so by bringing together previously isolated ethnic groups that find themselves competing for the same economic niches. People then compete for occupational positions and seek out their ethnic identity as a tool in promoting their economic and political demands. This reinterpretation of the relationship between modernization and ethnicity was to have a profound influence on the study of ethno-political conflict. No longer was ethnicity dismissed as a 'primordial' identity which would disappear according to Marxist and liberal expectations. Rather nationalism and its sources serve as an 'instrument' that can be constantly created and re-created to suit particular political goals.⁸⁰

The instrumentalist approach to ethnicity treats nationalism primarily as a form of politics.⁸¹ The argument is "that the search for the common features underlying all nationalist movements should focus upon the political context."⁸² Instrumentalists such as Ernest Gellner, Eric Hobsbawm and Benedict Anderson subscribe to the Marxist tradition of class manipulation when seeking to explain and understand national

⁷⁶ Smith, "Theories of Nationalism."

⁷⁷ Connor, "Nation-Building," 319

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, 336

⁷⁹ Walker Connor, "The Politics of Ethnonationalism," *International Affairs*, Vol. 27, No 1 (1973): 1- 21

⁸⁰ Nathan Glazer, "Introduction," in *Ethnicity: Theory and Experience*, eds. Nathan Glazer and Daniel P. Moynihan with the assistance of Corinne Saposs Schelling (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1975), 2

⁸¹ John Breuilly, *Nationalism and the State*, 2nd ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1993), 1

phenomenon. For recent Marxist treatments nationalism cannot be recognized as a primordial 'given.' It is subject to a range of economic and political forces such as: economic competition between groups and regions, the manipulation of ethnic identity, and the attraction of communalism in the absence of other effective forms of political participation; "when society fails, the nation [ethnic group] appears as the ultimate guarantee."⁸³ This viewpoint, typical but not exclusive to Marxist writings, contrasts sharply with the theoretical works which tend to treat nationalism as a state of mind.

The 'state of mind' approach which is most closely associated with the 'primordial' school, owes its intellectual origins to the classical historical writings. The theorists who approach nationalism from this standpoint make the assumption that the nation is the product of natural consciousness, which demands the supreme loyalty of all individuals, classes, and groups. Ultimately, a 'nation' will emerge from this common loyalty. For the primordialist, nationalism is the primary formative factor, and the nation is derivative.⁸⁴ Rupert Emerson writes, "the nation is the largest community which, when the chips are down, effectively commands man's loyalty . . . the end point of working solidarity between men. . . . is when the nation is seen as the community which makes the nearest approach to embracing all aspects of their lives."⁸⁵

Though they differ in their basic assumptions, both these schools of thought -- primordial and instrumental -- subscribe to Marxist-liberal shared expectation that distinct ethnic and racial differences among people recede, over time, and are replaced by loyalty to larger units. As indicated earlier this has not been the case. What theorists failed to take into account was the persistence of national identity, and particularly the attitudes, identities and value commitments associated with ethnicity, nationality and religion.⁸⁶ These are deep-seated values and commitments that appear to be nearly indestructible. Relying on the 'melting pot' assumption, theorists have often effectively

⁸³ *Ibid.*, 72

⁸⁴ Miroslav Hroch, quoted in E. J. Hobsbawm, "Nations and Nationalism," 173. Also see Hroch Miroslav, *Social Preconditions of National Revival in Europe. Comparative Studies of Small European Movements* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985)

⁸⁵ Kohn, "The Idea of Nationalism," 19

⁸⁶ Rupert Emerson, *From Empire to Nation* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1960), 96-97

⁸⁷ Gabriel A. Almond, *A Discipline Divided. Schools and Sects in Political Science* (London: Sage, 1985), 150

ignored the question of 'why' nationalism persists. This remains a complex issue that continues to engage students of political and ethnic conflict. One scholar's attempt to explain the 'why' illustrates the point: "nationality is in the end the most critical of all the identifications an individual carries as part of his group identity."⁸⁷ Once national identity is conceded to be a long lived and powerful source of political behavior -- whether due to primordial or instrumentalist reasons -- the question naturally becomes how do such emotions affect the political stability of particular societies?

SECESSIONIST THEORY AN EMERGING SUB-FIELD

Secession has not been a popular topic for social scientists. As Samuel Huntington has pointed out the "twentieth century bias against political divorce, that is, secession, is just as strong as the nineteenth century bias against marital divorce."⁸⁸ Since World War II almost every new nation-- and they far out number the older nations-- has come into existence with a number of serious ethnic conflicts waiting, as it were, their turn to disrupt post-independence political life. Such disruptions are especially complicated when one also takes into account the strong prejudice since World War II and from the United Nations, against adjusting international state boundaries for any reason.

During the 1970s half of the independent countries of the world were troubled by some degree of ethnically inspired dissonance.⁸⁹ This figure has risen exponentially with the historical events of the last two decades. While the origins and causes of ethnic conflict are not new, the extent, scale, and intensity of such conflicts are a marked departure from earlier patterns. Moreover, the absence of overt ethnic conflict should not be taken as an indicator of peaceful inter-ethnic relations. Thus, many 'modern' societies -- after years of inter-ethnic cooperation, or at least contrived inter-

⁸⁷ Harold R. Isaacs, *Idols of the Tribe: Group Identity and Political Change* (New York: Harper & Row, Publishers, 1975), 184. Also, see George Schoffin, "Nationalism and National Minorities," 51-65.

⁸⁸ Samuel Huntington, "Foreword," Eric Nordlinger, *Conflict Regulation in Divided Societies*, Occasional Papers in International Affairs #29 (Cambridge: Harvard University Center for International Affairs, January 1972).

⁸⁹ Connor, "The Politics of Ethnonationalism," 1-21.

ethnic peace -- have witnessed a rapid upsurge of ethnic group unrest based on the principle of self-determination. Ethnic conflict's most radical outcome usually is a group struggle to secede and form an independent state. Resistance to this path is usually quite strong. Against a right of self-determination, authorities raise the right and duty to preserve union, to stamp out rebellion, to insure domestic tranquillity, and to defend the state's political and territorial integrity. "What is self-evident truth to those desiring separation is treason to those in authority."⁹⁰

The dilemma of attempts to reconcile two antithetical concepts that of self-determination of nations and territorial sovereignty of states is very difficult and often proves impossible in practice. As legal recognition of states rests within the international community, the issue of international law and the role of the United Nations Charter becomes highly pertinent as they relate to the establishment of 'new' states. To what extent should ethno-nationalist demands be recognized, even if they have the potential to lead to secession? This issue is at the heart of responses to the doctrine of self-determination.

United States President Woodrow Wilson suggested that where possible every nation should be entitled to its own self-governing state. The establishment of fair treatment, including reasonable autonomy and opportunity, would help to maintain the nation's distinctive culture. Unlike Wilson his Secretary of State Robert Lansing saw that self-determination was a phrase "... simply loaded with dynamite. It will raise hopes which can never be realized. It will, I fear cost thousands of lives. ... What a calamity that the phrase was ever uttered!"⁹¹ Wilson did not create 'nationalism,' but without him, the 'principle' of self-determination would not have been articulated first by the League of Nations or subsequently be ratified by the United Nations Charter; it was Wilson who put self-determination on the agenda of international order.

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, 12

⁹¹ Robert Lansing, Dec. 30, 1918, Lansing Papers, Manuscripts Division, Library of Congress, in *Pandaemonium: Ethnicity in International Politics*, Daniel Patrick Moynihan (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993), 83. President Woodrow Wilson interpreted self-determination in a very narrow sense in that the doctrine was to be restricted to the territories of the defeated powers, namely, Austria-Hungary, Germany and the Ottoman Empire. Self-determination was not intended to apply to the Irish question nor to the overseas territories of the

The United Nations Charter formulates the basis of the system of law referred to as international law or the law of nations. This system governs the relations between states and, as such, contributes to international order. Although international organizations, companies and individuals have rights and duties under international law "it is still true to say that international law is *primarily* concerned with states."⁹² It follows that the formation, dissolution, and relations amongst member states is a salient feature of the law of nations. The right of self-determination and protection of state sovereignty are set forth in the first chapter of the Charter: (Article 1, paragraph 2) promises "to develop friendly relations among nations based on respect for the principle of equal rights and self-determination of peoples," but forbids (Article 2, paragraph 7) "the United Nations to intervene in matters which are essentially within the domestic jurisdiction of any state."⁹³ These two well intentioned principles present a dilemma: first, there is no legal consensus about what constitutes a 'people;' second, there are few issues that established territorial states are likely to consider more a matter of domestic jurisdiction than the claim of an ethnically organized group of people to rebel and establish a state of their own.

The dilemma of attempting to reconcile two causal and opposite principles (self-determination of nations (peoples) and respect for the territorial integrity of the independence of multi-ethnic states is reflected in the debates and resolutions of the United Nations.⁹⁴ "The sovereignty, territorial integrity, and independence of states within the established international system and the principle of self-determination for peoples, both of great value and importance, must not be permitted to work against each

Belgian, British, French, Dutch, Portuguese, and Spanish Empires. But, Lansing perceived the implications of the concept being extended to this broader sphere

⁹² Michael Akehurst, *A Modern Introduction to International Law*, Sixth Edition (London: Unwin Hyman, 1987), 1. Emphasis in the original

⁹³ Office of Public Information, *Charter of the United Nations and the Statute of the International Court of Justice* (New York: United Nations, 1987), 3.5. Emphasis added. As discussed in the section on nationalism and ethnicity much of the confusion of what constitutes a 'state,' a 'nation,' and a 'people,' has impacted on the interpretation of the Charter and these two founding principles. For example, is the law of 'nations' based on the 'primordial' sense of nations (the primacy of loyalty to group identity within a pluralistic territory) or on the sense of 'multi-ethnic' states who have managed to reduce ethnic conflict through a transfer of parochial loyalty to loyalty to a larger unit?

⁹⁴ Since 1945 the resolutions passed by the United Nations General Assembly have attributed a wider scope to the right of self-determination. See Akehurst, "A Modern Introduction," 290-302

other.”⁹⁵ That it might not be possible to do both things at one time appears not to have occurred to the Charter drafters, nor current United Nations’ champions. Walker Connor makes the point that given the mass appeal of the self-determination principle its lack of successful application is one of its more astonishing characteristics.⁹⁶ However, considering that most states are heterogeneous this is not entirely surprising. Thus, there is an universal tendency on the part of governmental leaders to make decisions subject to the presumption that the political integrity of the sovereign territory is incontestable.

But, when the situation arises as to whether an ethnic sub-unit within a state is entitled to self-determination and international recognition, legal complexities quickly develop. The state of international law on secession is at times quite vague. On the one hand, various international bodies, including the United Nations, proclaim a broad ‘right to self-determination of all peoples’ which would appear to imply a right to secede. However, when faced with applications for ‘new’ state recognition this body and the International Court of Justice have been somewhat arbitrary in their judgments.⁹⁷ For the most part the Court has demonstrated a clear reluctance toward interpreting the right of self-determination to include a broad right to secede. The concept of a *legal right* of self-determination “would be a most significant exception to the traditional notion that the creation of states is a matter of fact and not law.”⁹⁸

“Recognition is one of the most difficult topics in international law.”⁹⁹ It is a mixture of politics, international and municipal law. The political and legal elements are interwoven. Thus, when giving or withholding recognition, states are often influenced more by political than by legal considerations. When a new state comes into existence or

⁹⁵ Secretary-General to the United Nations Boutros-Gali, *Agenda for Peace*, issued 17 June 1992, Paragraph 19 (New York: United Nations Publication, 1992)

⁹⁶ Connor, “The Politics of Ethnonationalism,” 11

⁹⁷ The Court, while championing the right of self-determination for peoples struggling to free themselves from the yoke of colonialism was not as receptive to arguments centered around the application of that same ‘right’ to separatist movements in newly formed countries. This is particularly relevant in the Court’s decisions as they related to the post-colonial African states

⁹⁸ James Crawford, *The Creation of States in International Law* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1979), 85

⁹⁹ Akehurst, “A Modern Introduction,” 57

when a new government comes into power in an existing state by violent means,¹⁰⁰ other states are confronted with the problem of deciding whether or not to recognize the new political structure. Recognition means a willingness to deal with the new state as a member of the international community, or with the new government as the representative of that state. If successful in their bid, the new state or government is welcomed into the community of states and international society; if unsuccessful, non-recognition may transform the state into a pariah.

The problem of recognition of states and governments has not been solved satisfactorily either in theory or in practice. The paradox of sovereignty and self-determination has been supplemented by the paradox of the dual international condition i.e., the simultaneous fragmentation and globalization. Emphasis on inclusiveness, racial reconciliation and religious tolerance contradicts the trend of the global renaissance of ethnicity and nationalism. This has prompted scholars to re-examine the classic questions of nationalism, state viability, and secession. It is no longer sufficient to assume 'one world,' nor is it wise to embrace the unlimited 'right of self-determination for all peoples. Charles Tilley poses the question: "By what means, other than establishing one independent state per mobilized nation might we guarantee cultural viability, civic connectedness, protection of minorities, and other *desiderata* commonly portrayed as the benefits of national self-determination?"¹⁰¹ Allen Buchanan responds: scholars must "rethink the most fundamental categories of political philosophy and international law - the notions of sovereignty, self-determination and of the state itself - to develop moral and constitutional frameworks for a limited right to secede."¹⁰² Still others have engaged in a process based on the realistic assumption that people weigh gains and losses associated with secessionism. Calculation and strategic

¹⁰⁰ There are today only eight states which both existed in 1914 and have not had their form of government changed by violence since that time. The United Kingdom, Canada, Australia, New Zealand, United States, Sweden and Switzerland. For the greater number of the 170 or so contemporary states ethnic conflict has been the most frequent factor in intra-state turmoil. See "Pandaemonium," 10-11.

¹⁰¹ Charles Tilley, "National Self-determination as a Problem for all of us" *Daedalus* (Summer, 1993) 29-36.

¹⁰² Allen Buchanan, *Secession: The Morality of Political Divorce from Fort Sumter to Lithuania and Quebec* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1991), 364-5.

games lend themselves well to this approach.¹⁰³ Robert A. Young in a comparative study explores how peaceful (the non-use of state employed force) secessions have occurred in the past and has formulated thirteen generalizations about the politics of non-violent secession.¹⁰⁴

In sum, secession has become an academic 'hot' topic, precipitated in part by world events, but more so by the extended belief in the right to the self-determination of peoples. The heightened awareness in multi-ethnic states that the needs of a group of people who consider themselves separate and distinct from others cannot be accommodated within existing political structures has fostered a rise in nationalism, that is the matching of a 'people' and a 'state.' In general, this new awareness has called into question many of the assumptions of the political integration literature reviewed in this chapter. More specifically, greater concern has been directed toward the international community's conventional hostility to acts of secession. The failure of the law of nations to accommodate a right to secede, though far from justifiable, is not difficult to understand. Fears that secession would mean international anarchy has elicited attempts to disassociate the endorsement of the right of self-determination from the recognition of a right to secede. But increasingly it has become apparent that "the great achievement of Western culture since the Enlightenment is to make many of us peer over the wall and grant some respect to people outside it; the great failure of Western culture is to deny that walls are inevitable or important."¹⁰⁵ This thought recognizes that there are limits to integration, calling into question liberalism's universalism, and also Marxism's proletarian nationalism, and also emphasizes the need for international law to accommodate a right to secede.

¹⁰³ Stéphane Dion, "Why is Secession Difficult in Well-established Democracies? Lessons from Quebec," *The British Journal of Political Science* Vol 26-Part 2 (April 1996): 270-83.

¹⁰⁴ Robert A. Young, *The Secession of Québec and the Future of Canada* (Montreal & Kingston: McGill-Queens University Press, 1995), 128-150

¹⁰⁵ Personal communication from James Q. Wilson to Daniel P. Moynihan in "*Pandaemonium*," xiv. Also see James Q. Wilson *The Moral Sense* (New York: The Free Press, 1993)

Chapter Summary

Although this chapter's overview of the theoretical literature most associated with the concept of political integration has been selective by necessity it has also identified some common threads uniting the various approaches to political integration. Each school of thought relating to the integrative processes has attempted define what it is which holds a society and a political system together or, conversely, what does not serve that goal. The discussion has demonstrated that much of the theoretical writing on political integration has been characterized by an unwarranted degree of optimism. In the Marxist perspective the focus for the mobilization of group interest depends on class; from the liberal viewpoint the individual would develop attachments to the state, or the civic 'nation,' such a national loyalty would supplant parochial loyalties with allegiance to a larger unit. Modernization was to provide the vehicle for this conversion to a national group consciousness. Federalism offered an alternative means of political organization and mode of conflict resolution through constitutional arrangements. For most federations the growth of certain common values were not essential in order for groups to form a new political order consisting of divided powers and different levels of sovereignty. In cases of deeply divided sub-cultural federations consociationalism or the politics of accommodation provided a viable temporary option which might counteract centrifugal forces within a political system.

The underlying assumption of these approaches to political integration varied from that of assimilation of values throughout a society to simply the formulation of a contract among groups and regions. But whatever the strategy of dealing with diverse national identity in a single state, recent evidence suggests that ethnic conflict has been experiencing a dramatic increase in incidence. Despite the tendency of theorists to devalue the powerful strength of ethnic based nationalism, ethnic sentiments have figuratively fought and bled their way into current scholarly literature. As a result comparative studies of state dissolution and secession have also burgeoned and an

argument has been advanced, that based on moral grounds, the prejudice against all ethnic based separatism is not only unjust, but unwarranted. Concomitantly, there is a growing recognition of the limits to integration, and the unacceptability of simply emphasizing the *status quo*.

The preceding exposition of concepts and issues that are associated with major approaches to the study of political integration provide a background and underpinning for our analysis of Czechoslovakia's peaceful disintegration. For example, in what way have Czech and Slovak political actors viewed the meaning or essence of integration since the state was formed in 1918? What political strategies were used to achieve or impede integration? Were the pro-integration strategies primarily federalist, consociationalist, liberal, Marxist, etc., and how did secessionists attempt to disrupt the process? Did traditional ethnicity engender political conflict during the various phases of Czechoslovak's evolution from 1918 to 1993, or to what extent were ethnic differences instrumentally manipulated? These and other orienting questions will inform and guide the analysis in the following chapters.

CHAPTER TWO

THE FIRST REPUBLIC: 1918-1938

This chapter begins the case study of Czechoslovakia's attempts to satisfy the nationalist aspirations of the peoples of the Czech Lands (Bohemians and Moravians)¹ and the Slovak peoples in a common state. When the state was declared independent in 1918, and internationally recognized, by the 1919 Treaty of St. Germain, it was multinational and unitary rather than a federal entity as the country's name implies.² Although the country would be composed of several nationalities throughout its existence this study will focus on the relationship between the two Slav nations that were the principal ethnic groups in the country's post-1918 history. First, the chapter will concentrate on the events preceding the establishment of the state including a brief historical overview of the two 'founding' peoples. This will be followed by an analysis of the liberal/democratic regime established immediately after World War I by Tomáš (Tomáš Garrigue) Masaryk and continued throughout the First Republic (1918-1938). The chapter will conclude with the consequences of the 1938 Munich Agreement i.e. - the wartime experience of the bifurcated rump states of occupied Bohemia and Moravia, and independent Slovakia.

One basic assumption for the analysis of the First Republic is that political integration crucially affected by the institutional framework and policies adopted by élites when faced with governing a segmented society. The analysis will focus on the degree of political cohesion within the state during the interwar period and the challenge nationalism presented to the nation-building process. The discussion will concentrate particularly on the way in which the country's institutional framework and the political agenda of the central decision-makers contributed to the failure of the Republic to depoliticize the centrifugal forces of Slovak nationalism. As matters turned

¹ In an effort to avoid cumbersome descriptive phraseology the 'people of the Czech Lands (Bohemians and Moravians)' will be referred to, henceforth, as Czechs.

² When the state's territorial boundaries were established there were sizable minority populations of Germans, Magyars, and Sub-carpathian Ruthenese.

out, the politicization of Slovak nationalism was a direct result of the unfulfilled expectations of the Slovaks within the new state.

The initial section of the chapter will examine the preconditions for national conflict by presenting a brief discussion of the nineteenth century national awakening experienced by both the Czechs and Slovaks. As will be shown below, language would have a primary role in determining national identity. The historical overview will include the unique experiences of both the Czechs and the Slovaks as part of the multinational Austro-Hungarian empire; the Czech experience in being ruled by the relatively liberal Austrian monarchy, and the Slovak subjugation by the more illiberal control of Budapest.

National Self-Definition

The Czech Experience

The fifteenth century figure Jan Hus, is the greatest single influence upon the formation of the character, values and attitudes of the Czech people.³ A Protestant reformer, Hus opposed all privileges, hierarchies, aristocracies and establishments including the Catholic Church. His basic tenet -- which provided the philosophical underpinning of the Hussite movement -- was equality which implied: 1) a tolerance of all men and a devotion to humanitarianism; 2) individualism, for if men were equal and capable of critical reason, their right to judge for themselves was to be respected; 3) the principle held a spirit of nationalism during this period.⁴ Czech nationalism was stimulated by the struggle for supremacy within the Austro-Hungarian kingdom, between the Germans and the Czechs. Hus became identified with the Czechs, while the Germans oriented to the Roman Catholic Church. The Hussite movement shaped Czech national identity, and thus the Czech tradition was intrinsically democratic and egalitarian.

³ Galia Golan, "National Traditions and Socialism in Eastern Europe: the Cases of Czechoslovakia and Yugoslavia" in *Tradition and Socialism in East Europe*, ed. S. Eisenstadt and Yael Azmon (New York: Harcourt, 1975), 41

⁴ R. W. Seton-Watson, *History of the Czechs and Slovaks* (Connecticut: Archon Books, 1965), 56-75

The nineteenth century Czech national revival was a continuation of the positive-activist, liberal ideals of the Hussite tradition. In the first half of the nineteenth century Czech nationalism proved to be politically benign. Intellectuals taught the Czech language, wrote poetry, produced Czech newspapers and journals, and promoted Czech culture.⁵ The renewed interest in Czech national identity had no real political relevance until 1848 when the Czech nationalist-historian Frantisek Palacky, a Moravian Protestant, politicized the movement.⁶ The sense of being unique or different requires a referent, that is, the concept of 'us' requires 'them.'⁷ Thus, Czech nationalism was a process of defining ethnic German predominance within the Austrian sector of the empire, thereby offering a 'them' who allegedly threatened the welfare of the Czechs. Palacky approached the Austrian diet with a proposal for a reconfiguring of the empire as a federation. This reform would take into account the distinct national identity of the Czech people. Further, in order to increase Slav power and diminish Germanic dominance, Palacky's proposal also included the annexation of Slovakia to the Czech Lands.

Neither of Palacky's ideas, federalist reform or the annexation of Slovakia, materialized. Indeed, the counter-revolutionary post-1849 policy centered around a system of governance which may be described as absolutist centralization.⁸ The policy was seen, and quite rightly so, as a German concept, in which the German middle class, nobility, church and court were all involved in the subjugation of minority political interests and efforts to mobilize. Such political exclusion forced Czech nationalism to retrench and focus once again on a culturally-based benign perspective. But for the remainder of the century, whenever diplomacy and coalition-building presented opportunities, the Czechs petitioned the Austrian diet for increased institutional recognition of Czech culture. Their efforts were rewarded when a Czech National

⁵ John Bradley, *Czechoslovak Nationalism in the 19th Century* (Boulder: East European Monographs, 1984), 121

⁶ John Breuilly, argues that Palacky is a classic example of the transition from cultural revival nationalism to political nationalism. Palacky began writing his history of the Czech people in German, increasingly his anti-German feeling caused him to switch from German to Czech. "Nationalism and the State," 131-135. Breuilly uses this example to enhance his instrumentalist argument discussed in Chapter one of this thesis.

⁷ Connor, "The Politics of Ethnonationalism," 3.

Museum and a national theater were constructed and also in the 1880s when the Czech branch of Charles University was reopened after being closed for over a century. The powerful resonance of this medieval academic legacy served the dual purpose of advancing Czech nationalism and energizing Czech efforts at political organization. Entering the twentieth century, the Czechs could lay claim to their territory as a national political entity with recognized institutions and a limited sphere of autonomy.

The Slovak Experience

Though not immune to the currents of national enthusiasm in nineteenth century Europe, Slovak efforts at establishing a national revival based on a distinct Slovak language and cultural identity were not as successful as that of the Czechs. Anton Bernolák published the first Slovak grammar and orthography in 1787. The work set the precedent for the existence of a Slovak literary language as distinct from Czech. In the 1820s and 1830s two Slovak Lutherans, Ján Kollár a poet and Pavol Jozef Safárik a linguist, contradicted Bernolák by being the first to articulate the 'Czechoslovak idea':⁹ i.e. that Czechs and Slovaks together formed a 'Czechoslovak' culture and as such should merge into a single 'Czechoslovak nation.' It was not until 1851 when L'udovít Stúr a Lutheran clergyman and pedagogue challenged the vision of Kollár and Safárik.¹⁰ Reviving Bernolák's idea Stúr insisted that the Slovak language was distinct from Czech and that Slovaks were a nation in their own right. But, in contrast with the Czechs who continued to pressure Austria for recognition of their distinctiveness, Slovak national identity, under Hungarian rule, was repressed and the Slovaks subjected to forced assimilation. The forced Magyarization¹¹ of all minorities in the Kingdom began in earnest when a truce was declared between Austria and Hungary

⁸ Breuilly, "Nationalism and the State," 133

⁹ James Ramon Felak, "At the Price of the Republic" *Hlinka's Slovak People's Party 1929-1938* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1994), 5

¹⁰ For a more detailed debate over the issue of the validity of the 'Slovak Language' see, *The Limits of Integration*, ed Onof Pi-Sunyer (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Department of Anthropology, Research Report no. 9, 1971)

¹¹ The term 'Magyar' denotes the non-Slav ethnic group that governed the Hungarian Kingdom.

in 1867.¹² By 1875 the Hungarian government had closed down all Slovak secondary schools. The Slovak's cultural institute *Matica Slovenská* had been disbanded and its library transferred to Budapest. National minorities had no legal status and officially there was only one nation: the Hungarian nation.

The severity of the Magyarization process prompted many Slovaks to embrace the vision of Kollár, Safárick, and Palacky namely that, the Slovak national cause could best be served by a merger with the Czechs. In 1898 a group of Slovak students studying in Prague were influenced by the writings of a Czech nationalist- philosophy professor Tomáš Masaryk. Publishing in a journal called *Hlas* (Voice), Masaryk worked to revive the 'Czechoslovak idea.' These *Hlasists*, as they were called, argued for Czech/Slovak national unity, attacked the Hungarian government's policy of Magyarization, and played an active role in advancing Slovak national demands.¹³ The *Hlasists* led by Vavro Srobár and Pavol Blaho were joined by others with similar aspirations for Slovak national identity, including a clerical wing headed by Monseigneur Andrej Hlinka, and also a more liberal faction headed by Milan Hodza. The loose coalition among these groups prevailed until World War I. The groups were united by one central premise that the Slovaks should nurture a unique national identity. However, the various groups were divided by the means to achieve this identity and also their precise final goal.¹⁴

Establishing the State

The Path to Statehood

The recognition of the state of Czechoslovakia was the result of a determined diplomatic campaign organized by Tomáš G. Masaryk, Eduard Benes and Milan Stéfánick.¹⁵ Those personalities endeavored to convince the public and élites of Britain,

¹² Carol Leff, *National Conflict in Czechoslovakia: The Making and Remaking of a State, 1918-1987* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1988), 28

¹³ Felak, "At the Price of the Republic," 10-11

¹⁴ For allies Hodza looked to the Habsburgs as a counterweight to Hungary, Hlinka's Catholic group looked to Czech and Moravian Catholics for support, and Srobár Blaho to the Czechs and Masaryk.

¹⁵ Masaryk was born in the Slovak district of Moravia, Benes was from Bohemia, and Stéfánick was a Slovak from Slovakia, all three believed in one 'Czechoslovak' nation.

France and the United States regarding the desirability of a union between the Czech and Slovak peoples. Such a union, it was argued, presented a national unit sufficiently large to be a viable entity within the international community. Coincidentally, this marriage paralleled the desire, on the part of the Allies, to redraw the map of the Austro-Hungarian Empire after World War I. It also coincided with US President Woodrow Wilson's policy of the principle of national self-determination.

Tomás Masaryk must receive primary credit for having forged politically relevant linkages between the two Slav neighbors, and thus, he also deserves recognition as the creator of the Czechoslovak state. As a professor at Prague's Charles University Masaryk formulated his perspective and philosophy through a study of both Czech and American history. In his view there was a close comparison between Jeffersonian liberal institutions and the democratic/egalitarian Czech traditions first articulated by Jan Hus in the 15th century. An apostate from the Roman Catholic Church, Masaryk embraced Hus' distaste for the Church's arbitrary power. Masaryk also believed in a clear separation of Church and state. Frantisek Palacky provided Masaryk with the idea of federalizing the Austrian Empire. Finally, Masaryk adopted Kollár and Šafárik's 'Czechoslovak idea.' Masaryk found, as discussed above, disciples for the 'Czechoslovak idea' in a new generation of Slovak students who were unhappy with earlier Slovak acquiescence to Magyar rule. From 1890 onward Masaryk and his followers campaigned for the federalization of the Empire, and the unification of the Czech and Slovak peoples. But the Habsburg monarchy was still a great power, served by a bureaucracy protective of its position, and an army loyal to the imperial tradition. Czech protests in parliamentary debates remained symbols of discontent, with little or no promise of

transforming the empire into a true federation much less inspiring genuine democratic ideals.¹⁶

After W.W. I was declared Masaryk exiled himself to London. Benes and Stefánick went to Paris. A lecture, delivered in London in 1918, The Problems of Small Nations in the European Crisis, brought Masaryk recognition not only in his quest for a recognized Czechoslovak state, but also for the positive idea of the post-war reconstruction including the refashioning of Europe as a whole. Masaryk hoped to achieve broader goals than simply constructing a new defense against Germanic power. Czechoslovak independence was to be "part of the political and social reorganization of Europe and humanity."¹⁷ Benes and Stefánick delivered Masaryk's message on the continent. Aware of the large Czech and Slovak émigré population in America, and seeking American support for a Czechoslovak state, Masaryk went abroad. The Czech émigré community's reaction to Masaryk's proposal was very positive. But support was less enthusiastic in Slovakia, and within the Slovak émigré community in America. In Slovakia the options under review were fusion with the Czechs, complete independence for Slovakia, or autonomy within Hungary. This uncertainty prompted Masaryk to make overtures to the large Slovak émigré community in the United States as a means of pressuring Slovakia to unite with the Czechs in a single state.

While in Pittsburgh, Masaryk met with representatives of the Slovak League of America, the Czech National Alliance, and the Federation of Czech Catholics. The assembly resolved to support "the union of Czechs and Slovaks in an independent state consisting of the Czech Lands and Slovakia."¹⁸ The conferees also resolved that this state would be a republic with a democratic constitution and Slovakia would have its own 'diet, administration, and courts,' with Slovak as the official language in education, the civil service, and public life. Support from the organized and vocal American Slovaks was consolidated by reassuring them that Slovaks, in the old country, would not be

¹⁶ Peter Zenkl, *T.G. Masaryk and the Idea of European and World Federation*, Translated from Czech by Vlasta Vraz (Chicago: Czechoslovak National Council, 1955), 5

¹⁷ Quoted in *Ibid.*, 52, and Edward Polson Newman, *Masaryk* (London: Campion Press Limited, 1960), 104-5.

¹⁸ Felak, "At the Price of the Republic," 40.

"Czechosized" in the new Czechoslovak state.¹⁹ The Pittsburgh Agreement signed in May 1918 served Masaryk's needs of the moment. As Masaryk prepared to lobby Western leaders, in particular American President Woodrow Wilson, the Agreement would confirm that his attempts to create a Czechoslovak state had Slovak support, even if such backing was limited to Slovak émigrés.²⁰

In retrospect it is clear that Masaryk never intended to present the Pittsburgh Agreement as a framework for the future republic.²¹ For almost a year the document remained unknown in Slovakia, until Monseigneur Andrej Hlinka, the nationalist leader of the Slovak People's Party (SPP), publicized its contents, underscoring the clause which indicated that Slovakia should have its 'own diet, administration and courts.' For the next twenty years the Pittsburgh Agreement would be at the center of the Slovak nationalist debate. Masaryk's official and somewhat cavalier response was: "the Agreement was concluded in order to appease a small Slovak faction which was dreaming of God knows what sort of independence for Slovakia. . . . I signed the Convention unhesitatingly as a local understanding between American Czechs and Slovaks upon the policy they were prepared to advocate."²²

The Pittsburgh Agreement was not the only pact that would figure prominently in the nationalist debates of the First Republic. In the fall of 1918 a provisional Czechoslovak government headed by Masaryk had been established on 14 October, and the Czech National committee in Prague declared the creation of the Czecho-Slovak Republic on 28 October.²³ In the interim a politically unorganized group of self-selected Slovak national leaders formed the Slovak National Council (SNC). The group met 30 October at Turčiansky Svätý Martin to agree on a Slovak position to legitimate their

¹⁹ Victor S. Mamatey, *United States and East Central Europe* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1957), 282-84

²⁰ Dorethea H. El Mallakh, *The Slovak Autonomy Movement, 1935-1939: A Study in Unrelenting Nationalism* (New York: East European Quarterly, 1979) 32-33. For a translated text of the Agreement see pages 243-244

²¹ Leff, "National Conflict," 152

²² Tomáš G. Masaryk, *The Making of a State, Memories and Observations 1914-1918* (New York: Frederick A. Stokes, 1927) 220. Quoted in *Ibid.*, 152, and El Mallakh, "The Slovak Autonomy Movement," 32.

²³ During the months when the Czechoslovakia state was conceived, established, and consolidated, the hyphenated appellation Czecho-Slovakia was used officially to designate the common state of Czechs and Slovaks. It is found in the postwar peace treaties (Versailles, St. Germain, Trianon). Shortly after the hyphen was

claim to participation at the Versailles peace conference. Unaware that a Czecho-Slovak Republic had been proclaimed, the Slovak leaders issued "The Martin Declaration" accepting the principle of union with the Czechs in order to form a 'Czecho-Slovak Republic.' However, the Declaration was vague with regard to the Slovak attitude toward the idea of a 'Czecho-Slovak Nation.'²⁴ This vagueness reflects the 'haste and uncertain' character of decisions made in the closing days of World War I, the difference of opinions within the Slovak leadership as to the precise definition of Slovak identity, and the perception that the allies had to be convinced that Czechs and Slovaks must constitute a single nation before international recognition would be given to the independent state.²⁵

Statehood Achieved

The Martin Declaration and subsequent recognition of an independent Czechoslovakia were major turning points in Slovak history. One-thousand year Hungarian dominance had ended. This signaled the end of Magyarization as a threat to Slovak aspirations for nationhood. However, the two main goals of the Slovak national movement since the time of L'udovít Stúr -- official recognition of the Slovaks as a distinct nation and autonomy for Slovakia -- would not necessarily be realized. The high degree of ambiguity surrounding the various agreements that had been reached between the Czechs and Slovaks during their respective struggles for liberation, permitted their leaders to draw different conclusions concerning the nature and framework of their union. Additional problems would also prove to be divisive, for example there was no recognition by either group of the possible complications of unifying two very disparate social, economic, and administrative entities. The more developed and more numerous Czechs had an economic advantage as well as a sense of cultural superiority in relation to the Slovaks. As the economic heartland of the Habsburg Empire, the Czech Lands in

dropped. Many Slovak nationalists resented the removal of the hyphen, which they regarded as a symbolic confirmation of centralization. The remaining sections of this study will employ the un-hyphenated version

²⁴ Felak, "At the Price of the Republic," 15, emphasis added.

²⁵ Leff, "National Conflict," 40-41

the nineteenth century were heavily industrialized, as a consequence Czech social structure comprised a large middle and working class.

The Czech national movement rested on a firm foundation. The Czech language and educational system had developed along with the movement. In Austria Czechs obtained jobs in the state administration and gained experience in parliamentary government. When war was proclaimed the Czechs were a fully developed modern nation, with a solid economic base, a modern social structure, a high level of culture, and a deep sense of national consciousness. In contrast, Slovakia was relatively underdeveloped. Because of its agricultural character, Slovak society consisted mainly of peasants and lower-middle-class townsmen. The peasant values were a sharp contrast with the regions few cities. Rural attitudes toward the outside world's the money-using economy were fundamentally hostile.²⁶ There was also a strong strain of anti-semitism in Slovakia. Much of the former Slovak nobility and the working middle class had been Magyarized. Virtually excluded from political influence in the Hungarian Diet, Slovaks lacked experience in managing their own administrative affairs. By 1918, they remained a largely traditional, religious, rural society with a rather weaker national consciousness if compared with the Czechs. Slovak political vision was inchoate, devoid of effective political form and struggling with an unfocused political agenda.²⁷

The problems of forging a nation-state from these two regions with such disparate levels of social, economic, cultural, and political experience -- generally subsumed under the term 'the Slovak Question'-- was the Gordian knot that plagued relations between the two groups throughout the interwar period.²⁸ In addition, the new state brought together sizable minorities, such as Germans and Magyars who, like the Czechs and Slovaks, were not only nationally, but also territorially established

²⁶ George Schöpflin, "The Political Traditions of Eastern Europe," *Daedalus*, Vol. 119, Number 1 (Winter, 1990): 79. Schöpflin, in this article outlines the internalized values of the three categories of the peasantry of Eastern Europe

²⁷ Marek, Bankowicz, "Czechoslovakia: from Masaryk to Havel," in *The New Democracies in Eastern Europe: Party Systems and Political Cleavages*, Second Edition, eds Sten Berglund and Ake Dellenbrant (Aldershot, Hants, England: Edward Elgar, 1994), 25.

²⁸ Felak, "At the Price of the Republic," 18, and Karen Henderson, "Czechoslovakia: Cutting the Gordian Knot," *Coexistence*, Volume 31, No.4 (December 1994): 309-324.

cohesive groups. For Masaryk and the other state founders the task ahead was to resolve the "problem of how to integrate the already integrated."²⁹

Inter-War Czechoslovakia

A prime cause of political disunity in a multi-national state was the absence of a single consciousness of focus shared by all segments of the population. In 1918 the newly formed state of Czechoslovakia was a case in point. Czechoslovakia was not unique in being ethnically heterogeneous,³⁰ and the two nations common Slavic background should have facilitated their political integration. Ironically, however, this commonality would prove divisive. As Carol Leff points out the Czech nation had deluded itself into the "imprecisely formulated hope that the two nations had identical interests - that Slovakia could be induced to behave like a lost tribe returned to the fold."³¹ By virtue of their numerical superiority, together with their advanced political experience, higher level of education and cultural/national awareness, Czechs believed that they should play the dominant role in the new state's political system. The official ideology was that there was a single nation, and the chosen institutional framework promulgated by Masaryk and others credited with founding the Republic was that of a unitary system. A strong central government based on democratic principles with proportional representation would, it was argued by Masaryk and other Czech proponents of a unitary state, ease ethnic tensions with the German and Magyar minorities, diffuse the irredentism and revisionist claims of those minorities, advance the 'Czechoslovak idea,' and facilitate the enactment of public policies to resolve 'the Slovak Question.'

What resulted was an élite based political system which failed to accommodate the divergent group interests of its minorities. The Constitution of 1920 established, *de*

²⁹ Jacob and Teune, "The Integrative Process," 9

³⁰ When the new state's borders were formalized, although the Czechs had become the dominant ethnic group, they composed less than half of the population, and only sixty-five percent together with the Slovaks. The Germans, nearly a quarter of the population, occupied an area of Bohemia, Moravia, and Silesia (known as the Sudetenland). This area made up one-fifth of the entire country. The Magyars, numbering about 750,000, inhabited the southern boundaries of Slovakia and Carpathian Ruthenia. Newman, "Masaryk," 204

jure, a parliamentary democracy with a rather weak presidency; *de facto* it was a presidential democracy, where political cleavages were reinforced by an electoral system which encouraged, indeed, promoted, a highly fragmented multi-party system which served the purposes of five national parties. These ruling coalition parties reappeared in one governing coalition after another, never falling into opposition. The *Petka*, or representatives of the five governing parties, by design, could and did exclude more narrowly based nationalist parties from the state's decision-making process. Particularly relevant, for the purposes of this study, there was a failure to include the nationalist Slovak People's Party (SPP) whose members were known as *l'udáci* (populists, or Ludaks). Thus the party structure and also the institutional framework, as will be shown below, both facilitated national tensions between the Czechs and Slovaks.

Institutional Framework and Weaknesses

At the Paris peace settlement, Czechoslovak spokesmen had made promises to the effect that democracy would safeguard the rights of the non-Czech minorities in the newly formed state. The political implications -- as distinct from the legal ones -- of this promise to the minorities were that the new state would draw equally from the national cultures included within the new borders and no single nation in the country would enjoy pre-eminent position. But, as some students of integration have pointed out "every political force opts for the institutional framework that will best further its values, projects, or interests."³² Moreover, rules are often fashioned by political actors whose own resources and interests differ. When Tomáš Masaryk was elected as the first President of the Republic, he remained true to his democratic, liberal, and egalitarian ideology, but only to the extent that the new state was to be a polity in which there would be *legal* equality for all. However, "politically Czechs would have the constitutive core function, so that Czechoslovakia would be primarily a Czech state."³³ The Constitution, formally adopted in 1919, provided for a single government located in

³¹ Leff, "National Conflict," 7

³² Adam Przeworski, "Democracy and the Market," (Cambridge University of Cambridge Press, 1992), 80

Prague. "This was a logical outcome of the attempt to create a unitary Czechoslovak state based upon the assumption that there existed a single Czechoslovak nation."³⁴ This ideology did not overtly result in the exclusion of the non-Czech population from the political process, but it did create a striking political dis-equilibrium.

There were a number of practical and pressing reasons why the 'Czechoslovak idea' and centralism became the basis of the new regime, not the least of which had to do with 'ethnic arithmetic.'³⁵ But, in order to preserve the Czech Lands' strategic and economical predominance in the new state, the Czechs would have to confront the significant German minority in the Sudetenland. This 2:1 ratio of Czechs to Germans was regarded by Czech national leaders, especially Masaryk, as a dangerously high proportion of members of a nationally conscious, economically, and culturally advanced minority whose western border was contiguous to a great power of co-nationals. Ideally, a Czecho-Slovak alliance (six million Czechs and three million Slovaks) balanced against three million Germans would, in Masaryk's words, "... be so much stronger vis-a-vis the minority."³⁶ Thus, Masaryk promoted the 'Czechoslovak idea' as the optimum ideology for the preservation of the Republic. Initially, Slovak nationalists joined their Czech counterparts in defending the affirmation of their joint superior status over the minority Germans, Poles, Magyars, Ruthese and Gypsies who made up the balance of the population of the newly formed state. Regretably, it was to be a solution that the majority of Slovaks would, very quickly, come to resent and reject. Indeed it ran counter to the Slovaks pre-union expectations of achieving autonomy within the state's borders.³⁷

Other compelling reasons also existed for the regime's choice of a strong central government based in Prague: Firstly, domino effect -- if the Slovaks were granted increased autonomy Germans and Magyars could demand the same; secondly, genuine

³³ Schopflin, "The Political Traditions of Eastern Europe," 73.

³⁴ Archie Brown and Gordon Wightman, "Czechoslovakia: Revival and Retreat" in *Political Culture and Political Change in Communist States*, 2nd ed., eds. Archie Brown and Jack Gray (New York: Holmes & Meier, 1979), 168

³⁵ See Leff, "National Conflict," 35-41 and Felak, "At the Price of the Republic," 18-21 for additional and varying points of view on the reasons behind the adoption of a centralist regime

³⁶ Quoted in Leff, *Ibid.*, 35

fear in Prague that Hungary, who resented the Trianon Treaty, would move to re-annex Slovakia;³⁸ and thirdly, there were serious concerns over Slovakia's ability to manage its own affairs. Conscious of their lack of experience in government, administration, politics and the relatively low level of national consciousness among their constituents, even those Slovak politicians who were sympathetic to autonomy were often willing to postpone taking measures to achieve its implementation.³⁹ The Ludaks were exceptions. Even before the state's first elections in 1920, the Ludak's leader Andrej Hlinka became aware of the Pittsburgh Agreement's many ambiguities. Hlinka championed the cause of Slovak autonomy which he and the Ludaks believed were actually provided for in the Agreement. From this point forward Slovak nationalism would prove to be a potent political force within the new state.

The Petka and the Slovak People's Party

In the inter-war period Czechoslovakia's politics were unquestionably pluralistic with a very wide range of interests able to participate in the democratic process. Parliamentary sovereignty, however, was not the reality of the system. Policy was determined by various Czech élites and articulated through the *Petka*: a group of five parties banded together in what was almost a perpetual alliance. The *Petka* was an extra-constitutional steering committee, superior to both cabinet and parliament where inter-party disputes were resolved by the final arbiter, President Masaryk.⁴⁰ Due to Masaryk's backstage involvement in this political decision-making mechanism interwar Czechoslovakia evolved as a presidential democracy. Regardless of shifting electoral

³⁷ Andrew A. Michta, *The Government and Politics of Post-Communist Europe* (Connecticut: Praeger, 1994), 74.

³⁸ Yeshayahu Jelinek, "Trianon and Czechoslovakia: Reflections," in *Trianon and East Central Europe: Antecedents and Repercussions*, ed. Bela K. Kiraly (Columbia: Social Science Monographs/ Atlantic Research Publishers, 1995), 201-211. Jelinek discusses Trianon's importance to the development of the Czechoslovak Republic and Masaryk's concerns over the creation of a sizable Hungarian minority within the Czechoslovak borders.

³⁹ Vaclav L. Benes, "Czechoslovakia Democracy and Its Problems," in *A History of the Czechoslovakia Republic, 1918-1948*, eds. Victor S. Mamatey and Radomire Luza (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1973), 93-4.

⁴⁰ Arend Lijphart, "Democracy in Plural Societies" argues that the *Petka* was an example of the grand coalitions in consociational democracies which was discussed in the first chapter. Rudolf Schlesinger, *Central European Democracy and its Background: Economic and Political Group Organization* (London: Routledge and Paul Kegan,

trends, the *Petka* continued to regulate affairs of state with considerable continuity. The leadership was prepared to trade-off diversity in order to achieve stability. However, the political structure, though democratic, was often stagnant and exclusionary.⁴¹

The Czechoslovak chosen unitary system based on democratic principles with proportional representation allowed for a large number of political parties, but the strongest of those organizations rarely won more than 15% of the vote; 8% of the seats was a respectable showing and worthy of partnership in the coalition government.⁴² The large number of parliamentary delegates meant that no one grouping could claim a majority. Together, the Agrarians,⁴³ Social Democrats, National Socialist, National Democrats, and the Czechoslovak Populist Party (sometimes with a smaller ally or two) commanded the majority of the seats in the National Assembly (See Appendix I). A rule which gave each party the power to force dissident deputies to vacate their seats ensured strict party discipline and unity.⁴⁴

The *Petka* was the only level of entry into regional as well as statewide power. The prevailing coalition party leaders negotiated policy and Parliament essentially rubber-stamped their decisions. No government-sponsored bill was ever rejected in inter-war Czechoslovakia, nor was a vote of non-confidence in the government ever passed.⁴⁵ A party that lost votes in an election did not pass over into opposition, but remained in government, albeit in a weakened capacity. If the *Petka* as a whole failed to gain the simple majority needed to govern, it merely added allies from among the smaller parties to augment its number of seats in Parliament. The structure was stagnant. The five dominant parties adjusted their coalition, but they never accepted the dynamic momentum between a 'government' and an 'opposition.' "Though the electorate four

1953), 268-69 argues that the *Petka* was not truly a grand coalition because it excluded the ethnic based minority parties, specifically, the Slovak People's Party and the German People's Party

⁴¹ See Joseph R. Rothschild, *East Central Europe Between the Two World Wars* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1974), 119-120. And Leff, "National Conflict," 45-85.

⁴² Leff, *Ibid.*, 48

⁴³ The Agrarian party was the bedrock of the coalition-building process; it participated in every Cabinet till 1938 and held the premiership virtually continuously from 1922 to 1938.

⁴⁴ Golan, makes the argument that this ruling may be traced to Czech participation in the Austrian parliament, where the Czech national struggle demanded solid unity and discipline. "National Traditions," 85. Also, in many respects the system had facets which resembled a consociational democracy (See Chapter 1).

⁴⁵ Felak, "At the Price of the Republic," 85

times denied the outgoing coalition an ongoing majority, the political consequences were trifling, the chronic government parties considering themselves more-or-less immune to effective electoral retribution."⁴⁶

Czechoslovakia's political system made it all but impossible for the Slovak People's Party to advance its goal of increased autonomy. The core governmental parties, who supported the 'Czechoslovak idea' or Czechoslovakism and centralization, were always strong enough to form a majority without the SPP. Neither German, Magyar, nor Slovak nationalist groupings were deemed fit coalition partners. In this sense the central government accepted the exclusion of much of the electorate in Slovakia and the Sudetenland. Prague was able to ignore these constituents because sufficiently large numbers of Slovaks and Germans backed the broader based national parties. With the exception of a brief interregnum between 1927-1929, the Ludaks were excluded from the *Petka*. This inclusion was viewed by the other coalition members as a "sobering dose of reality for hot-headed (SPP) radicals, not as encouragement for their perspective."⁴⁷ The *Petka*'s rigidity and priorities excluded the SPP's demands for autonomy.⁴⁸ Temporarily the SPP, by accepting the coalition's guidelines, was forced to compromise its autonomist program.

Ironically, it was not the system alone, but also the degree of the SPP's own popular support that hampered the movement for Slovak autonomy. "Even if national movements do not have active popular support they claim to speak for the whole nation."⁴⁹ The SPP was no exception. Although the party professed to speak for the entire Slovak nation and its electoral support out-paced all other parties, in Slovakia, it could not command the loyalty of a clear majority of the ethnic Slovak population, let alone the population of Slovakia as a whole. Many voters, though opposed to the centralist regime, were not eager to give their votes to the nationalist, autonomist and

⁴⁶ Rothschild, "East Central Europe," 135

⁴⁷ Leff, "National Conflict," 78

⁴⁸ The other governing parties did concede to the Ludaks on two points: they removed the Catholic Church in Slovakia from the jurisdiction of Hungary's archbishops increasing the power of the Slovak priesthood. A new law replaced the *zupny* centralized land control system with a provincial one giving what Hlinka called 'a glint of autonomy' to the Slovaks. See Felak "At the price of the Republic," 35-36.

⁴⁹ Breuilly, "Nationalism and the State," 19

largely Roman Catholic SPP. As a consequence the party did not carry enough political weight to command the consistent attention of the state's leading governing parties, much less compel them to realize its autonomist program. Securing no more than seven percent of the statewide popular vote the Ludaks could not expect to have, in a democracy like Czechoslovakia, the power to dictate how that state was to be organized.⁵⁰ Electoral support in Slovakia for the SPP ebbed and flowed throughout the interwar period reflecting the measure of Slovak discontent with the policies enacted by Prague.

Policy Making in Inter-War Czechoslovakia

In order for a new government, state, or regime to endure it must reward its population and such rewards must be general enough to preclude the development of large-scale dissident groups. "It must, in short, produce the goods."⁵¹ The central government's policy objectives to 'produce the goods' and resolve the 'Slovak Question' were based on raising the economic standards of the Slovaks. The socioeconomic development that the Czechs would provide their Slovak brothers allegedly would serve to homogenize Czechoslovak society. Noble as this cause may have been in the minds of the Czechs, who were fostering and nurturing the 'lost tribe,' the policies came to be resented by the Slovaks who viewed them as patronizing, exploitive, and hypocritical. Hlinka and the Ludaks capitalized on this resentment and sought autonomy for Slovakia even "at the price of the Republic."⁵² To the Czechs the Slovaks appeared ungrateful, inured to the sacrifices being made on their behalf to modernize Slovakia. In this symbiotic relationship there was an "absence of a deeply rooted public conviction [in the Czech Lands] that the Czechs needed Slovaks as much as Slovaks needed Czechs."⁵³

As previously discussed the Czechs and Slovaks joined the Republic with considerable disparities in their political experience and economic standards. The

⁵⁰ Felak, "At the Price of the Republic," 210

⁵¹ Lipset, "Political Man," 45

⁵² Felak, "At the Price of the Republic," 96

⁵³ Leff, "National Conflict," 36

Czech lands had a relatively highly developed industrial based economy, a large middle class, and leaders who had gained political and administrative experience in the Austrian Diet. Whereas Slovak society was parochial, agriculturally based, pastoral,⁵⁴ and had no experience in governance. In cases where there exists such a large disparity of economic base, the inequality of economic rewards may be offset by a readiness of one of the parties "to share the wealth or at least not to have wealth constitute a social barrier."⁵⁵ The attitude the Czechs adopted toward the Slovaks reflected this conviction. Budgetary allocations and diversion of investment were concrete manifestations of the price the Czechs were paying for upgrading Slovakia, but such policies did little to satisfy the autonomist demands of Slovak nationalists.⁵⁶

Augmenting Czech fears of Slovak autonomy was the suspicion, held by many of the Czech and some Slovak political leaders, that an autonomous Slovakia would become the domain of reactionary and clerical elements.⁵⁷ Although both nations were overwhelmingly Catholic their attitudes toward the Roman Catholic Church were markedly different. In the Czech lands the Church was denied a significant role in society, not only because of the traditional disdain for arbitrary authority dating back to the Hus era, but also because of the historical association of the Church with the Germans and, subsequently, the Austrian Empire. In Slovakia, Catholic priests and Lutheran ministers were respected as leading intellectuals, and anti-clerical ideas were almost nonexistent. Prague adopted a number of policies (see below) reflecting this concern over reactionary elements within Slovak society. The policies not only increased tensions between the two nations, but enhanced the Roman Catholic SPP's popularity and influence.

If the Slovaks had apprehensions about Prague based anti-clericalism: this was confirmed on 3 November 1918, when Czech demonstrators destroyed the statue of the

⁵⁴ In 1921, 60.63% of the population in Slovakia was engaged in agriculture, forestry, and fishing, whereas the percentages for Bohemia and Moravia-Silesia were 29.69% and 35.27%, respectively. In Bohemia, 22.3% of the population lived in an urban setting (that is towns over 10,000 inhabitants), in Moravia 21.9%, and in Slovakia, only 11.1%. See Rothschild, "East Central Europe," 91-92.

⁵⁵ Jacob and Teune, "The Integrative Process," 21.

⁵⁶ See especially Leff, "National Conflict," Chapter Five.

Virgin Mary in Prague's Old Town Square. The demonstrators intended this act to be a largely symbolic way of the Czech people signifying the end of Austrian rule, but the Czech leaders recognized its significance. Prague statesmen, convinced that the Church was an impediment to society's progress, intended to impose secularization throughout Czechoslovak society. The government nationalized primary and secondary education, and state appointed teachers replaced the clerics in Slovak schools. Agrarian land reform confiscated Church lands, threatening the future of the Church's estates, and anti-clerics attempted to have a clause separating Church and state written into the new Czechoslovak Constitution. These measures had popular support in the Czech Lands, but met with resistance in Slovakia particularly, within the Slovak Catholic clergy. Patriotic nationalist priests, who had suffered in the past from their Magyarizing superiors had high expectations concerning the role of the Slovak priesthood in the new Republic. Hlinka and other clerics had hoped to become bishops in place of the expelled Magyars and to take over the administration of Church lands. The Prague regime obstructed the priesthood's aspirations. Prague's policies were designed to diminish not increase Church authority: as such the regime left the Church under the jurisdiction of Magyar archbishops based in Hungary.⁵⁸

The interplay between Slovak Catholics and the Slovak Lutherans was an additional factor Prague capitalized on in order to resist the political demands of Slovak nationalists and elicit popular Slovak support for its policies. According to 1921 census, Slovak religious society was comprised of 77.4% Catholics, with Protestants (mainly Lutherans) at 17.6%.⁵⁹ This Lutheran minority traditionally played an important role in Slovak political, economic, and cultural life that was far out of proportion to its numbers. Moreover, much of the Slovak intelligentsia was disproportionately drawn from Lutheran ranks. The new Czechoslovak regime, suspicious of both Magyarized Slovaks and the clerical influence among Slovak Catholics, preferred to rely on the

⁵⁷ These fears were confirmed when the fascist-clerical regime of the independent state of Slovakia, lead by of Josef Tiso, took power in 1938. The Tiso regime will be discussed further in the following section.

⁵⁸ It was not until the Ludaks joined the *Peška* in 1927, that the Catholic Church in Slovakia was removed from Hungary's jurisdiction.

Lutherans as its administrative agents in Slovakia.⁶⁰ Prague gained support for this action from Slovak politicians who, while sympathetic to autonomy, also feared the SPP's clerical influence and joined with the Czech progressives against the SPP.

One such politician was Vavro Srobár. A *Hlasist* from prewar times Masaryk appointed him minister with full powers for the administration of Slovakia. His task, which he successfully executed, was to purge government offices and schools of Magyar influence, establish a Czechoslovak administration, and quell any social unrest.⁶¹ Srobár's powers were sweeping. He was responsible for naming a cabinet of thirteen department heads to act as chief administrators of Slovakia, appointing forty-one representatives to the provisional National Assembly in Prague, and selecting the *zupani* (the heads of Slovaks counties). In filling these positions, Srobár relied heavily on Slovak Lutherans, progressives and thousands of Czech government officials who moved to Slovakia to staff the administrative posts vacated by the outgoing Magyars. This large Czech influx had mixed results on inter-ethnic relations between the Czechs and Slovaks. On the one hand, these officials filled an urgent need for trained personnel, on the other, the influx caused a number of tensions to surface. The newcomers differed in language, culture, and outlook. Some were tactless in dealing with the local population; others were patronizing.⁶² Although Prague gained support amongst many Slovaks, many more, resentful of these 'colonizers,' gave their support to the nationalist SPP.

State Crisis and Collapse: The Munich Agreement 1938

All issues addressed by the Hlinka's Slovak Peoples Party (HSPP)⁶³ were connected in some way with Slovak nationalism. Unlike the governing parties in Prague,

⁵⁹ Yeshayahu Jelinek, *The Parish Republic: Hlinka's Slovak People's Party, 1939-1945* (New York and London: East European Quarterly, 1976), 139.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 1-2

⁶¹ Benes, "Czechoslovak Democracy and Its Problems," 76-9

⁶² Rothschild, "East Central Europe," 119-120.

⁶³ When Andrej Hlinka died in 1938 the party, recognizing his name as an asset, renamed itself Hlinka's Slovak People's Party

which had a fundamental commitment to the Czechoslovak Republic, the HSPP grudgingly supported the Republic because it was seen, at the time, as the best alternative for the Slovak nation. When Czechoslovakia came under increasing pressure from the nationalist Sudetenland German People's Party's calls for secession, the HSPP regarded this as an opportunity to advance Slovak autonomist goals.⁶⁴

The political and constitutional organization of the First Republic, while not without its problems, ran relatively smoothly under Masaryk and after 1935 under his successor Eduard Benes. The Republic crumbled under pressures from outside when Great Britain, France and Italy capitulated to Adolph Hitler's territorial demands and on 26 September 1938 and signed the Munich Agreement authorizing the partition of Czechoslovakia. The Sudeten provinces were incorporated into Germany, Poland annexed the Tesin region, and Hungary the southern part of Slovakia. In a measure designed to preserve a united front against further encroachments the Czechs yielded to Slovak demands for self-government and federalization as codified in the Zilina Accord signed on 6 October 1938. However, in the tense new relationship federalism never had an opportunity to become firmly rooted. Five months later, 14 March 1939, on Hitler's orders Slovakia declared its independence one day before the Nazis annexed what was left of Bohemia and Moravia. The experiment in joint statehood was annulled. 'Independence' surprised the majority of the Slovak people. This 'quasi-sovereignty' was in great measure the work of the more radical faction of the HSPP and their allies/backers in Berlin; no one had asked the Slovak people.⁶⁵

The Wartime Experiences of the Two Nations

World War II constituted a traumatic period for the populations which inhabited the two 'statlets.' The Munich Agreement which initiated Czechoslovakia's partition, and the horrors of German occupation during the Second World War are matters of

⁶⁴ Felak. "At the Price of the Republic" 146

⁶⁵ Jelinek. "The Parish Republic," 32

substantial historical record.⁶⁶ Granted, this same fascist occupation and association with the Axis powers was a stimulant to Slovak nationalism and industrial development. Finally Slovaks had an independent state, although its existence was subject to obedient collaboration with the Nazi Germany. In exchange for German capital inflows, the homegrown ultra-nationalist and fascist independence party, (which now completely shed any mask of moderation), the Hlinkas, under newly proclaimed Slovak President Josef Tiso, cooperated actively in the deportation of over two thirds of Slovakia's Jews to extermination camps.⁶⁷ Tiso rejected pluralistic democracy because "the majority could be stupid and may be wrong; he wanted a democracy built on quality, a government by the élite."⁶⁸ Not satisfied with power alone, the party strove to influence the whole society in the spirit of Catholicism and authoritarian leadership. Czech and progressive Slovak fears that an autonomous Slovakia would become the domain of reactionary and clerical elements were confirmed. The party's program was to create a new Slovak man, infuse a new spirit in the socioeconomic life of the nation, and build a fascist state. Father Tiso was the undisputed head of the state, taking pride in his association with his peers - Adolph Hitler, Benito Mussolini, Ion Antonescu and the other masters of the new Axis dominated Europe. The wartime experiences of Slovakia advanced the national cause for independent statehood, but Fascist Slovakian participation in the holocaust would prove to be extremely costly to the reputation of Slovak nationalism. Neither the state, Tiso, or the HSPP would survive the post-war transition.⁶⁹ Just as the success of the Nazis had established and strengthened an independent Slovak regime; the defeat of the Reich would lead to the a renewal of the unitary based state structure of the inter-war period.

⁶⁶ See R. W. Seton-Watson *A History of Czechs and Slovaks* (Connecticut: Archon Books, 1965) and Victor A. Mamatey and Radomír Luza, *A History of the Czechoslovak Republic 1914-1948* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1918).

⁶⁷ M. George Zaninovich and Douglas A. Brown, "Political Integration in Czechoslovakia: the Implications of the Prague Spring and Soviet Intervention," *Journal of International Affairs*, Volume 27, No 1 (1973) 67

⁶⁸ Jelinek, "The Parish Republic," 85

⁶⁹ President Father Tiso, was executed in 1947

Chapter Summary

Men are not created equal; neither are ethnic groups. That they should or should not be equal in any particular state is usually, of course a very different and controversial issue. The Czech/Slovak confrontation pitted two numerically unequal groupings against each other. Two groups whose competing visions of their status and role within the post-1918 Czechoslovak state never were successfully reconciled throughout the First Republic. The absence of a common set of values and mindset was a problem that extended beyond these two major antagonistic groups to involve the sizable German and Magyar populations within the state's borders. Theoretically it may have been possible to establish a political and institutional framework which would have integrated some or all of the minorities over a period of time, but such an outcome would have required the Czech majority to make greater concessions to the Slovaks, as well as the German, and Magyar minorities. The Czechoslovak elite regarded such concessions as imprudent and undesirable.

For Masaryk and the other state founders a unitary political structure with a strong centralized government and the policy of 'Czechoslovakism' were the preferred methods to manage centrifugal nationalisms which existed within the state's borders. President Masaryk's strong belief in the 'Czechoslovak idea', whether ideologically or tactically based, was the central factor in the decision-making process. Masaryk was the final arbiter within the permanent *Petka* coalition; the social institutions, which might have served to constrain his 'dictatorship of respect' and his devotion to Czechoslovakism, were not in place. All nationalist parties and their troublesome claims were denied access to the central policy process. Slovakia's demands for national recognition and autonomy, as articulated in the Pittsburgh Agreement, were neutralized by the exclusionary tactics of the *Petka* and Masaryk. By default the HSPP took up the role of permanent opposition. But there were costs involved in Prague's attitude to its minorities. When a time of crisis arose the Czechs proved unable to stimulate genuine integrative sentiments, or command the overriding loyalty of the non-Czechs; Prague

was unable to depend upon the security that is derived from having the widespread support of all the state's citizens from the major ethnic groups. The Republic collapsed when it came under outside pressure from Nazi Germany and internally from its German and Slovak minority elements. The Czech leadership recognized that relatively few segments of the élite and the population wanted Czechoslovakia to survive as a unitary state. A genuinely integrated polity would not have dissolved in this manner because its constituent member groups would have regarded loyalty to the state as a higher priority than any sub-national loyalties. "But when society fails," as it was perceived to have done so under Czech dominance, "the nation appears as the ultimate guarantee."⁷⁰

⁷⁰ Hroch, *Social Preconditions*, 11

CHAPTER THREE

POLITICAL INTEGRATION AND THE COMMUNIST STATE - 1948-1989

This chapter will concentrate on the second most long lived political framework in the history of Czechoslovakia -- the communist state that existed from 1948 to 1989. As previously discussed, despite Prague's efforts during the inter-war years to sustain the Republic, the multi-national state of Czechoslovakia remained a fragile creation characterized by the absence of a fundamental ethnic, cultural, or historical unity among its principle ethnic groups. 'Czechoslovakism' ultimately proved too shallow to save the First Republic from partition in 1938. This chapter will analyze the persistence of nationalist tension and explore the various mechanisms, adopted by the successive communist régimes, in conflict management and state building.

The first section of the chapter will evaluate the controversial efforts, following World War II, by re-instated President Benes to re-establish the state's inter-war political framework. Benes' efforts took place in a radically altered political environment of 1945. When the Czechoslovak Communists gained power in February 1948 they imposed a unifying political dogma which demanded popular commitment to an integrated concept of statehood -- building the 'Czechoslovak socialist man' -- and also a policy of achieving economic equalization between the Czechs and Slovaks. These two techniques will be evaluated in terms of their impact on state cohesion and unity. The chapter will then examine the federalization of the state in 1969, which was a concession to Slovak nationalist demands, and the sole surviving provision advanced by the reform communists and their 1968 Action Program. Commonly referred to as the 'Prague Spring,' this attempt at communist liberalization -- 'socialism with a human face' proposed by Alexander Dubcek -- ruptured the Stalinist orthodoxy which had preceded it. That springtime of reform abruptly ended when Leonid Brezhnev ordered the Soviet invasion in August 1968. The final section of the chapter will assess the adequacy of the 'federal solution's' attempt to manage refractory forces within a bi-entity politically federalized system.

POST-WAR RENEWAL 1945-1948

A Pre-Communist Interregnum: 1945-1948

The renewal of the Czechoslovak Republic after the war marked a significant stage in the development of the Czech and Slovaks peoples.¹ The forced deportation of the Sudetenland Germans, the expulsion of Magyars to Hungary, and the transfer of the sub-Carpathian territory of Ruthenia to the Soviet Union left the state with a 94 percent population of Czechs and Slovaks and the balance minority groups.² The aspirations of minorities was a major concern in pre-war Czechoslovakia; in the post-war era the key political concern would be the friction between the two major nationalities, the Czechs and Slovaks. The central problem in 1945 was to construct a political system that could be reflective and respond to this new balance of power.

The old antagonisms of the inter-war period reemerged during the post-war period. For example, the question arose of whether the continuity of the state should date from before or after the Zilina Agreement of 1938 which had granted the Slovaks a degree of federal autonomy. President Benes favored the *status quo ante* embodied in the constitution of 1920. Benes' consuming crusade to undo the consequences of the Munich Agreement cast the October Zilina Agreement's grant of autonomy to Slovakia into political limbo. Benes' stance brought him into conflict with Slovak leaders Milan Hodza, the pre-Munich Prime Minister, and Stefan Osusky, Prague's pre-war Ambassador to France. These leaders pressured Benes to find a solution to the 'Slovak question,' warning him that the inter-war policy on Slovakia had led to 'state catastrophe,' and that positive remedial action was essential.³ Benes and his followers dismissed Hodza and Osusky's solutions to the Slovak question, which ranged from

¹ From 1945 to February 1948 Czechoslovak government was composed of a coalition of parties from the pre-war period which had not collaborated with the independent Slovak state or Axis occupation. The Communist Party had a significant role in the coalition, but was not yet in a monopolistic position, largely because of President Benes' considerable stature.

² H. G. Skilling, "Revolution and Continuity in Czechoslovakia, 1945-1946," *Journal of Central European Affairs* 20 (January 1961) 363-64.

autonomy to confederation, as a power play by ambitious rivals. ⁴ Although refusing to be committed to a specific plan Benes did sign the Kosice Agreement of April 1945 that promised . . . the government shall from the very beginning consistently strive to realize the principle of 'equals among equals' in Czecho-Slovak relationships in order to establish a real brotherhood of the two nations." ⁵ While the national government in Prague would administer all of Czechoslovakia, the Slovaks were granted their own regional administration and were promised equal treatment in the new unitary state. How this broad Agreement would have been implemented in *realpolitik* terms would never be tested. Both the Czech and Slovak post-war aspirations were nullified as a result of the 1948 Communist *coup d'état*.

Slovak Self-Assertion

The Czechs, and the Czech oriented Slovaks did not welcome the program of national equalization which Kosice appeared to offer. Only 36 percent of those Czechs polled in a 1946 Gallup survey approved of Slovakia's new autonomist position within the state but, two-thirds of them still considered Czechs and Slovaks to be branches of the same 'Czechoslovak' nation. ⁵ Words such as 'federation' or 'equalization' were looked upon with suspicion by Prague. The fervent nationalism that pervaded the 1946 electoral campaign in Slovakia revealed the Slovaks very different response to Kosice's guarantees.

Interestingly most Czechs did not recognize that the wartime Slovak fascist state -- which most observers correctly reviled as a Nazi satellite -- had resulted in a considerable mobilization of Slovak nationalism. Reprehensible as many of Josef Tiso's policies were, his regime was successful in advancing Slovak state building and administrative experience in several spheres of political, cultural, and economic life. During the war, all positions within the bureaucracy formerly occupied by Czech

³ Leff, "National Conflict," 89

⁴ *Ibid*

⁵ Joseph A. Mikus, *Slovakia: A Political History, 1918-1950* (Milwaukee, University of Milwaukee Press, 1963), 348-349 Quoted in El Mallakh, "The Slovak Autonomy Movement," 196

administrators were taken over by Slovaks, more precisely, by HSPP members. Czech and Jewish businesses, homes, and property were confiscated, sold, or turned over to Slovak party members, their owners expelled or deported to Nazi concentration camps. A nationalist political socialization process, sanctioned by the fascist-clerical regime, was permitted a free reign in the utilization of the mass media. The education system was restructured to inculcate the glories of Slovak language, culture, and history; redirecting attention to a national heritage distinct from that of the Czechs. The wartime experiences heightened the self-affirmation of the Slovaks, which would affect their post-war expectations and out-look.⁷

The focus of the anti-fascist resistance movement also contributed to Slovakia's expectations. The movement made up largely, but not exclusively, of Slovak Communists, was nationalist in terms of its goals for the state. This nationalism was sanctioned by Moscow, when it decreed the Party should encourage nationalist and even violent outbursts, oppose 'Czechoslovakism,' and play down the universalist aspects of socialism, in order to gain support of dissident nationalities such as Slovaks. The tactic was to exploit, not resolve, traditional conflicts.⁸ Though defeated in the Slovak National Uprising of 1944 the mainly Communist partisans, by resisting the Nazi-backed Slovak government, fought their way into a position of influence in the post-war state. Thus the partisans gave a new momentum to, and partially restored the respectability which nationalist sentiments had lost under Tiso's HSPP regime.

In sum, the transformation in the national composition of Czechoslovakia, and also the enhanced self-assertion of the Slovaks eliminated the inter-war period's rationale for a strong centralized government in Prague. The expulsion of the Sudetenland Germans and the massive transfer of Magyars expunged Czech fears that concessions to Slovaks would entail concessions to other national groupings. Further, the serious doubts raised over Slovakia's ability to manage its own affairs were proved

⁷ El Mallakh, *Ibid.*, 154

⁸ See Jelinek's *The Parish Republic* for a more detailed study of the Benes government's failure to recognize this new Slovak self-confidence in their capabilities to manage their own affairs. A similar argument is detailed in Leff, "National Conflict," 86-96

⁹ Golan, "National Traditions," 62

invalid by the experiences in administration gained after 1939. At the opening of the National Assembly on 28 October 1945 President Benes endorsed this new perspective on Slovak political autonomy. The radically changed political environment in post-war Czechoslovakia would necessitate a renewed consolidation and a total renegotiation of the political system's base; decentralization, he argued, would not only be possible but essential.⁹

The Communist Coup d'État

As in the rest of Europe post-war politics was a time for the censure of collaborationist forces. The issues of 'treason' and 'loyalty' became central to the vocabulary of political evaluation and political recruitment. The post-war provisional government, made up of a coalition of non-communists and communists, prohibited members of the Czech collaborationist parties (Agrarians, Small Tradesmen, and National Democrats), and the Slovak HSPP from reconstituting themselves as legitimate organization. The demise of the Agrarians removed what had been a bedrock political order in Czech politics. During the inter-war years the dissolution of the HSPP destroyed a regionally based and quite popular political organization for the Slovaks. However necessary and comprehensible these policies and prohibitions were, nevertheless decisions they left the non-communist parties of both Czechs and Slovaks in disarray, creating a political vacuum which the Czechoslovak Communist party (KSC) and the Slovak Communist party (KSS) would fill. Unlike the inter-war party structure there were no country-wide based non-communist parties who shared any common outlook for inter-party consultation and coordinated action.

In the election held in May 1946 the communists won 38 percent of the statewide vote, prompting President Benes to ask Communist Party leader Klement Gottwald to form a government.¹⁰ The Party's rapid nationalization of the economy and

⁹ Leff, "National Conflict," 94

¹⁰ Andrew Michta, "The Government and Politics," 32 In Slovakia the Slovak Democratic Party, a coalition of pre-war Slovak Agrarians and HSPP members, was awarded two-thirds of the overall vote. The KSS, having lost a pre-war electoral stronghold when the Magyars lost their franchise, failed to match the impressive KSC gains in the Czech Lands. Also see Leff, "National Conflict," 95

also communist consolidation in the army and police motivated the non-communist parties to form a more coordinated opposition. Assessing the Slovak Democratic Party (SDP) to be the weakest link in the coalition's opposition and their strongest rival in Slovakia the Party leaders accused leading SDP politicians of taking part in a conspiracy directed against the state.¹¹ Based on this accusation the government modified all Slovak institutions in such a way that the Democrats lost their dominant role in Slovak politics. Nevertheless, by the winter of 1947 the Communist Party sensed the possibility of a defeat in the elections scheduled for May 1948.¹² Acting under Soviet pressure and inspiration the Communist Party now made its move to seize legal total control of the state.¹³ This move took the form of a *coup d'état* in February 1948. Moscow's sanctioning of the *coup* reaffirmed the Czechoslovak communist's belief that their claims to power was permanent and irreversible; they had embarked on a socialist revolution, and, according to their ideological tenets, history could not be reversed.¹⁴ To cede power to a democratic principle of electoral choice was anathema to their beliefs.

The communist take over was facilitated by the difficulties encountered by the non-communists in marshaling their forces after the war. This was particularly valid in the Czech Lands where the KSC had made substantial gains in popular support. As a result of the Munich Agreement, the entire Czech political élite had suffered a loss of political confidence, prestige, and support. During the war the Czech upper and middle classes had been purged -- 38,000 perished at the hands of the German occupiers -- those who survived were "presented with the difficult daily decision as to where survival ended and collaboration began."¹⁵ It can be assumed that Slovak collaboration with the Czech's historic enemy was looked upon as little more than treason and a betrayal by their Slav brothers to 'Czechoslovakia.' In this context of demoralization the

¹¹ Bankowicz, "Czechoslovakia: from Masaryk to Havel," 149.

¹² For a detailed account of this period see Paul Zinner, *Communist Strategy and Tactics in Czechoslovakia 1918-1948*, (London: Pall Mall, 1963).

¹³ For additional and comprehensive information of how the communists gained power in Eastern Europe see Hugh Seton-Watson, *The East European Revolution*, 3rd ed. (New York: Praeger, 1956). Watson argues that the takeover was a three stage process: genuine coalition, facade coalition and monolithic bloc.

¹⁴ Schöpflin, "The Politics of Eastern Europe," (Oxford: Blackwell, 1993), 74.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 62

communists displayed great organizational skills in mobilizing the masses while their opponents, divided and in disarray, retreated into apathy.

THE CZECHOSLOVAK PEOPLE'S REPUBLIC-1948-1960 ¹⁶

Stalinist Czechoslovakia

The Czechoslovak communists came to power through a mixture of inter-party maneuvering and relatively non-violent urban protests. In June 1948, the frustrated and ill President Benes resigned from office. He was succeeded by a communist, Klement Gottwald, who began the process of tailoring the political and economic structure of Czechoslovak to the Soviet model with some minor domestic deviations, the existence of several small satellite parties, ¹⁷ and the provision for two Slovak institutions with political and administrative powers. In acknowledgment of Slovak national identity and recognition of the 1945 Kosice Agreement Slovakia was permitted its own legislature, Slovak National Council (SNC), and its executive, the Board of Commissioners. No paralled Czech counterparts to these institutions existed. As such the political structure of Czechoslovakia could be described as centralized asymmetrical federalism. However, it should be noted that these anomalies-- satellite parties and Slovak government institutions -- were marginal to the primary objective of reconfiguring Czechoslovakia on the basis of a centralized Soviet model.

Following the 1948 *coup* economic nationalization, initiated in the coalition government period, was extended to all business, industry, and agriculture. At the same time a large scale program of economic equalization between the developed Czech Lands and the less developed Slovak territory was undertaken as officially sponsored Party

¹⁶ Czechoslovakia was a 'People's Republic' from 1948 to 1960, becoming the first 'Socialist Republic' outside the Soviet Union with the proclamation of a new Constitution in 1960

¹⁷ The left wings of some of the former parties formed new organizations in 1948: the Czechoslovak National Socialist Party established itself as the Czechoslovak Socialist Party; the Catholic People's Party was reorganized as the Czechoslovak People's Party; the Slovak Democratic Party was renamed the Slovak Renaissance Party and the Slovak Freedom Party retained its name. Until 1989 these four political parties served as allies or silent partners of the KSC, performing the "function of transmission belts for the Party." Bankowicz, "Czechoslovakia from Masaryk to Havel," 151.

policy. In addition the Communists imposed a " Stalinist unifying political dogma which required commitment to an integrated concept of statehood."¹⁸ By the application of these two techniques -- economic equalization and cultural assimilation -- it was expected that the differences between the Czechs and Slovaks would decline to allow the "development of an homogeneous, cohesive, and assimilated national community within one generation."¹⁹

By prioritizing the industrialization of Slovakia, the regions output, compared with pre- World War II, increased more than twelve times.²⁰ Whereas before the war it was the Slovaks who coveted the greater economic prosperity of the Czechs, it was now the Czechs turn to protest what they considered to be privileged treatment of the Slovaks. To the Czechs this development represented a questionable return on what they had considered the high investment already made in the Slovak economy. The pattern evident in the First Republic was perpetuated under communist rule. Slovak gains came at Czech expense. For the communist régime the price paid by the Czechs was viewed not only as an antidote to the earlier strength of Czech social democratic traditions, but a pre-condition for the dictatorial régime's preservation. As in all Stalinist régimes, those occupying the higher echelons of the political élite -- the new class-- were exempt from egalitarian rules, but the Czech "intelligentsia endured what was in their view the dubious privilege of being the most leveled-down intelligentsia in East Europe."²¹ The intellectual community fared no better during this period.

Stalinism versus Czechoslovak Socialism

Throughout the inter-war years the Bolshevik experiment being carried out in Russia was considered an interesting one by members of the Czechoslovak élite, but of no particular relevance or applicability to the relatively advanced and progressive Czech society. As discussed in chapter two the Czech traditions of humanitarianism,

¹⁸Peter A. Toma, "The Czechoslovak Question Under Communism," *East European Quarterly* (March 1969), 15.

¹⁹*Ibid.*, 19, and Zaninovich, "The Political Integration of Czechoslovakia," 68.

²⁰Toma, "The Czechoslovak Question," 23.

²¹Brown, "Czechoslovakia: Revival and Retreat," 173.

egalitarianism, and individualism were factors, viewed by many, as conducive to the adoption of social democracy. These traditions dictated the type of socialism deemed applicable to or desirable for Czech society; Bolshevism was not a popular option. The Czechs tended toward the economic-distributive side of socialism, rather than the politically-strong central planning type, and as a rule embraced evolutionary 'social democracy' rather than revolutionary-autocratic Bolshevism. Czech traditions also exhibited a preference for peaceful and gradual change.²² Throughout the inter-war period the Czech Communist Party²³ sought a 'Czech way' to socialism, reluctant to submerge itself in the universalism which denied national sovereignty or subordinating itself to solutions devised by Moscow. The Czech worker when he voted communist "voted for workers welfare, and egalitarianism, not Bolshevik revolution."²⁴

But, the leaders of the *coup* in 1948 were not adherents to the 'Czech way' to socialism. For the Gottwald élite the Stalinist model was the chosen vehicle to move Czechoslovak society forward to the ultimate goal of socialism. To accomplish this the Gottwald regime established a rigid and repressive political system. A deplorable by-product of the implementation of the Stalinist model was a series of public trials and purges aimed first at anti-communists, but later extended to the more independent KSC and KSS leaders. Dissidents from both branches of the Party were accused of being 'bourgeois nationalist' traitors.²⁵ The purges, the most intense outside of the Soviet Union, were conducted to assure disciplined obedience to the regime's socialist program. When Gottwald died in 1953 his mission was complete: Czechoslovakia was politically and economically the Soviet Union in miniature. The next party leader Antonín Novotný, a dedicated Stalinist, continued to prescribe and adhere to the tenets of

²² See Golan "National Traditions," 41-76 for a more detailed analysis of Czech democratic-liberal traditions, and for an argument she makes regarding the Czech penchant for passivity and ability to endure adversity with the hope that improved conditions would evolve through legal and institutional means.

²³ Czechoslovakia was the only East European country where the Communist Party remained legal throughout the inter-war period receiving consistent electoral support.

²⁴ Paul Zinner, *Communist Strategy and Tactics in Czechoslovakia 1918-1948* (London: Pall Mall, 1963), 25-26.

²⁵ The most famous trial, in November 1952, was of Rudolf Slansky Vice-Premier and Secretary of the Communist Party. Eleven of the accused who stood trial along with Slansky were hanged one month later. The thinning of the ranks in the five year period before Gottwald's death in 1953 was divided between the KSS and KSC as follows: the KSS lost five of its thirteen Presidium members; the KSC lost twelve of twenty-two, and six out of seven Central

Stalinism. The de-Stalinization 'thaw' of the early Khrushchev era largely bypassed Czechoslovakia. The 1960 Czechoslovak Constitution declared that the building of socialism had reached its final form and the country had actually achieved it. The consequences of this enormous achievement was to endow the political structure with an oddly petrified quality; there was surface movement, but below the pre-existing patterns were frozen.²⁶ This petrification would persist until the Communist reform movement known as the 'Prague Spring' challenged the existing system's control.

Economic Crisis

By the 1960s it was becoming apparent that the two pronged approach of the Soviet model -- economic equalization and cultural assimilation -- was showing signs of severe strain. The overall Czechoslovak economy was stagnant. Bohemia and Moravia's industrial base had become largely obsolete. The new industrial development output in Slovakia was concentrated on large-scale defense and defense-related industry whose principle buyer was the Soviet Union. The heavy industry lobby justified its constant demands for more investment by reference to the military needs of the Soviet Union and the Warsaw Treaty Organization. This acquiescence to the Slovak lobby by the central government resulted in a diversion which left the industry of Czechoslovakia with the short end of the economic stick. While Czechoslovakia remained a major supplier of machine tools, building and construction equipment within the Council for Mutual Economic Assistance (COMECON), its products were no longer competitive on world markets. The entire area of Eastern Europe was in a downward phase of an economic cycle and all the communist economies were showing falling growth rates, between Czechoslovakia was the most severely effected. (See table 1.1) What had gone wrong?

Committee Secretaries Bankowicz, "Czechoslovakia from Masaryk to Havel," 153 and Leff "National Conflict," 167 fn. 49

²⁶ For a philosophical discussion of static qualities of the Soviet-Stalinist socialism see Ayn Rand, *Philosophy: Who Needs It* (New York: The Bobbs-Merrill Company, Inc., 1982)

Table 3.1 *The growth of GNP as a percentage of annual growth* ²⁷

1951-1960	1961-1965	1966-1975
10.9	6.6	8.2
7.5	1.9	6.1
10.1	3.4	5.4
5.8	4.1	6.6
7.6	6.2	7.8
10.4	9.2	9.4

While it is true that priority treatment by the communist planners increased Slovak industrial output, it is equally true that central planning was failing in the economy of the Czech Lands. The realization of this failure came in 1962 when the regime saw that the once prosperous Czech economy was on the brink of crisis. Bolshevism simply had not been suited to the Czech society into which it had been introduced. A society that had, initially, embarked on a process of industrialized reform and had become a more complex, social, economic, and political organism. Economists argued that the Bolshevik system was more suited to a country in the early stages of industrialization, not an economy that was already there. Bolshevism suited the less developed less industrialized Slovak society. ²⁸

The concentration on economic reforms during the 1960s had several motives. First, the practical reason mentioned above of falling growth rates. Second, the extensive resources used to fuel the Stalinist expansion -- surplus labor from the countryside and the investment inherited from the previous regime -- were all nearly exhausted. Third, this slowing down of investment had the serious consequence of making it difficult to keep promises of mounting consumer consumption. Fourth, the inefficiencies inherent in a highly centralized planned economy. ²⁹ These inefficiencies resulted in an increasing share of investment being allocated into coal, steel and related industries long after it would have been obvious that these no longer deserved the priority accorded them.

²⁷ Tamás Bauer, "The Second Economic Reform and Ownership Relations: Some considerations for the Further Development of the New Economic Mechanism," *Eastern European Economics*, 22 No 3-4 (Spring-Summer 1984), 33-87. Quoted in Schopflin, "The Politics of Eastern Europe," 138.

²⁸ For an extension of this argument which will be presented in subsequent Chapters of this thesis see Jin Musil, "Czechoslovakia in the Middle of Transition," *Daedalus* Volume 121, Number 2 (Spring 1992): 175-195.

Modern growth and service industries were neglected. Housing construction was near the bottom of the Eastern European league. And the effectiveness of the share of investment in GNP had declined dramatically. Production had become a "moloch devouring itself."³⁰ A final concern over this economic malaise was that the decline in growth rates would be interpreted as a comment on the viability of the communist system. A great deal of energy (not to mention the tremendous cost to the people of Czechoslovakia) had been put into the predicted success of the planned economy as the 'true' path to modernity and prosperity. The decline in growth rates represented an opening for domestic critics of the system.³¹ Thus the Communist Party was obliged to find a way of relaunching the economy without incurring political costs. In the early 1960s reform communists were convinced that this equation could be balanced -- improved planning and a more arms length approach to the economic process.

'SOCIALISM WITH A HUMAN FACE'

The 'Slovak Question' Resurfaces

In purely economic terms the equalization program could be considered a 'success' for the Slovaks, but the result had an unanticipated consequence. The impact of political and socioeconomic modernization unexpectedly served to increase Slovak national particularism. This, in turn, led to challenges aimed at the concept of a unified state. To counter the increased demands for greater autonomy the communist leaders strategy was one of greater centralism and increased emphasis on integration. This reversion to the Stalinist cultural development formula would be instituted at the expense of the Slovaks. The 1960 Novotny Constitution eliminated virtually all the legislative activities of the Slovak National Council (SNC), both the executive and administrative agencies came under Prague's influence. The consequences of the regime's nation-building strategy and the overt suppression of Slovakia's rights and

²⁹ Schöpflin, *"The Politics of Eastern Europe,"* 138

³⁰ Theodor Prager, "Why Socialism Requires Democracy - Czechoslovakia: An Object Lesson" *Coexistence*, Vol. 6 (1969) 60

aspirations were to kindle Slovak resentment against the Czechoslovak state.³² The obvious outgrowth of this resentment was the development of an even stronger national consciousness and a further deepening of the "growth of ethnic particularism within the Slovakian ethnic group."³³ This failure of the Novotny regime to deal with the Slovak national issue contributed to the pressure for liberalization and reform and to the tragic events what culminated in the August 1968 Soviet led invasion.

Challenges to the Novotny Regime

Three groups provided the impetus for the reform concept of 'socialism with a human face.' The movement was started in 1960 by members the intelligentsia who were dissatisfied with the new 'socialist' Constitution adopted in 1960. With the change in the KSS leadership in 1963 the movement gathered momentum and gained mass appeal in the 'Prague Spring' of 1968.³⁴ While the majority of the Party still believed in Marxism-Leninism as an authentic body of ideas the reform minded members also believed that a better system more suited to the Czechoslovak traditions could be created, a more democratic socialism.³⁵ The reform movement could be characterized as evolutionary as opposed to revolutionary. This was the first time in history that a ruling communist party had been seriously challenged from within by reformers who questioned the very basis of its power.³⁶ These members of the intelligentsia were joined by the creative intellectuals, whose two fold agenda included the right to free expression

³¹ Schöpflin, "The Politics of Eastern Europe," 139.

³² The results of a poll by the Gallup institute in Bratislava showed that the political arrangements that would be satisfactory to the Slovaks took precedence over economic well being *Práce*, 13 July 1968. Cited in Milan J Reban, "The New Federation," in *The Politics of Ethnicity in Eastern Europe* (East European Monographs, New York: Columbia University Press, 1981), 226.

³³ Gary K. Bertsch, "Molding the 'New Man' in Communist societies: The Multi-National Czechoslovakia, Soviet and Yugoslav Cases." Mimeograph (University of Georgia Press, 1972), 49. Quoted in Zaninovich, "The Political Integration of Czechoslovakia," 69.

³⁴ Much of the literature on Czechoslovakia from this point forward makes analogous reference to spring/winter seasons when recounting the country's history. This thesis, when deemed appropriate, will utilize the analogy.

³⁵ The terms -- Czechoslovak traditions and democratic socialism -- both have a somewhat exclusionary connotation in that they refer to the early traditions of the Czech Lands which were carried forward into the inter-war period. These traditions were assumed to have been adopted by the Czechoslovak /Slovaks, but it is not valid to assume that they were also embraced by the Slovak Slovaks. For the purposes of this section the two terms should be applied to Czechoslovakia as including all three groupings.

³⁶ V. Mastny, ed. *Czechoslovakia: Crisis in World Communism* (New York: Facts on File, 1972), 1.

and a voice in the formulation of policy; to those individuals group censorship was an unacceptable policy in a socialist state. On their own, these fledgling reform initiatives by the Czech and Slovak intelligentsia would not have been sufficient to result in changes to the system. But, the coincidence of the downturn in the Czechoslovak economy together with these pressures, impacted on the leadership and forced it to focus, at least at a minimum, on economic reforms.³⁷

Finally, the next group to join the reform movement was political in nature, and its pressure for reform was grounded in the Slovak question. The KSC's membership was dominated by Czech communists. To increase their representation in Prague, the KSS's members pressed for national recognition and the rehabilitation of their Slovak comrades who were previously condemned as 'bourgeois nationalists.' during the trials of the early 1950s. Novotny treated this striving for greater Slovak autonomy with disdain and missed few opportunities to make his distaste public. But he did acquiesce to a leadership change in the KSS in 1963.³⁸ This move was, in all probability, made in an effort to pacify his intra-party forces by offering up 'sacrificial lambs.'³⁹

The new First Secretary of the KSS Alexander Dubcek was a committed reformist. Sensing the Novotny regime's vulnerability Dubcek campaigned against 'Prague centralism' with a platform designed to appeal to Slovak national identity. Novotny publicly criticized the KSS leader for following a narrow national interest approach and as late as October 1967 continued to resort to the 'bourgeois nationalism' accusation in an attempt to rid the regime of dissident Slovak reformers. This attack lost Novotny the support of his natural allies, the Slovak conservatives and ultimately, Slovaks in general. To the Slovaks Novotny became "the very embodiment of the 'grand Czech' attitude to Slovak problems, which [to them] belied the promise of equality."⁴⁰ At this

³⁷ Prager, "Why Socialism needs Democracy," 60 fn #3. In 1962 there was a negative growth rate and zero growth between 1964-1965

³⁸ This appointment was the first step in Slovakia's path to enhanced authority within the state during the 1960s - the right to its own elite selection process. Further, it marked a concession on the part of Prague and was a catalyst for the Slovaks to extract additional control from the KSC.

³⁹ The former First Secretary was the hated 'Slovak' Karol Bacilek. Born and trained in the Czech Lands, Bacilek was regarded as an outsider by many Slovaks and his Slovak ancestry repudiated. For the Slovaks, Dubcek had more acceptable credentials. Leff, "National Conflict," 109

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 161

critical juncture, the KSS was functioning in the role of a second political party within the system, thereby, exercising its rights within the spirit of the Kosice Agreement. This was a precursor to a widened scope of administrative activity and a 'modest expansion' of the SNC from 1964 onward.⁴¹ These gains prompted an effort to resurrect the 1938 Zilina Accord 'federalist' debate. The reformist Slovak communists were aware that self-determination for the Slovaks within the framework of one political system could be achieved only through liberalization leading to de-centralization of the system's decision-making process. Under the pretext of the need to respect the specific Slovak conditions, the KSS was also engaged in the struggle for the liberalization of all Czechoslovaks.⁴² The political stage was now set for many of the proposed mid-60s 'Prague Spring' reforms. From this point forward until the disintegration of the state in January 1993 "federalist aspirations would *always* lie beneath the surface of the national debate."⁴³

The reformers were linked in this loose coalition, but there was little on which they were actually united upon except that both Czechs and Slovaks favored reforms designed to give power to a variety of actors.⁴⁴ Further, there were diverse factors motivating both reform groups. For the Slovaks the 'Prague Spring' was perceived as a vehicle for the fulfillment of Slovak nationalist aspirations, while the Czechs and many Czech oriented Slovaks were committed to genuine democratization of the Republic. In sum, ethnocracy not democracy was what infused the 'Prague Spring' with its true meaning.⁴⁵ The cohesion necessary to unite behind a single long - term vision of the political structure of the state, once again, had eluded the two nations.

The Action Program of 1968

⁴¹ H Gordon Skilling, *Czechoslovakia's Interrupted Revolution* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1976), 49-56. This work by Skilling has been acclaimed as the best analysis of the 'Prague Spring'

⁴² Toma, "The Czechoslovak Question under Communism," 27

⁴³ Leff, "National Conflict," 112, emphasis added

⁴⁴ Reban, J. ed., "Czechoslovakia: the New Federation," 215

⁴⁵ Vladimir Tismaneanu, "Reinventing Politics: Eastern Europe from Stalin to Havel" (New York: Macmillan, The Free Press, 1992), 279

In January 1968 Alexander Dubcek replaced Novotny as First Secretary of the KSC. A new government was formed in March, inaugurating the 'Prague Spring'. By April 1968 the KSC had issued its 'Action Program.' As in preceding documents dealing with the political framework of Czechoslovakia, the 'Action Program' was most notable for its ambiguity.⁴⁶ The document promised a complete transformation of the system, but subjected it to the leading role of the party. As such much would depend on what kind of a party would hold power in Czechoslovakia. One reason *inter alia* for the Soviet led Warsaw Pact invasion was the Kremlin's concern that the Extraordinary 13th Congress of the KSC, scheduled for late August would elect a Central Committee committed to full-scale democratization and a Western-style economic system. This would no longer have been the type of party the Soviet Union could entrust with a leading role in what had been up until now its most obedient satellite.

An additional initiative of the Program was a plan to federalize the state. The federal system outlined would resemble classic federalism's division of powers with three power centers operating in the Republic. The KSS in Slovakia and the KSC in Czech Lands would each have their own Central Committee, Presidium and Secretariat. These national parties would share power with the central general party in Prague, each within a sphere, coordinate and independent. To the Slovaks the federal solution promised to strengthen their power vis-à-vis the central authority. To the Czechs, allowing for a fuller sense of Slovak participation, was intended to yield a greater level of political legitimacy, and also provide enhanced political harmony between the two Slav nations. Czech acquiescence to the federalization of the Republic was intended to settle the 'Slovak question' and convert the centralized power system into one based on more democratic principles. At no time did the reformers question their commitment to socialism, nor did it occur to them that without a multi-party system there was a high probability that the consent and cooperation necessary within a federal system would, in the one-party pluralist structure being proposed, result in a return to coercion.⁴⁷ Despite this there was a sense of renewal, and a return to the old values and beliefs of

⁴⁶ Schöpflin, "The Politics of Eastern Europe," 155

the First Republic. In the spring of 1968 the prospects for an improved future looked hopeful.

NORMALIZATION AND THE FEDERAL SOLUTION

Normalization

All this sense of renewal came to an abrupt halt on 20 August 1968 with the Soviet led Warsaw Pact invasion. When Dubcek attempted to defend the 'Prague Spring' on the basis of his understanding of 'socialism' Leonid Brezhnev discounted his views and any reforms that could develop from them.⁴⁸ The Soviet Union, from the invasion in 1968 through the collapse of communist power in 1989, stationed troops in Czechoslovakia. Brezhnev's reaction to any type of reform, successfully destroyed, in the minds of the Czechoslovaks whatever attractions communism, as an ideology and the Soviet union as a friendly ally, had retained; henceforth, "communists were career communists, not convinced ones."⁴⁹ In 1969 Dubcek was replaced by Gustáv Husák a pre-war rehabilitated Slovak communist. On his inauguration, Husak pledged to the nation: "we are not giving up a single one of the great ideas that have become a part of our life the last year."⁵⁰ Among the 'great ideas' implemented in the last year of the 'Prague Spring' was the abolishment of censorship, the enhancement of civil rights, the modernization of the economy, the rehabilitation of the victims of judicial and police repression, the federalization plan for the state and, above all - -what the Soviet Union correctly perceived and feared - -the weakening of the role of the Communist party.

It was this weakening of the role of the Party that prompted the formulation of an official policy known as 'normalization.' Initiated by Moscow, normalization's main aspects included political and economic recentralization, a massive purge of the KSC

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 156.

⁴⁹ See Archie Brown, "Ideology and Political Culture," in *Inside Gorbachev's Russia*, ed., Seweryn Bialer (Boulder: Westview Press, 1989), 1-40. Brown asserts that Brezhnev's disapproval of the 'Prague Spring's' reform proposals led to the Soviet Union's own failure to reform and its ultimate downfall in the 1990s.

⁵⁰ J. F. Brown, *Surge to Freedom* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1991), 25. Brown argues that most of Czechoslovakians were career communists before the invasion. He also argues as does Brown, *Ibid.*, that from this point forward the communist system in Eastern Europe and Soviet Union "was terminal."

and wholesale turnover of personnel in all institutions, the restoration of censorship, a renewed emphasis on ideology in mass media, arts and scholarship, and repressive measures directed against all non-conformists.⁵¹ These policies instituted by the Husák-Jakes regime defined Czechoslovak society until the regime's collapse in 1989. The only lasting legacy of the 'Prague Spring' was the *de jure* federalization of the state formally established in 1969. However, this measure was to be modified in the 'normalization period.' By 1970 Husák argued that unity must prevail over the artificially, narrowly defined, national interests of both the Slovaks and Czechs. Both the Party and its organs were declared unified. But, in an effort to ensure that Slovakia would remain a loyal political base the political structure returned to the asymmetrical-federal framework of the pre- 'Prague Spring.'

The change formally strengthened Slovakia's position with respect to the central government and partially fulfilled its goal of national autonomy. As noted previously, the asymmetrical-federal structure outlined in the Kosice Agreement featured a central government in Prague and a government in the Slovak Republic. However there was no provision made for a Czech government, only a weak parliament -- the Czech National Council (CNC). All vital institutions were organized in a similar fashion. Although the Slovaks represented only one-third of the federation's population the principle of parity was introduced in all federal institutions. For the first time in the state's history large numbers of Slovaks were given positions in the federal bureaucracy. In the economic sphere, Slovakia's rapid industrialization continued after the invasion, resulting in a continuous transfer of resources from the Czech Lands to Slovakia and relatively higher investments in the Slovak Republic than in the Czech regions. The Slovaks, by being granted some satisfaction of their national aspirations and preferred treatment, became loyal supporters of the Husák-Jakes regime.⁵² For the Slovaks the Husak regime's official policy resulted in high mobility and improved standard of living; for the Czechs decay, stagnation and obscurity.

⁵⁰ Otto Ulc, "Czechoslovakia in 1984," *Current History* (November 1984): 365.

⁵¹ Michael Kraus, "Czechoslovakia in the 1980s," *Current History* (November 1985): 374.

⁵² Schöpflin, "The Politics of Eastern Europe," 214.

Overall, the 'normalization period' was a period of economic and political stagnation, but relative social stability; stability gained at the expense of political freedom and under conditions of coercive government tactics. From 1970 onward the leadership's identification was that of the loyal defender of 'real socialism.' "Instead of attempting to win popular consent, they [the regime] built up a formidable coercive apparatus, justified according to the tenets of traditional Marxist-Leninist ideology and ultimately dependent on Soviet backing."⁵³ Despite the changes taking place in Moscow after the 1985 election of Mikhail Gorbachev as General-Secretary of the Soviet Union, Czechoslovakia's Husak regime remained resistant to new ideas, both political and economic. The people remained largely passive and cooperative. It was only in early 1988 that dissension began to spread to large numbers of the population. Having purged the word 'reform' from their vocabulary, Prague's hard-liners found themselves on the defensive for the first time since August, 1969.⁵⁴

The Federal Solution.

The *de jure* federal system outlined in the 'Prague Spring' was never constituted, and the *de facto* asymmetrical federal system of the Husák-Jakes regime was only federal in terms of institutional structure. That structure had very little influence on political decision-making. Equality of nations did not apply to the organization of the Communist Party, which was the real locus of power. As such the importance of the republics in the communist Czechoslovak federation was potential rather than actual, with the system resembling the operation of a unitary state.

On 15 March 1968, the Slovak National Council, by an unanimous vote had, accepted federalism as a solution to increase their participatory role within the state's decision-making process. The confederation model previously favored by the Slovaks

⁵³ Judy Batt, "East-Central Europe: From Reform to Transformation" in *Dismantling Communism: Common Causes and Regional Variations*, ed. Gilbert Rozman (Washington: Woodrow Wilson Center Press, 1992), 255.

⁵⁴ Michael Kraus, "Czechoslovakia in the 1980s," 373.

was by-passed.⁵⁵ On 24 June 1968 the Czechoslovak National Assembly approved a constitutional provision authorizing the preparation of the transition from a unitary system to a federal one. One of the considerations motivating the Czechs to accept the federation was the expectation that the 'Slovak question' would, at last, be resolved. Allowing for a fuller sense of Slovak participation, federalism was intended to yield greater levels of legitimacy and political harmony to the overall political system. The difficulty with this optimistic view of federalism's functions is that the balance of legitimacy is altered when, as in the case of Czechoslovakia, the state is two-territorial entities which were nationally homogeneous.⁵⁶

A federal union implies that those who join will be expected to develop some common nationality in addition to their own and also to divide their loyalties between the two. Without a sense of this common nationality a federation provides little in the way of a unifying system. The 'us versus them' framework in a state with two republics sharply delineates political confrontations, all policy victories and defeats occur with respect to a single and obvious rival. There are limited, indeed, no possibilities of coalitions with other states, provinces, or *Länders* which could facilitate the negotiation, compromise, and cooperation necessary for a federation to function effectively. In the case of Czechoslovakia Slovak gains come unavoidably at Czech expense and vice versa. Such a situation not only restricts the development of a common nationality which commands the loyalty of the sub-units, but also restricts the building of flexible relationships which facilitate the intra-state linkages necessary for a successful and unified federal system.

⁵⁵ This concession to something less than their original goal was not an uncommon strategy of the Slovak nationalists. As early as the 1930s Hlinka and the Ludaks expressed their "love and loyalty to the Republic" because "*for the present we can best develop our national, political, cultural, and economic interests in it*" Quoted in Felak, "*At the Price of the Republic*," 190. Implicit in this notion was if Slovakia could best be developed in some other configuration Slovak loyalty to the Republic would vanish as it did in the inter-war period.

⁵⁶ Leff, "*National Conflict*," 250

Chapter Summary

The Masaryk framework for 'Czechoslovakism' and Marxism-Leninism had certain philosophical similarities. Both approaches embodied a distrust for traditional nationalism and its potential for impeding broader international purposes. Both recognized the vulnerability of Czechoslovakia's geographic location and the 'small nation' status of the two ethnic groups thereby impelling a concern for unity. And in both the First Republic and the socialist state, the diagnosis and treatment of the 'Slovak question' was founded on a single common assumption: that socioeconomic development would serve to homogenize Czechoslovak society and exert a stabilizing influence on Czechoslovak politics. This emphasis on socioeconomic solutions to nationalist tensions between the Czechs and Slovaks brought about unexpected consequences which impeded political integration, namely, modernization produced an activist and nationalist Slovak opposition.

For the Novotny regime increased centralization was to be the antidote to the centrifugal tendencies of Slovak nationalism. Initiated by economic crises the reforms of the 'Prague Spring' -- liberalization, democratization, and decentralization -- created 'on paper' a model of integration along the lines of classic federalism. Though these reforms were never realized in practice, there is some question as to whether a genuine and classic federal structure would have succeeded in unifying the two disparate groups. The Husák regime sought to advance Slovak national rights through an asymmetrical federalism. This development and the preferential economic policies followed by Husák favored the Slovaks to some extent, and exacerbated Czech resentment over the ingratitude of the Slovaks to the various economic and political sacrifices the Czechs had made on their behalf. A common theme of Czech reactions to Slovakia's autonomous demands was the perception of the Slovaks moral and political indebtedness to the Czechs and the Slovaks refusal to acknowledge that debt. The pattern established in the first Republic was perpetuated by the Communists -- Slovak gains came at Czech expense and vice versa. Neither the First Republic nor the

communist regimes in the socialist state proved willing or able to remedy the tensions between the Czechs and Slovaks, nor to create a climate of normal political discourse between the state's two major national groups. Most political leaders sought to defuse the issue rather than to confront it, and all experienced similar long-term failures to depoliticize the centrifugal forces of Slovak nationalism. Whenever there was a crisis or at moments of political change -- 1918 at the founding of the republic, 1938 after the Munich Agreement, 1948 when the communist seized power, 1968 the Prague Spring, and beyond to the dark period of 'normalization' -- the 'Slovak question' would undermine political order. Each hastily cobbled together agreement, signed by the constituent units at these various junctures, exhibited notable ambiguity and absence of any long-term vision for a unified state.

These turning points, the 'years of eight,' represent shifts in power and legitimacy, self-determination and dominance, subjective perception and objective exploitation of the Czech and Slovak peoples. The predominant behavioral response of the Czechs, specifically, and the Slovaks, marginally, to their failure to put into political action the ideals and values expressed in 1968, was to retreat into their private lives and do their best to ignore a political system which they felt they could not change.⁵⁷ But by the late 1980s there were signs of change emanating from Moscow as Soviet General-Secretary Mikhail Gorbachev's key concepts of *perestroika* and *glasnost*' began to win popular support in the Soviet Union and spread throughout Eastern Europe. The impact and profound consequences of Gorbachev's reforms on Czechoslovakia will be the focus of the following chapter.

⁵⁷ Brown, "Czechoslovakia: Revival and Retreat," 190

CHAPTER IV

THE REBIRTH OF CZECHOSLOVAK PLURALISM

1968-1989

The post-invasion Husák and Milos Jakes régimes centered their strategy for maintaining power not on a program of genuine domestic economic and political reforms, but on a firm alliance with the soviet leadership of Leonid Brezhnev. Instead of attempting to win popular consent for its policies -- although that would have been extremely difficult-- the régime reinforced the coercive apparatus instituted in the Novotny-Gottwald years. Justified according to the tenets of traditional Marxist-Leninist ideology this strategy was ultimately dependant upon the military and political backing of the Soviet Union. When Moscow moved toward abandoning these traditional ideological principles and eventually abdicated its role as the ultimate guarantor of the Eastern Europe régimes, communist rule in Czechoslovakia would implode.

During the 1970s and 1980s the political strategies of the Soviet Union's commonwealth in Eastern Europe were subject to specific directives from Moscow. But, there was some room to maneuver, the 'Bloc' or 'satellite' states' options were contingent upon the preferences of a particular Party leadership in a particular communist régime. The Czech communist leadership choose to identify itself as the defender of 'real socialism; as such, it was virtually immune to change, and for two decades settled comfortably, albeit stagnantly, into a pattern of a self-stabilizing oligarchy. The régime had no interest in embracing thethe concepts of *perestroika* and *glasnost*' emanating from Moscow's relatively younge new leader Mikhail Sergejevich Gorbachev. The Czechoslovak régime made no attempt to conceal the fact that it would use its repressive apparatus to ensure its political monopoly. On 17 November 1989 the Prague political leadership would use force to brutally suppress a student demonstration that had originally received official authorization. This act would prove to be the catalyst for the Czechs and Slovaks to emulate the example of citizens of other countries in the region

and 'took to the streets' in numbers that the régime could not control or manipulate. Lacking any moral legitimacy, overwhelmed by the protests, and unwilling to implement real changes the Czechoslovak Communist régime would collapse in a manner which has become known as the 'Velvet Revolution.'

This chapter will examine three interrelated factors which led to the collapse of four decades of communist rule in Czechoslovakia -- the régime's lack of legitimacy, economic stagnation, the erosion of the 'social contract' -- and how they impacted on the Czechs and Slovaks. Since the Czechoslovak régime from 1968-1989 derived its legitimacy from its close relationship with the Soviet leadership, it is important to focus on the 'Gorbachev factor,' and to highlight how change in the Soviet Union influenced the democratic renewal in the Republic of Czechoslovakia. The "Velvet Revolution" will be reviewed with an emphasis on the two dissident led umbrella groups, Civic Forum in the Czech Lands, and Public Against Violence in Slovakia which won a majority of support in the June 1990 national and federal elections. The chapter will conclude with a discussion of the factors which led to the re-emergence of the "Slovak Question," and the crisis of identity of the entire state structure.

PRELUDE TO THE COMMUNIST COLLAPSE

The Onset of Decay

Before the advent of Soviet-inspired *perestroika* and *glasnost'* in the 1980s, "legitimation was the single most significant, overarching problem facing the communist leadership and system"¹. In Czechoslovakia, the leadership's conservatism had become the immediate real, and symbolic obstacle to change. Gustáv Husák, the Brezhnev sponsored successor to Dubcek in 1969, was still in office combining the title of the First Secretary of the Communist Party, and President of the Czechoslovak Socialist Republic. The handpicked Party leadership under Husák had become an ossified oligarchy. When

¹ Schöpflin, "The Politics of Eastern Europe," 187.

Milos Jakes was chosen to replace Husák as head of the KSC 17 December 1987, the new leader did not depart in any dramatic way from the policies of his predecessor.² The leadership was dedicated to the preservation and prolongation of its policies and power; it presided over a state of affairs that was "degenerating from stability into stagnation and from stagnation into decomposition."³ The erosion of the Communist Party's legitimacy had at least three components: first, there was dwindling popular confidence in the Soviet backed regime and its coercive practices; second, there was a clear economic failure by the system of central planning to deliver the material abundance promised by Marxist-Leninist ideology; and thirdly, as a result of the intractable economic problems the tacit "social contract" between élites and citizens gradually eroded. The contract involved the government offering a series of socio-economic guarantees in exchange for the public's compliance and support. Under the terms of the contract the Czechoslovak population was denied basic freedoms or any semblance of political liberty.⁴ As a result the economic 'crisis' that emerged in the late 1980s had both economic and political roots.

Legitimacy Eroded

The Soviet led invasion of Czechoslovakia sent a clear signal throughout the Warsaw Pact countries regarding the limits of reform and precisely how far a satellite Communist Party could go in rearranging its political system without Soviet approval. The ideological and legalistic underpinnings for the Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia .

² It has been argued that Husák was no more than a figurehead in his years in office and the real power was held by Central Committee Secretary Vasil Bil'ak, a man with neo-Stalinist views and close ties to the pre-Gorbachev Soviet leadership. See Gati, *The Bloc that Failed* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1990), 93. Milos Jakes another hard liner conducted the devastating purges of the Party's reformists in 1970s. It should also be noted that Husák retained the Presidency of the Republic.

³ *Supra*, 187.

⁴ The term 'social contract' which implies a 'bargain' is mis-leading. First, this was not in the true sense of the word a 'bargain.' The deliberations that led to the adoption of this 'contract' were conducted by the government side alone. As in the Soviet Union Czechoslovak society was left with the choice of either accepting or rejecting what the state had to offer, society played no essential role in specifying the terms. Second, although mass terror ended after the purges in 1970, the Husák régime's coercive instruments were retained and employed. This all but ensured that no politically organized opposition could unify against the régime. See Peter Hauslohner, "Politics Before Gorbachev: De-Stalinization and the Roots of Reform, *Inside Gorbachev's Russia: Politics and Society and Nationality*, ed. Seweryn Bialer (Boulder: Westview Press 1989), 72-73.

were provided by the what the West called the 'Brezhnev Doctrine' and was termed 'socialist internationalism' in Eastern Europe. Briefly, the Doctrine proclaimed that the fate of socialism in one country was the concern of every other socialist country, and revealed that Moscow would only grant the states of Eastern Europe a highly restricted form of 'limited sovereignty.' Whenever Moscow perceived that there was a political 'threat' to communist rule in a particular country the Kremlin preserved the 'right' to 'defend the gains of socialism.' "The Soviet leadership would, of course, retain control over the definition of what constituted a 'threat.'" ⁵ Implicit in the Doctrine was the assurance that the Kremlin would support -- even through the use of military force -- East European regimes, when Moscow deemed it was necessary. Indeed, in the aftermath of Soviet intervention, the Husák leadership repudiated the reforms of the 'Prague Spring,' and subsequently became the Kremlin's most loyal satellite.

To offset the stationing half a million Soviet troops in Czechoslovakia, and the dismantling of the achievements of the 1968 Prague Spring, Moscow offered the Czechs the carrot of economic improvement. Benefiting from generous Soviet subsidies the Czechoslovak economy showed a sustained annual rate of growth in national income between 1971 and 1975 of 5.6 percent, and 3.7 percent during the 1976-1980 period. ⁶ "Those who did not meddle into public affairs were given the right to pursue socialist petty bourgeois goals, ownership of a house, a car, occasional trips abroad." ⁷ As such the basically illegitimate Czech leaders could supplement the ideologically based strategy of 'normalization' with limited economic incentives and the promise of higher consumption and a 'radiant future'. ⁸ In exchange for this relative prosperity, average citizens were required to publically conform. This had a number of features; joining the ritual of 'elections', voting prescribed way in the 'trade union' meetings, enrolling one's

⁵ Schöpflin, "The Politics of Eastern Europe," 157.

⁶ Richard R. Starr, "Soviet Relations with East Europe," *Current History*, Vol. 83, No. 496 (November 1984): 356.

⁷ Otto Ulc, "The Bumpy Road," (May June 1992): 28.

⁸ Kraus, "Czechoslovakia in the 1980s," 374.

children in the 'socialist' youth organization etc., in brief, it meant to keep your mind to yourself.⁹

The use of the Marxist-Leninist ideology was a façade, a security blanket, a reassurance to the Husák regime that as long as a largely passive people observed the ritualistic ideological dogma and did not openly oppose the system the régime's position was secure. Václav Havel's parable of the greengrocer who displays a notice proclaiming 'Workers of the World Unite!' in order to signal that he is not challenging the régime illustrates this clearly.¹⁰ But, there were underlying costs to this façade. The régime and its policy outcomes were imposed and maintained by Soviet power, a condition that severely compromised the Communist Party's legitimacy among the people it ruled. Being dependent on military force, "communism remained (among many in society) suspect as an alien creed and as a mere cult of power."¹¹

It is worth pondering why the Husák-Jakes régime collapsed, but equally interesting how it maintained control for so long? The system was based on a clear division which worked for over 40 years: "on the one side there was a power mafia consisting of 200,000 to 500,000 members of the party apparatus, the state security service, the officers, and the leading people in enterprise and local administration: on the other side there were 15 million citizens, the people, who were kept at bay by the power mafia, but otherwise largely led normal lives."¹² The establishment, which included five separate sub-élites: political, economic, cultural, professional, and military had, naturally, a strong vested interest in the régime's survival. Thus, the régime operated in a way which would not threaten its monopoly and even critical members of

⁹ Timothy Garton Ash, *The Uses of Adversity: Essays on the Fate of Central Europe* (New York: M.E. Sharpe, 1989), 56

¹⁰ Václav Havel, "The Power of the Powerless," *The Power of the Powerless: Citizens Against the State in Central-Eastern Europe*, ed. John Keane (New York: M.E. Sharpe, 1985), 27-31. The green grocer could have cared less whether or not the world proletariat closed ranks. Nothing was more remote from his everyday concerns than the Marxist call for global workers' solidarity, but by performing the ritual the green grocer sent a signal to the authorities, who had provided him with the poster and who expected him to behave as a disciplined fragment of the social society, that he was acting according to the régime's prescribed ritual. As such, he became a player in the game

¹¹ Joseph Rothschild, *Return to Diversity: A Political History of East Central Europe Since World War II* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989), 222

¹² Valt Komárek, Czechoslovak economist in an interview with, *Der Spiegel*, 25 December 1989. Quoted in J. F. Brown, *Surge to Freedom*, 36-37

the political élites typically preferred the status quo to unknown forces of change. This élite conservatism was not based on any particular loyalty to communist ideology, much less on conviction but rather the need for self-preservation; the conviction that the system's overthrow would not threaten the niches that members of the political class had carved out for themselves. "The power mafia only worked as long as it was able to use the Brezhnev system as its base. When it broke down and Gorbachev introduced *Perestroika* and *Glasnost'*, the abnormality of the system became apparent . . . the power mafia was forced onto the defensive, became nervous, and started to make mistakes." ¹³

Economic Stagnation

The collapse of communism in Czechoslovakia and Eastern Europe was in large part a result of economic failure; the failure of the system of central planning to deliver the material abundance promised by the Marxist ideology, and the basis upon which the communist régimes rested their claim to legitimacy. As discussed above communist rule was imposed by force on Czechoslovakia and perpetuated by a narrow ruling clique who had the full backing of the Soviet Union. The Husák-Jakes régime had obvious difficulties in presenting themselves as genuine representatives and defenders of the national interest. As such "economic performance came to play a peculiar role as a form of substituted politics: the people were offered high levels of consumption and welfare in exchange, as it were, for the lack of political freedom." ¹⁴

This policy, sanctioned and financially supported by Moscow was known as 'consumerism.' Marxist materialists expected that by raising the living standards of certain elements of society 'consumerism' would lead to genuine popular support for communism. Initially between 1971 and 1975 consumerism was relatively successful, although real wages rose only by about five percent, personal consumption in Czechoslovakia rose by 27 percent. "In 1971 one in seventeen people had an

¹³ *Ibid.*, 37

¹⁴ Batt, "East-Central Europe," 205

automobile; in 1975 one in ten; in 1979 one in eight."¹⁵ But, from the mid-seventies onward the gap between living standards began widening, and the inability of the regime to generate more growth forced a withdrawal from its generous welfare orientation. As a result infrastructure was neglected and consumption stagnated.

The pathology of the Brezhnev style system, imposed on Czechoslovakia, was that lacking legitimacy the regime could not introduce an element of consent and was forced to operate with hierarchical, coercive structures that set management and workers, 'them' and 'us', in an adversarial relationship which effectively precluded efficient workers and higher productivity. Because labor was in very short supply workers and management developed a tacit formula for survival. The attitude that persisted was 'they pretend to pay us and we pretend to work.' As a second economy gained ground, the socialist sector could not compete with the 'wages' that workers could obtain in their spare time.

Unlike some neighboring socialist states, Prague resisted the temptation to acquire modern technology by means of Western credits. While Czechoslovakia was insulated from the Polish predicament of having to repay extensive loans through exports to Western markets, by the mid 1980s 70 percent of its industrial plants were rendered obsolete with outdated equipment and technological procedures. The country's share of world trade had dropped from two percent in 1974 to less than one percent a decade later.¹⁶ Disagreeing with Husák on economic policy Prime Minister Strougal stated: "If things go on this way, we'll have to put up signs on the frontier saying 'Entering Czechoslovakia, the Museum of an Industrial Society.'"¹⁷ Soviet subsidies to Eastern Europe as a whole had declined sharply in the 1980s. For the Husák-Jakes régime their post-invasion economic strategy began unraveling. The economy registered

¹⁵ Vladimír V. Kusin, "Husák, Czechoslovakia and Economic Stagnation," *Problems of Communism* (May-June 1982) 26

¹⁶ Otto Ulc, "Czechoslovakia in 1984," 366

¹⁷ David Binde, "Czechoslovakia, the East's New Economic Disaster," *The New York Times*, 8 November 1981, 21

zero to negative growth in 1981 and again in 1982. After Poland, Czechoslovakia experienced the worst economic decline in the Warsaw Pact.¹⁸

Erosion of the "Social Contract"

The failure of consumerism had a short-term and a long-term deleterious effects. First, the system failed to deliver the material abundance promised by the Marxist-Leninist ideology a situation which had mounting political consequences. Second, as consumerism was the only option that the Czechoslovak system had at its disposal, when it failed there was neither the flexibility nor an alternative option available to implement.

The social contract introduced at the outset of the 'normalization' period -- absolute docility in exchange for relative prosperity -- was a casualty of the economic slowdown and the diminishing resources available for consumption. The promise of security and fairness had required uniformity and a powerful supervisory center, but that had meant severe restrictions on the flexibility and initiative of producers. The collapse of communist economic performance had undermined the tacit understanding between the regime and the broad society, sharpening social division as prices rose and shortages worsened. The worsening of shortages, in turn, made the privileges of the communist leadership less acceptable.¹⁹ Czechoslovak citizens increasingly perceived that they were the cheated contractual figure within the social contract. In sum, although an "anachronistic growth strategy was undeniably a major cause of the deterioration of economic performance" in the Husák-Jakes period, "the contributions of an increasingly anachronistic social contract were probably equally great."²⁰ The 'crisis' that lay on the horizon during the mid-1980s was not just economic but, also political. Recognition of this added to the complexity of the régime's problems.

¹⁸ Kraus, "Czechoslovakia in the 1980s," 374

¹⁹ Stephen White, 'Introduction' *Developments in East European Politics* eds Stephen White, Judy Batt, Paul G Lewis (London: Macmillan Press, 1993), 8-9

²⁰ Hauslohner, "Politics Before Gorbachev," 75-76

TOWARD SOCIAL PLURALISM

Gorbachev's Reform Concepts

On the horizon at the outset of the 1980s were two factors destined to upset the normal routine of the Czechoslovak leadership and members of Czechoslovak society. The first was the continued and accelerated economic and political decay inherited from the 1970s. The second was the unnerving effect which Moscow's attitude toward Eastern Europe had on the insecure Communist élite in Prague.

Because communist systems anchor their political legitimacy more explicitly to economic performance than do non-communist systems, any deterioration in economic performance has attendant political consequences. For the Czechoslovak régime the political consequences of consumerism's failure emerged when the various societal groups -- who had previously had a vested interest in the régime's survival -- began to question the system's viability. 'Kept at bay by the power mafia,' but sensing the régime's increasing vulnerability and reluctance to use the extreme coercive practices of the past, large numbers of Czechoslovaks calculated that it was time to distance themselves from the régime. Thus the emergence of the "irony of a classic Marxian contradiction between a seething socioeconomic sub-structure and an ossifying political super-structure."²¹

Gorbachev was elected Soviet party leader in March 1985. From the outset he stood for change and modernization, not only for the Soviet Union, but also for its Eastern European satellites. Gorbachev's concepts for reform were: *perestroika* (reconstruction or restructuring), *glasnost* (openness), *uskorenie* (acceleration), and *demokratizatsiya* (democratization).²² The principal enemies of these concepts and the reforms they implied were the hard-line conservatives throughout Eastern Europe. As Novotny had resisted the Khrushchev thaw, Husák now resisted Gorbachev's concepts

²¹ Rothschild, "Return to Diversity," 220.

²² Archie Brown, "Ideology and Political Culture," 7. *Perestroika* came to stand for political and economic reform, a program of action, in contrast to 'developed socialism,' which had become a rationalization for inactivity. *Glasnost* indicated a definite widening of the limits possible in the release of information and in political debate. The idea of *uskorenie* 'acceleration' meant getting the country moving again. *Democratization* raised broader

of *perestroika* and *glasnost*'. The choice confronting Gorbachev in Eastern Europe after 1985 was whether the region needed "relief only or cure, palliatives or surgery, reform or transformation."²³

The Impact of Gorbachev

The choice Gorbachev made in his first few years in power was that his prescription for the Soviet Union was relief, not cure.²⁴ From 1985-88 Gorbachev appeared to view the Eastern European crisis as a 'crisis of performance' rather than a 'crisis of the system.' He was aware that the region's political and economic conditions were in crisis and could present a threat to the success of his policies in the Soviet Union, but he was also convinced that these conditions could be remedied with the adoption of his concepts of *perestroika* and *glasnost*.' Some leadership changes were needed to replace the Brezhnev-style élites but "the communist systems were eminently capable of rebirth, revival, and even renaissance."²⁵

Czechoslovakia's régime is a special case for Gorbachev's impact on Eastern Europe. Having purged the word 'reform' from its vocabulary after the Prague Spring the post-invasion government in Czechoslovakia was particularly vulnerable to the concepts emanating from Moscow. The régime had been among the most repressive in the region. The Party ruled through a system of terror which took an emotional toll larger than that of any other country in Eastern Europe.²⁶ The use of terror created a need for more terror until, in time, the régime was entirely dependent upon it. The purges of the Party

issues and at the outset suggested some confusion as to whether it would be the type of democracy that would be meaningful to the West. 7-8

²³ Charles Gati, "The Bloc that Failed," 66.

²⁴ Most analysts agree that Gorbachev's reform processes in both the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe could be broken down into three phases: from 1985-1986 a period conceptualizing his concepts and consolidating his leadership; the second phase 1986 to 1987 was more activist where in the case of Eastern Europe reforms were recommended, but the régimes were largely free of Soviet intervention as to how the reforms would be implemented; the third phase 1988-1989 was the radical and galvanizing phase. See Brown *Surge to Freedom* Chapter One. Gati, *The Bloc that Failed*, 65-76.

and Seweryn Bialer, "The Changing Soviet Political System: The Nineteenth Party Conference and After," *Inside Gorbachev's Russia: Politics, Society and Nationality*, (Boulder and London: Westview Press 1989), 193-215.

²⁵ The leaderships specifically targeted by Gorbachev have been identified by Gati as "The Gang of Four" Erich Honecker-German Democratic Republic, Nicolae Ceausescu-Romania, Todor Zhivkov-Bulgaria, and Milos Jakes-Czechoslovakia. Gati, "The Bloc that Failed," 65.

after the invasion eliminated all reformers and reform policies from Czechoslovakia. Under the Husák-Jakes régime the country became a conservative state, resolutely opposed to change, dissent, or opposition. The one dissident force that had prevailed was Charter 77. Led by the eminent playwright Václav Hável, Charter 77 was premised on Western-oriented human rights movements. Until the 1980s when it became a focal point in the downfall of the Czechoslovak régime Charter 77's interaction with the broad society was negligible. With the emergence of Gorbachev, his strong of personality, and Moscow championing change rather than repression the Czechoslovak dissident movement acquired a purpose and even some sense of political organization. However, as long as the Husák-Jakes régime could undermine any reformist activities -- by employing the pretext that according to the Brezhnev Doctrine the Kremlin would object to any measures of reform -- it was reassured that its hold on power was secure.

Resistance to Change

As early as 1987, Moscow sought to discredit and even to dislodge the leaders it had put in power after the 1968 Soviet intervention.²⁷ Gorbachev visited Prague in the spring of 1987 and when asked by Western reporters to clarify the difference between Dubcek's 'Prague Spring' and his own *perestroika* and *glasnost* his Soviet Foreign Ministry spokesman, Gennadi Gerasimov, replied: 'Nineteen years.'²⁸ But Gorbachev himself was reluctant to openly criticize Brezhnev's protégés in Prague. Despite his aggressiveness in implementing reforms in the Soviet Union, Gorbachev's behavior toward his external clients, at this stage, was quite conservative.²⁹

The guiding principle of Soviet-East European relations in the early Gorbachev era was still 'socialist internationalism.' Its two components Soviet respect for Eastern

²⁶ Golan, "National Traditions," 52.

²⁷ See Gati, *The Bloc that Failed*, Karen Dawisha, *Eastern Europe, Gorbachev and Reform: The Great Challenges*, 2nd ed. (New York and Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990) for more in depth discussions of Gorbachev's strategy for the removal of the anachronistic Brezhnev-style élites and the promotion of more imaginative, reform-oriented, pragmatic, or even technocratic teams.

²⁸ Zbigniew, Brzezinski, *The Grand Failure: The Birth and Death of Communism in the Twentieth Century* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1989), 134.

²⁹ Rothschild, "Return to Diversity," 221.

European sovereignty and Eastern Europe's respect for the bloc's (Soviet-defined) common interests still prevailed. Initially, under Gorbachev these components of the old Soviet concept of intra-bloc relations remained essentially unchanged.³⁰ In retrospect the Gorbachev visit to Czechoslovakia was a watershed in the reform process as well as in relations with Moscow, but it led to quite opposite results from those which Gorbachev expected. Rather than stimulating reform along lines conforming to that of the Soviet pattern, Moscow's adherence to 'socialist internationalism' resulted in a slackening of reform urgency on the part of the Czechoslovak régime.

Neither the best hopes nor the worst fears of the Husák-Jakes régime were fulfilled by the Gorbachev visit; not once during his visit did he endorse the 1968 Soviet-led invasion, but neither did he reject the Brezhnev Doctrine. Dubbed the 'Sinatra Doctrine' by Gerasimov, alluding to the American popular singer Frank Sinatra's famous song '[I did it] My Way,' the Soviet position at the time was that Czechoslovakia and the other Eastern European states would be free to choose between systemic reform, partial reform, or no reform at all. If there was to be reform in Czechoslovakia it would be defined on Prague's terms, not Moscow's.

Recanting the Brezhnev Doctrine

For several years after Gorbachev came to power he failed to come to terms with the depth of popular Eastern European disillusionment with any form of communism, reformed or otherwise. He did not recognize what the peoples of Eastern Europe knew all along: that the postwar communist political and economic order imposed on the region by Stalin and sustained by his successors lacked legitimacy, and was therefore inherently unstable and potentially explosive.

It was not until the fall of 1988 that Gorbachev had come to the inescapable conclusion that economic reforms would not work without a "complete dismantling of the political system which had in Eastern Europe entrenched the power of conservative

³⁰ Gati, "The Bloc that Failed," 71

forces and strangled all reforms at birth."³¹ In the mid-1980s the Prague government had reduced investment in order to protect consumption, but had still not addressed the deeper flaws in its economy, including its technological deterioration and its related tendency to squander energy and materials, swell pollution, degrade the environment and harm the public's health. A significant but misguided substitute for corrective reforms was the situation whereby the régime turned a blind eye to a thriving underground economy. That economy was fueled by embezzlement, theft, corruption, bribery, absenteeism and private entrepreneurship. At first the régime acquiesced to the second economy sustained surprisingly high levels of consumption and diluted political opposition and tension, but in the long-run the cost was rampant cynicism, eroded ethics and social malaise: the régime was mistaking stability for viability.³²

Further, Prague's reform 'policy' conflicted with Gorbachev's expectations about how 'socialism' should administer itself in this new age. The Soviet leadership became impatient with the economic stagnation, corruption and self-congratulatory rhetoric of the Czechoslovakia régime. As the ambitious Soviet leader of a huge empire Gorbachev could ill afford to endlessly tolerate Prague's persistent resistance to *perestroika* and *glasnost*. Permitting the Husák-Jakes régime the autonomy to implement Gorbachev style reforms at their own pace was not bringing the desired results and the Soviets would have to rethink their policy.

One of the first clues to Gorbachev 'new thinking' about Eastern Europe emerged in April 1988, when the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (CPSU) abolished the Department for Liaison with the Communist and Workers' Parties of socialist countries. At the same time the Politburo created a Commission on International Policy and appointed Aleksandr N. Yakolev, one of Gorbachev's closest advisers, as its chairman. The new commission's mandate was to coordinate Soviet foreign policy in Eastern

³¹ Judy Batt "The Politics of Economic Transition" *Developments in East European Politics*, eds. Stephen White, Judy Batt, and Paul G. Lewis (London: Macmillan, 1993), 214. As with Dubcek in 1968, Gorbachev may have been searching for a 'third way'. A way not to terminate the communist system but to create a more democratic form of communism.

³² Michael Kraus, "Czechoslovakia and the Soviet Bloc: From Stalin to Gorbachev," *The Political Economy of Bloc Cohesion*, eds. Cynl E. Black and Kenneth Oye. See and quoted in Rothschild, "Return to Diversity," 208-209.

Europe and around the world. The effect of this organizational change signalled to the leaderships in Eastern Europe that they would no longer be treated as special cases. Moscow's policy toward Eastern Europe would be made in the context of global and geopolitical considerations rather than ideological dogma.³³

Debates over Moscow's new Eastern European policy and its implications for the future of the Brezhnev Doctrine continued throughout 1988. It was only in the aftermath of Gorbachev's United Nations speech in December that the impact of the new policy was fully realized. In his speech Gorbachev³³ announced that by the end of 1990 240,000 men, 10,000 tanks, 8,500 guns, and 820 combat aircraft would be withdrawn from Eastern Europe.³⁴ By signaling that Moscow was prepared to remove Soviet forces from its satellites, Gorbachev put the region's communist leaders on notice that Soviet tanks would no longer protect their rule. The prospect of the removal of Soviet troops, stationed in Czechoslovakia since the invasion, was particularly devastating to the Prague régime. The leadership had convinced themselves that Gorbachev or his successors would inevitably revert to the principles of the Brezhnev Doctrine rather than permit large-scale defections from the socialist republics. It was now clear that this would not occur. The Husák-Jakes régime would be left to their own devices with nothing between them and their subjects except the most incriminating thing of all: their own record.

*From Dissent to Opposition*³⁵

For everyone except Husák-Jakes leadership it had become crystal clear that there was no social pressure for the resumption of the experiment in 'socialism with a human face,' and that the direction of Czechoslovak reforms had to transcend the mere

³³ Gati, "The Bloc that Failed," 164-165

³⁴ *Ibid.*, 166

³⁵ There is a clear distinction to be made between opposition and dissent in a communist system. Opposition's properties involve a readiness to play a public role, to establish organizations which reject the leading role of the Party and assume responsibility for acts beyond an individual's control. Dissent is restricted to independent acts of defiance or disagreement, while these acts may be expressed overtly they remain within official channels. The aim of opposition is political, that is, to effect change in the political sphere on a routinized basis. Dissent is

desire for liberalization. As the political situation after December 1988 evolved the Czechoslovak people sensed that their leaders had become paper tigers. No longer able to rely upon the Soviet Union to back-up their leadership, Prague's power élite started to show signs of disarray. Meanwhile Charter 77, the main organizational expression of dissent became the magnet for those individuals who had post-poned their break with the system.

One of the basic preconditions for the emergence of opposition in the communist world was the collapse of Marxist-Leninist ideology and the abandoning of its tenets by former Marxist intellectuals.³⁶ The ultimate limit placed upon the reformers of the Prague Spring, and also Gorbachev in his formative phase was the unwillingness of communist regimes to abandon the Marxist-Leninist paradigm and devolve power from the Party to the people. In Czechoslovakia it was not until Charter 77 that the critics of the system, denounced the need for a Marxist base to their reform proposals.

Abandoning Marxism meant that dissidents could align themselves with non-Marxist causes -- human-rights, religion, free-expression, etc..

Both organizational expressions of dissent, Charter 77 and the Committee for the Defense of Unjustly Persecuted (formed in 1978 and termed VONS from the initials of its Czech name), sought to anchor themselves in the Helsinki Final Act of 1975 and in Czechoslovakia's formal Constitution. Petitioning the régime to abide by its own laws and international commitments,³⁷ these organizations worked for civil and human rights while denying that they wished to play an opposition political role or even to offer a reformist social program. The cost of this self-restrained low profile was that Charter 77 and VONS remained weak, small, and confined to the ethnic Czech parts of the country. As such, governmental authorities, subscribing to much more sweeping definitions of the terms 'opposition' and 'political,' persecuted the two groups, confiscated their materials, imprisoned some of their members, deprived their children of

not necessarily intended to set a precedent beyond the individual Schopflin, "*The Politics of Eastern Europe*," 179-180

³⁶ This argument is put forward by Vladimir Tismaneanu, "*Reinventing Politics*" and Schopflin, "*The Politics of Eastern Europe* "

³⁷ Czechoslovakia was a signatory to the 1975 Helsinki Accord

higher education, forced many into menial work, drove others to emigrate, and intimidated still others into silence.³⁸ Though Charter 77 was not a social movement in the magnitude of the Polish "solidarity" movement, its survival and continued activity, despite police harassment and persecution, earned it considerable renown throughout the world in the struggle for human rights. By virtue of its moral and ethical stance and the perseverance of its members Charter 77 evolved as the repository of the Czechoslovak national conscience. Conveying the grievings and aspirations of the broad society, Charter 77 symbolized the politics of trust, hope and human solidarity.³⁹

The preceding year the collapse of communist power in Czechoslovakia had been a period of daring dissident challenge and unprecedentedly large and frequent public demonstrations. Particularly at historical anniversaries (such as those concerned with the the founding of the Republic in 1918 to the Soviet invasion of 1968). The régime became increasingly anxious about the widening impact of Charter 77's dissident ideas on other intellectuals, the intelligentsia, students, and on society in general. The technical workers, factory foreman, well-off collective farmers, social service employees most of whom had tolerated the political system began to see its collapse as inevitable. As in 1968, the most reluctant groups to embrace reforms were the Czechoslovak industrial workers and small subsistence level farmers. This sizable segment of the population had been relatively privileged under the régime. Communist leaders harbored the false, but not irrational hope such elements of the social structure would not find common cause with the intellectuals who were the core of the existing dissidents.

The beginning of the final crisis for the Husák-Jakes régime was the brutal suppression of a student demonstration on 17 November 1989. The authorized rally in Prague was a commemoration of the death of Jan Opetal, a student victim of the Nazi crackdown on Czech universities just prior to W.W.II. When the rally turned into a pro-democracy and anti-government demonstration, police riot troops responded with ruthless violence. The police brutality on that night angered the whole country and was

³⁸ Rothschild, "Return to Diversity," 209-210

³⁹ Similar groups could be found in the GDR - The Initiative for Peace and Human Rights, the Soviet Union - Moscow Trust Group, and in Hungary - The Democratic Opposition.

a major impetus which moved popular feeling in the direction of radical change. On 27 November three-quarters of a million people took part in demonstrations across the country. The industrial worker response -- a two hour general strike -- removed the last vestige of support for the régime. The two main, often opposing, trends in Czechoslovakia politics - the intellectual 'liberal' and the worker 'socialist' element- had become linked in opposition against a communist régime that had ruled for forty years. The régime was toppled when dissidence gained momentum, steadily broadened its base, and emerged as an opposition force.

CZECHOSLOVAKIA'S VELVET REVOLUTION

The Eve of the Velvet Revolution

Few events in modern world history rival the revolutionary changes that erupted in Eastern Europe in 1989. By the fall of that year there were overt signs of increased Soviet concern over the Czechoslovak leadership and its refusal to embrace *perestroika* and *glasnost*. Evidence in the public record demonstrates that in August 1989 Moscow had begun a persistent campaign against the post-1968 invasion leadership.⁴⁰ By the end of September, it was clear to all but the Husák-Jakes top leadership that the régime did not have Moscow's support. By October the Communist élite was divided and hesitant: knowing it must use force to survive, but fearful of the results of confrontation with its own population.

By the time of the 17 November 1989 student demonstration that launched the 'Velvet Revolution,' Czechoslovaks had witnessed the dynamics of change in the Soviet bloc: 1) in Poland a mixed Solidarity-communist government had been installed, with a non-communist prime minister Tadeusz Mazowiecki, 2) in Hungary, competitive elections had been held, 3) in East Germany Gorbachev, when he attended the fortieth anniversary celebration of the founding of East Germany 7 October, praised *perestroika* and not GDR leader Erich Honecker, 4) in Prague many Czechoslovaks had seen with

⁴⁰ Gati, "The Bloc that Failed," 180

their own eyes a flood of East German citizens besieging the United States Embassy seeking safe passage to the West -- through Austria and West Germany. 5) and, perhaps one of the most important symbolic acts, the breaching of the Berlin Wall by anti-communists on 9 November. Throughout these dramatic months the Soviet Union had, stunningly, done nothing to halt the attack on the East European Communist regimes. The message was clear. Gorbachev's pledge not to interfere in the internal affairs of Moscow's fraternal socialist countries was not merely rhetoric; the Brezhnev Doctrine, while not officially repudiated by the Soviets until early December, had become obsolete.

Three days after the brutal suppression of the 17 November demonstration 200,000 people amassed in Prague's historic Wenceslaus Square to demand free elections, academic freedom, genuine *perestroika* and the resignation of the Communist leadership. Until the collapse of the Husák-Jakes régime in early December demonstrations were conducted with clock-work regularity across the country culminating in a nation wide strike at noon on 27 November. As in other European countries the people took to the streets in numbers that were simply beyond the capacity of the coercive apparatus to contain. A confident leadership facing an isolated, or tentative opposition may be capable of quelling unrest with force. But an ideologically bankrupt and divided leadership facing ever growing popular resistance is in a very different position. In Czechoslovakia force only increased the number of opposition sympathizers and the régime was uncertain whether its own security forces would follow orders to shoot at its fellow countrymen.⁴¹ Stripped of Soviet support and even sympathy, the Czechoslovak communist leaders renounced the only option -- taking up the military's offer to intervene -- they had for remaining in power. The 'Tiananmen Square solution,' a reference to the Chinese military crackdown on protesters a few months earlier, was not considered to be an option.⁴² "Short-sighted and arrogant as they were, they [the régime] realized nonetheless that such a solution would have resulted in immense bloodshed that would have horrified the world."⁴²

⁴¹ Carol Skalnik Leff, *The Czech and Slovak Republics: Nation vs State* (Boulder Westview Press, 1997), 77

⁴² Tismaneanu, "Reinventing Politics," 215

The 'Velvet Revolution'

The collapse of one-party control in each of the communist countries had its own special peculiarities, evolving from the varied character of the societies that had grown increasingly diverse.⁴³ Unlike Hungary and Poland the warning signals of unrest were ignored by the Czechoslovak régime. The leadership made no effort to negotiate with the protesters, alternating repression with empty conciliatory gestures of economic reform. The Prague leadership that had been installed after the Soviet invasion could not make credible promises of reform; it was "a prisoner of the legacy of the invasion of 1968 not only as regards to policy but also respecting the selection of personnel,"⁴⁴ thoroughly tarnished by its own suppression of the Prague Spring a generation earlier. A further unique aspect of the Czechoslovak situation was that there was no reformist group within the leadership. Extensive purges of the Party in 1968 and a progressive policy to eliminate any reform minded members from its ranks left an intransigent ruling élite which was unprepared, and disinterested in negotiations with any opposition.

The initial phases of the challenge to communist power were quite literally a drama, as the theater groups and musicians had gone out on strike with the students and had turned their stages over to all dissident groups. It was in the Magic Lantern - a Prague theater on Wenceslaus Square that an ad hoc assembly of dissident groups formed the umbrella movement known as the Civic Forum (CF).⁴⁵ The Forum's most visible and compelling spokesman was Václav Havel, the former leader of Charter 77. His news conferences encapsulated the broadening goals of the movement, and his presence on the balcony of the Melantrich publishing house overlooking Wenceslaus Square was a magnet for the growing crowds who gathered daily to protest against the régime.

⁴³ See Rothschild's "Return to Diversity," for an overview of the differential development of the region

⁴⁴ Bernard Wheaton and Zdenek Kavan, *The Velvet Revolution: Czechoslovakia, 1988-1991* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1992), 35.

⁴⁵ Jan Urban, "Czechoslovakia. The Power and Politics of Humiliation," *Spring in Winter: the 1989 Revolution* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1990) and essay on the Velvet Revolution as seen from one of the key posts within the Magic Lantern. And Timothy Garton Ash, *The Magic Lantern: The Revolution of 1989 Witnessed in Warsaw, Budapest and Prague* (New York: Random House, 1990), 78-130. The groups who joined this spontaneous social movement were Charter 77, Czechoslovak Helsinki Committee, Movement for Civic Freedom, Rebirth Club, VONS, and the Independent Peace Association.

The most definitive steps toward a genuine power transition took place following the general strike. In a document issued 26 November, the Civic Forum had outlined its program for reform which called for the reconstruction of Czechoslovakia's political and economic system, a separation of powers, the development of a market economy free of bureaucratic intervention, environmental protection and a foreign policy that would allow Czechoslovakia to resume its honorable position within Europe and the World.⁴⁶ On 29 November, the Federal Assembly rescinded Article 4 of the Constitution, abrogating the legal bases for the leading role of the Party. On 3 December there was massive outrage when President Husák named a new twenty-person cabinet which included only five new non-communists (the other fifteen were communists associated with the old régime). Hundreds of thousands of demonstrators took part in a rally in Prague to denounce communist domination of this proposed new Czechoslovak government. Civic Forum threatened a second general strike unless the government became more representative. On 9 December, being left with no choice, Husák and the Communist Party leadership conceded to all of Civic Forum's demands -- the communist system in Czechoslovakia had imploded. Gustav Husák, executor of the policy of repressive 'normalization' for two decades, resigned. A provisional Government of National Understanding was formed to preside over the interim period between December and the scheduled elections in June 1990. Václav Havel accepted the state presidency and was sworn in on 29 December. His credentials were his integrity, his visibility in the 'Velvet Revolution' and the favorable and potentially valuable international image he had received from Western press coverage throughout the 'revolution.'⁴⁷

With the benefit of hindsight, the government's implosion would appear to have been inevitable. But, at the time all those involved -- government and dissidents -- played a constant guessing game about actions and consequences.⁴⁸ The government did not know how far it would have to go in order to quell the protests, and made ever-increasing numbers of concessions, until the regimes collapse finally ensued. The

⁴⁶ Tismaneanu, *"Reinventing Politics,"* 217

⁴⁷ Leff, *"The Czech and Slovak Republics,"* 81

dissidents did not know exactly who would follow their lead; if they could not secure popular backing they would lack the legitimacy necessary to bargain with the régime. The crowds cheering Civic Forum in Wenceslaus Square were an important component of the opposition formula; such protests assured the CF leadership that it had popular acceptance and gave its demands the credibility necessary to be taken seriously by the régime.

Slovak Mobilization

Public Against Violence (PAV), founded 20 November 1989, played a similar role in Slovakia to that of CF in the Prague. Its leadership was composed of religious and intellectual dissidents, cultural figures and the Prague Spring's principal architect Alexander Dubcek. PAV's demands paralleled those of CF, with the significant exception of a pronounced emphasis placed on the rectification of Czech-Slovak relation in a more democratic federation. Both umbrella groups were dealing collectively with the government and by early December the two groups were promising to run a joint slate of candidates in the June 1990 elections. The federal structure that was the only lasting outcome of the Prague Spring was reinforced. A Slovak coalition government, composed of communists and non-communists in roughly equal numbers and headed by former communist Minister of Justice Milan Cic, was sworn in 12 December two days after the new federal government had taken office and a week after the Czech Republic government had been formed.

In the heady days of the protest period Dubcek emerged as the 'friendly broker' between the Czechs and Slovaks. Along with the Czech dissidents he appeared with and spoke to the crowds in Wenceslaus Square. The Communist Party leadership, aware of past tensions between the two nationalities, attempted to foment division between the Czech and Slovak opposition movements by encouraging Slovakia's demands for a review of the state's federal system and Dubcek's nomination bid for the presidency.

⁴ Rasma Karklins and Roger Petersen, "Decision Calculus of Protesters and Regimes, Eastern Europe, 1989," *Journal of Politics* 55 3 (August 1993): 588-614. Also see Urban, "Czechoslovakia the Power of Humiliation."

Dubcek defused this issue by withdrawing his candidacy in favor of Havel and accepting the post of Federal Assembly leader as an alternate position. As the federal government emerged, the key leadership posts were divided between Czechs and Slovaks: The Czech Havel became president, the Slovak Dubcek became chairman of the Federal Assembly, and the Slovak Marian Calfa became prime minister.

With some exaggeration the Czechoslovaks said that Poland needed ten years to overthrow the communist system, the GDR needed two weeks, while Czechoslovakia needed only ten days. In reality the "Velvet Revolution" took little more than a month. Pacts, roundtables, or even elections were not a part of the 'revolutionary' transition. Instead, an entirely new set of political leaders peacefully assumed control of the state without any obligations to the past order. In his New Year's Day address Havel emphasized that "democracy has to be rebuilt on a social ground devastated by corruption, incompetence, and cynicism."⁴⁹ It was not only economic decay of which Havel spoke, but the debasement of society's moral fabric, both of which were seen as communism's most unfortunate legacy.

THE CZECH AND SLOVAK NATIONAL QUESTION

Friction within the Post-Communist State

From very early on in 1990 Slovak political discourse was increasingly dominated by nationalist rhetoric, while Czech aspirations emphasized the economic reforms which might return them to the entrepreneurial golden age of the inter-war First Republic.⁵⁰ With the demise of communism, all barriers to the manifestation of nationalist expression were swept away. Slovak discontent with the federal concept of Czechoslovakia could be traced back to the state's inception in 1918, and has already received attention in this thesis, but significant factors after 1989 also contributed to an effervescence in Slovak nationalism. While most Czech post-communist leaders

⁴⁹ Tismaneanu, "Reinventing Politics," 215.

⁵⁰ Karen Henderson, "Czechoslovakia: Cutting the Gordian Knot," *Coexistence* (December 1994): 317.

envisioned the new state based on civic and individualistic principles, the Slovak political leaders favored one based on nationalism and solidarity.⁵¹

The Slovak's marginally more favourable attitude towards socialism was connected, in part, with the milder form that post-1968 'normalization' (i.e. repression) had taken in Slovakia. Thus, the divisions between the opponents and supporters of the Husák-Jakes régime were less polarized in Slovakia than in the Czech Lands. During four decades of communist rule Slovakia had undergone a rapid process of industrialization and urbanization including an upgrading of its infrastructure, education, and living standards. And although this period had brought much suffering - forced collectivization of agriculture, suppression of religion and the dismantling of traditional life styles -- 'socialist modernization' was, generally, not seen by the Slovaks in purely negative terms. While the Czechs viewed the communist decades as one of national decline, the Slovaks saw themselves as a society on the move.

Historical economic distinctions played a role in the emerging friction within the post-Communist state. During the inter-war years the Czech Lands prospered, under a free market economic system. Although Slovakia also prospered a perception existed that the Republic's policies were more favorable to the Czechs than to the Slovaks. This contrasted sharply with the period after Communist takeover in 1948 when the Party policy of large scale equalization placed a priority upon Slovak interests and industry. The outcome in the views of most Czechs, was economic stagnation, and industrial decline. During the inter-war period the Czechs experienced economic prosperity under free market principles, the Slovaks experienced economic prosperity through government intervention. For the majority of the Czechs total rejection of the whole communist period had a somewhat more rational, economic basis. Such historical influences and differences between the two national groups figured prominently in future debates among the leaders in the post-Communist state.

⁵¹ Jiri Musil, "Czechoslovakia in the Middle of Transition" *Daedalus*, (Spring 1992) 184.

The June 1990 Elections

The first post-communist elections to the Czech and Slovak National Councils and the Federal Assembly were conducted according to a proportional representation formula, with a threshold set at five percent of the total vote to gain representation. The 8-9 June 1990 elections were won by the leaders of the "Velvet Revolution". Electoral turnout was 96 percent of registered voters, and CF and PAV, the two dissident led anti-Communist movements, emerged as the clear winners in the Czech Lands and Slovakia respectively. Václav Havel, elected President of the federation by the Federal Assembly deputies, interpreted the vote as more of a referendum on democracy than an occasion on which the voters expressed their preferences for particular parties. This was certainly true of the Czech Republic where half the electorate cast their votes for CF in both the Federal Assembly and the Czech National Council, but it was less true of the elections in Slovakia. No contender in Slovakia came near to winning the 50 percent of the vote. The strongest Slovak party, PAV, attracted a much lower proportion of the vote -- ranging from just under 30 percent for the Slovak National Council to 32.5 percent for the House of the People and 37.3 percent for the House of the Nations.⁵² (See Appendix II). With the exception of PAV, which appealed to a stronger civil libertarian current in Slovakia than had been evident in the past, successful parties in that region appeared to owe their support to the persistence of clerical, national, and social cleavages which had been a feature of the Slovak political scene in the pre-Communist era.⁵³

The convincing win by CF and PAV leaders gave them a mandate to introduce radical changes that would move the country toward democracy and free market economic principles. All the non-Communist parties had based their campaigns on promises to dismantle the country's politically oppressive and economically ineffective system; not much was said about how this would be accomplished and, more

⁵² Gordon Wightman "The Party System and the Break-Up of Czechoslovakia," *Party Formation in East-Central Europe* (Aldershot, Hants, England: Elgar, 1995), 59-64

⁵³ Wightman, "The Party System," 63. An example was the surprising win by the Slovak National Party (see Appendix I)

importantly, at what price. Both CF and PAV were broad coalitions of forces with a clear anti-Communist stance, but within the coalitions there were very different outlooks regarding the new state. What united coalition members and had resulted in their election victory was their respective roles in defeating the Communist Party. But this bond began to disintegrate soon after the victory, with leaders of various persuasions wanting to take the country's politics and economy in different directions.

Chapter Summary

According to Alexis de Tocqueville, 'the most dangerous time for a bad government is when it starts to reform itself.' In the countries of Eastern Europe a variation on de Tocqueville's theme may be closer to the truth: For bad governments whose survival depends on a foreign protector, the most dangerous time is when their protector retreats. The impact of Gorbachev and his concepts of *perestroika* and *glasnost* cannot be underestimated in the fall of the Husák-Jakes régime and the end of communist rule in Czechoslovakia. Until its stunning implosion in November 1989, Czechoslovakia had been an anachronism in Gorbachev's world of reform and renewal; in political, social, and economic terms, orthodoxy prevailed. Brezhnev's protégés, were unable to duplicate what Gorbachev was doing in the Soviet Union: running against the record of his predecessors. This was the same leadership which instituted the 'normalization' period, purged the Party of any and all reformers, and established one of the most repressive régimes in the region kept in place by a power mafia. On the eve of the 'velvet revolution' it was their own record that was their most incriminating burden.

The crisis that emerged in the late 1980s was not just economic, but also political and this added to the complexity of the régime's problems. The ruling élites suffered from a complete loss of legitimacy. The Marxist myth had exhausted its galvanizing power, and there were no substantial portions of the intelligentsia interested in perpetuating the system of domination as it had functioned for four decades. The decline in communism's legitimacy and the emergence of an opposition was linked to the

overall political, social, economic, and moral crises the régime had brought upon itself. The deteriorating economy, which had failed to provide the material goods that would have justified the sacrifices ceaselessly imposed on the population, was the major catalyst behind the spontaneous outbursts of discontent that provided the non-violent collapse of the Husák-Jakes régime. The connections between economic and social policy are numerous and complicated, and for either policy to work as intended, both must be compatible with, indeed mutually reinforcing. There was no 'third way', no partial dismantling of the system which would satisfy the growing discontent the people had begun to openly display toward Prague's leadership and the communist system.

By November, the Communist régime underwent a meltdown; the two opposition groups CF in the Czech Lands, and PAV in Slovakia literally inherited power and moved towards the democratic principles of the inter-war period. It was the speed of change and the non-violent nature of the upheaval which aptly earned the national uprising in Czechoslovakia the name 'Velvet Revolution.' The two umbrella opposition movements emerged as clear winners in their respective sub-units during the June 1990 elections. Initially there was little to indicate that the dominance of distinctive Czech and Slovak parties would undermine the survival of the state. However, at the heart of the crisis in Czech-Slovak relations, which was to dominate the second half of 1990 and erupt once again in late 1991, were different perceptions of the appropriate constitutional relationship between the two nations. The next chapter will attempt a detailed analysis of the Czech and Slovak regions from the June 1990 elections. Particular emphasis will be devoted to the relationship between the Czech and Slovak regions, and especially their respective élite's role in attempting to resolve the 'Slovak Question,' a failure of which culminated in the dis-integration of the state into two new independent republics on 1 January 1993.

CHAPTER FIVE

THE DISINTEGRATION OF THE STATE OF CZECHOSLOVAKIA

The formal disintegration of the state of Czechoslovakia on 1 January 1993 was the culmination of a seventy-four year history of the failure of the Czech and Slovak efforts to agree upon a mutually satisfactory political arrangement for their coexistence in a common state. Czechoslovakia's newly re-created democratic political system, in its initial stages following the 'Velvet Revolution' proved unable to survive the continued nationalist conflict between the Czechs and Slovaks that dominated public life during the first two years of the post-communist era.

The post-communist élite, in power from 1990 to 1992, were presented with three simultaneous challenges which needed to be met in order to ensure a transition to post-socialism: 1) creating new political institutions, 2) building a market economy, and 3) forming a new cultural identity, i.e. a 'social glue' which would provide new ties and bonds between the Czechs and Slovaks. This 'triple transition' task -- political, economic, and national -- proved to be insurmountable for the re-newed state. The central argument advanced in the chapter is that the post-communist political system, especially the structure of parliament and the organization of political parties within the new federation, allowed ample opportunity for regional separatism, but provided no effective mechanism to impede serious disintegrative impulses.

This chapter will examine the organization and functions of the Federal Assembly of the Czech and Slovak Federal Republic (CSFR) and will also review the course of events from the elections of 1990 until 1993. Attention will be given to the early faltering consensus between the two constituent groups and to the federal structure which facilitated a shift in the balance of power from the center to the sub-units. This shift resulted in a power struggle between the Czech and Slovak republics, the climax of which was the dissolution of the federative state 1 January 1993. What were the factors involved that brought about this dissolution? And why, was the break-

up of the state into two independent sovereign entities as peaceful and orderly as the 'Velvet Revolution' just two years earlier?

SLIDE INTO STATE DIS-INTEGRATION

Implications of the June 1990 Elections

The June 1990 elections produced a convincing victory for the coalition of the two 'Velvet Revolution' opposition movements: Civic Forum (CF) and Public Against Violence (PAV). The coalition won a comfortable majority of 170 seats in the 300 seat Federal Assembly. CF also won a clear victory in the Czech National Council (CNC). PAV gained the most seats in the Slovak National Council (SNC) but in order to form a majority government, PAV entered into a coalition with the Christian Democratic Movement (CDM).¹ The absence of a successful statewide party, other than the communists who gained 47 seats in the Assembly, produced distinct Czech and Slovak groupings within their respective sub-units and in the Federal Assembly.²

The federal parliament was elected to a two year term as a 'provisional government' with the following mandate: to serve as a constituent assembly to draft and approve a new democratic constitution, and to reconstruct the state administration to create the legal and institutional framework where free-market economic principles could function. Both tasks would prove to be daunting for the new post-communist government. While the economic transition was largely successful, constitutional change would provoke a protracted struggle to define the division of powers between the center and the two constituent units.

¹ PAV faced a more fragmented electorate in Slovakia than CF did in the Czech Lands. The half million strong Magyar vote went to a coalition involving Coexistence and the Hungarian Christian Democratic Movement. Two other important rivals for the Slovak vote were the Christian Democratic Movement that appealed to a Catholic constituency and the Slovak National Party that appealed to the Slovak separatists. Neither of these three groups had a constituency in the Czech Lands

² The Communist support was 15 percent of the vote in the Czech Lands and 13 percent in the Slovak Republic. The support was attributed to the superior organizational skills of the party

Structural Conditions Leading to the Disintegration of Czechoslovakia

Czech politicians generally accepted the view that the highly centralized federal system inherited from the communists needed to be modified in order to transfer increased power to the republics. The Czechs also hoped that this would satisfy Slovak aspirations for greater control over their own affairs. But, many Czechs also voiced concerns that too much devolution of power could be dysfunctional, inhibit a coordinated economic policy, and even prove to be the first steps towards the break-up of the state.³ After the post-communist élite took power rather than abrogate the communist inspired 1968 Constitution -- which had transformed Czechoslovakia from a unitary to a federal state-- they endorsed the document as an interim framework until new laws could be drafted and ratified.⁴ The consequence of this act would result in the weakening of the Federal Assembly and the transformation of the Czech and Slovak National Councils from provincial bodies to parliaments of what almost amounted to sovereign nation-states. One of the federal devices which had the potential to unite different regions into a common state, increased representation for a smaller sized ethnic group in a the statewide parliament, became an obstacle, in Czechoslovakia's case, to the consolidation of state unity.

An unusual feature of the Czechoslovak Federal Assembly was the practice of bicameralism.⁵ Bicameralism was based upon the federal structure of the state where the two chambers of the house were of equal size. Seats in the Chamber of the People were allocated by population: two-thirds to the Czech Republic and one-third to the Slovak Republic. Seats in the Chamber of Nations were equally divided.

³ Gordon Wightman, "The Czech and Slovak Republics," *Developments in East European Politics*, eds Stephen White et al (London: Macmillan, 1993), 57

⁴ For a discussion on the merits of endorsing the pre-1989 Constitution as an interim measure see Allison K. Stanger, "Czechoslovakia's Dissolution as an Unintended Consequence of the Velvet Constitutional Revolution," *East European Constitutional Review* Volume 5, Number 4 (Fall 1996): 40-46. And Karen Henderson, "Cutting the Gordian Knot"

⁵ This section's framework owes much to David M. Olson, "The Sundered State: Federalism and Parliament in Czechoslovakia," *Political and Economic Transformation in East Central Europe*, ed Hanspeter Neuhold, Peter Havlic, and Arnold Suppan (Westview Press: Austrian Institute for International Affairs Series, 1995), 101. Olson's analysis is much more extensive and includes the rules of procedure, legislative initiatives etc.

Table 5.1: Bicameralism in the National Assembly: Seats by Republic. ⁶

Republic	Chamber	
	of People	of Nations
Czech	99	75
Slovak	51	75
Total	150	150

It was not bicameralism itself that was unusual rather its practice in Czechoslovakia which, at times, displayed additional unicameral and tricameral features. The Federal Assembly typically met in joint sessions suggesting that a functioning unicameral system prevailed. But, for certain issues, such as constitutional amendments, votes were tabulated separately within the three voting sections -- the Chamber of Peoples and the separate Czech and Slovak sections of the Chamber of Nations-- suggesting the reality of a tricameral system. This complex arrangement has been characterized as a "three-chambered" parliament, with two of the chambers located within one house.⁷

The unicameral practices of the Federal Assembly began with equal powers; both chambers were equal in their legal authority and scope. This complete equality of the two constituted chambers was a departure from other democratic federative systems. Equality was also expressed through identical terms of office and simultaneous elections; the two houses were elected at the same time, using the same system of proportional representation, and the identical 5 percent threshold for representation.⁸

The tricameral feature emerged with the requirement of a 'double majority' on decisions relating to all matters constitutional and votes of non-confidence. For such issues a majority was necessary from each of the two republic voting sections in the Chamber of Nations, as well as the Chamber of People. Failure in any of these three voting chambers would defeat any constitutional initiative. In essence this provided both the Czechs and Slovaks with "veto" power.⁹ Politically, this veto power, designed by the previous régime (and therefore essentially a formal mechanism rather than a

⁶ *Ibid.*, 101

⁷ Jin Pehe, "RFE/RL Research Report, July 31, 1990, 30-33

⁸ Wightman, "The Czech and Slovak Republics," 58

working reality), was more important to the Slovaks than the Czechs. Any constitutional draft that the Slovaks refused to pass in their Chamber of the House of Nations would not be approved, regardless of the size of the vote in the Czech section of the Chamber of Nations or the Chamber of People where the Czechs had 26 additional deputies. For the Slovaks this represented true veto power; if a proposed constitution draft did not allocate power between the center and the republics in a way that leaders of both republics accepted, the draft would fail, even if the Czech majority gave the draft overwhelming support. A further stipulation was that this was not a simple majority, but a three-fifths majority which was almost impossible to achieve. As such the communist federal constitution -- designed to be implemented under a communist régime where the central power was the ultimate decision-maker -- now placed the minority Slovaks in a powerful bargaining position. The Czechs, even with a majority in the Chamber of People faced a 'catch 22' situation; they could not break the dead-lock to change the communist federal structure without a constitutional revision and they could not gain a constitutional revision, without Slovak approval.

On a wide range of less sensitive issues, the Slovak and Czech deputies voted similarly to one another, thus making the Assembly a functioning unicameral body. But as the federal issue grew hotter with increased tension between the two ethno-centric regions major decisions were repeatedly defeated by a small number of Slovak deputies (thirty-one) who exercised their veto power within the Assembly.¹⁰ A new division of powers between the governments, the Law of Competency, was passed December 1990. The increased powers the Law conferred on the regional governments coupled with the lack of restraint on the part of the Slovak deputies to exercise their veto power left the statewide authority simply reacting to decisions made by the two republics.

⁹ Leff, *The Czech and Slovak Republics*, 133

¹⁰ Olson, *The Sundered State*, 103

From Umbrella Movements to Political Parties

The two main political forces that won the 1990 elections, Civic Forum and Public Against Violence, were essentially grand coalitions whose unifying factor was the defeat of communism. These "transformative movements" were explicitly not political parties; they were much broader in scope and more amorphous in organization.¹¹ Denied any freedom of political expression under communism, participation in the new political system, at this stage, was seen as a good in itself rather than a means to power.¹² But as the task of ending communist rule changed from simply opposition to the more complex task of shaping an alternative government, pressures mounted to conform more closely to traditional West European parties.

Once in office, the newly elected members of the Federal Assembly soon began to split into smaller 'parliamentary clubs' which would subsequently develop into functioning political parties within the new democracy. The number and size of the 'clubs' was subject to change; the concept of membership was open and fluid. A further important feature was the fact that the 'clubs' were oriented to the republican level, with no overarching 'federal' organization.¹³ This tentative and changing party/club system in Czechoslovakia was, in part, a consequence of the previous communist period which had been dominated by a single, albeit factionalized, hierarchical party. It is noteworthy that the very concept of "political party," at this time, had been tainted by public association of the term with the Communist *Party* legacy. In brief, the democratic party system was not yet well rooted in the country's political culture.

By autumn the process of political differentiation began to take place first within the CF and soon after within the PAV. At Civic Forum's congress in October 1990 Václav Klaus, the federal Minister of Finance, was elected CF's first chairman. Klaus, an economist who embraced the anti-statist views of the German economist Friedrich von

¹¹ Olson, "The Sundered State," 110

¹² Jan Ake Dellenbrant, "Parties and Party Systems in Eastern Europe," Stephen White et al., *Developments in East European Politics*, eds. Stephen White et al. (London: Macmillan, 1993), 150

¹³ Wightman, "The Party System," 60

Hayek¹⁴ and the American economist Milton Friedman, advocated the transformation of CF into a conventional right-wing political party which would reject a 'third way' between socialism and liberalism. Klaus pledged to turn the CF into a dynamic, well-organized party whose platform would reflect his desire for the radical 'shock therapy' approach to economic transformation and his anti-statist beliefs. Many CF deputies refused to accept Klaus and his supporter's platform and by March two new parties had emerged from the CF movement: the Civic Democratic Party (CDS) led by Klaus, and Civic Movement led by Foreign Minister Jiri Dienstbier.¹⁵ Civic Movement's platform remained committed to CF's ideals: a more 'human face' to economic transformations, a less formal 'movement' orientation, and a progressive-liberal based ideology closely aligned with President Havel's own political preference.¹⁶

At issue in CF's split was the character of the movement and its role in the transformation of the economy; for Public Against Violence the constitution issue and nationalist claims were the contributing factors to its disintegration. The division within PAV, in the spring of 1991, was far reaching and acrimonious. This dispute resulted in the dismissal of its leader Vladimir Meciar as Prime Minister along with seven of his cabinet by the Slovak National Council (SNC). The nationalist line pursued by Meciar, his lukewarm attitudes towards radical economic reform, and his authoritarian and aggressive style of leadership were seen as threatening not only relationships with the Czechs, but also the pursuit of democracy in Slovakia. Politically talented, charismatic, controversial, abrasive, and undeterred by this turn of events Meciar formed his own political party, the Movement for a Democratic Slovakia (MDS). Based on an eclectic and somewhat ambiguous program of national populism, paternalistic socialism, and a promise to achieve an independent Slovak state within the framework of the federation, MDS quickly became the most popular political force in Slovakia.¹⁷

¹⁴ See F.A. Hayek, *The Road to Serfdom, Fiftieth Anniversary Edition* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994) and *The Fatal Conceit: The Errors of Socialism*, W.W. Bartely III ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1988).

¹⁵ Before the 1992 elections Civic Movement also split with left-wing deputies forming a group call Civic Association.

¹⁶ Batt, "East-Central Europe," 272-273

¹⁷ Milan Svec, "Czechoslovakia's Velvet Divorce," 379.

The creation of MDS destroyed PAV. The other principal contenders for the Slovak vote were PAV's Federal Assembly coalition partner the Christian Democratic Movement (CDM) led by Ján Carnogursky and the militant separatist Slovak National Party (SNP). While Carnogursky, who was elected Meciar's successor as prime minister, took a middle and muddle approach to a review of the constitutional arrangements of the federation, the SNP pressed for the immediate break-up of the state and the creation of an independent Slovakia. Sensing the political dangers of promoting rabid nationalism Meciar distanced himself from the extremist 'separatist' Slovak National Party. But, he was successful in exploiting the latent mixture of national and economic grievances within the Slovak population who "wanted to stand on their own two feet and be masters of their own fate."¹⁸ As such, Meciar entered the election campaign of 1992 as the major opposition force.

Though Carnogursky brought a less aggressive political style to public rhetoric the most salient issue -- a constitutional settlement which would satisfy Slovak demands for an optimum form of self-government within the common state -- remained unchanged. The dissolution of the two broad political movements -- CF and PAV -- into rival political parties, usually a healthy move toward a properly functioning democracy, unfortunately, only strengthened the latent nationalist and separatist tendencies within the Czechoslovak federation.

A FALTERING CONSENSUS

The Hyphen War

The two major movements, CF and PAV, agreed that a satisfactory resolution of the national question was overdue, and that the communist federal solution had, by its authoritarian nature, been no solution at all. The phrase at the time, was "authentic federation" with genuine power vested at the republic level.¹⁹ The first sign of the

¹⁸ Vaclav Havel, quoted in John Monson, "The Road to Separation: Nationalism in Czechoslovakia," *Contemporary Nationalism in East Central Europe*, ed. Paul Latawski (London: St. Martin's Press, 1995), 80

¹⁹ Musil, "Czechoslovakia in the Middle," 183 and Leff, "The Czech and Slovak Republics," 129.

fragility of consensus on the national question pre-dated the June 1990 elections. Czechoslovakia was officially re-named the Czechoslovak *Socialist* Republic in 1970. In 1990, intent on removing all political vestiges of communist power, the Federal Assembly took under advisement an amendment to delete *Socialist* from the state's official name thereby reverting to its original designation the Czechoslovak Republic.

Slovaks seized this occasion to challenge the accuracy of this state title. 'Czechoslovak Republic,' the Slovaks argued, was ethnically misleading as it implied that there was a 'Czechoslovak' nationality that merged the Czechs and Slovaks. Demonstrations were organized in Bratislava demanding that Slovakia be made more 'visible' in the country's official name. Enter the hyphen a seemingly innocuous punctuation mark, the hyphen, would act as a bridge and a divider communicating the distinction between two nations in a common state.²⁰ If the traditional Czechoslovak Republic was unacceptable to the Slovaks, the hyphenated version was equally objectionable to the Czechs (reminiscent of the short-lived period of the second Republic before the Nazi invasion). Eventually, during 1990, the new state's official title became the Czech and Slovak Federative Republic (CSFR). The symbolic character of this political battle proved to be a forerunner of more fundamental differences that were to surface soon after the 1990 elections. This debate was a clear signal that past legacies of mutual suspicion and betrayals continued to affect national relations between the Czechs and Slovaks and would impact on each group's vision for the continuance of the Czechoslovak state.

The tension between the Czechs and Slovaks resurfaced in July 1990 when Slovak nationalist extremists unveiled a plaque in memory of Josef Tiso, President of the Slovak puppet state during W.W.II. In spite of the fact that Tiso had been executed as a war criminal in 1947, representatives of the Slovak Christian Democratic Movement -- a member of the Federal Assembly coalition-- attended the unveiling ceremony, thereby identifying themselves with this highly controversial nationalist gesture. This action caused outrage in the Czech Republic, and the plaque was removed. It has been argued

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 130

that the plaque did not necessarily arise from nostalgia for fascist values, rather it was an example of the sad paradox that the only time in history that Slovaks had managed to achieve 'statehood' was coincident with the advent of a Nazi-backed régime.²¹

More serious issues erupted in the autumn of 1990 with repeated clashes over the distribution of power between the republics and the federal authorities. Rallies supporting Czechoslovak statehood competed with increasingly numerous counter-rallies favoring a vaguely defined 'sovereignty' for Slovakia. A crisis erupted when Slovak intellectuals in conjunction with the Slovak Nationalist Party published a 'Declaration of Sovereignty for Slovakia.' The 'Declaration' envisaged full Slovak independence, asserting that Slovak laws would take precedence over federal ones, and that the republic would endow itself with a separate army, currency, and foreign policy before signing a treaty on a common state with the Czech Republic. Repeated attempts were made to have the 'Declaration' adopted by the SNC.²²

THE RISE OF THE SUB-UNITS - A PRELUDE TO SOVEREIGNTY

National Sensitivities and the Federal Structure

As detailed above, with the exception of the Communist Party the parties who were successful in the 1990 elections were all regionally based rather than statewide. Czechoslovakia's federal structure with the simultaneous election to the statewide Federal Assembly and regional National Councils facilitated separate political organizational efforts within each republic. The first post-communist free election was not only a referendum on change it was also a blue print for a complex political contest which included -- along with economic transformation and democratization issues -- a 'national question' which was demanding resolution.

It is a matter of record that narrowly focused political groups in a democracy can make demands for recognition and political change. It is equally true that such groups can be ignored if they lack genuine political access. In the unitary structure of the inter-

²¹ Tismaneanu, "Reinventing Politics," 258

war period the Slovaks were a minority in the only power structure that had real decision-making power: the Petka. In the communist state, while the asymmetrical federalist structure increased Slovakia's status any of their demands or interests would have to be in accordance with those of the Communist Party. But, in the new order of post-1989, the democratization of the existing federal structure gave the Slovak minority a strong voice. Further, as each republic had its own legislature, and the Federal Assembly was sub-divided into chambers where each republic's deputies had veto power, neither the Czechs nor the Slovaks were dependent upon each other's constituents for electoral victory. "Federation *plus* democratization," was, for the Slovaks "a power equation."²³ In general, new parties in search of a reliable base of support could concentrate their efforts and resources at the republic level with, if successful, the immediate reward of being simultaneously elected to both the statewide and republic-level institutions. In contrast, state-wide parties would face higher organizational costs in the larger arena and risked losing support to the more focused appeals of their regional counterparts.²⁴

An additional aspect of the 'Slovak power equation' was the national sensitivity of its smaller electorate when compared to the Czechs. When regional institutional bases are supported by ethno-national divisions, as in Czechoslovakia, the smaller nation tends to protect its own interest.²⁵ In the chaotic time of the transition period and the early effort to organize a democratic party system both the Czechs and Slovaks were able to build a reliable base within their respective constituencies. In the 1990 and 1992 elections "voters responded to the opportunity to express *both* their national identity and their desire for change."²⁶ It was Czechoslovakia's combination of

²² Pehe, "Growing Slovak Demands," United States, FBIS, 14 March 1991, 5-6

²³ Leff, "The Czechs and Slovaks," 132

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 134.

²⁵ Often this Slovak 'protective' instinct has been cynically characterized as a "What's in it for the Slovaks attitude" by Czechs who witnessed that in past times of state crises the Slovaks appeared to emerge with a better deal than the Czechs i.e. their own state in 1939 and federalization in 1968.

²⁶ Leff, "The Czechs and the Slovaks," 99. Emphasis in the original

institutional structure and ethnic diversity that facilitated the emergence of separate party sub-systems.²⁷

But, one of the outcomes in the Czechoslovak model of a segmented party system was that on sensitive issues of a statewide nature, such as constitutional changes and the division of powers between the center and the regions, there was no overarching party with a statewide base to represent the interests of the whole country. Any politician who attempted to speak for the interest of the whole country, as Czech Prime Minister Petr Pithard did when he made concessions to the Slovaks in November 1991, was chastized and labeled 'soft on the Slovaks' and a 'betrayor' of his own republic's interest.²⁸ For the two years after the 1990 election Czechoslovakia's party system reinforced the 'us' and 'them' among the chief constitutional negotiators. By 1992 party lines coincided closely with the ethnic divisions in the country. In the unsettled time of the transition period, voters, in search of clarity in the confusing new electoral environment increasingly gravitated to the banner of national identity.

Shift in the Electorate - Federal State v Sovereign States

Frank Parkin argues that 'those groups in society which occupy positions of the greatest power and privilege will also tend to have the greatest access to the means of legitimization.'²⁹ This concept is derived from Karl Marx's statement that "the ideas of the ruling class are, in every age, the ruling ideas."³⁰ After the June 1990 elections, when constitutional revision assumed more importance on the political agenda, a poll found that only 6 per cent of the population (5 percent of Czechs and 8 percent of Slovaks) favored dividing the country into two independent states. Table 5.2 indicates that 72 percent of Czechs and 57 percent of Slovaks favored federation. The ill-defined 'confederal' option, advocated by some political activists, a perspective which was often

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 99

²⁸ Robert A Younge, *The Secession of Quebec and the Future of Canada*, (Kingston, Queens University Press, 1995), 151

²⁹ Frank Parkin, *Class Inequality and Political Order: Social Stratification in Capitalist and Communist Societies* (London: St. Martins Press, 1971), 83

³⁰ *Ibid.*, 82

vaguely associated with sovereignty, attracted twice as much support in Slovakia as in the Czech Republic, but it was still a minority political position.

Table 5.2 Constitutional Preferences in the Czech and Slovak Federal Republic, June 1990 ³¹

<i>Preference</i>	<i>Throughout Czechoslovakia</i>	<i>Czech Republic</i>	<i>Slovak Republic</i>
Common state with large powers vested in central government	33%	42%	16%
Common state with large powers vested in Czech and Slovak national governments	34	30	41
Confederation	21	16	30
Two completely independent states	6	5	8
Do not know or other alternatives	6	7	5

But, public opinion would rapidly change as tension in the country became more polarized. By the eve of the June 1992 elections -- for reasons which will be more fully discussed below -- 3 percent of Czechs would favor 'confederation' and 16 percent wanted two independent states; on the Slovak side the figures would be 30 and 16 percent respectively. But, by early autumn of that same year the Institute for Public Opinion reported that 46 percent of Czechs already favored a split and 45 percent only were opposed; by this time Slovak opinion had risen to 41 percent for sovereignty, and 46 percent were opposed. ³² More important, over 80 percent of both Czechs and Slovaks agreed in September that the separation was inevitable. ³³ By October 1992, Czech opinion was even more committed to separation: 37 per cent of Slovak respondents thought that separation was necessary, compared with 56 percent in Bohemia and 43 percent in Moravia. ³⁴ Although polls on statehood are notoriously poor indicators because they do not measure how strongly publics are committed to the existing state, nor do they clarify what are the preferred trade-offs, the data show the effects of polarization as the republics moved toward separation.

³¹ Younger, "The Secession of Québec," 149.

³² *Ibid.*, 148.

³³ RFE/RL Research Report, October 30, 1992, 35-38. See also United States Foreign Broadcast Information Service (hereafter cited as FBIS), 24 July 1992, 18.

³⁴ Draper, "End of Czechoslovakia," 25.

Explaining Political Polarization: Élites and Interests in Conflict

The dissolution of the two umbrella movements into organized political parties increased the importance of the regions and correspondingly weakened the center. From early 1991 onward the constitutional issue became polarized between the two republics. This polarization both reflected and affected the two major party leaders in the country, Vacláv Klaus and Vladimir Mečiar. Each leader wanted to take Czechoslovakia in directions that were basically incompatible with the views of the other. In general, Mečiar and his Slovak followers wanted a looser federation, with maximum power concentrated in the hands of the two republics rather than the central government. Klaus and his Czech supporters favored a tighter federation with key powers vested in and concentrated at the center; the Slovaks and the Communists were skeptical of this 'Prague-centrism.'

By July 1991 three major parties, with a total of 75 members in the 150 person Slovak National Council, were advocating some form of a confederal/nationalist approach to reconfiguring the state they shared with the Czechs. For Carnogursky and the CDM "Slovakia's aim was to gain full independence by the year 2000," with a confederal arrangement established until that time.³⁵ Further, CDM was in favor of a 'state treaty' between the two republics which would *precede* and *underpin* the new federation. This meant that it would be the Republics, not the Federal Assembly, which would ratify any new constitution. (Subsequently, Carnogursky's party splintered over this issue and lost its majority control of the SNC.)³⁶ The Slovak Communists were opposed to a strong central government which would engineer a rapid economic reform, while the SNP were committed sovereigntists. Mečiar and the MDS hoped to capture nationalist support and take the lead of this 75 seat majority. How would they be able to do that? Mečiar's MDS was more moderate than the SNP, less tarnished than the communists, and more coherent than the CDM.³⁷ As the loose remnants of the PAV and the CDM suffered internal tension with having to take responsibility for decisions

³⁵ Wheaton, "The Velvet Revolution," 178

³⁶ RFE/RL Research Report, 27 March 1992, 13-16

made at the federal level, Meciar shrewdly gained the upper hand. According to public opinion surveys by the spring of 1992, the MDS had the support of 30 percent of the Slovak people, while the communists were at 16 percent, and the CDM floundered at 13 percent.³⁸

In the Czech Lands there was partisan advantage to be won on constitutional issues. Initially, Czech public opinion favored the continuation of a federation with substantial powers conferred on the central government. Federalist forces found a strong voice in the leaders of a federal coalition: Petr Pithart of the Civic Movement and federal Prime Minister Marian Calfa of PAV. Throughout 1990 and early 1991 Czech and Slovak leaders began negotiations concerning a Slovak sponsored 'state treaty.' During this period, the Czech National Council took a pragmatic and conciliatory stance toward constitutional matters. However, soon after the formation of the Christian Democratic Party (CDM) in the Czech Lands during March 1991, the party rejected the notion of the 'state treaty.' CDP's leader Vacláv Klaus stated that only a 'functional' federation would be acceptable to the Czech peoples.³⁹ That type of federalism amounted to the status quo or increased centralization. Klaus and his supporters opposed what they considered the unrealistic and damaging Slovak demands and rejected outright the idea of two independent economic policies operating within one state. By the end of 1991 Czech public opinion had moved its support to the more right-wing and centralist Czech parties, with Klaus's CDP garnering 20 per cent support, or twice that of its nearest rival.⁴⁰

By February 1992, a draft 'state treaty' received the backing of the Czechs. But, the treaty, which presumed the continued existence of a common state, was rejected by the presidium of the Slovak National Council. Carnogursky supported the treaty but, Meciar and other Slovak nationalist politicians declared it a betrayal of the national movement. Slovak Prime Minister Marian Calfa, later declared that the separation of the Czech and Slovak republics had begun with that rejection: "In my view we have now set

³⁷ Younge, *The Secession of Québec*, 150

³⁸ RFE/RL Research Report, 28 March 1992.6

³⁹ RFE/RL Research Report, 18 February 1992. 14

in motion a centrifugal process for the two parts of our common state -- the Czech Lands and Slovakia." ⁴¹ The battle lines were clearly drawn between two republic-level governments and between two ethnically and territorially distinct party systems, each championing a different conception of the state, with each vision unacceptable to the other. It was a clear formula for bargaining deadlock. As nationalist issues acquired prominence in the political life of the Slovaks, Czech politics grew more secular and progressively concerned with economic issues. The question of the constitutional status of the Czech and Slovak Federative Republic, increasingly, took precedence in the political life of the state, and by the second half of 1991 and into the Spring of 1992, that issue came to over shadow all other matters in the political life of the country.

ECONOMIC TRANSITION

Strategy for Economic Transformation

Ralf Dahrendorf, describes the economic transformation of the East European countries as the "valley of tears." He has pointed out that the time-scales of political and economic transition are not compatible; whereas democratic political institutions can be set up in a matter of months, transforming the economic system takes years. In the intervening period economic upheaval and social dislocation make extraordinary demands on the political leadership and the new democratic institutions. Compared to the relative simplicity of constitutional and political changes, "economic transformation takes on the character of a battlefield." ⁴²

In the move toward free-market principles the Czech élite championed rapid economic reform; the Slovak élite in Bratislava, sensing that this strategy would impact more adversely on them, demanded a much slower pace to the economic transition. When Klaus was elected Chairman of Civic Forum, in the fall of 1990 he had a clear majority in both the Federal Assembly and the CNC. As federal Minister of Finance, he

⁴⁰ RFE/RL Research Report, 31 January 1992, 6

⁴¹ FBIS, 19 February 1992, 4.

⁴² Ralf Dahrendorf, *Reflections on the Revolution in Europe*, (London: Chatto & Windus, 1990), 85.

could claim a mandate for his aggressive program of rapid economic reform. On 1 January 1991, Czechoslovakia introduced a comprehensive economic transformation package characterized as a moderate form of economic 'shock treatment'.⁴³ The package had two primary goals: stabilize the economy and create a competitive environment. This involved applying restrictive monetary and fiscal policies, strict wage controls, fixed prices, and the elimination of subsidies.⁴⁴ The transformation strategy prompted a heated debate which paralled the contentious economical, philosophical, and historical issues between the respective Czech and Slovak nations.

In a federal state, such as Czechoslovakia was until the end of 1992, allocation of funds from common revenue represent a means of income sharing and equalization. The Husák-Jakes régime had treated Slovakia generously; it was allocated a much higher portion of funds than it was entitled to on the basis of population or overall economic contribution.⁴⁵ This was an official policy adopted after the 1967-1968 'Prague Spring' and had long been resented by Czechs who regarded the policy as excessive preferential treatment of the Slovaks. Most Czechs basically felt that they were being asked to subsidize Slovak economic development. Under Klaus' economic policy, Slovakia was told that both parts of the country would be required to live increasingly on the basis of their own revenues. In 1990 the country's joint revenues were allocated in the proportions 40% (Czech Lands), 25% (Slovakia), and 35% (federation), and in 1991, 41.5%, 23.5% and 35% respectively.⁴⁶

Klaus beleived that a partial reform and a gradual attempt to transform the centralized system was worse than no reform at all. The task, as he perceived it, was to "create a normally functioning market economy and a normally functioning political system based on standard political parties. We have no wish to undertake new social

⁴³ Jan Adam, "Transformation to a Market Economy in the Former Czechoslovakia." *Europe-Asia Studies*, Vol. 45 (1993) 629

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 629

⁴⁵ Gordon Wightman, "The Czech and Slovak Republics" 51

⁴⁶ Adam, "Transformation to a Market Economy," 632

experiments. We have had enough of such experiments in the past.⁴⁷ But, Klaus and the rest of the Prague based architects of the transformation strategy must have known that the shock treatment scheme would bring greater suffering to Slovakia than to the Czech Lands. The Czech economy was service-oriented, based on light industry and, therefore, more easily integrated into the international capitalist system. Slovakia's economy was based on an unenviable combination of unproductive farms and obsolete industrial military enterprises that were formerly closely integrated with the Soviet economy. The military enterprises were further compromised in the international arena by the arms-limitations agreements championed by Prague and Vacláv Havel in particular. Prague's policy was to close these munitions factories, and end arms production. When Meciar defied federal injunctions by continuing foreign arms sales he publicized the conflict of economic interest between the country's two regional sub-units. In the summer of 1992 the impact of the reforms were beginning to emerge; unemployment in Slovakia was 11.8 percent as compared to 4.1 percent for the Czech Republic.⁴⁸ Because the move to a market economy disproportionately hurt the Slovak Republic more than the Czech Republic, the economic disparities served to amplify calls for independence and thereby endanger the preservation of this already precarious federation.⁴⁹

*The Case for Radical Reform*⁵⁰

A major issue debated among economic experts regarding the transformation of Eastern Europe had been the speed of economic transition ('shock therapy' versus gradualist or evolutionary approaches), the role of the state ('hands off' neo-liberalism versus more interventionist approaches), and privatization. In the early post-1989 period it was a well-known fact that the International Monetary Fund (IMF) favored 'shock

⁴⁷ Václav Klaus, "Transition - An Insider's View," *Problems of Communism* (January - April 1992): 73. Klaus was referring to the Prague Spring where Dubcek has attempted to find a middle way between Marxist-Leninist ideology and Western Liberalism.

⁴⁸ Adam, "Transformation to a Market Economy," 63-4

⁴⁹ Ulc, "The Bumpy Road," 23

⁵⁰ See Anders Aslund, "The Case for Radical Reform," *Journal of Democracy* Vol. 5, No. 4 (October 1994): 63- 87.

treatment' for the economic transformations taking place in Eastern Europe. IMF officers, concerned that politicians in the post-communist countries might not have the resolve to persevere with their transition policies once they encountered political resistance, reasoned that such a rapid strategy, while inflicting some initial social hardships, would make a return to the previous communist system more difficult. Economic aid, primarily from the IMF and the World Bank, was essential to support the reform programs. These organizations preferred strategy coincided closely with Klaus' preferred economic philosophy.

The general debate of experts over the pace of economic transition was reflected in the division amongst Czechoslovak economists and also the economic differences between the Czech Lands and Slovakia. As previously noted Finance Minister Klaus embraced 'shock therapy', a 'hands-off neo-liberalism' approach and rapid privatization. Valt Komárek, an economist, who was also deputy prime minister, was Klaus' principle opponent to the radical reform strategy. Sensing the high social costs such reforms would inflict on society as a whole, and on the Slovaks in particular, Komárek favored a more evolutionary approach, a more interventionist state, and provision for more publicly owned industry. These two differing perspectives mirrored those of the Czech

and Slovak nations within the new democracy during the first two years of its transformation.⁵¹

While such questions over the proper strategies for transformation appear at first glance to be largely a technical economic matter, they carry with them substantial political implications and can be a major source of acute political conflict. In Czechoslovakia, while there was widespread consensus on the desirability of democratic government and also to work in a 'normal' fashion in a market oriented economy which enjoys Western standards of consumption, such the consensus faltered over how to achieve those goals and the extent of social costs members of society should pay in that quest. The existence of intense national conflict which expressed itself early in the transition period produced a friction within the state when the issues of political legitimacy became entangled with economic controversies. In addition, inter-ethnic conflicts focused upon the legitimacy of the existing state challenging its right to rule. As Walker Connor has noted "economic considerations may be an irritant that reinforce ethnic consciousness, but economic factors are likely to come in a poor second when competing with the emotionalism of ethnic nationalism."⁵²

CZECHOSLOVAKIA'S 'VELVET DIVORCE'

The Power Struggle Intensifies

The underlying disagreements between the Czech and Slovak political élites were derived from their divergent political agendas and their competing perceptions of what national arrangements would best serve to protect each republic's interests. If the 1990 election was a referendum on the end of communist rule, then the 1992 election was a referendum on the continuation of the Czech and Slovak Federative State.⁵³

⁵¹ Musil, "Czechoslovakia in the Middle of Transition," makes a reasoned argument that the Slovaks unlike the Czechs, were simply not a market oriented nation

⁵² Walker Connor, "Nation-Building" 343

⁵³ Nine European communist states felt the impact of post-communist transformation politics; the three -- Soviet Union, Czechoslovakia and Yugoslavia -- that disintegrated, and only those three, were federations.

On two separate occasions President Havel sought to break the constitutional impasse over his country's future. In late 1991 he unsuccessfully sought to obtain greater powers for his own office, including the right to dissolve the Assembly and call for new elections. In January 1992, Havel proposed a series of amendments which would have required both Czech and Slovak Parliaments to approve a new constitution and to hold a national referendum in Slovakia on the question of remaining within the federal system.⁵⁴ On both occasions Slovak deputies voted against the proposals, in the first instance they protested the centralization of power; in the second, if the polls were correct, a referendum would have enabled the Slovaks -- contrary to the wishes of some of their leaders -- to express their desire to remain in the federation.⁵⁵ It was clear to all the parties that renewed constitutional negotiations would have to await the outcome of the June 1992 elections.

Table 5.3 Public Opinion on the Preferred Form of Czech-Slovak Relationship (in percent)⁵⁶

	Unitary State	Federation	Confed- eration	Independence	Other/Don't Know
June 1990					
Czech Republic	30	45	—	12	13
Slovakia	14	63	—	13	6
November 1991					
Czech Republic	39	30	4	5	22
Slovakia	20	26	27	14	13
March 1992					
Czech Republic	34	27	6	11	22
Slovakia	13	24	32	17	14

The June 1992 the campaigns in each republic focused on competing and divergent interests. The Czech parties focused on the acceleration and completion of the economic transition. Their Slovak counterparts devoted virtually exclusive attention to the protection of Slovak interests within the unitary state. As Appendix III demonstrates the election results between the Federal Assembly and the two National

⁵⁴ For a criticism of the role Havel played in the constitutional negotiations and the failure of his direct initiatives see Elster, "Transition, Constitution-Making and Separation in Czechoslovakia," *European Journal of Sociology* XXXVI Number 1 (1995): 115.

⁵⁵ Sharon Wolchik, "The Politics of Ethnicity in Post-Communist Czechoslovakia," *East European Politics and Societies* 8 1 (Winter 1994): 180.

Councils were very similar to each other. Each republic had one clear plurality-winning party in their respective councils CDP won 29.7 percent of the vote and a clear mandate for radical economic change; the MDS captured 37.3 percent of the vote with its promise to slowdown painful reforms, keep the government heavily involved in the economy, and seek greater independence for Slovakia.⁵⁷ A country-wide election was converted into republic-centered contests which in turn became virtually a "referendum on the meta-political question of 'stateness'."⁵⁸

The Czechs and Slovaks both returned distinct, but contradictory electoral results which produced no clear governing arrangement at the federal level. The voting patterns produced a situation where it was almost impossible to form a federal government. The defeat of Civic Movement, which did not reach the 5 percent threshold, was seen as a failure of the liberal center in Czechoslovak politics.⁵⁹ The two antithetical nationalist forces CDP and MDS, gained the most seats in the Federal Assembly and in their respective Councils (See Appendix IV). This outcome would have the potential for accelerating separatist tendencies in the country. Further, the heads of both of the winning parties, Klaus and Mecliar, gave preference to their ambition to becoming prime ministers in their own republics rather than seeking positions in the enfeebled federal government.

The elections consequence was that the two republics now had separate functioning governments which could pass legislation on issues within their competence (in their own National Councils) but, at the federal level forming a functioning government capable of passing legislation was all but impossible. Basically, the two leading parties, CDP and MDS, who needed to agree, held divergent positions on the divisions of powers and the federal structure of the state. The Federal Assembly was further marginalized as a consequence of the resignation of President Havel in July 1992, thus removing a statewide symbol and source of authority. One country with two

⁵⁶ Olsen, "The Sundered State," 106

⁵⁷ Svec, "Czechoslovakia's Velvet Divorce," 380

⁵⁸ Olson, "The Sundered State," 112

⁵⁹ RFE/RL Research Report, 26 June 1992 12-19

strong and independent prime ministers and no functioning unifying institutions was an anomaly.

Move Toward State Dissolution

Renewed federal constitutional negotiations between the leaders of the two parties who held the most seats, Klaus and Meciar, quickly broke down. The issues were predictable. Meciar introduced a proposal for a loose federation that would permit Slovakia to issue its own currency, carry out its own economic reforms, and maintain an independent military. Klaus rejected it.⁶⁰ With the emerging deadlock and a governing crisis unfolding at the federal level there was a shift in the balance of power and authority toward the republics.

The June elections awarded both republics with relatively secure coalitions. As a result of the weakening of authority at the center discussions over the future of the country shifted into the republic arenas. In the Czech Republic, Klaus formed a government and continued his aggressive economic reforms. In Slovakia, Meciar formed a government and moved to modify the character of Slovakia's transition by slowing the pace of economic reform. He blatantly disregarded any directives from the federal government that would hasten the pace of reform. Given Meciar's firm commitment to what Klaus interpreted as 'a defense and economic community with two states recognized in international law,' and Klaus' outright rejection of such a proposal there was no room for compromise.⁶¹

As a result, the distribution of seats in the Federal Assembly after the election were such that both the CDP and the MDS had powerful vetoes with which they could obstruct each others agendas. Any constitutional legislation proposed by the Czechs in the Federal Assembly would have to have the agreement of 45 of the 75 Slovak deputies in the Slovak Chamber of Nations. Since Meciar's party had 33 of these 75 seats, which was more than the two fifths required to block any legislation, they could veto any

⁶⁰ RFE/RL Research Report, 1 January 1993, 84-88.

⁶¹ Wightman, "The Czech and Slovak Republics," 61.

Czech proposals. Similarly, Klaus' party could use its veto to prevent the Slovak parties from joining forces with a Czech opposition in order to form a positive parliamentary majority to pass constitutional amendments.⁶² The Assembly was no longer a viable institution which could enact laws to amend the constitution, nor, ironically, could it adopt legislation legally permitting the formal dissolution of the state.⁶³ Further, it could not even elect a president. When Václav Havel was nominated for a second term Meciar ordered his deputies to withdraw their support. The refusal to re-elect Havel was, by itself, an important step toward state dissolution. The slight to Havel was viewed by the Czechs as a calculated insult. Havel resigned on 17 July 1992, within an hour of the SNC's adoption of the Slovak Republic's Declaration of Sovereignty.⁶⁴ Havel believed the Slovaks were building 'structures' before asking the citizens what they wanted.⁶⁵ With his resignation he left behind a shadow federal government whose parliament was reacting to decisions that were being made at the Republic level.⁶⁶

Czechoslovakia in the summer of 1992 was in a situation where formal institutional power and the actual power of decision-making and policy implementation no longer coincided. While there was still *de jure* a common state of Czechs and Slovaks with functioning federal institutions, this 'state' was being marginalized, incapable of exercising the formal competencies it possessed. The republic National Councils became the *de facto* centers of government. In the volatile conditions of post - communist transition, this irregular situation appeared particularly threatening, and "since reality could not be made to match the institutions, institutions had to be made to match the reality."⁶⁷ The fact that each republic was represented by parties holding two incompatible visions of state-society relations made dissolution of the union a more likely outcome of the struggle to define the federative state.

⁶² Henderson, "Cutting the Gordian Knot," *Coexistence* 31, Vol. 31, No. 4 (December 1994): 317.

⁶³ Olson, "The Sundered State," 115

⁶⁴ *RFE/RL Research Report*, 31 July 1992, 25-29

⁶⁵ *FBIS*, 17 JULY 1992, 9

⁶⁶ *RFE/RL Research Report*, 17 July 1992, 1-8

⁶⁷ Henderson, "Cutting the Gordian Knot," 316

Reformed by Law

As an example of Western democratic decision-making the process, which divided Czechoslovakia, could be called, at best, quasi-parliamentary. Neither Klaus nor Meciar had a clear electoral mandate to split the country. But, both parties presented clear platforms on which they were elected. The democratic mechanisms had produced republican governments with mandates to settle the constitution issue. The electorate voted for leaders who they perceived would best serve their interests -- in a unified state or a non-unified state. The June elections, in effect, were similar to very narrow majorities in a 'referendum.' The victories of the CDP and MDS produced coherent, determined governments that could garner widespread public support, within their respective Republics, for their distinct policy objectives.

Klaus was committed to the continuation of the federation and his rapid economic strategy which had acquired support both domestically and internationally. But, he and his party tended to see issues from a Czech perspective and to be uncompromising in defense of Czech interests.⁶⁸ Meciar was committed to a slower pace of economic reform and a constitutional arrangement which would afford Slovakia greater autonomy. On 17 July, the SNC adopted a 'Declaration of Sovereignty' which declared Slovakia a sovereign state.⁶⁹ 1 September the Council ratified a constitution for Slovakia which would take precedence over any federal constitution. The Czechs interpreted this as a grave step: "By adopting a full constitution, Slovakia has quit the federation, with all the possible consequences."⁷⁰

To avoid what Czech politicians described as 'wild separation' (perhaps international events occurring at the time in Bosnia-Herzegovina factored into their decisions) there was a certain urgency in devolving formal power to the republics. The target date of 31 December 1992 was set for a "controlled transition to two separate

⁶⁸ John Monson, "The Road to Separation: Nationalism in Czechoslovakia," *Contemporary Nationalism in East Central Europe*, Paul Latawski, ed (London: St. Martin's Press, 1995), 80

⁶⁹ RFE/RL Research Report 31 July 1992, 25-29

⁷⁰ RFE/RL Research Report 18 September 1992, 12-15

states.”⁷¹ Both republics discounted the possibility of confederation or a consociational structure to maintain the unified state. In what could be described as a chaotic political situation, the complexity of confederal arrangements did little to recommend them as a transitional solution, and for a consociational structure to prevail a very basic requirement was missing -- the *will*, on the part of the two groups, to resolve intractable differences to avoid state dissolution (see chapter one). The negotiation of this peaceful approach to state disintegration represented essentially an élite-based deal worked out between Mr. Klaus and Mr. Meciar.

In October 1992 the two Republics signed a series of agreements dissolving the federation. Cooperation would still exist between them in the forms of a customs union, a six-month currency union, and common social security policies. The republics also affirmed the freedom of movement of people, and of goods and services between the two states with a common foreign policy, and joint border control. Subsequent talks laid down the conditions for the division of federal assets on a 2 to 1 ratio except for immovable property, most of which was in the Czech Republic.⁷² The dissolution of the state was formally approved by the Federal Assembly on 11 November 1992, to take effect on 1 January 1993.⁷³

The decision to dissolve the federation was made at the Republic level with the Federal Assembly relegated to rubber-stamping the agreements put forth by Klaus and Meciar.⁷⁴ There were no explicit unilateral declarations of independence. The international commitments of predecessor and successor states and the reallocation of state property were given consideration in advance. The emphasis was on accord rather than confrontation. At no time in the Czech-Slovak negotiations was a political point ever enforced by the deployment of armies. In the summer when Meciar wanted to force Klaus' hand he canceled pre-arranged meetings and refused to talk to him.⁷⁵ Acts such

⁷¹ RFE/RL Research Report, 18 September 1992, 12-15.

⁷² At the time of this writing relations between the two constituents are strained and they are two independent entities with only the customs union still in effect.

⁷³ It should be noted that this dissolution was technically illegal. The federal constitution required that a statewide referendum was required for such an act.

⁷⁴ Henderson, "Cutting the Gordian Knot," 314

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, 312

as the Slovak Declaration of Sovereignty and the adoption of the Slovak Constitution in the summer of 1992 may have bordered on coercion, but the creative use of democratic institutions was infinitely better to the the political protagonist than employing other less civilized methods. The rapid international acceptance of the new states was determined to a degree by the fact that they had been created by parliamentary processes familiar to Western democracy.⁷⁶

Chapter Summary

A crucial factor in any explanation of Czechoslovak's disintegration must include the failure of the first generation of post-communist élites-- in power from 1990 to 1992, to cope with three simultaneous tasks essential to a successful transformation: democratization of the political system, the adoption of free-market economic principles, and the establishment of a joint national identity. While a number of important institutional changes occurred during the first two years after the fall of the communist system, Czech and Slovak leaders were unable to agree on a division of powers between the federal and republic levels, on the pace of economic reform, and the degree of independence for the Slovak nation. The break-up was precipitated by an illusion on the part of many Slovaks that they could combine sovereignty and recognition in international law while remaining in a common state with the Czechs, and also a conviction on the part of many Czechs that anything other than a centralized federal system was unworkable, and to their disadvantage.

Since 1918 there had been continued tension over the cohesion of the Czechoslovak state and over the relationship between the Czechs and Slovaks. The collapse of the communist system in 1989, had created an opportunity to renegotiate fundamental assumptions, including the type of political and economic system the state should adopt, and, ultimately, even the boundaries of the state. What the CSFR inherited from the communists federalization of the state appeared to be a sound federal parliamentary system which afforded protection for the minority Slovaks. The Slovak

⁷⁶ *Ibid.* 314

veto power may have been appropriate to the mythical harmonious society of Marxist-Leninist ideology, but it hardly suited the everyday problems of a real functioning democracy. The Slovak deputies wanted extreme decentralization of power to the republics, while the Czechs wanted a strong centralized federal system. Thus, the veto provision enabled each ethnic group to obstruct one another's constitutional proposals. Since the constitution could not legally be changed other than under its existing rules it remained an impediment to consensus-building until the very end of the CSFR.

However, despite the historic enmity between the two nations the dissolution was a negotiated process and 'quasi-parliamentary.' When the Slovaks adopted a 'full' constitution which provided that federal laws were valid only insofar as they did not contradict the constitution of Slovakia the action was interpreted by the Czechs as the end of the federation. A timetable was set for a controlled transition to two separate states. By 30 September the two republics had negotiated treaties covering citizens rights, foreign policy, defense, a customs union, and had agreed on 1 January 1993 as the official end of the CSFR. At no point was there a threat, by either side, to employ the use of armed force.

CHAPTER SIX

CONCLUDING REMARKS

Factors Contributing to Czechoslovakia's Divorce: A Recapitulation

The factors which led to the disintegration of the CSFR are complex. The preceding discussion of the break-up focused on the divergent and incompatible views of the Czechs and Slovaks over what form the newly re-created democratic state should take and the calculation and preferences of the political leaders in their institutional settings. The discussion brought to light the conflict between the two nations. The roots of this conflict pre-dated the communist period, and reflected the impact of a variety of factors -- institutional, historical, economical, and psychological-- which allowed the political leaders, particularly in Slovakia, to mobilize their citizens around ethnic aims.

In the turmoil of the transition period it was clear that the Czechoslovak federal institutions were overwhelmed by their tasks. The political framework dominated, as it continued to be, by institutions and decision-making rules that dated from the communist era and the Prague Spring contributed to the inability of political leaders to resolve the conflict between Czechs and Slovaks without a break-up of the state. The equal representation of Czechs and Slovaks in the Chamber of Nations and the decision-making rules which included double majorities in three voting sections, originally designed to protect the minority Slovaks, proved to be more of a source of irritation and confusion than a means of arriving at shared decision-making. "The federal state was under-developed in its capability but overwhelmed by its responsibilities."¹ Ultimately, as the sub-units increased in stature and power the federal structure and the rules of democratic governance were used to encourage regional separatism rather than to build country-wide unity.

¹ Olson, "The Sundered State" 119

By the June 1992 elections it was clear that the patience required to settle fundamental disputes by a process of political compromise and debate had worn thin on both sides of the ethnic divide. Although most people continued to support the maintenance of a common state, sentiment in favor of separation grew dramatically in the Czech Republic in reaction to the victory of Mecliar and the MDS, and also to the Slovak parliament's 'Declaration of Sovereignty' less than one month later. Many Slovaks supported the continuation of a common state but, a large majority thought that Slovak interests were not served by the federation, which they perceived benefited the Czechs disproportionately. In Slovakia, the desire for a strong leader to resolve the country's problems, coupled with distrust of Czech motives, fear of the future, and negative news of the impact of the shift to the market economy gave added force to what was undoubtedly seen by certain Slovaks as a necessary step to allow Slovakia to determine its own future.²

The long history of Czech-Slovak disagreement over national questions had undoubtedly weakened mutual trust and undermined emotional commitment to the 'Czechoslovak' idea-- the concept that the Czechs and Slovaks, together, formed one nation. At issue was the national sense of the two founding peoples. The Slovaks made a distinction between a 'Czechoslovak state' to which a majority of them were prepared to give their allegiance as citizens and a 'Czechoslovak nationality' which they overwhelmingly rejected. Conversely, the Czechs defined the Slovaks as a linguistic and a cultural-historical part of the united 'Czechoslovak nation.'

The most prominent issues in the 1992 elections were joint statehood and the pace of economic reform. If economic integration was viewed as the key to overcoming political and social hurdles in the transition period, then the policies emanating from Prague only served to exacerbate national tensions.³ The insecurities created by the need to deal with rapid change in almost all areas of life and the economic hardships created by the shift to the market-based economic system also contributed to the ability

² Wolchik, Sharon. "The Repluralization of Politics in Czechoslovakia." *Communist and Post-Communist Studies* Vol. 26, No. 4 (December 1993) 430. Also Sharon Wolchik *Czechoslovakia in Transition: Politics, Economics and Society* (New York, Pinter Publishers, 1991)

of political leaders, specifically Slovak leaders, to mobilize their constituents around ethnic issues.⁴ As Klaus' rapid economic reforms impacted adversely on the Slovaks the linkage of nationalism and economics became apparent. This linkage was the focus of the 1992 electoral campaign. Meciar gained the political profile that won him the elections by exploiting the mixture of national and economic grievances latent in the Slovak population. In the CSFR it was the differing economic conceptions of the Czech and Slovak governments that ultimately doomed any kind of federation or confederation involving monetary union.⁵ Economic problems and conflicting leadership was at the heart of Czechoslovakia's disintegration. Mr. Meciar exploited ethnicity in Slovakia as a means to obtain and consolidate power, but the fundamental issue that destroyed the bi-national state was not inter-ethnic relations.

If the Czech unwillingness to contemplate anything weaker than a federal system was one obstacle to agreement, another was the apparent belief among many Slovak politicians that they could combine sovereignty and Slovakia's recognition in international law with membership of a 'common state' with the Czechs. The Slovaks gambled that the Czechs were so psychologically attached to the existing state that they would concede to almost any Slovak demands to ensure its survival.⁶ Meciar's image as a defender of Slovak interests and his party's commitment, first to a confederation and then to a 'looser association' between the two republics, as well as to more protectionist economic policies, appealed to Slovak public which wanted to see a greater devolution of power to Bratislava, and which feared the consequences of marketization and privatization. In sum the dissolution of Czechoslovakia was, in part, the result of a confrontation between divergent and incompatible views about what was politically possible to attain in the reorganization of the Federative Republic.⁷

Why a Peaceful Dissolution?

³ George Schöpflin, "The New Democracies in Central Europe," *International Affairs* 67 (March 1991): 235

⁴ Wolchik, "The Repluralization," 429

⁵ Henderson, "Cutting the Gordian Knot,"

⁶ Wightman, "The Czech and Slovak Republics," 57

⁷ *Ibid.*, 61.

Robert Younge has provided thirteen empirical generalizations regarding the process of peaceful secession in a multi-national state: 1) secession follows protracted constitution and political disputes, 2) the secessor state declares its intent to withdraw, 3) the predecessor state accepts the principle of secession and negotiations follow, 4) the secession is a galvanizing event, 5) the ideology broadens and strengthens on each side-- there is a premium on solidarity, 6) the negotiations involve few participants, 7) the separation is accomplished quickly, 8) foreign powers play an important role, 9) the settlement involves a relatively short list of items to be negotiated, 10) the secession is accomplished constitutionally, 11) there are no other substantial constitutional changes in either state, 12) policies in the two states soon begin to diverge, and finally, 13) the secession is irrevocable.⁸

Most of Younge's generalizations appear to be confirmed in the case of Czechoslovakia. The separation of the CSFR was preceded by a long and frustrating constitutional negotiation process. That process was complicated by regionally articulated conflict concerning the pace of economic reform and the federal structure the post-communist state should adopt. After the contradictory results of the June 1992 elections, and the break-down of negotiations, the secession was decided by talks which included very few participants. The initial meeting occurred between Klaus and Meciar with five party members on each side in July 1992.⁹ The process was fast. By October all the post-secession arrangements had been decided. New republican constitutions were adopted and the date was set to dissolve the federal state. The settlement involved only thirty-one separate treaties agreed to on a wide range of issues.¹⁰ The EU, as the foreign power, was reluctant to extend recognition to the two new states unless the level of economic integration between them met the prevailing standard in the community itself. This resulted in a customs union agreement.

The separation was effected constitutionally. Although some brinkmanship was necessary to convince the Federal Assembly to pass an amendment dissolving the

⁸ Younge, *The Secession of Québec*, Chapter 10

⁹ *Ibid.*, 165

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 166

federation. There was a coalition caretaker government divided mainly along republic-centric lines which essentially rubber-stamped agreements reached behind closed doors. Each republic adopted its own constitution. The Slovaks founded their state on the principle of national citizenship rather than declaring it a civil society; the Czechs retained much of the Prague Spring 1968 Constitution, but did change certain articles to avoid the deadlock they had experienced in the federative state and also increased executive power relative to the legislature, something Havel had asked for earlier. During the months of negotiations most citizens, sensing the inevitability of partition, galvanized behind their respective leaders. There were demonstrations, strikes, boycotts and mass petitions in both republics. This polarization resulted in an outpouring of nationalist celebration, and substantial ill-feeling between the two sub-units. Both state's policies after dissolution soon diverged on matters of foreign policy, trade flows, and assets. Border patrol crossings were also installed. Slovakia issued its own currency. The monetary union failed, although, the customs union remained in tact. It has been observed that "whenever secession has occurred, it has inevitably been accompanied by sharp political controversies which are not easily forgotten. . . . The resentments . . . have tended to persist and to discourage the subsequent creation of a looser form of association between the territories concerned."¹¹ In the CSFR, where mutual resentments pre-dated the communist period, it quickly appeared that reunification between the two republics would not be a viable option in the future.

Most of these comparative generalizations regarding secession appear to hold true for the dissolution of the Czechoslovakia. However, there are some notable exceptions: no broad coalitions were formed in either state to confront the national crises and there was no explicit declaration by either side of its intent to fully secede (only to confederate with the other unit on the basis of two sovereign regions). Further, though external forces were involved, specifically the EU, their role did not threaten the integrity of the state and it was non-interventionist. Young's generalizations outline the

¹¹ Ronald L. Watts, "The Survival of Disintegration of Federations," *One Country of Two?* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's Press, 1971), 51

factors involved in peaceful secessions, but the issue of why a particular state disintegrates must be examined on a case by case basis.

The Czech/Slovak secession includes some noble features. First the absence of a fervent unified 'Czechoslovak' national patriotism had at least one positive consequence; no group in the state felt intensely enough about its continuance to raise violent objection to its demise.¹² Also the distribution of ethnic groups enhanced the peaceful character of the break-up. Only about 1 percent of the population of the Slovakia was Czech, and only 4 percent of the Czech Republic's population was Slovak.¹³ Neither minority was seen as a threat to the majority in the other republic. This limited intermix had occurred within the communist period and was therefore very recent. "There was no real sense of ancestral belonging or of being ripped away from the motherland, no ancient territorial rights."¹⁴ These 'displaced' Czechs and Slovaks became a minor item on the agenda for negotiating the dissolution of the state.

There was also a very real concern with maintaining stability. Once negotiations for a joint state had clearly failed in the summer of 1992, the pressure mounted for a peaceful, negotiated, and timely separation. It was important to the Czech and Slovak élites that their disintegration would not mirror the events which were occurring at that time in Yugoslavia. In fact the Balkan pattern was not a likely scenario, given the pacifist traditions of Czech political culture.¹⁵ Moreover, failure to agree on separation would have created gridlock, and increased the risk of a chaotic disintegration, thereby raising alarm in the international community. Further, post-cold war Europe was an environment of opportunity rather than threat. The desire, on the part of most leaders in Czechoslovakia, for rapid integration with Europe militated against a disruptive and destructive state break-up. The EU's input was not to compel concessions on the part of the Czechs and Slovaks but, rather to provide set economic guidelines, and encouragement for a non-confrontational state dissolution.

¹² Leff, *The Czechs and the Slovaks*, 139

¹³ *Ibid.*, 141

¹⁴ *Supra*

¹⁵ Golan, "National Traditions "

Of course, to complete the answer to the question why the state disintegrated requires an understanding of the long history of distrust and reciprocal mutual incomprehensions between the two nations that factored into the two year misunderstanding between the Czechs and Slovaks, a factor that was very evident during the two year negotiation process. Slovak distrust of Czech motives can be traced back to the inception of the state in 1918. Czech attitude toward Slovak 'identity politics' was highly negative. To the Czechs Slovak nationalist aspirations were "fueled by elite demagoguery that compromised the more important goals of political and economic consolidation"¹⁶ to the initial state-building process and the current rebuilding phase. During the course of negotiations this distrust was magnified as each republic sought to advance their own vision of the federation. The two divergent conceptions of the state renewed historical grievances, generated heated exchanges, and undermined the resolution of the constitutional issue. From the Czech perspective a strong argument could be made that the Slovaks had "won" concessions at critical junctures in the state's history (eg. autonomy in post-1938, federal provisions 1968) but, the Czechs were not prepared to concede to Slovak demands in 1992. The combination of the renewal of old injustices, mistrust, and even what was seen by the Czech delegation as betrayal by the Nazi sponsored Slovak puppet state, combined with divergent concepts over economic reform precluded a resolution of the constitutional issue. But, if there is any virtue or genius that can be perceived in Czechoslovakia's disintegration it may be that the country divided in a peaceful rather than a violent manner.

Comparative Insights on Integration

Most analysts have recognized that integration is a process rather than a condition, the process of integration does not remain constant, moreover, it is bi-directional; it is a process which may involve a putting together, pulling apart, merging

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 142

and dissolving. Thus, change is intrinsic to the concept; the case study of the disintegration of the former state of Czechoslovakia presented in this thesis reinforces this conceptual realization. The history of Czechoslovakia is almost a museum for the major ideological themes of the twentieth century: liberalism, fascism and socialism. The state is also a study in the various political organizational options: unitary state, federal union, parliamentary democracy and single-party rule. What is instructive to students of integration is that all of these orientations failed to depoliticize the centrifugal forces of Slovak nationalism. Whenever there was a crisis or at moments of political change -- 1918 the founding of the republic, 1938 the Munich Agreement, 1948 the communist seizure of power, 1968 the Prague Spring -- the 'Slovak question' would resurface. Each of the hastily cobbled together agreements, signed by the constituent units at these junctures, was most notable for its ambiguity on any long-term vision for a unified state.

The dissolution of the former state of Czechoslovakia ended a seventy-four year experiment to satisfy the nationalist aspirations of the Czech and Slovak peoples in a common state. The 'divorce' was as 'velvet' as the 'revolution;' the emphasis was on accord rather than confrontation. It was parliamentary and peaceful. From the states inception in 1918, the two major ethnic groups, the Czechs and the Slovaks, had divergent political and economic interests and competing visions of their respective roles. Czechs and Slovaks were pitted against one another in a zero-sum game, competing for economic power and political legitimacy; the Czech's fortunes rose at the expense of the Slovaks and the Slovak fortunes rose at the expense of the Czechs. This pattern was magnified in the post-Communist years when the Communist Party's large formal structures crumbled and Marxist-Leninism ideology was openly discredited. Once freed to explore their own destinies the inherent divisions between these two nationalities resurfaced. As nationalist forces came to predominate in Slovakia, Czech politics grew more secular and progressively concerned with economic issues. From the Czech perspective economic reforms would return them to the entrepreneurial age of the inter-war First Republic. The Slovaks whose prosperous economic days corresponded more

directly with the communist period could not look back to traditions that might sustain a free-market.

Each school of thought relating to the integrative processes in multi-national states (see chapter one), attempts to define what it is which holds a society and a political system together or, conversely, what does not serve that goal. Concerned with the deleterious effects of nationalism some scholars posited the 'modernization approach' to political integration and still others embraced the 'federal solution.' Modernization, that is increased communication, education, and economic prosperity, it was argued would be the vehicle for a conversion to a single national group consciousness. In both of the two most enduring régimes we have examined -- Czechoslovakia's inter-war period and the socialist state after 1948 -- the diagnosis and treatment of the 'Slovak question' was founded on a single common assumption: socioeconomic development would serve to homogenize Czechoslovak society and exert a stabilizing influence on Czechoslovak politics. Reality proved rather different. In fact, modernization brought about unexpected consequences which impeded political integration, namely, it produced a skilled and sophisticated Slovak opposition. The 'federal solution,' instituted in 1968 by an amendment to the 1948 Constitution, was a concession to Slovak demands for increased autonomy in the unitary state. Federalism offered an alternative means of political organization and mode of conflict resolution through constitutional arrangements. By allowing a fuller sense of participation federalization was intended to yield greater levels of legitimacy and political harmony between the two nations. Not the least of the considerations motivating Czech acquiescence to federalization was the hope that Slovakia's aspirations for greater autonomy would be satisfied. That belief did not materialize.

A federal union implies that those who join will be expected to develop some common nationality in addition to their distinct nationalities and divide their loyalties between the two. The problem with this hopeful view of federalism's functions is that the balance of legitimacy is profoundly altered when the federation is a bi-national union, that is, two nationalities of opposing forces are united in the federation. This

was the case in Czechoslovakia. There was no possibility of coalition alignment, as might take place in a multi-national federation, which could have served to mitigate confrontation. This 'us versus them' framework of controversy meant that confrontations over policies were sharply delineated; policy victories and defeats all occurred with respect to a single and obvious rival. Slovak gains came clearly and unavoidably at Czech expense, and vice versa. Such an environment was not conducive to the legitimization of decision-making, no matter what procedural/structural arrangements were developed.

This became evident when the collapse of the communist system created an opportunity to re-negotiate fundamental assumptions, such as the type of political and economic system the state should adopt. Communism's demise re-opened the question of the adequacy of the federal bargain. General constitutional change tends to provide "an auspicious setting from which to consider new territorial arrangements to cope with ethnic problems."¹⁷ In the case of Czechoslovakia the change was to greater democracy. But, in the arena of competitive elections the unresolved identity issue, the 'Slovak Question,' entered into the public's agenda. Parties were elected whose divergent views precluded agreement on constitutional issues of the division of powers between the two republics and the center. The constitutional structure and its rules of governance, inherited from the communist period, were used to encourage regional separatism rather than build country-wide unity. The minority veto provisions, the segmented Czech and Slovak party system, and the extra-large majorities were an impediment to the settlement of critical decisions on all constitutional issues. Further, the historically conditioned atmosphere of mutual distrust, and the differential impact of economic reforms provided ample opportunity for both the Czechs and Slovaks to confound chances of settlement and accommodation in a unified state.

Unable to agree on an appropriate structure in a unified state, the two sides did reach agreement to dissolve the federation. Whether the resultant 'velvet divorce' was a misfortune or a belated recognition of systemic differing Czech-Slovak interests it may be

¹⁷ Donald Horowitz, *Ethnic Groups in Conflict*, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1985), 563

valid to observe that the conditions after 1989 inevitably contributed to political polarization between the two republics. In the chaotic political turmoil of the transition period the first generation of post-communist élites, in power from 1990 to 1992, failed to cope with the three simultaneous tasks essential to a successful transformation: reform of the political system to a functioning democracy, the adoption of free-market economic principles and the establishment of a new joint national identity. Both economic and political instabilities impacted adversely on the third component of these simultaneous tasks -- the national identity problem. Given the fact that a successful resolution of the national identity question had evaded the state from its inception, condemnation of this 'failure,' on the part of these post-communist élites, should not be too harsh.

The case study of the peaceful disintegration of the former state of Czechoslovakia has introduced some provocative themes which subsequent students of political life may find worthy of future study. Not the least of which is the current rise of nationalism and its principle of self-determination-- the matching of a 'people' and a 'state.' In broad terms nationalism, arising from heightened ethnic consciousness, has been increasing. State borders, as presently delineated, are being challenged. No particular classification of multi-ethnic state has been immune to the impact of ethnicity: authoritarian and democratic; federative and unitary; Asia, North America, Western and Central Europe, are being affected. Equally important ethnicity is impacting on states at all levels of modernity. What does this tell us?

As the case study of Czechoslovakia has revealed nationalism's durability and self-evident success, emanating eventually in state collapse, suggests that ethnic consciousness is very strongly rooted in the thoughts and behavior of peoples or at least can be conjured up to complicate political life when leaders work to inflame such sentiments. Once national identity is conceded to be a long-lived and powerful source of political behavior, many of the assumptions of the scholarly literature on nationalism and also solutions to managing inter-group hostility prove inadequate and require

rethinking. First and perhaps most important is that more concentration should be devoted to why states disintegrate rather than how to cobble states together.

Studying the process of disintegration must consider that at times it may become necessary to alter the boundaries of an existing multi-national state. This would suggest that the current international prejudice against adjusting national state boundaries should no longer constrain scholarly thought on the realities of sub-unit secession. The magnitude of ethnic violence and cultural turbulence has continued to grow more costly each year. As these scenarios of disintegration develop in culturally divided societies, the question then becomes -- how can secession best be achieved by peaceful, negotiated means, as occurred in the case of the Czech and Slovak Federative Republic? That issue and other related themes offer a challenge to social science theorizing, a process which may benefit from closer examination of the approaches discussed in this thesis.

EPILOGUE

THE STATE OF THE STATES

Looking West - The Czech Republic

The two successor republics have moved in distinctly different political and economic directions.¹ The Czech Republic is no longer burdened with concerns over the integrity of the Czechoslovak state and the threat of Slovak secession. The broad and comprehensive policy agenda which won the Christian Democratic Party and its leader Václav Klaus the 1994 election has been successful in its central aim of achieving rapid economic change to free-market principles. Politically the state is regarded, by most observers, as the most stable of the former East European communist countries.²

A key element to Klaus' success had been his ability to engage virtually every Czech household in what he describes as the "systemic change from communism to a nice society and market economy."³ But, even in the Czech Republic there are some problems of transition, for example the Czech Republic's political institutions are still insecurely linked to a popular base. Despite the familiar landmarks of the political landscape -- parties, elections, legislatures, and executive agencies -- the parliamentary system, naturally, does not operate in quite the same way as in the West. This maybe a situation that can be overcome in time as the system gradually matures. In response to criticism that the government is far more paternalistic and interventionist than their free-market stance would have the world believe, Klaus told *The Economist* that his "policies are designed to maintain the social peace and basic political consensus in the country."⁴

¹ For a current detailed analysis of the economic statistics of each government, the economic costs of the break-up and the assumption of external and domestic debt see Jir Krovak "The Czech Republic," *Parliaments in Transition: The New Politics in the former USSR and Eastern Europe*, Thomas F. Remington, ed. (Boulder: Westview Press, 1995), 185-222.

² *Economist*, 4 November 1995 54.

³ *Economist*, 6 August 1994 43

⁴ *Economist*, 6 August 1994 43

The legacy of an entrepreneurial spirit, technological excellence, and historical industrial strength of the Czech Lands in the inter-war period has contributed to international confidence in the Czech régime. This resulted in an inflow of direct foreign investment and funding from the United States and European Union. Klaus' continued commitment to rapid economic transformation has also been rewarded by international investment organizations. Both the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank have lent funds to finance the transition period.

The Czech Republic's goal of 'returning to Europe' may become a reality by the year 2000. Formal negotiations for admittance to the EU will commence after the inter-governmental conference on the future of that organization has convened in 1998. The June 1997 NATO summit in Madrid extended an invitation to the Czech Republic, Poland, and Hungary to join the security organization.⁵ Joining both NATO and the EU, would assure the Czech Republic of an enhanced international image. It is not surprising that there is an atmosphere of success in the Republic. This atmosphere has been reinforced by the confidence of the world monetary system, the advent of direct foreign investment and the pending international recognition in two prestigious international organizations.

Since 1992 when free-market principles were introduced: the economy has grown at an annual rate of 5 percent; inflation has fallen to 1 percent; the unemployment rate is a stable 3 percent; the budget is in a surplus and 70 percent of the economy is in private hands.⁶ But, for all these achievements Prime Minister Klaus and his government are not without critics. Corruption, while a problem even in established democracies, has also had a considerable impact on the newly emerging Republic. Klaus' reluctance to increase social spending and refusal to de-centralize power to local authorities has resulted in an organized opposition. In the campaign leading up to the 1996 elections Milos Zeman, the leader of the Social Democratic Party was Klaus' major rival. Zeman had built his support by appealing to voters who, despite having jobs and shares in privatized firms, felt disadvantaged. The Christian Democratic Union led by

⁵ *The Vancouver Sun*, 17 June 1995 A8

Josef Lux won support by stressing the need for a "social market rather than a capitalist one."⁷

Electoral results showed Klaus' Civic Democratic Party with 29.61 percent of the vote while the leftist Social Democrats took 26.44 percent.⁸ Though the loss of voter support was marginal the leakage was sufficient to cost the government its previous majority. To govern Klaus had to accommodate, for the first time since 1992, the views of both the Social Democrats and the Christian Democratic Union. Both these parties have advocated a more 'equitable' society. Though Zeman favors a more socially oriented market economy he also is in favor of continued privatization. In this instance Zeman and Klaus agree. This has resulted in a power sharing coalition between a slightly right-wing party and a slightly left-wing party. As of the summer of 1997 the Czech Republic continues to enjoy a stable political atmosphere, economic prosperity, and international goodwill.

Looking East -The Republic of Slovakia

The situation in Slovakia near the end of 1997 appears less favorable than in the Czech Republic.⁹ The lasting influence of nationalism and the appeal to populism, manifested in one man, Vladimir Meciar, has engendered concerns about the country's internal and international future. Concern over Slovakia's non-democratic practices and the reluctance of Meciar's régime to implement rapid economic reform have alarmed the West. Foreign Minister Milan Knazko has stated that Slovakia considers itself to be an "East-West bridge."¹⁰ But, Meciar's reversal of radical market reform, his resumption of arms shipments to foreign clients, and Bratislava's difficult relations with Hungary all have led to Slovakia's growing isolation from the international community.

⁷ *Economist*, 4 November 1995 54 and 8 June 1996 53

⁸ *Economist*, 4 November 1995 54

⁹ *Reuters*, 3 June 1996 15

⁹ Jim Kabele, "Czechoslovakia." *Parliaments in Transition: The New Politics in the former USSR and Eastern Europe*, Thomas F Remington ed (Boulder Westview Press, 1995). 82

¹⁰ *FBIS-EEU-93-013*, January 3 1993

During 1997, political tensions continue to undermine democratic consolidation. There appears to be a radical disconnection between the political groups prepared to govern and those capable of gaining popular support. Between independence in 1993 and the spring of 1995, Slovakia had three coalition governments, each beleaguered and controversial. Meciar's third reincarnation as prime minister since the 'Velvet Revolution' in 1989 highlighted a pattern of governmental crisis. In March 1994 concerns over the direction Meciar's government was taking the country prompted President Michal Kovac to address parliament with a special state of the nation speech. The speech galvanized the resolve of opposition parties to remove Meciar from the premiership for the second time in four years. A coalition interim government was formed under the stewardship of Prime Minister Jozef Moravcik. Immediately economic policy took a move to the right, as a second round of privatization was enacted: Moravcik stated "if we do not succeed, the world will write us off."¹¹

The Economist reported approvingly that the coalition government formed in 1994 was "beginning to get the economy right," and that the IMF, which had severed relations with Meciar in the Spring of 1993, agreed, in July to extend \$263 million in new credits.¹² The EU and other industrialized countries promised an equal amount of funds for Slovakia, and potential foreign investors also began to look favorably at the Republic. The anti-Meciar coalition also sought to enlist the sympathies of the 560,000 strong Hungarian minority, and the Slovak Assembly passed legislation to safeguard Hungarian language rights. In return, the country's fourteen Hungarian deputies joined Moravcik's coalition. However, Meciar's opposition still had to face the fact that the Movement for a Democratic Slovakia remained the most popular party in the county. For example, Meciar's populist, anti-reform rhetoric appealed to Slovakia's 15 percent unemployed and also peasants, and the elderly.¹³ It was this support that won Meciar the 1994 elections.

¹¹ *Economist*, 10 September 1994 83

¹² *Economist*, 13 August 1994 47

¹³ *Economist*, 13 August 1994

While no party in the election gained an outright majority, Meciar and his MDS took 35 percent of the vote and won 61 of the 150 seat parliament. Although unable to form a formal coalition government until more than two months later, Meciar was able to form a 'voting pact' with the arch-nationalist Slovak National Party and the left-wing Association of Slovak Workers giving him a majority with 83 votes.¹⁴ Meciar's 'voting pact' passed legislation that had distinctly undemocratic aspects to it: 1) the attorney-general was fired 2) the board of National Property Fund (which supervised privatization) was dismissed 3) all parliamentary committees were placed under the chairmanship of members of the voting pact 4) radio and television were brought under MDS control 5) sales of state-owned companies, approved by the former Moravcik government, were blocked 6) no-confidence votes were passed against members of the caretaker government, and the state intelligence service was placed in the hands of Meciar's former secretary, Ivan Lexa.¹⁵ Meanwhile, the Moravcik's government remained in office, but not in power. Meciar and the opposition saw their opponents not merely as political rivals but as threats to Slovakia itself.¹⁶ Meanwhile, Moravchik fears Meciar represented a latent authoritarian agenda; Meciar regarded the Moravchik-lead opposition as wholly illegitimate. This pattern aroused increasing concern in the West.

Internationally the Slovaks have become very poorly positioned. In December 1995 the European Parliament threatened to suspend EU assistance to Slovakia and expressed 'grave concern' at the adopted policies which 'show insufficient respect for democracy, human and minority rights, and the rule of law.'¹⁷ As a result of these concerns the Republic was the subject of three diplomatic notes; two from the EU and one from the United States. All of these notes expressed concern with Meciar's rather odd interpretation of democracy. Although Meciar's rhetoric continued to suggest that he was not against joining Western institutions and alliances, the government's

¹⁴ This interim between the Slovak elections and the official formation of a new government in late December was lengthy, but not that unusual in the unstable post-communist political environment of the region. Parties are new and have no established patterns of cooperation with one another to facilitate the process of government formation. Leff, *"The Czechs and Slovaks,"* 153

¹⁵ *Economist*, 12 November 1994 70

¹⁶ Leff, *"The Czechs and the Slovaks,"* Chapter Five

¹⁷ FBIS, 22 December 1995

emphasis on pan-Europeanism is far less genuine than that of the Czech Republic.¹⁸ In its bid to join NATO Slovakia was 'not even in the hunt.' Slovakia's status appeared to be on a par with Bulgaria, Macedonia, and Albania when it came to meeting NATO's requirements for membership.¹⁹ A regional pact known as the Visegrad Four -- the Czech and Slovak Republics, Hungary, and Poland -- was pledged to total integration into the European political, economic, security and legislative structures. When the pact was signed the Czechs and Slovaks were joined in one country, and the pact was originally called the Visegrad Three. The members have now reverted to 'three,' in effect excluding the Slovaks.²⁰ As a result of Slovakia's strained European connections its leaders are looking eastward to Russia. Following his re-election in 1994, Meciar and his ministers have signed 70 governmental agreements with the Boris Yeltsin administration.²¹

In order to improve economic conditions in the country without instituting radical market reform the Meciar government has also increased its weapons production for export, particularly to middle-east countries. As 1997 draws to a close Slovakia still has not come to terms with many of the major issues that have troubled other post-communist regimes. Until the régime in Bratislava does so, it seems likely to be isolated from the center of the emerging new Europe.

Future Prospects of the Two Republics

The dividing line of the new Europe has now been set with the Czech Republic's invitation to join NATO.²² The greater stability and economic progress of the Republic has been rewarded by the international community. In terms of instituting and practicing democracy it is clear that the Czech Republic has moved far in this direction and the Republic of Slovakia, under Meciar's stewardship, has not yet faced up to the difficult tasks of constructing a democracy. In 1997 there remains grave concerns over

¹⁸ Andrew A. Michta, *The Government and Politics of Post-Communist Europe* (Connecticut: Praeger, 1994), 48.

¹⁹ *Economist*, 7 June 1997 53

²⁰ *FBIS*, 9 March 1996.

²¹ *Economist*, 9 March 1995 55-56

Meciar's interpretation of democratic principles.²³ Economically, the Czechs have consistently moved toward greater privatization and free-market principles. In contrast the Slovaks, unwilling to suffer the pains of economic reform, have elected governments that advocate a slower approach to economic reform and more state intervention into the economy. Although Václav Klaus continues to enjoy striking popularity his tendency to maintain power at the center, in Prague, has generated serious regional concerns in Bohemia and Moravia. Meanwhile, Slovakia has the potential for serious ethnic unrest. Meciar's policies toward the Magyar population which is concentrated close to the Hungarian border continues to be a source of political volatility, particularly on the sensitive minority language rights and education. Until Slovakia resolves these and other outstanding issues the country's transition to democracy will remain rather problematic.

²² *Vancouver Sun*, 9 July 1997, A8

²³ Mary Ann Tétreault and Robin L. Teske, "The Struggle of Democracy in the Slovak Republic," *Current History*, Vol. 96, #608 (March 1997) 135-140

APPENDIX I

Governing Coalitions in the First Republic

Coalition Formation Date	Participating parties							
	ND	A	NS	SD	CZPP	ST	GP	HSLŠ
September 1918	x	x	x	x	x			
July 1919		x	x	x*				
May 1920		x		x*				
September 1920		Nonparty expert government						
September 1921	x	x*	x	x	x			
October 1922	x	x*	x	x	x			
December 1925	x	x*	x	x	x	x		
March 1926		Nonparty expert government						
October 1926		x*	x		x	x	x	x
February 1929	x	x*	x		x	x	x	x
December 1929	x	x*	x	x	x	x	x	
October 1932	x	x*	x	x	x		x	
February 1934		x*	x	x	x		x	
June 1935		x*	x	x	x	x	x	
November 1935		x*	x	x	x	x	x	

Note: In the above table, "X" designates participation in the governing coalition. An asterisk (*) signifies the party that held the prime ministership. Code initials for the parties translate as follows: ND, National Democrats, A, Agrarians, NS, National Socialists, SD, Social Democrats, CZPP, Czechoslovak Populist Party, ST, Small Traders, GP, German parties (especially the German Social Democrats and the German Agrarians), HSLŠ, Hlinka Slovak Populist party. Out of the fifty parties that contested First Republic elections, these eight groupings are the only ones who held cabinet portfolios, although others adopted a formal stance supportive of the government. The last cabinet (November 1935) endured until Munich, when it was succeeded by a series of nonparty expert governments until the Protectorate was proclaimed in March 1939.

APPENDIX II

*Elections to the Federal Assembly of the Czech and Slovak Federative Republic and to the
Czech and Slovak National Councils (percentage share of the vote) June 1990.*

	Federal Assembly		Czech/ Slovak National Council
	House of the People	House of the Nations	
<i>Czech Republic</i>			
Civic Forum	53.1	50.0	49.5
Communist Party of Czechoslovakia	13.5	13.8	13.3
Christian and Democratic Union	8.7	8.7	8.4
Movement for Self-governing Democracy-Society for Moravia and Silesia	7.9	9.1	10.0
<i>Slovak Republic</i>			
Public Against Violence	32.5	37.3	29.3
Christian Democratic Movement	19.0	16.7	19.2
Communist Party of Czechoslovakia	13.8	13.4	13.3
Slovak National Party	11.0	11.4	13.9
Coexistence and Hungarian Christian Democratic Movement	8.6	8.5	8.7
Democratic Party	(4.4)	(3.7)	4.4
Green Party	(3.2)	(2.6)	3.5

APPENDIX III

Elections to the Federal Assembly of the Czech and Slovak Federative Republic, 5-6 June

1992

	House of the People (150 seats)		House of the Nations (150 seats)	
	Votes (%)	Seats	Votes (%)	Seats
<i>Czech Republic</i>				
Civic Democratic Party and Christian Democratic Party	33.9	48	33.4	37
Left Bloc	14.3	19	14.5	15
Czechoslovak Social Democracy	7.7	10	6.8	6
Association for the Republic- Republican Party of Czechoslovakia	6.5	8	6.4	6
Christian Democratic Union- Czechoslovak People's Party	6.0	7	6.1	6
Liberal Social Union	5.8	7	6.1	5
Other parties	25.8	0	26.7	0
Total	100.0	99	100.0	75
<i>Slovak Republic</i>				
Movement for a Democratic Slovakia	33.5	24	33.9	33
Party of the Democratic Left	14.4	10	14.0	13
Slovak National Party	9.4	6	9.4	9
Christian Democratic Movement	9.0	6	8.8	8
Hungarian Christian Democratic Movement and Coexistence	7.5	5	7.4	7
Social Democratic Party in Slovakia	4.9	0	6.1	5
Other parties	21.3	0	20.4	0
Total	100.0	51	100.0	75

Wightman, "The Part System," 70. Also see Leff, "The Czechs and the Slovaks," 98 and Olson, "The Sundered State," 113-114 for additional statistics.

APPENDIX IV

Elections to the Czech and Slovak National Councils, 5-6 June 1992

Czech National Council	Votes (%)	Seats
Civic Democratic Party and Christian Democratic Party	29.7	76
Left Bloc	14.1	35
Czechoslovak Social Democracy	6.5	16
Liberal Social Union	6.5	16
Christian Democratic Union- Czechoslovak People's Party	6.3	15
Association for the Republic- Republican Party of Czechoslovakia	6.0	14
Civic Democratic Alliance	6.0	14
Movement for Self-governing Democracy- Society for Moravia and Silesia	5.9	14
Other parties	19.0	0
Total	100.0	200
Slovak National Council	Votes (%)	Seats
Movement for a Democratic Slovakia	37.3	74
Party of the Democratic Left	14.7	29
Christian Democratic Movement	8.9	18
Slovak National Party	7.9	15
Hungarian Christian Democratic Movement and Coexistence	7.4	14
Other parties	23.8	0
Total	100.0	150

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