

# **The Partition of Czechoslovakia**

Abigail Jane Innes

(Ph.D. Thesis)

London School of Economics and Political Science

UMI Number: U105555

All rights reserved

INFORMATION TO ALL USERS

The quality of this reproduction is dependent upon the quality of the copy submitted.

In the unlikely event that the author did not send a complete manuscript and there are missing pages, these will be noted. Also, if material had to be removed, a note will indicate the deletion.



UMI U105555

Published by ProQuest LLC 2014. Copyright in the Dissertation held by the Author.  
Microform Edition © ProQuest LLC.

All rights reserved. This work is protected against  
unauthorized copying under Title 17, United States Code.



ProQuest LLC  
789 East Eisenhower Parkway  
P.O. Box 1346  
Ann Arbor, MI 48106-1346

643806



7480

F

THESES

## **Thesis abstract**

The subject is the post-communist state, examined through an analysis of the break-up of Czechoslovakia. The thesis argues that the separation was not merely a symptom of the transition, of the multiple stresses afflicting the state, but that it was manufactured by the Czech right as a technocratic partition and sold to the Czech electorate as the cost of continuing reform. The thesis considers the Czech right's definition of a 'functioning federation', its basic insensibility to Slovak national grievances, its roots in neo-liberal conceptions of economic reform, and the impact of this definition in blocking constitutional negotiations. The research charts how Slovak party politics developed in response to this dominating Czech vision of the future state. Persistent, broad-based public opposition to separation is found to have been deflected and neutralised by the under-developed nature of party competition, by the profound weakness of the federal parliament and by the absence of constitutional norms.

The thesis opens with an introductory history. Chapter two provides a scene-setting account of the last six months of the Czechoslovak federation, the 'endgame' during which the separation was arranged and completed. The third chapter maps out six competing explanations for the split, to be tested in subsequent chapters. Chapter four considers the merits of a nationalist conflict analysis, and concludes that this theoretical emphasis tends to over-determine the separation, overplaying as it must the slim evidence of assertive nationalism in either republic. Chapter five argues that identifiably transitional imbalances in the party system prohibited the clear mediation of Czech Slovak relations. Chapter six examines the character of the constitutional deadlock up until June 1992. The penultimate chapter addresses economic aspects of the Czech Slovak conflict after 1989. The final chapter concludes.

## **Table of Contents**

Thesis Abstract	2
List of Tables	4
Acknowledgements	5
<b>1 The Sources of Discontent</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>2 Ends Justify Means - Arranging the Czechoslovak Separation</b>	<b>45</b>
<b>3 Competing and Complementary Explanations of the Partition</b>	<b>87</b>
<b>4 The Weakness of Nationalism in the 1992 Elections</b>	<b>120</b>
<b>5 The Impact of Party Development on the Separation of the State</b>	<b>152</b>
<b>6 The Legal Deadlock</b>	<b>188</b>
<b>7 Sweetening the Reform Pill - the Uses of Conservatism</b>	<b>224</b>
<b>8 Partition...With Honour?</b>	<b>260</b>
Bibliography	291
Appendix I: Federalism in comparative perspective	308
Appendix II: Political parties represented between 1990 and 1992	319
Appendix III: Interviews	320

**List of Tables**

1.1 Party strength in the First Republic by region	21
1.2 Electoral fortunes in Slovakia in the First Republic	23
3.1 Inevitability argument	95
3.2 Inequality argument	100
3.3 Democratisation argument	104
3.4 Institutional argument	110
3.5 Party competition argument	114
3.6 Realist argument	117
3.7 Thesis argument	119
4.1 Electoral performance of nationalist parties in the Slovak National Council	133
4.2 Results of the 1992 elections - Federal Assembly	138
4.3 Results of the 1992 elections - National Councils	139
5.1 Results of the 1990 elections	154

## Acknowledgements

There are many people who, through their generous help, have been invaluable to the completion of this thesis. First of all I am beholden to my hardy supervisor, Brendan O'Leary, at the London School of Economics. His always excellent advice and accommodation of my geographical and intellectual wanderings has been much appreciated. I must thank Chris Pomery, Christoph Bartmann, Anja Tippner, David Rehak, Michaela Kaplankova, Jan Hanzl and Quentin Reed in Prague for their constant help and wonderful company. I also benefitted enormously from the office space provided by the Czech Centre for Economic Research and Graduate Economic Studies. I am indebted to the Massachusetts Institute of Technology for providing me with the privilege of 'Visiting Scholar' status. In particular I would like to thank Jason Wittenberg of MIT, Anna Gryzmala-Busse of Harvard and Shari Cohen of Berkeley for their spirited fight through various parts of the manuscript, and Grzegorz Ekiert at Harvard for being a constant source of great advice and support.

My parents, Jean and Michael Innes, as ever, provided every imaginable form of assistance and comfort, and I thank them from the bottom of my heart. Similarly, I could not have done without the day to day support of my partner, Denis. I thank him for being - it must be said - the perfect antidote to studying divorce.

Finally, I would like to thank the Economic and Social Research Council for their funding of this project.

## **Chapter 1**

### **The Sources of Discontent**

#### **Introduction**

On 1st January 1993, the Federative Republic of Czechoslovakia (CSFR) died. Its successor states were the two independent republics of Czechia and Slovakia. The decision to separate followed just over two years of negotiations over alternative state forms, which had ended in deadlock. The divorce occurred after the subsequent general election in June 1992. The new Czech and Slovak Premiers, Vaclav Klaus and Vladimir Meciar, settled the dispute at breakneck speed. No shot was fired and no borders questioned. So apparently punctilious and rapid was Czechoslovakia's end, that it was set down as a model abroad: an exemplar of the frictionless parting of nations. This thesis will attempt to explain the break-up of post-communist Czechoslovakia, and to assess its alleged merits as the perfect divorce.

Surprisingly few authors have analysed Czechoslovakia in anything approaching its historical entirety<sup>1</sup> (1918-1992), and until recently, anyone reading Czech Slovak history has faced an unusual burden of ideological 'decoding'. As several post-Second World War studies pointed out, Slovakia had tended to be subsumed within histories of the First Republic (1918-1938) as if it represented no more than a province of the Czech dominated whole. Though a fair objection, this perception of neglect spurred an alternative but often equally polemical literature, particularly from émigré Slovaks and their descendants<sup>2</sup>. Within the country, a complete hijacking of the history of the state followed the communist takeover in 1948. Until communism's collapse in 1989, analysis and analysts alike were dragged into a disinformational maze constructed by the Communist Party. While it might be instructive of the Central European experience to observe how the far left and far right have portrayed national differences over time, it is also important to note how ill-served would-be mediators in the national dispute

---

<sup>1</sup> The exceptions being Carol Skalnik Leff and Frederic Wehrle.

<sup>2</sup> Frantisek Vnuk, a nationalist historian sympathetic to Slovakia's wartime clerico-fascist regime stands at the more extreme end of the spectrum whilst Stanislav Kirschbaum, son of a postwar émigré and author of one of the few comprehensive works in English on Slovak history, clearly has strong nationalist leanings.



have frequently been by the overburdened narratives within Czechoslovakia's school books.

F. Wehrle and C.S. Leff have done much to explain the foundations behind these evidently "diverging constructions of history" (Wehrle 1994:241), applying important anchors to the historical record with their explorations of both the Czech *and* Slovak sides to the story. Their attention has rested on the abiding constitutional and economic inequality of the two regions, and the repercussions in Slovak perceptions of the Czechs as colonisers and betrayers of the constitutional promise of equality, and in Czech readings of the Slovaks, conversely, as opportunistic and ungrateful 'younger brothers'. The thesis presented here, though drawing a great deal on these same issues, does not represent just another consideration of Czech and Slovak relations but rather seeks to consider the national conflict as a vehicle for exploring the wider, and more regionally comparable issues of democratic consolidation following the collapse of communism in 1989. By examining the *dénouement*, the separation process between 1989 and 1993, the thesis seeks to isolate 'national' from other underlying weaknesses in the structure of the new democratic state.

### **A history of stereotypes**

This introductory chapter concentrates on the ostensibly all-important, stereotype-forming moments in the history of the state: on national provocations before 1989. By considering those affairs conventionally recognised as conflicting in Czech and Slovak memory the aim is to sensitise the reader to some of the fuller implications of political rhetoric after 1989. A first chapter thus structured implies a question: were these Czech and Slovak differences when democratically released an irreconcilable clash in a resurgent ethnonational conflict? Equally, how much did separation owe to the tired indifference of two peoples who, having endured war, fascism and communism, looked on in dismay at the bloody national conflict in Yugoslavia, and concluded 'we have had enough'? In short, was there, in fact, any reasonable hope for a common state of Czechs and Slovaks? These questions run throughout this thesis. As we shall see, the answers must qualify many conventional explanations of secessions or partitions.

### **Czechoslovakia 1918-1938: The shot-gun marriage and the German-in-laws**

*“In actual practice it was a mixed state, in which the Czechs and Slovaks represented the ‘Will to the State,’ while the existence of important German and Magyar minorities, which only reluctantly accepted the accomplished fact, created a problem of great delicacy, whose solution was likely to depend, and did actually depend, upon the extent to which Central Europe settled down, or relapsed into disorder, after the Great War.”*

R.W. Seton Watson “History of the Czechs and Slovaks” (1965:313)

Before considering some of the controversies that afflicted the First Republic the context in which the state itself arose must be noted. The Czechoslovak Republic emerged in October 1918 as a successor state from the 1914-1918 European war: a union of regions from opposite sides of the Austro-Hungarian tracks. The industrially advanced Czech lands (Bohemia, Silesia and Moravia) emanated from the Austrian side of the now collapsed Habsburg empire, the still predominantly agrarian Slovakia, from Hungary<sup>3</sup>.

It was a significant, and as separation grew closer in 1992, much remembered fact that Czechs and Slovaks had been divided until 1918 not only legally, symbolically and territorially, but in myriad other facets of historical development, the Czech claim to ancient statehood not least amongst them. Czechs and Slovaks differed radically in the nature of their economies<sup>4</sup>, in their social stratification, their traditions and religious affiliations (Bartlova 1995:160). Slovakia was predominantly Catholic, the Czech lands, both Protestant and Catholic, but philosophically anti-clerical. More simply, the weakness of the “Slovak element” in Czech collective awareness before 1918 would play an important role in the subsequent development of the state (Suda 1995:119).

---

<sup>3</sup> Another region which eventually accrued to Czechoslovakia as an autonomous region was the former Hungarian territory of Ruthenia (Sub-Carpathian Ruthenia). Ruthenia was administered by a Governor appointed by the Czechoslovak President and, though promised a separate Diet, this remained un-established when the Czechoslovak Republic fell in 1938 (Seton-Watson 1965:324).

<sup>4</sup> The Czech economy before the Great War was among the most progressive in the empire. It compared well with France and contributed disproportionately to the Austrian budget - the Czechs were responsible for some 60 per cent of overall taxation revenue. Slovakia’s economy remained predominantly agrarian (Bartlova 1995:161/2) and un-modernised under Hungarian rule, adding “underdevelopment to misrule” (Dubcek 1993:2).

Slovakia under Hungarian rule had suffered relatively greater national repression and seclusion, including systematic attempts at Magyarisation which had all but crushed Slovakia's mid-nineteenth century attempts at a national 'revival'. The dawn of the twentieth century only worsened conditions for Hungary's national minorities as the Magyars sought to eliminate emancipationist impulses root and branch. After 1907, Hungarian was the exclusive language of instruction in all schools: a potentially fatal blow to a Slovak national identity surviving in little else but language. 'Slovakia' was never at any stage before 1918 permitted even an administrative or economic recognition distinct from other Hungarian regions. It had also lacked a major urban centre (Johnson 1985:47) to which a nation-minded intelligentsia might have flocked. Slovakia's miniature political and intellectual elites (for historical reason, predominantly and disproportionately Protestant<sup>5</sup>) were aware of their lack of historic claim and evidence for statehood, and saw little choice when the time came but to appeal directly to the vaunted but alarmingly un-assertable rights of self-determination.

The Czech lands by 1918 in contrast possessed a strong national tradition and discipline as well as a large educated class (Seton-Watson 1965:313). Bohemia's Prague had long been a cosmopolitan and much admired European city, more restored of its political independence after the revolutions of 1848-9 than any other city under the Habsburgs bar Vienna and Budapest themselves. The Slovak voice was scarcely audible amongst the non-Hungarian nationalities represented by less than 10 per cent of members in the Hungarian parliament (Bartlova 1995:161). The Czechs meanwhile perplexed the authorities with their numerous calls to end pro-German electoral rules and for recognition by Vienna as an ancient independent state - on a par with Hungary. The Czech National Revival had proceeded apace from 1848 to the outbreak of World War I, and through its many associations had popularised the Czech aspiration to statehood.

---

<sup>5</sup> Between 1910 and 1920 Bohemian Catholics began to leave the church in huge numbers, perceiving the Catholic hierarchy to be an instrument of Habsburg oppression. Equally, anti-Magyar Slovak intellectuals who had sought refuge in the Czech education system - the new national elite after 1918 - tended to be from Protestant backgrounds precisely because their Protestantism had rendered them relatively immune to Magyarisation, lending them the very dissatisfaction that had driven them into the arms of the Czechs in the first place (Leff 1988:19).

What brought two such apparently disparate nations together in 1918? The traditional, state-and-nation building explanation of Czechoslovakia is taken from the ideas of the national revivalist and pan-Slavic movements of the nineteenth century, and is based on the understanding that the neighbouring Slavs, Czechs and Slovaks, shared deep common roots of culture and language. Even these commonalities however, were a constant source of debate. The state's founder, T.G. Masaryk (actually of Moravian/Slovak origin but viewed by Slovaks as a Czech), believed that "Slovaks and Czechs formed a single nation, separated only by differences in language, history and culture" (Skilling 1994:79) - a full set of distinctions which more than hints at incipient trouble. The less romantic but in 1918 the weightier explanation for Czechoslovakia's existence comes from the calculations of Czech and Slovak political elites and the state-makers of the Paris Peace Conference, and their combined understanding of Germans and Magyars. Czechoslovakia was, to a critical degree, a product of its massive minorities<sup>6</sup>. During the 1914-1918 War, the previously limited business and culture oriented contacts between Czechs and Slovaks had moved to a different plane as groups within the two political leaderships joined in mutual support of their respective national claims. Masaryk, the principle initiator of this collaboration, had calculated early in the war that neither region was likely to achieve independent statehood alone (Bartlova 1995:163), nor, if independence was achieved to sustain it well in the face of those minorities who would find themselves demoted, to paraphrase Seton-Watson, from overlords to underdogs.

There were certainly international pressures for the creation of a unified state, where the two nations would act reciprocally as the bulwark against minority strengths. As Johnson points out, however, "unless the Slovak people were proclaimed to be part of the Czechoslovak people, the Czechoslovak state would have been a state of minorities... The question would then have been asked why three million Germans should belong to such a state, and without the German territories, the economy of Czechoslovakia would have been severely wounded" (Johnson 1985:53). It was

---

<sup>6</sup> The First Republic embarked on the interwar period with some three million Germans and three-quarter of a million Magyars - in a population of 13,600,000. By 1930 Czechs constituted 49.9 per cent of the total population; Germans 21.9 per cent; Slovaks 15.9 per cent; Hungarians 4.7 per cent; Ukrainians, Ruthenians and Russians 3.7 per cent; Jews 1.3 per cent and Poles 0.6 per cent (Prucha 1995:45).

undoubtedly with such questions in mind that Masaryk already in 1907 had made pointed references to the two million Slovaks in upper Hungary as “belonging to our nationality”, and as “co-nationals” (Skilling 1994:71).

The First Czechoslovak Republic began with a fundamental flaw. The failure to grant Slovaks significant autonomy throughout the First Republic marked Masaryk’s establishment notion of ‘Czechoslovakia’, with an irreducible defect for Slovak pride. Many Slovaks adjudged Slovakia to have been co-opted into a notion of ‘Czechoslovak’ identity only to safeguard the stability of a Czech dominated state. The interpretation arose once the rewards accruing to Slovakia for its Czechoslovak status were deemed inadequate, albeit for different reasons among different quarters. The logic of the state’s built-in flaw and the reasoning to which Czechs had recourse between 1918 and 1938, was that granting any Slovak aspiration to administrative autonomy could trigger similar calls from both Germans and Hungarians, and so support irredentist claims<sup>7</sup>.

To complicate matters further the ‘Slovak question’ was ‘triangular’ *i.e* between Czechs, Slovak autonomists and Slovak integrationists (for a review of this interpretation see Leff 1988:193-211), and remained so with some variations to the state’s demise in 1992. The integrationist first generation of ‘Czechoslovakists’ (among them the bulk of Slovakia’s young Protestant intellectuals), believed that Slovakia could only benefit from the modernising and Westernising influence of the Czech territories and should adopt a suitably loyalist attitude. Czechoslovakia was nevertheless from the beginning a hostage to the fortune of its Slovak population, predominantly Catholic and agrarian as that population for the moment remained - an unlikely seedbed for the visions of progressive, Westernising, and secular intellectuals. Demography moreover was against the assimilationists. The Slovak population increased considerably after 1918 through the combined effect of an increase in the Slovak birthrate, a decline in emigration and the re-Slovakisation of the Magyarised population. The 1921 census revealed the sweeping away of the apparent Hungarian majority in many Slovak cities.

---

<sup>7</sup> The Hungarians and Germans rejected the invitation to participate in the pre-1920 “Revolutionary National Assembly” which wrote the 1920 constitution (Johnson 1985:60). They boycotted the Parliament hoping for re-union with Hungary and Austria respectively. When they eventually entered the legislature they were, of course, confronted by laws and principles completed by Czechs and Slovaks.

Combined with a continuing process of urbanisation, concentrated in Bratislava and Kosice (Johnson 1985:84), and a comprehensive improvement in the entire education structure within Slovakia, conditions were clearly turning to favour those who wished to distinguish the Slovak national identity, not only in its own right, but as separate from the Czech.

Was the fate of Czechoslovakia sealed by such a mis-equation of minorities?<sup>8</sup> It is a tempting answer. The combined imperatives facing Czechoslovakia suggest a state besieged. To begin with, Slovak goodwill appeared considerable. On the plus side, the evidence is that the coexistence with and assistance of the Czechs was initially welcomed as the realisation of an ethnically 'natural', economically beneficial, non-assimilationist and relatively non-centralising Slavic state. In these early years Bratislava became the headquarters of new and resuscitated parties, newspapers, home to a national university and other diverse cultural and educational institutions, able to function with relative freedom (Bartlova 1995:169) and to stand as the marks of a 'capital' city. Above all, in terms of its own cultural security, Slovakia had won formal demarcation as a distinct territory - for which it was undoubtedly grateful. On the down side, within a year of the Republic's existence Slovakia found itself part of a "centrally governed multinational state, with numerically significant ethnic minorities from the former ruling nations who were much more politically aware, better organised and", in a telling phrase which alludes to the all-important notion of a natural hierarchy bestowed by historic nationhood, "*more mature in every respect*" (Bartlova 1995:169, my italics).

The term **Czechoslovakism** could often be heard in Slovakia after 1989. When said in derogatory tones 'Czechoslovakist' was a shorthand expression for "someone who believes/ is clearly assimilated/ in a composite national identity, though historically this identity is merely a guise for Slovak assimilation into Czech culture". The term had become a rich source of contention almost immediately following the state's formation: "the emergence of the new state in October 1918 was not accompanied by a clear delineation of what the term Czechoslovak meant. Some persons thought it descriptive,

---

<sup>8</sup> The sequel 'imponderable' is to ask whether the expulsion of ethnic Germans after the Second World War effectively removed all reason for the existence of Czechoslovakia.

others saw it as prescriptive. Some thought it was related to politics, while others cast it solely into the ideological sphere. There was disagreement whether its significance was primarily internal or external. By 1938, the Czechoslovak concept was beginning to give way to recognition of distinct Czech and Slovak nations..." (Johnson 1985:50).

The derogatory implications of 'Czechoslovakism' in Slovak usage derived not just from the basic paradoxes in the state however, but from particular, and stereotype-forming political grievances to which we now turn. The essence of the problem was articulated at the time by Ferdinand Peroutka, in his encyclopaedic *Budovani statu* ('Building the State'). How could Slovaks be other than antagonised he asks, when "there did not exist a Czechoslovak nation. How else could one refer to it other than as a demand?" (Peroutka I:213 in Kirschbaum 1983:170).

#### **National Stereotypes and their sources:**

##### **The Pittsburgh Agreement - 1918**

One of the most embittering experiences for Slovaks was that the language of 'fraternity' prevailing before 1918 translated into a Czech attitude of the older brother from the moment the two cohabitated. Czechs wore their historic nationhood and economic success as a badge of maturity and deemed their goals the most appropriate model for Slovak development. On the reverse view many Czechs, including those more sympathetic to Slovak particularism, were dismayed at the seemingly endless demands of Slovaks for both improving conditions and greater equality. The Czech resentment of Slovak ingratitude and their surprise at the protectiveness and coherence of Slovak national characteristics provided fertile ground for unflattering stereotypes on both sides.

For a significant group in Slovakia's political and cultural elite<sup>9</sup>, its young Catholic contingent in particular, the grievances over the term 'Czechoslovak' gathered like moss on the state's foundation stone. The basic document of the state-union, the Martin

---

<sup>9</sup> Between 16 and 29 political parties participated in the elections of 1920, 1925, 1929 and 1935, though the spectrum of opinions was far more varied in the first post-war decade than the second, when takeovers and attrition narrowed the group (Bartlova 1995:171-179) - the term 'Slovak parties' is in fact inappropriate since there was only one Slovak, as opposed to statewide party, of any significance - Hlinka's Slovak People's Party (see below).

Declaration of unity of October 30th 1918, was in many respects a vague expression of Slovak assent to the Czechoslovak Republic<sup>10</sup>. It was nevertheless assumed by Czechs from the outset as legitimating not only a unitary, Prague-centralised state but membership in a “Czechoslovak nation” and use of a “Czechoslovak” language<sup>11</sup>: terms to be found throughout the 1920 constitution<sup>12</sup>. When another document signed abroad, the Pittsburgh Agreement of May 30th, 1918, became known in Slovakia in 1919<sup>13</sup>, it provided a focus for those who wished to reassert Slovakia’s equal status in the state<sup>14</sup>.

Signed by the future state President, Thomas Garrigue Masaryk, and by Czech and Slovak émigré groups in the United States, the Pittsburgh Agreement had stipulated a separate administration, parliament, and even courts for Slovakia, (Jelinek 1983:5), propitious clauses for the quickly frustrated in Slovakia’s elite. According to Masaryk, however, the Agreement had been “concluded to appease a small Slovak faction which was dreaming of God knows what sort of independence for Slovakia... I signed the

---

<sup>10</sup> The Slovak declaration endorsing Czech-Slovak unity included a resolution demanding the right of self-determination and another for significant Slovak National Council powers. It was, however, adopted two days after a proclamation of statehood by the Prague National Committee, to which the pro-Czech Slovak, Vavro Srobar, was the sole Slovak signatory. The 28th and not the 30th of October became the official anniversary date of the creation of the Czechoslovak Republic.

<sup>11</sup> Other laws provided that state offices using the official state language in former Austrian territories were to use the Czech language, while those in Slovakia were to use Slovak and even that “matters presented in the Czech language and officially dealt with in Slovak or presented in Slovak and dealt with in Czech shall be deemed to have been dealt with in the language in which they were presented”. The idea of a Czechoslovak language was nonetheless prescriptive, since there existed a popular Czech notion that Slovak existed only as a backward form of Czech, which would soon dissolve as Slovak society passed through the social and economic modernisation already completed by Czech society (Johnson 1985:52-3).

<sup>12</sup> In his opening address to the National Assembly on November 14th, 1918, Prime Minister Karel Kramar defined Czechoslovakia as a “Czech state”, welcoming the Slovaks as ‘lost sons’ who had now “returned to the nation’s fold, where they belong” (Benes, V. 1973:73-74).

<sup>13</sup> If this seems like a tremendous delay it should be remembered that these were chaotic post-war times. Conditions in Slovakia were not conducive to transparent administration. Before the arrival of Czechoslovak legionnaires in December/January 1918-1919 (Bratislava was not occupied until 4 January 1919), Slovakia’s economy had been ransacked. Entire factories, government records and even locomotives and rolling stock were expropriated to Hungary (Bartlova 1995:168/9). Border security between Slovakia and Hungary was not achieved until August 1919 and the collapse of the five month old Hungarian Bolshevik regime under Bela Kun. The prolonged ambiguity over the border further embittered an already deeply frustrated Magyar minority in what was now definitively Slovakia, a situation not fully stabilised until the Treaty of Trianon of June 4, 1920 (Seton-Watson 1965:322-4).

<sup>14</sup> An earlier document, the Cleveland Accord (October 1915) had already been swept aside. The Accord was a joint declaration by émigré representatives of the Slovak League and the Czech National Association and it called for the formation of an independent federated Czechoslovak state. The Accord provided for Slovak autonomy to the extent of its own financial and political administrations and total cultural freedom. As Johnson points out, the significance of the document was that the American Slovaks could claim to represent the Slovak cause in northern Hungary, effectively silenced by the war (Johnson 1985:47).



Convention unhesitatingly as a local understanding between American Czechs and Slovaks upon the policy they were prepared to advocate" (*The Making of a State* 1927, quoted in Leff 1988:152). Though cited by nationalists to expose the real measure of his attitude to Slovak aspirations, Masaryk's interpretation was in fact supported by the concluding clause of the agreement, which stated that its U.S signatories were in no way competent to bind the nation to the Agreement's contents, and that only the state itself, following independence, could decide its fate (Seton-Watson 1965:334).

The Agreement had nonetheless resonated within the Slovak People's Party under Father Andrej Hlinka, a party hitherto preoccupied by Catholic rights and education. Hlinka had promoted and endorsed the principle of Czech Slovak unity on several occasions before 1918, but he had remained suspicious of Czech anti-clericalism (Mamatey 1973:9) and had argued passionately for Slovakia's distinctiveness after the war. The Agreement tipped the party toward a defensive position of autonomism. This was expressed in the Zilina Morandum in 1922 which accused Prague, but Masaryk in particular, of a breach of faith in failing to implement either the Cleveland or Pittsburgh 'Treaties' - a status they had never had, but which in nationalist histories has been consistently claimed. Thereafter Hlinka campaigned to present Pittsburgh as the ideal and unfairly forsworn guidelines for the reform of the state and for the full recognition of the Slovak nation<sup>15</sup>. The failure of Prague to acknowledge even the spirit of these two Agreements registered them as landmarks in Czech-Slovak relations. They appear in Slovak eyes as the first of several instances of broken Czech promises of constitutional change.

It is important to note that despite their solid Catholic pedigree and their attempts at agitation, the People's Party (known as L'udaks or Populists) did not fair as well in the 1920 election as nationalist and L'udak histories imply. The 1920 election, despite coinciding with the postwar recession, evoked some optimism. Both the Czech and

---

<sup>15</sup> Hlinka began to agitate for the adoption of the Agreement, even making his way to Paris to lobby at the Peace Conference. On his arrival home Hlinka was arrested and, untried, was only allowed to return to Slovakia after his election to the Prague Parliament in 1920 (Kirschbaum 1983:165). As Johnson commented, "Czechoslovak nationalism had become intertwined with Czechoslovak state patriotism" (Johnson 1985:54).

Slovak electorates favoured the left and 1920 represented the high point in interwar Social Democratic support. The social democratic left was loyalist as far as the state was concerned. More preoccupied with social than 'narrow' national questions, they supported multi-national states whilst opposing 'nationalist particularism'. Somewhat more pragmatically, they too feared that prioritising Slovak national grievances would incite national tensions.

The evidence suggests that in the early twenties at least, more Slovaks were engaged by urgent socio-economic issues than were attracted by aspirations to threaten the only just-won order and relative freedoms of the unitary state. When the reality of Slovakia's relative inequalities had sunk in however, the popularity of Hlinka's Slovak People's Party began to grow as the dividing line of those who opposed and supported Prague rule began to cut more clearly down religious lines. This development, in turn, shed a different light on the state's inherited socio-economic differences<sup>16</sup>. The profoundly conservative, parochial, and socially influential clergy had concluded early that it was they who would have to describe a convincing explanation for national inequalities, if Slovakia was not to be radicalised by secular ideas of class and secular emancipation.

### **Bureaucracy: the glass ceiling**

No sooner had the Czechs arrived in Slovakia in 1918 it seemed, than they began to replace the Magyars as administrators and to choose Slovak Protestants to assist them, though Protestants represented a relatively small minority at 18.7 per cent of the population of Slovakia in 1910 (Leff 1988:21). Slovakia's governance had immediately fallen to the so-called Slovak 'Hlasists'<sup>17</sup>: close and predominantly Protestant followers of Masaryk. Though it was only a hastily constituted Slovak National Council which had initially empowered Vavro Srobar, a leading Hlasist and a Catholic, to represent its

---

<sup>16</sup> Czech and Slovak Protestants could reasonably argue that the Catholic Church held a persistently questionable loyalty to the liberal Republic. However, in branding as Magyarone those Catholics who had worked for the Budapest government before the creation of Czechoslovakia, Prague appeared guilty of applying a double standard. No equivalent practice existed in the Czech lands against Czechs who had worked for the Viennese government, who were encouraged to offer their services to the new state.

<sup>17</sup> The works of Masaryk greatly influenced and shaped the anti-Habsburg feeling of many Slovak students in Prague during the 1890s. The newspaper *Hlas* (voice) was a mouthpiece of the liberal democrats among the progressive student clubs advocating closer Czech Slovakia cooperation on the basis of their common roots.

interests in Prague, Srobar became the sole Slovak representative on the so-called Czechoslovak National Council<sup>18</sup> (Bartlova 1995:170). In the nationalist canon Srobar's decisive advocacy of Prague centralism, and its apparent administration of Protestant chauvinism marked him thereafter as a traitor to the national cause.

Returning as Minister for Slovakia in December 1918, Srobar abolished all too promptly the limited organs of Slovak administrative autonomy to have grown out of the grassroots. The scene was pictured optimistically by Seton-Watson, who claimed that Srobar "set up what was in effect a sub-Cabinet of thirteen prominent Slovaks, sitting at Bratislava from January 1919 onwards, and administering Slovakia on virtually autonomous lines" (Seton-Watson 1965:917). While it may have struck Czechs that this was so, Srobar used his powers in ways that could only increase the hostility to Prague of Slovaks already antagonised by the liberal, secularising and 'one-nation' principles of Czechoslovakism. Endowed with wide powers of decree but also with the units of the Czechoslovak legionnaires (Bartlova 1995:171), one of Srobar's earliest actions was to dissolve the Slovak National Council (SNC). Reconstituted in May 1918 by the Slovak People's Party, the Social Democrats and the Slovak National Party, the Slovak National Council was viewed domestically as the representative forum of Slovak political feeling. Further centralising inroads came with the abolition of the local councils in January 1919, formed under Slovak National Council auspices. Following the first parliamentary elections Slovakia's special caucus was also dissolved in April 1920<sup>19</sup> - even Srobar's own administration lasted only until May (Bartlova 1995:171). Thereafter Slovak deputies seemed destined to gel indistinctly into the state-wide parties, albeit representing Slovak wings of those parties.

Slovak nationalist historians have naturally made much of how the Hlasists appointed Czech Protestants to public positions in Slovakia, some of whom undoubtedly viewed

---

<sup>18</sup> The latter acted as temporary government before the first sitting of the Czechoslovak National Assembly.

<sup>19</sup> Before the first elections in 1920 the National Council apportioned mandates among existing parties according to their results in the last election to the (Habsburg) Reichsrat, held under universal suffrage. This method could not be applied to Slovakia because of the distorting Hungarian franchise, which had left Slovakia with only three deputies. The National Council therefore, acting on Srobar's advice, *nominated* forty-one leading Slovaks, to whom a further fourteen were shortly added. This was later criticised, though at the time, according to Seton-Watson "it was universally accepted as a graceful compliment" (Seton-Watson 1965:317).

themselves as “bringing enlightenment to a backward country” (Jelinek 1976:5). Though this was not another ‘iron centralism’ as the nationalists have claimed, the security-conscious Hlasists were indeed sufficiently dogmatic in their purging of ‘Magyarone’ Slovaks - who, because of the past assimilationist role of the Church were predominantly Catholic - as to appear anti-Catholic as a matter of policy<sup>20</sup>. From the Slovak point of view the regime appeared philosophically and legislatively anti-clerical. Czech politicians were clearly bent on separating Church and state, and were quick to nationalise primary and secondary education, previously the preserve of religious authorities. Agrarian reform also threatened the Church estates, and even anti-Magyar priests found themselves denied the flourishing parishes for which they had hoped. Peroutka concluded that “in probably the most complete way, they [the Protestants] excluded Catholic representatives from public service and the enjoyment of glory” (Budovani statu II:1227 in Kirschbaum 1983:161).

There has been much debate as to the true basis of the pro-Protestant recruitment tendency and the disproportionate dominance of Czechs in the administration of the First Republic. Kirschbaum insists that the slur of Magyar apprenticeship not only deprived the state of many qualified people but created an influx of Czech personnel who were thereafter preferred (1983:162). Less anachronistic accounts (*e.g.* Seton-Watson and Leff) lean more to the conclusion that in the first years of the Republic, Slovakia straightforwardly lacked sufficiently educated and, in the terms of the day, politically reliable people to assure fair representation in the civil service - a fact resulting from Slovakia’s arrested development under Hungarian rule. By the time the reformed Slovak education system had produced large numbers of competent candidates in the Republic’s second decade, however, they too found themselves unable to penetrate into the central administration. Their frustration derived not just from the few openings naturally becoming available - the abiding Czech explanation, but from a virtually impenetrable glass ceiling of real Czech bias in the by now re-centralised civil service.

---

<sup>20</sup> Kirschbaum claims that over 80 per cent of the population were Catholic, Johnson, citing the *Statistický lexicon* (1921) vol.III puts the figure at 70.89 per cent Roman Catholic and 6.46 Greek Catholic in 1921 (Johnson 1985:27).

This later and clear discrimination caused tension amongst Slovakia's educated classes, newly swelled with Catholics as this class was<sup>21</sup>. Some Czech politicians interpreted this as rank ingratitude for the comprehensive new 'Czechoslovak' education system that had so elevated them<sup>22</sup>. Even accepting Seton-Watson's argument, that the state's centralising impulses were curbed in 1926 with the accession of a 'bourgeois coalition' to government which included Hlinka's Slovak People's Party, antagonistic policies had prevailed long enough for the "cleavage between the Clerical and Progressive elements in Slovakia" to have become fixed (Seton-Watson 1965:334).

Undoubtedly it was this cleavage that had supported the development of a Slovak Party belying notions of a singular Czechoslovak identification. Such a development in another age might have proved sustainable. In 1930s Czechoslovakia however, Slovak Catholic discontent was an Achilles heel. Hlinka's Slovak People's Party had created a strong alliance of co-religionists, frustrated clergy, Catholic laymen, and also 'Magyarone' Slovaks behind the cause of autonomy. Untried as it was, it seemed the idea holding the greatest hope of relief, if not a panacea.

### **The Hlinka Slovak People's Party (HSPP)**

According to Seton-Watson, Hlinka was a priest, "of the twelfth rather than the twentieth century" (Seton-Watson 1965:917). In Czech eyes, Hlinka was too overtly tolerant of the now officially despised Magyarone Slovaks, and even prone to Hungarian manipulation. In Catholic Slovakia, Hlinka was considered a patriot who had suffered for his efforts against Hungarian repression and had done little to deserve Czech animosity. Prague's overt mistrust and the parliamentary tendency toward character assassination marked him out as Slovakia's *ami du peuple*.

By hooking diverse grievances to perceptions of religious bias the clerically-based Slovak People's Party was able to frame a national agenda as an article of faith. The

---

<sup>21</sup> As late as 1938, a head count of all those employed in the ministries, together with the office of the president and executive council, totalled 10,825 positions, of which a staggering 123 were occupied by Slovaks (Bartlova 1995:173).

<sup>22</sup> The view was encapsulated by Hubert Ripka in his book *Munich: Before and After* (Gollanz 1939), where he objected that "The [Slovak] autonomist demand was, in fact, to be exclusive master in a house which was built mainly by the Czechs" (quote in Leff 1988:157).

HSPP's main rivals lost their appeal through their relative abstraction from Slovak realities but also because of their unwillingness to touch contentious national issues under the circumstances of fragile inter-ethnic balance<sup>23</sup>.

---

<sup>23</sup> After Social Democracy divided into warring Communist and Social Democratic Parties between 1920 and 1921 both groups seemed incapable of noting Slovak difficulties without first appraising them through the prism of international Socialist strategy, a practice diminishing their initial support to a smaller, if consistent core. The Slovak section of the Agrarians (unified in 1922) might have laid claim to significant Slovak support had not their Slovak leader, Milan Hodza, established himself as one of Hlinka's main adversaries at the same time as appearing deeply attached to his position and influence in Prague. In 1920, Hodza had gone so far as to prophesy that Czech and Slovak cultures would converge and their languages merge - an apparent recitation of the Czechoslovakist creed. More sensitive to the issue by the 1930s, Hodza nevertheless managed eventually to become an intermediary between the two regions (Benes, V. 1973:83). Sramek's Czechoslovak People's Party might have laid claim to Slovak Catholic sympathies had it not fallen out with the HSPP in the early nineteen-twenties over religious education. As coalition kingmakers between 1921 and 1938, Sramek's populists anyway held so great a stake in the establishment, hard won as it was, as to lose the disenchanted Slovak vote almost entirely to Hlinka's L'udaks, though Sramek, unusually, defended Hlinka in Prague (Benes 1973:83).

*Party Strength in the First Republic: Elections results by region (% of votes cast)*

	1920	1925	1929	1935
<b>BOHEMIA</b>				
Agrarians	12.4	13.2	13.6	12.7
Social Democrats	22.4	10.4	13.8	12.9
National Socialists	11.2	11.7	13.9	11.6
Czechoslovak Populists	5.6	8.0	6.6	6.0
National Democrats	8.8	5.8	5.2	7.6
Small Tradesmen	2.4	5.2	4.6	6.4
Communists	---	12.6	10.3	9.0
German Parties	32.5	27.0	26.1	28.7
<b>MORAVIA</b>				
Agrarians	12.9	11.5	12.3	14.2
Social Democrats	22.0	9.6	14.8	13.3
National Socialists	6.2	7.0	9.7	9.8
Czechoslovak Populists	18.9	21.3	17.7	15.6
National Democrats	6.2	2.5	3.1	3.9
Small Tradesmen	2.9	4.6	4.3	6.1
Communists	---	11.1	8.9	8.6
German parties	21.3	22.7	21.8	22.2
<b>SLOVAKIA</b>				
Agrarians	18.0	17.4	19.5	17.6
Social Democrats	38.1	4.2	9.5	11.4
National Socialists	2.2	2.6	3.0	3.2
Czechoslovak Populists	17.5	1.3	2.6	2.3
Hlinka Slovak Populists	---	34.3	28.3	30.1
Communists	---	13.9	10.7	13.0
German-Magyar Christ. Soc.	18.5	6.9	15.9	14.2

*Source:* C.S. Leff (1988:52)

For all but the period 1925-29 the Czechoslovak cabinet was constituted by Red-Green (Socialist-Agrarian) coalitions in which virtually everyone but the National Democrats and the communists was represented<sup>24</sup>. Green-Black (Agrarian-Clerical) coalitions

<sup>24</sup> The governmentally prominent National Socialists, Eduard Benes's party, it should be noted were not fascists but non-Marxist radicals with a constituency of the lower middle and working class. The party was however beleaguered by factional infighting. The secular evolutionary socialist party never gained a strong foothold in Slovakia (Leff 1988:57).

governed only between 1925/7-29, and these included not only Sramek's Czechoslovak Populists and for the first time the National Democrats and eventually the Hlinka Slovak People's Party, but also, and again for the first time, representatives of four out of the seven German groups. Their cooption was brought at the triple price of "abandoning extreme centralism, of toning down anti-clerical tendencies and of stiffening tariffs in the interests of the Agrarians", *i.e.* by "decentralisation, activism, protection, ecclesiastical peace". The price seemed eminently worth paying to bring the hitherto uncooperative principal minority and the obstructionist HSPP into the state's mainstream (Seton-Watson 1965:330). Neither, however, stayed long.

Having emerged definitively as the strongest party in Slovakia Hlinka's Slovak People's Party exacted a basic move toward greater decentralisation from the Prague government. In 1927, the county system was abolished and the administration reorganised along provincial lines, creating a "Slovenska Krajina" which transformed Slovakia from being only the object to being a source of power (Bartlova 1995:174)<sup>25</sup>. Though the HSPP thereafter accepted participation in government (after a full two years of negotiations), the thin air of accord lasted only until the so-called Tuka affair<sup>26</sup>, and the subsequent trial of Hlinka's advisor, Dr. Adalbert Tuka. The case had a fateful impact on the political environment as a whole. It rocked HSPP support (which had wavered following its move into the state coalition) and caused a final breach between the HSPP and all mainstream groups, bar Sramek's Populists, despite the rapprochement since 1926. Tuka's imprisonment put an end to Hlinka's attempt at

---

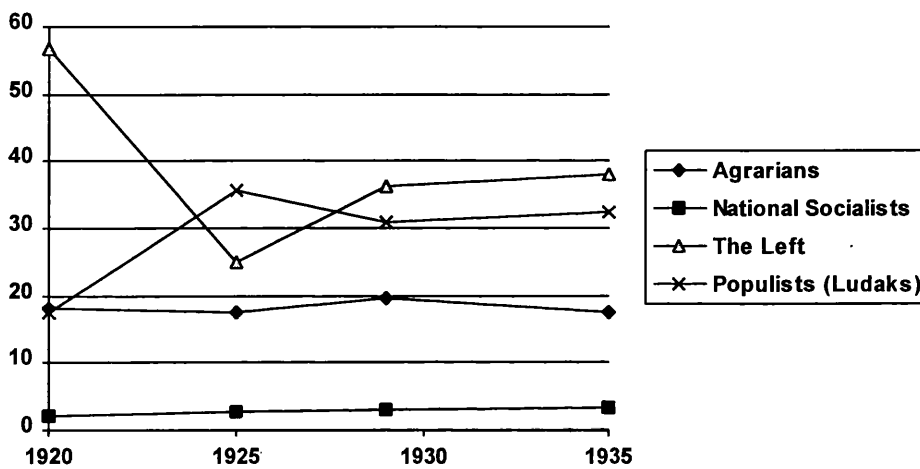
<sup>25</sup> The reform was a welcome reversal of an unsuccessful reform in 1923. The 1927 Law endowed Slovakia with a Provincial President with wide powers and an elected Provincial Assembly. The latter was however a throwback to Hungarian practices in that it consisted of two-thirds elected representatives and one-third selected directly by the civil service (Seton-Watson 1965:335). This latter third favoured central administration and keeping in line with central government policies (Bartlova 1995:174) - a factor exposing it to the dissatisfaction of the HSPP.

<sup>26</sup> In 1928 Hlinka's advisor, Dr. Adalbert Tuka, who had returned himself as a Magyar in the 1921 census, repeated in the Hlinka Party's *Slovak* a long established myth, that there existed a potential legal vacuum as a result of a secret clause in the 1918 Martin declaration stipulating the right of Slovaks, after ten years, to reconsider their decision to enter into a political union with the Czechs. He insisted that if autonomy was not granted by 31st October 1928, Slovakia might go its own way. Tuka was tried for treason as a Hungarian spy and sentenced to fifteen years imprisonment. Seton-Watson states that Tuka was merely one among several 'Magyar propagandists' who had long expounded such a line, however controversy lingered long over the result of Tuka's trial. (Seton-Watson 1965:311). According to Kirschbaum it was "a harsh sentence that reflected the imaginary fears of the Prague government as well as its unrelenting pursuit of a Czechoslovak nation" (Kirschbaum 1983:179). In fact it was only after the war that Czechoslovak historians were able to produce unequivocal evidence proving Tuka's guilt (Jelinek 1976:10).



constructive engagement with the establishment, and the case pushed the L'udaks into a more extremism-prone opposition than they had ever previously entertained<sup>27</sup>. The Depression then proceeded to revive L'udak electoral fortunes, relatively well attuned to social and economic grievances in Slovakia as the Hlinka party had become (Jelinek 1976:10).

#### *Electoral fortunes in Slovakia in the First Republic*



The Left = Social Democrats + Communists + German-Magyar Christian Socialists

Populists = Czechoslovak Populists + Hlinka Slovak Populists (L'udaks)

#### **The betrayal of Czechoslovakia**

It was a mark of the coalition dynamics of the First Republic that it took until the mid-1930s before economic debate addressed regional disparities in any direct, and politically sensitive way (Johnson 1985:51). The assumption until then had been that Slovakia would catch-up economically of its own accord, despite the tendency of Czech industry to treat it as a colony. Left to provide agricultural products, labour and raw

<sup>27</sup> In-fighting and Comintern dictates led the Communist Party at the time to engage in a leadership purge significant to postwar developments. The new elite centred on a Stalinist cadre around Klement Gottwald; "young fanatics, whose greatest qualification was their willingness to accept Moscow's orders unconditionally" (Jelinek 17:1983). At the end of the 1920s Party propaganda held up before the Slovak working class the vision of a "Soviet Slovakia" and while highlighting the differences between the Party and the Populists, Gottwald clearly played on L'udak ground. Mere autonomy said the communists, would only subject the Slovak worker to the Slovak bourgeoisie. Despite this Slovakia's branch of the Communist Party remained notoriously short of card-carrying members and functionaries during the Great Depression, whatever Slovakia's theoretical 'ripeness' for revolt (Jelinek 1983:24/25) and despite the blip in L'udak prestige. The latter lost five seats at the October 1929 election.

materials, Czechoslovakia's initial politics of *laissez faire* had done little positively to advantage Slovakia's relatively underdeveloped economy. As it was, the state's interest came far too late. By the mid-1930s, continuing economic inequality had helped create a convergence of Slovak grievances that looked set to pitch the entire state into crisis. Milan Hodza, though wise enough to attempt the cooption of L'udaks into a new government, failed in this endeavour, and the HSPP's persistence as an outgroup assumed its full potential as a serious threat<sup>28</sup>.

Hodza's coalition negotiations revealed that the Hlinka party too had succumbed to the radicalisation sweeping Europe. The HSPP's more constructive moderates were pushed aside by a faction intent on closing ranks with the Sudeten German party, the Slovak National party, the Czech Fascists and others of the extreme right. Since the mid-1930s Hlinka had acted as an arbiter between moderates who were more faithful to the Republic, led by the ideologist, Josef Tiso, and the party's neo-fascist and separatist radicals. Both groups however, had flirted with Germany since 1936. In 1937, L'udak agitation increased and culminated in anti-Czech demonstrations and accusations that the government had Bolshevised the Republic<sup>29</sup>, citing the May 1935 Soviet-Czechoslovak Treaty of Mutual Assistance. Anti-Czech, anti-communist and anti-Semitic propaganda became the weaponry of the day (Jelinek 1976:11-16). Hlinka's death on August 16, 1938, opened the party up completely to the factional contest, though the moderates appeared as good as defeated. The platform of the radicals was framed exactly to the demand for "national self-determination" to be invoked by Hitler's Germany in the Saarland, Austria, and eventually in the Sudetenland - in the Czech lands. The HSPP had thus aligned itself with the spread of fascism (Dubcek 1993:31).

---

<sup>28</sup> When Hitler became German Chancellor in 1933 that other main outgroup, the Communist Party, comprehended at last the true scale of the fascist Nazi threat. Turning from its interminable attacks against the Social Democrats, the Party shifted its priorities to support the "bourgeois state" and voted for the first time in favour of parts of the state budget. Following Masaryk's resignation in 1935, the communists voted for Edvard Benes (as did the L'udaks) rather than propose a candidate of their own. The slogan "Soviet Slovakia" disappeared (Jelinek 27:1983), leaving the Hlinka party again alone in calling for Slovak autonomy, but this time with a new resonance.

<sup>29</sup> In fact the Communist Party faced tremendous difficulties by this time: they had to criticise Czechoslovak capitalism and demand, amongst other things, pro-Slovak changes, for which they were accused of unpatriotic and pro-L'udak behaviour. The minorities meanwhile rejected the communists' brushing aside of self-determination and their apparent born-again Czechoslovakism. As Jelinek concludes; "Communism was in retreat in the last years of the Republic" (ibid. 1976:3).

As the extreme right began to hold sway so Hodza had attempted a last and desperate acceleration of governmental reforms as a basis for negotiations with Germany. A commission of the coalition prepared a Statute of Nationalities and a statute of national autonomy, to be implemented at last within a framework of decentralising government (Bartlova 1995:175-6). Their discussion by the National Assembly nonetheless represented a hopeless stand - Czechoslovakia could not be reinforced. Unwilling to step beyond appeasement of the growing Nazi threat, France and Britain, despite the former's treaty obligations, effectively signed away Czechoslovakia to the German sphere of influence through September 1938. The so-called 'Munich dictat' forced Prague to cede the Sudetenland territories to Germany, and left the remainder clearly without allied protection, and so in Hitler's grasp (see Churchill 1948:250-289).

In Kirschbaum's apologist account, as Czechoslovakia's international position became more precarious, the Slovak People's Party took upon itself the consideration of "various options to save the Slovak nation in the event of the government's inability to guarantee the survival of the state" (1983:180). These included appealing to Germany directly. In the confusion following Munich, Hodza's government fell and Benes requested that General Jan Syrový attempt to replace it. Syrový gave the Slovaks wide representation. However, on the heels of the Cabinet's formation, Matus Cernak of the HSPP presented an ultimatum demanding immediate Slovak autonomy on pain of his resignation. Opposed by the remaining Slovak political elite (not least because the HSPP looked set to be sole beneficiary) Prague insisted on more time. Cernak duly resigned and left Benes to negotiate with Tiso. Benes himself resigned the Presidency on the 5th however, and left Czechoslovakia shortly afterwards (Jelinek 1976:17). On 22, November 1938, Slovakia became autonomous, though still formally part of the now renamed "Czecho-Slovak Republic".

Slovakia's shotgun autonomy was fundamentally circumscribed under the now extremist-dominated HSPP, led, following Hlinka's death, by Dr Jozef Tiso. Elections were held from which the communists were excluded, the Social Democrats dissolved, and all other parties merged with the L'udaks. Independent associations such as trade

unions were brought swiftly under HSPP authority. Tiso meanwhile sought to hold off the independence so desired by the L'udak radicals (Mach, Tuka and Durcansky) so as to consolidate a measure of economic self sufficiency. As the historian Jan Rychlik points out "this meant the gradual construction of Slovakia's independence, paid for by Czech taxpayers" (Rychlik 1995:182). The Czech's response, of military intervention, the suspension of Tiso's government and the introduction of martial law in Slovakia, only swiftened the fatal blow from Germany. Tiso was presented with a German ultimatum: Slovakia could claim full independence or suffer Hungary being given a free hand in her former territory. Slovakia duly declared itself separate - a Nazi puppet state in effect - and the following day Germany annexed what remained of the Czech lands, establishing the Reich's "Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia" (ibid.).

The Slovak autonomy won in 1938 stunned Czechs as a betrayal not only of Czechoslovakia, but of the democratic principles that had flown about the masthead of the new state in 1918<sup>30</sup>. The direction of Masaryk's frequently overbearing Presidential influence had been toward fostering progressive and 'state-building' parties, whose priority would be 'state', rather than religious, ethnic or even party interests. The policies of the L'udaks had always represented an attack on the Masarykian philosophy. Tiso's brand of clerico-fascism provided Czechoslovak history with proof of Slovak disloyalty and difference, and of a latent demonic nationalism. Czechs have rarely failed to allude to the 'liberal' state's betrayal at moments of Czech Slovak tension, and for many years after they clearly expected acts of atonement and contrition.

For many Slovaks on the other hand, the events of 1938-9 buried even deeper Slovakia's already too overlooked frustrations with the essential inequalities of Czech rule. Leff's conclusion is exact and reflected in lasting stereotypes: "National trauma and successful Slovak assertion have historically gone hand in hand. Each Slovak advance of political significance has been coupled with a crisis in the life of the state,

---

<sup>30</sup> This was a feeling shared by many Slovaks. Though the true level of public support for the HSPP is ultimately hard to judge, there is little evidence that a Slovak majority existed which preferred the resolution of their differences by the dismemberment of the state, let alone Czechoslovakia's crushing by outside forces dictating the installation of fascism. The early (if fleeting) enthusiasm of the Catholic majority can be put down to the realisation of their belief that Slovakia was competent to manage autonomy, or to their genuine hostility to all aspects of the first republic. There is evidence supporting both interpretations (Leff 1995:90).

with systematic realignment, with tragedy and shame. The association has accordingly been costly for the Slovak cause” (Leff 1988:163-4).

### **The Second World War**

Slovakia’s experience of the Second World War was very different to that of the Czechs lands, where open occupation resulted in greater repression, resistance and use of terror. The contrasts provided for one of the most durable slants in the historical record. As El Malakh has complained: “In most historical literature, Benes and Prague are viewed as clear-cut and powerless victims of Reich designs. The Slovak autonomists, conversely, are assessed at worse [*sic* in Malakh] as active and conscious agents of Germany and at best as inept, dull-witted pawns” (El Malakh, Ph.D. p.296, quoted in Leff 1988:165). Such interpretations, it has to be said, have been greatly aided by Slovak L’udak nationalist histories, which have proven consistent apologists for a Slovak state of highly dubious virtue - the virtue most openly claimed for it being that it ‘safeguarded’ the Slovak nation.

Germany relied on the HSPP to arrange the particulars of Slovakia’s alliance, including the maintenance of ‘order’ and the subordination of the economy to German war needs. Economists of all political hues have agreed that the economy prospered under German tutelage - with certain undoubtedly popular spin-offs. Jewish property was given to ‘Christian’ Slovaks rather than to the Germans (Myant 1981:41), and Slovakia remained unengaged in the war until 1941. Kirschbaum has argued unashamedly that “the Slovak Republic not only took the Slovak people far down the road of modernisation but it served the Slovaks well especially in the social and cultural field, and played an extremely important role in the development of the national consciousness of the people”. For the sake of his argument the Slovak people are portrayed as having been fully behind Tiso, relieved at ‘liberation’ from Czech domination - as if Tiso’s popularity might amount to proof of Slovakia’s benign intent (Kirschbaum 1983:287). Such single-minded belief in the goodness of the Slovak national idea *per se* has persuaded more than a few Czechs of the inability of nationally-minded Slovaks to recognise, let alone mind, fascism when they see it<sup>31</sup>.

---

<sup>31</sup> Few writers on either side have identified the correspondingly constant trend (contradictory to the prevailing stereotypes), that liberal and even some leftist Slovaks, like today’s young liberal Germans, have

The Tiso regime claimed in the early war years to represent the lesser of possible evils, and Tiso proved adept at keeping Germany at arms length from general domestic affairs. To this end, however, the L'udaks perjured the Christian values to which they supposedly aspired. Between March 25th and September 20th 1942 - arguably the year of the regime's greatest confidence - over 57,000 Jews were deported: two-thirds of Slovakia's Jewish population. Under the euphemism of 'evacuation', Slovakia's Jews were delivered unequivocally into Nazi hands. Subsequent deportations were suspended for a while owing to pressure from the Lutheran but also some of the Catholic clergy - their concern contradicting the government's claim to be ignorant of the Jews' intended fate. Most of Slovakia's remaining minority of 30,000 were deported in 1944 when the Germans occupied Slovakia (Rychlik 1995:198). By this stage the general sufferance of the regime was falling away, replaced by active resistance. In the last years of the war Slovakia's partisans experienced connivance at the official level. Crucially, the Slovak army proved disloyal to the Tiso regime; it had little stomach for a fight with the Russians, historically seen as Slavic brethren (Rychlik 1995:186) and when circumstances improved, the army switched sides.

### **The Slovak National Uprising 1944 - Slovak redemption or nationalist conspiracy?**

With the downturn of Hitler's fortunes tactical considerations arose of how an anti-fascist insurrection might be secured, and with whose assistance<sup>32</sup>. Slovakia's underground had begun to increase, swelling the ranks of army officers, Czechoslovak loyalists and communists who had formed its core (Jelinek 1976:125). Though a strong nationalist faction existed within the Slovak communist movement it was, under Soviet instruction in 1943, committed to restoring Czechoslovakia. The Agrarians too - the bulk of Slovakia's underground democratic opposition or 'Civic-bloc' - supported

---

since tended to see harm in every 'national' idea - a hyper-conscientiousness that proved an important and problematic element in Slovak liberal policy after 1989.

<sup>32</sup> In 1940 Czech and Slovak emigrants opposed to Benes's 'Czechoslovakist' thinking had formed a "Czecho-Slovak National Council" with the goal of securing, in peacetime, a restoration of Czechoslovakia but on federative principles. In Benes's favour, insofar as it secured him the British recognition decisive after the fall of France, was his ability to offer to the allies an entire network of secret service operations in Central Europe. From July 1940 Benes's National Committee was duly recognised as the provisional Czechoslovak government in exile (Rychlik 1995:185-6). Slovakia's hopes of being offered postwar choices were apparently sunk when on 22 July 1941 it joined Germany in the war against the USSR. When Tuka declared war on the USA and the UK (in December 1941) it secured US, UK and USSR recognition of the Czechoslovaks in London (ibid. 186).

Czechoslovakia's restoration, and together with the communists they clandestinely reformed the Slovak National Council. The programme to emerge from the Slovak National Council, the so-called 'Christmas Agreement', called for a restoration of Czechoslovakia but as a federation, on the principle of 'equal with equal'. More successful than Srobar's centralists in penetrating the army, and aided by pro-Czechoslovak officers, the Slovak National Council prepared an anti-L'udak coup: its declared purpose, Czechoslovakia's basic restoration, to be followed by the reconstruction of constitutional relations.

Soviet partisans were dropped into Slovakia in the summer of 1944, and when German troops entered Slovakia on the 29th August, the signal was given for the Slovak National Uprising (Rychlik 1995:187). Its bloody suppression, owing to Soviet non-cooperation, the withholding of promised assistance, and, more bitterly still, to the Soviet veto of the proffered British support (Dubcek 1993:41-50) was, for Czech-Slovak relations, less important than the fact of the Uprising itself.

Following the war the Uprising's main protagonists fell victim to communist historical revisionism and inner-Party tactics, and the consequences of the Uprising are much debated by Slovaks<sup>33</sup>. For Czechs the contribution to the Slovak national stereotype remained unusually constructive - a redeeming act - even though the Party had variously claimed it as a Czech and even Russian-inspired event (Golan 1971:195). According to Jelinek the Uprising "saved Slovak nationalism", acting as a purgative of the idea that Slovak nationalism was collaborationist or 'Ustashist' (Jelinek 1983:75). Future relations however, were hardly simplified, for Slovaks thereafter seemed to claim equality on two conflicting fronts. The Slovak state was taken to have demonstrated Slovakia's competence at self-government, and yet the demise of that same state was assumed proof of the nation's sense of moral responsibility.

---

<sup>33</sup> Sounding ever more distinctly like an émigré L'udak, Kirschbaum argues that 1944 brought down a "tragedy" on the Slovak people and he calls the resistance "accomplices in the imposition on the Slovaks of a state structure and system that was fundamentally inimical to their survival as a nation" (Kirschbaum 1983:291). Vnuk in another variant argues the "revolt was firmly in the hands of local communists with strong nationalist sentiments" - but that the Slovak communists failed: crushed, not by Stalinist strategy but only typically, by their Czech comrades (Vnuk 1983:316).

### **Bolshevik Czechoslovakism 1945-1948**

In March 1945, a still-powerful Slovak National Council had passed a resolution echoing the Christmas Agreement. *The Standpoint and Requirements of the Slovak Nation* proposed that Czechoslovakia be formed as a loose federation - with only foreign trade, defence and foreign affairs to be under central jurisdiction; temporarily, Slovakia was even to be separate in its customs and currency administration (Rychlik 1995:189). When the Slovak National Council met to negotiate reconstitution with the Czechoslovak Government in Moscow in March 1945, it was evident that, while its role in the Uprising and Slovakia's national individuality were recognised and acceptable, federalisation was not. It was the Czechoslovak Communist Party, moreover, that stood at the forefront of Czech efforts to reduce Slovak powers, despite its internal reassurances to the contrary. The Czechoslovak Communist Party was the only power that Slovak communists were unable, following the discipline and context of the time, to resist.

In a programme announced on 5th April in Kosice the Czechoslovak Government promised guarantees of Slovakia's autonomous status. The exact divisions of competence remained to be resolved however, and this ambiguity turned out to be a false hope for the Slovak National Council. Against the Council - still constituted by the Slovak democrats and the communists - were ranged the implicit leverage of Czechoslovak Communist Party discipline but also financial considerations. Slovakia remained the weaker power at the bottom line and continued to rely on a Czech sense of principle and prudence for an equalising constitutional settlement. By the end of May 1945, the Slovak Communist Party was outflanked. They lacked a robust ideological justification for their claims and perhaps more importantly still, they lacked the support of those now Prague-aligned Slovak communists who had not participated in the Uprising (Kirschbaum 1995:227). Fatally for Slovak interests in the future, a joint sessions decree resolved that the Communist Party of Slovakia would become only part of a united Communist Party of Czechoslovakia and be subject to a common leadership (Vnuk 1983:325). The first instruction to Slovak communists was that they drop their federalising proposals. They conceded, convinced that the favourable postwar environment made unanimity crucial.



Follow-up negotiations to the Kosice Programme brought about successive 'Prague Agreements': the first on June 2nd, 1945, the second on 11th April 1946. These Agreements began the steady erosion of Slovak powers. An interim confederative arrangement enshrined in the first gave way to an extension of presidential powers to cover Slovakia in the second, though Slovak MPs maintained some rights of confederative veto (Rychlik 1995:191). Following the humiliation of the senior Slovak communists of the Uprising, Smidke, Husak and Novomesky<sup>34</sup> (Jelinek 1983:92), the wartime common front of the Democratic Party and Slovak communists finally collapsed, leaving the way open to a Czech, and this time communist-led reassertion of centralised power.

The 1946 election revealed to Czech communists the convenient reality of communism's relatively weaker support in Slovakia. For Slovak communists the results meant a fatal and doctrinally inescapable weakening of their still-harboured autonomist platform. On May 26th 1946, the communists triumphed in the Czechs lands with 40.17 per cent of the vote, but were defeated in Slovakia even with 30.37 per cent. The Slovak victors with a massive 62 per cent were the Democratic Party, but a Democratic Party which had secured a deal with moderate L'udaks and so inherited the Catholic vote. In such circumstances the Slovak communists faced chairmanship over a Democratic Party dominated Slovak National Council, as well as their own Party instructions, pressures which made contesting the policy of recentralisation unthinkable. Shortly afterwards the Communist Party invited its partners in the Czech National Front (Social Democratic, National Socialistic and Czechoslovak People's Party) to coordinate in restricting Slovak National powers and curtailing clerical influence (in Vnuk 1983:331).

This result of these events was the Third Prague Agreement of June 28th, which further restricted Slovak authorities to the point that the agreement was signed, not on behalf of the Slovak National Council, but the 'Slovak National Front' (Vnuk 1983:332). When the Agreement was ratified by the Slovak National Council on 16th July 1946, Lettrich,

---

<sup>34</sup> One of the Slovaks now preferred was Siroky; hostile to the 'Uprising Generation', and burdened, for Slovak audiences, with a thick Hungarian accent (ibid.).

chairman of the Council and leader of the Democratic Party, proposed the motion on the understanding that “the Slovaks were making a big sacrifice in the interest of the Republic and expressed the hope that their gesture would find a ready response on the part of the Czechs” (Lettrich: Foreign Office 371/56004/N 9442 in Vnuk 1983:333). The Slovak understanding of ‘Czechoslovakism’ looked set to be reconfirmed regardless, though this time by Czechs who decried the ‘bourgeois’ First Republic’.

Following the communist *coup d’Etat* of February 25th 1948, the all-important Constitutional Committee fell to the disposal of the Party. Grounds for the *coup* had been prepared by Tiso’s trial and execution as a war criminal and the uncovering of a (fabricated) L’udak conspiracy at the centre of the Democratic Party. Prime Minister and soon to be President Klement Gottwald entrenched as far as possible the idea that Prague should maintain strict and central powers. The newly purged Constitutive Assembly abolished the Slovak right to a veto in Slovak affairs on April 16th and on May 9th 1948, it approved the new constitution. This removed those vestiges of autonomy left by the Third Prague Agreement and declared the Czechoslovak republic to be a state of “two Slav nations<sup>35</sup> possessing equal rights” (article II, 1948 constitution in Pechota 1991:8)<sup>36</sup>.

In practice, however, even Slovakia’s constitutional status had become an irrelevance, since legality was now the property not of parliament but of the Presidium of the Central Committee of the Czechoslovak Communist Party and eventually, of its political secretariat. The democratic division of powers was at an end, and of greater significance for Slovakia than constitutional changes was the formal unification of the Slovak Communist Party and the Czechoslovak Communist Party into one in September 1948. Henceforth there would be no ‘outgroups’ in Czechoslovakia.

---

<sup>35</sup> The statement about ‘nations’ and state was at least relatively accurate - following massive (and often brutal) transfers of Magyars and Germans from the country following the war. Though Slovakia remained heterogeneous, the Czechs lands became nationally, more or less homogeneous. Statewide the proportion of Czechs and Slovaks in the population rose from 64 per cent (1921) to 94 per cent (1950) (Leff 1988:93).

<sup>36</sup> Centralisation increased further with the reorganisation of local government (January 1st 1949) and the unification of criminal and civil law in 1950 (Rychlik 1995:193).

The assimilation of the Slovak Communist Party into the Czechoslovak Party occurred almost as a caricature of pre-war democratic developments, and it was viewed by some as an act of Czech revenge<sup>37</sup>. Even after years of the strictest communist indoctrination it was evident that national perspectives filtered perceptions of communist ideology and practice. Those principles supposedly derived from scientific law, such as the belief that material equality dissolved national sensibility, were often readily explained as old-fashioned national manoeuvring. Just as the Stalinist model succeeded only in throwing into relief, rather than evaporating, the Polish and Hungarian national consciousness, so too Czech and Slovak political perspectives remained, at least in part, nationally codified.

After 1948 it was not the liberalising and state-building aspirations of Czechoslovakists that led to investment in Slovak infrastructure but the communist expectation that converging material wealth dissolved national sensibility, among other things. Preferential investment in Slovakia, which began in the 1950s but was particularly accelerated after 1968, was perceived stereotypically by Czechs as merely an intensification of Slovakia's prewar tendency to exploit Czech idealism. On the Slovak side, the communist doctrine of democratic centralism and the leading role of the Party was seen as a minimal facade for continuing centralised rule from Prague. Once again the latter impressions had basis in fact.

### **The 1950s: show trials**

The "Uprising Generation" of Slovak communists had come under the Czech communists' whip hand as early as the Zilina Conference of July 1945, when 'Muscovites' re-established control over Czechoslovak Party reins. Veterans at home and those who had spent the war in the West found themselves severely demoted in the Party hierarchy (Jelinek 1983:86). Demotion, it transpired, was mild when compared with the strategies inflicted on Party members and non-members alike after 1948, when

---

<sup>37</sup> Viewed as the weak link in the Czechoslovak scene by Czech communists, Slovakia fell prey to some paradoxical tactics. In 1947 the Communist Party assisted in fomenting anti-communist activities in Slovakia - the logic being that these would hasten a final takeover (secured with the alleged L'udak conspiracy). "[E]xtra-parliamentary activity, anti-Czech, anti-Czechoslovakia, anti-Communist, and anti-Jewish demonstrations and riots were grist to the Communist mill" (Jelinek 1983:99).

communist leaderships across the region were under pressure to prove their obedience to Moscow.

The Prague leadership responded with the full Stalinisation of the Party and its tactics. When attempts to uncover the true scale of the ensuing political trials were inaugurated under Dubcek's liberalising offices in 1968, reports concluded that some 83,000 citizens had fallen victim (Kaplan 1983:16), even before those persecuted through collectivisation were taken into account. The Catholic Church found itself under pressure at every level: clergy, laymen, believers, and even officials connected to charitable church institutions (Kaplan 1983:20-21). Of greater importance for the position of Slovaks within the communist polity, however, were the trials at the senior Party level.

In accordance with the Stalinist strategy of the time - random and targeted terror - Klement Gottwald purged the Party of those prominent Slovaks who had ever proposed improvements in Slovakia's political status, and those whom the Party could usefully suspect of such a thing. Relatively unsurprising was the crushing of the Democratic Party - its membership of over 300,000 was reduced to a few hundred officials (Kaplan 1983:9). More shocking was the swathe cut through communist veterans of the Uprising and the wartime partisan struggle. In Slovakia, all but three of the political commissars and commanders of the partisan movement were arrested and the army *en bloc* found itself 'beheaded' of its experienced officer corps (Kaplan 1983:21). Some 273 top Party officials were tried between 1952-4, the two main characteristics of the trials being firstly that those Party-faithful who had helped establish the existing system and had been the Party's backbone through the war were now in the dock, and secondly, that these trials were a direct reflection of Soviet international interests (Kaplan 1983:23). The trials of the early 1950s<sup>38</sup> were directed at three distinct groups in senior Party positions: those who had spent time abroad ('cosmopolitans', 'Titoists'), Jews ('Zionists') and Slovak 'nationalists' - ('bourgeois nationalists').

---

<sup>38</sup> Often referred to as the 'Slansky process' after the trial's most senior victim and supposed ringleader, Rudolf Slansky (Secretary General of the Party). The particular persecution of Jews reflected the USSR's changing policy in the Middle East and the rising prevalence and exploitation of anti-Semitism in the USSR (Kaplan 1983:23).

Top-level purges had begun in earnest when the Central Committee expelled thirteen members and two candidates of this senior Party organ in February 1951. Amongst the expellees were the veterans Gustav Husak, Ladislav Novomesky and Karol Smidke - already reprimanded for "bourgeois nationalism" at the Ninth congress of the Slovak party in 1950 (Suda 1980:247). During trials designated for 'nationalists', Husak was jailed under a life sentence<sup>39</sup>, and Novomesky sentenced to ten years for the "betrayal", paradoxically, of the Slovak National Uprising. By associating these 'bourgeois nationalists' with allegations of 'Zionism' (11 out of the 13 senior communists executed in the trials were Jews - testimony to the psychology of the spectacle), it has been suggested that, given Slovak anti-Semitism, efforts were made to discredit popular Slovak leaders before their coming to trial (Leff 1988:167). The cold-bloodedly tactical nature of the purges, aimed first and foremost at appeasing Moscow, was nevertheless undeniably terrible for Slovakia, silencing many of its most respected leaders and coming as it did a mere five years after the constitutional promises following the end of the war. Any political expression of Slovak national feeling, grievance or aspiration, even, as it underwent forced heavy-industrialisation and collectivisation was rendered taboo not just through the 1950s, but for the foreseeable future.

Stalinism ensured that Slovaks experienced only the repression of the burning issues of their political culture - national recognition and equality of representation. Czech national chauvinism was arguably no longer necessary when assertions of national identity were systematically excluded. Though Slovaks would eventually rise to the very top of the communist ladder their experiences of the 1950s as a nation are essential in explaining how antagonistic were common Czech insinuations, after 1968 and again after 1989, that communism had been a system somehow more of Slovakia's making, more sympathetic to their putative 'primitive political culture' and supposed welfare-scrounger mentality.

---

<sup>39</sup> An experience which, to Dubcek's lasting horror, did not prevent Husak from launching a second wave of purges and punishments when installed as First Secretary following the repression of Prague Spring in August 1968.

### 1968 - Bratislava Spring?

By 1963 it was clear that the Czechoslovak economy was beginning to stagnate. In such circumstances Slovakia looked set to lose the preferential investment that had revolutionised its economy in the 1950s, a prospect which could only draw together two taboo issues of nationality and systemic change. Events abroad underscored the potential for upheaval. When Nikita Khrushchev went public with his denunciation of Stalinism at the Twenty-second Congress of the Soviet Communist Party in October 1961, even Czechoslovakia's most habituated Stalinists could not withstand the pressure to acknowledge past excesses. Though thousands of victims of Stalinist injustices were discretely released the state as yet balked at the idea of public redress. Many in Novotny's regime, including Novotny himself<sup>40</sup>, were all too evidently implicated in the brutality they were now expected to unmask and criticise.

First Secretary Novotny had cremated Gottwald's embalmed remains and had accepted that the massive statue of Stalin overlooking Prague be removed. Tokenism, however, was his limit. When the up-and-coming Slovak *apparatchik* Alexander Dubcek pressed for political rehabilitations and articulated the problems of Slovak underdevelopment, it seemed highly likely that Party hard-liners would teach him the lessons conventionally reserved for 'nationalists' (Dubcek 1993:83). Dubcek not only survived these attempts, testimony in itself to the growing weakness of the Novotny regime, but he even found himself on a commission investigating the political crimes of the 1950s.

When the shocking results of the Kolder Commission were presented to the Central Committee in April 1963, Dubcek again protested for comprehensive rehabilitations, including the clearing of all accused of 'bourgeois nationalism'<sup>41</sup> (Dubcek 1993:86). The report was made public in August 1963, and it added to the stir caused by Khrushchev's attempted reforms of the 'model' Soviet system. In April in Slovakia, Dubcek had sharply criticised the current Slovak First Secretary, Karol Bacilek, for his part in the repression and had been chosen as Bacilek's replacement. Though Novotny

---

<sup>40</sup> Novotny was a secretary of the Party, 1951-3 and first secretary, 1953-68, combining this with the Presidency of the Republic after 19.11.1957.

<sup>41</sup> These included Gustav Husak. Dubcek found Husak a place at the Slovak Institute of History, where he applied himself to the history of the Slovak National Uprising (Dubcek 1993:93).

tried to overwhelm him with placemen the Slovak party, having assimilated its success in defying Novotny, rallied to Dubcek (Dubcek 1993:87). Leff's assessment, that "weak as the KSS [Slovak Communist Party] and the Slovak National Council were in the years following 1948, both would retain the capacity to serve as nationalist time bombs" renders only one side of the development. Dubcek's rise in Slovakia undoubtedly carved out not only national, but reformist territory inside the always prone, too repressively centralised state.

The reaction of the Slovak press was increasing openness. In spring 1963, the weekly of the Union of Slovak Writers, *Kulturny Zivot* (Cultural Life) began to address the formerly taboo. With a circulation of over 100,000 *Kulturny Zivot* was one of the few publications with a state-wide circulation and readership. The Slovak Party paper *Pravda* also began to criticise Party policy (Dubcek 1993:89) - an unheard of apostasy. A war of attrition ensued between Dubcek, the growing body of Czech and Slovak reformers at his side, and the old guard. From 1963 onwards Dubcek's activity could not but reawaken Slovak hankerings after a more routinised power<sup>42</sup>, significant institutional change - even federalism<sup>43</sup>.

The Slovak writers congress in April 1963 brought forth bitter accounts of earlier repression and recriminations against their still high-ranking instigators<sup>44</sup>. The growing debate in *Pravda* Prague considered the most heinous breach of discipline, and in June 1963 Novotny instructed the Slovak Party to restrain this Party organ - an action acknowledging that Slovak structures had broken out beyond the control of the centre (Leff 1988:111). Though the reforming elite remained embattled for several years, the

---

<sup>42</sup> In 1964 Dubcek succeeded in wresting a limited expansion of National Council powers - another sign of the holding operation underway at the centre. The remnants of Slovak national institutions left after 1948 actually made Prague extremely prone to demands that they be operationalised when reformist moments arose (Leff 1988:112).

<sup>43</sup> In August 1964 the Slovak National Uprising was accorded some real recognition, with Krushev and Novotny attending celebrations. There was even some acknowledgement of Slovak non-communist, as well as communist participation in the event (Golan 1971:195). Only months before his own downfall in October 1967 Novotny resorted to visiting Slovakia in an attempt to improve his image there. The visit however, resulted in a catalogue of tactical disasters. Most extraordinary was Novotny's suggestion that *Matica slovenska* move its museum to Prague. *Matica slovenska* or 'Mother Slovakia', was Slovakia's main cultural organisation. Founded in 1861 it had since then safeguarded Slovak language/literature and was synonymous with national survival. As Dubcek observed with glee, following this spectacle "relations between Novotny and Slovaks of almost all stripes became irreparable" (Dubcek 1993:115).

<sup>44</sup> A precursor to the far more famous and feted 'Czechoslovak' writers congress in June 1967.

failure of censorship was a sign that when Novotny went, he would be swept by a tide. “By the end of 1963” Dubcek observed, “Slovakia continued to be a favourable environment for social and political criticism, one at which Czechs looked with envy” (Dubcek 1993:95). When the showdown was finally accomplished in 1967 nevertheless, the Slovak question emerged as only one point in the catalogue of failure to which the regime was finally called to account (Leff 1988:119). Czechs fearful that Dubcek might come to the fore of the Party as a nationalist were reassured of his even-handedness within a few months of his eventual Party leadership, when they rated him highly (Leff 1988:171). The Central Committee duly elected Dubcek first Secretary on January 3, 1968, leaving Novotny the Presidency only until March 22nd.

#### **‘Federalisation’ - a compromise**

Since 1948 the idea of federalisation had obviously lingered in the shadow form of institutional asymmetry *i.e.* the Slovak organs without Czech equivalents, and the Slovak branch of the Communist Party subordinate to the Czechoslovak Party. These circumstances had encouraged the already strong tendency of Czechs to identify Czechoslovak institutions as correspondingly Czech - a fact decried in 1968 in Dubcek’s Action Programme<sup>45</sup> - the agenda of the radical reformist period under Dubcek’s leadership that has come to be known as the ‘Prague Spring’. On May 15th, 1968, a committee was established to prepare a draft law on federalisation. The Slovak National Council unilaterally prepared a draft proposing two semi-independent states: the Czech Republic and Slovak Republic, in which the federation was reduced to an ‘umbrella construction’ with powers mainly over defence and foreign policy. The Czechs presented two different drafts. One suggested a strong federation, the other also proposed, remarkably and for the first time, a looser bond between the two republics, though in a version as yet unacceptable to the Slovaks (Rychlik 1995:196)<sup>46</sup>.

---

<sup>45</sup> This stated “that the very asymmetrical arrangement was unsuited by its very character to express the relations between two independent nations, because it expressed the standings of the two nations differently. The difference was mainly in the fact that the Czech national bodies were identical with the national central ones.... This prevented the Slovak nation, to all intents and purposes, from taking an equal share in the creation and realisation of a country-wide policy” (Action Programme, reproduced in Remington, 1969:107).

<sup>46</sup> In his discussion of Slovak nationalism after 1989, Kusy argues that; “Just as in 1968, this nationalist wave included a whole series of communist activists and members and agents of the former State Security”. The slur is disingenuous in the extreme - the participants in the radical Prague writers conference during the Prague spring was made up overwhelmingly of both Party members and intellectuals who had set their



In June 1968 the National Assembly approved the “Constitutional Law on the Preparation of the Federation”, founding at last a Czech National Council as an equivalent institution to the Slovak National Council. Slovak rights of veto were also reintroduced for matters covering Slovak national interests - the principle previously cancelled by the Prague Agreements. The members of the new Czech National Council were not to be elected but ‘presented’ by the National Front however; a reflection, no doubt, of the continuing Czech perception that the Czech National Council could only be a useless body, so long as the state National Assembly continued to exist (Rychlik 1995:196). Tragically, even this was put in doubt when on August 21st 1968, five armies of the Warsaw Pact occupied Czechoslovakia and Dubcek was taken, separated from his colleagues and blindfolded, to Moscow.

Though many among Dubcek’s supporters realised that there was no surer way to reinforce the state than by fulfilling Slovak aspirations as quickly as possible (Leff 1988:124), clearly not all Czechs understood enlightened self-interest in the same way. In the commentary of the time it was not unusual to find the birth of the Czech republic interpreted as “an exigency to which the Slovaks have led us... Czech public opinion understands the federalisation of Czechoslovakia in no way as their victory, but as historical necessity” (J. Lederer, *Reporter* 23.1.1969, quoted in Leff 1988:125). The Czech right after 1989 were to take this sentiment only one stage further, and argue that the supposed heroism of the communist reformists had done nothing but create a selfish factional struggle that lead the whole country back to the Soviet administered Dark Ages.

The Soviets themselves nevertheless followed the lesson of the ‘Slovak’ time bomb, and applied their own experience of exploiting constitutional guarantees. Back in 1960 in Czechoslovakia a new constitution had been created for the sole purpose of signalling the supposed elevation of Czechoslovakia from the ‘socialist stage’ of development to that of its embarkation upon ‘communism’ proper. The constitution of July 11th 1960, had claimed that “socialism has triumphed in our country” (Declaration, in Pechota

---

youthful faith in communism. Kusy’s rhetoric is a good example of the outlandish stereotypical view that only Slovaks participated actively in ‘extremist politics’, *i.e.* nationalism and communism (Kusy 1995:142).

1991:9) and through it a “socialist democracy” had replaced the vaunted “people’s democracy” of 1948<sup>47</sup>. An exercise in self-designated legitimation in the absence of any organic progress, the 1960 constitution had neglected to address Slovak autonomy even more than had its predecessor: it had even abolished the already powerless Board of Commissioners. Dubcek’s Action Programme had proposed a reconstitution of the emasculated Slovak National Council as a working legislature and the establishment of a Slovak Council of Ministers as an executive - both to be animated by an enhancement of Slovak competences (Pechota 1991:12). It was agreed, with Soviet encouragement, that the changes would be formally promulgated as of October 28th 1968.

As it transpired, Constitutional Act 143/1968 recognised the inalienable right of the Czech and Slovak nations to self-determination to the point of secession, but also explicitly and importantly for post-1989 discussions, the essential ‘sovereignty’ of the republics: the Czech Socialist Republic and the Slovak Socialist Republic. The relationship of republic to federation was to be based formally on cooperation rather than subordination. The federal government and its organs could supposedly perform activities on the territory of the republics only given explicit legal authorisation (Hendrych and Jicinsky in Hendrych 1993:46). A federal bicameral parliament was to be the supreme legislative body of the state and this would become tricameral when considering constitutional legislation, which would have to pass by a three-fifths majority in both the Chamber of the People and the now nationally separated Chambers of the Nations. The constitution provided a consociational guarantee against ‘*majorizacie*’ - the power of the majority nation to outvote the other on issues involving national interests.

The federal package to emerge was nevertheless even theoretically inconsistent. Though parity was a main characteristic of parliamentary structures, including committees, the principle was not applied to ministerial or government appointments, where majority rule continued (Leff 1988:127). As post-invasion ‘normalisation’ took

---

<sup>47</sup> Article III of the 1948 constitution set out the principles of the new economy, based on the “nationalisation of mineral wealth, industry, the wholesale trade and of finance”, empowering the state to direct “all economic activity by a uniform economic plan” (Pechota 1991: 9). Though ‘protected’ by the constitution, the private sector was practically eliminated by 1950.

hold, the re-shaped Federal Assembly was also practically as toothless as those that had gone before. Though the Federation law was based on divided sovereignty 'from below', the pyramidal nature of the communist system once again dictated that power came from above - not from government, but from Party structures, according to the principle of democratic centralism (Rychlik 1995:197). The consociational virtues of the constitution protected nobody - and its confederative elements (foreign policy, defence, currency, federal material reserves and federal legislation were the only policies supposedly under the exclusive purview of federal organs (Rychlik 1995:196) - were likewise a facade. The 1968 amendments to the 1960 constitution, while rapidly overruled in practice, were also formally weakened by amendments in 1970 which further diluted the original division of competences. Even before 1970, a fatal blow had fallen with the Soviet-enforced prevention of the federalisation of the Party. Also proposed in the Action Programme, Communist Party federalisation had been seen as an essential condition for the real differentiation of policy, viewed by Slovak economists back in the early 1960s as vital for the revitalisation of the Czechoslovak economy as a whole. Through the 1970s and 1980s Czechoslovakia was reestablished as a pillar of orthodoxy, surpassed in its conservatism only by East Germany<sup>48</sup>.

### **Between Scylla and Charybdis**

Though public support for reform had become marginally deeper and better defined in the Czech lands than in Slovakia - an unsurprising consequence of the former's longer history of self-government - 1968 was neither intrinsically nor solely a Czech phenomenon. The abiding Czech historical perception that it was, that democratic rather than structural reform impulses were essentially Czech, came from an important continuity in Czech political expectations. As Rychlik has concluded: "[t]he Czech population considered the Czechoslovak Republic to be their state and, in general, had no objections to the centralised system. Czech demands were for democratisation" (Rychlik 1995:195). These same preconceptions have tended to blur the extent to which

---

<sup>48</sup> Husak's post-invasion desertion to the forces of repression was a ready signal to many Czechs that Slovakia's prior engagement with reform had been motivated by nationalist expedience rather than democratic instinct (Leff 1988:174).

Slovaks perceived federalisation not just as a good in itself<sup>49</sup>, a narrowly nationalistic demand, but as a peculiarly Slovak prerequisite for those same democratic goods supposedly desired only by the Czechs. Alexander Dubcek, a Slovak who had fought as a partisan during the National Uprising, and had as strong an awareness of anyone of Slovakia's impoverished past, was also a socialist of almost Fabian instincts, with profound beliefs in the necessity of democratic freedoms. As he insisted subsequently, "I was not so naive as not to see that it would only take time before the changes we made yielded to a full multi-party democracy. I knew that, and Brezhnev knew that, of course. So why won't the critics see it?" (Dubcek 1993:277). Despite this, 'normalisation' worked retrospectively in terms of public sentiment. The particular conformism of the Slovak Party *apparatus* following 1968 appears to have effectively eradicated from the Czech memory all recollection of the highly contrasting state of affairs in Slovakia in the early sixties.

More than any other period during communism, the aftermath of the so-called Prague Spring returned to the political surface existing national stereotypes and reinforced them for another generation. The phenomenon of reinforcement has been discussed by Leff, who points out that far from engendering new prejudices, the events of 1968 to a striking degree only reworked the old: recycling, rather than reinterpreting the past (Leff 1988:163). The despair felt by both reformist Czechs and Slovaks at the destruction of 'socialism with a human face' moreover, lent a distinct bitterness to the charges that emerged in the aftermath. Two of the most enduring views to emerge from the '68 experiment and its demise would greatly inform evaluations of the 'other side' during disputes in the democratic 1990s. As summarised below they are composites of several views, but on occasions the composites could be found consistently in both public sentiment and the political allusions prevailing after 1989:-

### **The Czech view**

Though there was an attempt among Czech politicians of the right after 1989 to play down the popularity as such of the '68 reform movement, demoting it to a factional

---

<sup>49</sup> The scale of Party efforts to suppress the notion of Slovak national identity can be seen from the fact that until 1968 Bratislava had no formal legitimacy as a Slovak political centre, or capital (Leff 1988:107). This omission of institutional recognition reminded Slovaks of their predicament under Hungarian rule.

battle between two Party cliques (see Klaus 1994), a second mainstream Czech view remained which maintained that the liberalising impulses of 1968 were intrinsically Czech. According to this view Czechs alone had called for cultural and political emancipation, and Prague had formed the centre of radical activity. Slovak reformers, this view insists, worried only about Slovakia's status. As Petr Pithart, Czech Prime Minister between 1990 and 1992 put it; *"The reform movement which culminated in 1968 bore the distinct seal of the Czech genius loci. Slovakia left its mark in its emphasis on a greater degree of national self-determination, which could only mean a weakening of the democrats' position"* (1995:204). According to this reading, Slovakia remained more watchful and typically conservative, if not indifferent to rolling back the communist state. Slovakia's real endeavours were opportunist and, worse still, selfishly nationalistic - as after Munich 1938, they had shamed not just their nation but also the state after 1968, by salvaging from its humiliation. Nationalism, according to an old, and now repeated Czech saw, always brought out the worst in the Slovak tendency toward primitive politics, vehemence and self-dramatisation, something the liberal and rational Czechs had always found hard to understand. Slovakia sought only federalisation out of the revolutionary flux in 1968, and engaged in a Faustian bargain to secure it with the Soviet occupiers while all other aspirations were crushed and buried under 'normalisation' (1968-1989). With federalisation secured, Slovaks exploited their 'fifth column' status to extract massive Czech subsidies for Slovak industry, and encouraged Soviet patronage and protection.

### **The Slovak view**

Not surprisingly the Slovak version of events begs to differ. From their perspective, the events of 1968 amounted only to the fuller realisation of the Slovak reformist movement and Dubcek's influence. These had already taken hold in Slovakia in the early 1960s, when Slovak economists insisted that the economy required liberalisation and a parallel, political opening. These facts were lost in an international glamourisation of 1968 which focussed entirely on Prague, more beautiful and sophisticated as that venue was. While the Czech Novotny still clamped down on the Czechs, Slovakia had enjoyed so much freedom in its publishing that censored Czechs had sought refuge in Bratislava publishing houses - another fact forgotten in the 1970s

and 1980s, when the dissident movement was, for reasons far more complicated than can be expressed in the term 'political culture', disproportionately Czech.

Dubcek, Novotny's undoing, the undisputed instigator of state-wide Party reform and the democratising April "Action Programme", this exasperated view points out, was a Slovak. Not a Czechoslovakist Slovak or an opportunist Slovak, but a reasonable Slovak. The continued pursuit of federalisation was an attempt to wrest at least some good, and a good already long promised and repeatedly denied, from Czechoslovakia's shattered sovereignty - relatively acceptable to the Soviets as the idea was. Finally, and crucially, though the Czechs never stopped complaining about it, federalisation under communism turned out to be a sham, a constitutional facade for continuing centralised power. Czechs remained in the driving seat and deep down still begrudged all Slovak attempts to build even economic equality, Slovakia's only real compensation for being in the state in the first place. Federalisation of the Party had never been permitted and Slovaks had found themselves politically unarmed. After 1968 they could no longer even demand 'federalisation' since formally it existed, and the national issue had once again become taboo.

Czech-Slovak political debate after 1989 was shot through with allusions to national characteristics and aspirations as if they had been defined forever by these past events. Though such allusions were commonly used to give rhetorical weight to pragmatic requests, their influence over the general national discourse remained strong and, as expressions of morally absolutist conviction, inimical to negotiation. To the observer who recognises in this discourse the very hallmarks of nationalism, the unfolding of the full story may prove surprising. Stranger still than a thorough nationalist certitude was the cool facility, the episodic and glib manner, with which many Czech and Slovak politicians engaged in the theatrical use of nationally-referenced and nationalist rhetoric in the new, and supposedly democratic era. After 1989, as we shall see, the expression of national concerns was recognised as one of the few available ways of forestalling and manipulating political debate, not just about the state, but about the nature of communism, justice, capitalism, liberalism and even democracy.

## **Chapter 2**

### **Ends Justify Means - Arranging the Czechoslovak Separation**

#### **Introduction**

In the anti-communist tide which erupted and swept across East Central Europe at the end of 1989, few political transformations inspired as much optimism as the ‘velvet revolution’ in Czechoslovakia. The installation in that state’s presidency of a *bona fides* philosopher king, Vaclav Havel, exemplified the tale: the dissident playwright who for years had been exhorting his countrymen to retrieve their moral integrity and to ‘live in truth’ had finally won the castle<sup>1</sup>. This redemptive beginning, however, was all too soon overshadowed by decidedly earthly crises: economic collapse, social uncertainty and political fragmentation. Under such pressures even the almost notoriously unprejudiced Havel could not keep the state from finally splintering along the fault-line of its national divisions.

Czech and Slovak anti-communist elites were confirmed in government in free elections in June 1990, after which all agreed that the state itself must be reestablished in a democratic form. Beyond the recognition of this basic need, however, Czechs and Slovaks could not agree. Their initially consensual decision to create new constitutions for both the federation and each of the constituent republics launched a series of inter-governmental and cross-party talks which ended in deadlock, broken only through the general election of June 1992. The 1992 election evicted the former dissident elite from office and brought into government more pragmatic and populist politicians who had made their reputations in the brief interval of ‘transition’. This chapter describes in detail their response to the national question, the six-month ‘endgame’ from June to December 1992 during which the separation was decided upon, arranged and completed. A blow-by-blow account is essential if one is to make any sense of the highly theatrical rhetoric of the time. The purpose of the chapter is to establish the character of the divorce which the remainder of the thesis then endeavours to explain.

---

<sup>1</sup> For an analytical account of the revolutionary period across Eastern Central Europe see Banac, I. (1992), which includes Tony Judt’s excellent summary of Czechoslovak developments.

The blueprint for divorce was decided within weeks of the June 1992 election by the leaders of the victorious parties - former factions within the anti-communist successor movements - the right-wing Czech Civic Democratic Party (CDP) led by the economist, Vaclav Klaus, and the populist Movement for a Democratic Slovakia (MDS), led by the lawyer, Vladimir Meciar. An examination of this post-1992 election period suggests that government accountability, as it reflected public opinion, was virtually nil. Federal, Slovak and to a lesser extent, Czech parliamentary machineries were overwhelmed by the speed of CDP-MDS decisions, which proceeded after the election unchecked by constitutional constraints such as the constitutionally required referendum, or a veto by the constitutional court - despite the public's opposition. The resulting separation as *fait accompli* revealed more explicitly than at any other time since the revolution the systematic weaknesses in Czechoslovakia's democratic institutions.

The new Slovak leader, Vladimir Meciar, had insisted when post-election talks began in Brno on June 8th 1992 that Slovak independence was "not a point in the MDS programme". However, Vaclav Klaus's Civic Democratic Party had campaigned before the June election against the republican erosion of federal powers and for a return to a centralised *status quo*. A vote for the confederalist-sounding model being touted by Meciar in Slovakia, Klaus had argued, would amount to a Slovak vote for the division of the state. As this chapter reveals, the Czech right's position of centralised 'federation or bust' duly emerged in negotiations as an absolute, and before June was out Meciar admitted "if we talk about independence it is not because we want it, but because we must" (*Rude pravo* 25.6.1992:3). Meciar's belief that the Czechs might have been strong-armed into some form of confederation had proved baseless.

As negotiations progressed seemingly inexorably toward separation, Meciar, without a mandate to split the state, attempted to postpone the full public disclosure of the decisions being made and, more riskily, to adjust and delay their execution. As holders of all significant concession-giving power, Klaus's Civic Democratic Party indulged the Movement for a Democratic Slovakia only insofar as doing so smoothed the selling of separation to a disappointed Slovak population. If Klaus was indifferent to Meciar's



rag-bag of strategic hold-ups he was not indifferent to Meciar's ability to deliver the final outcome. Indeed, it is the historical paradox of the Czechoslovak divorce that it was the Czech and not the Slovak will to state separation which finally proved implacable. To undermine Czech claims that the Movement for a Democratic Slovakia had always been schemingly secessionist, the reincarnation of prewar Slovak separatism, one need only observe the pantomimic state to which the Slovak party was reduced when faced by Klaus in power in the Czech republic. As Theodore Draper observed, "it was as if Meciar pounded at Klaus's door without really wanting to knock it down; to Meciar's surprise, Klaus opened the door, and Meciar fell in" (1993:26).

### **June 1992**

The post-election agenda consisted of the appointments for federal and republican governments, ministries and institutions on the one hand, and negotiations over the future state structure on the other. Klaus maintained that his Civic Democratic Party saw "scope for negotiations" with the Movement for a Democratic Slovakia and argued that "manoeuvring space exists on both sides" (*Prostor* 8.6.1992:1). He also warned that the country would split if negotiations failed, implying that both parties would indeed manoeuvre. In fact, as throughout the constitutional talks which had begun in 1990 and continued in various forms until their collapse in February 1992, two issues put these new post-election negotiations into instant and familiar gridlock: the recognition of Slovak sovereignty and the indivisibility of economic policy across the republics.

According to Meciar the Movement for a Democratic Slovakia had succeeded in Slovakia because of its criticism of federal economic policy, a policy which in contrast to Czech conditions had "deepened the general economic crisis in Slovakia". Following the June 1992 election Meciar proposed a delay in the creation of a federal government in order to attain two "structural changes". In the first, an interim government would be formed to function until a referendum. In the second, new bodies would be constituted on the basis of the referendum's results. "The crucial thing", Meciar determined, "is whether Czecho-Slovakia will become two states or not. We insist on a treaty of cooperation which would respect the existence of the two legal entities from

the viewpoint of international law". Underlining this demand for an apparently loose confederation, Meciar also suggested that a provision for the post of Slovak President be included in a Slovak constitution to be approved by the end of August (*Pravda* 8.6.1992:1,2). The Civic Democratic Party, without any stomach for any such unprecedented state re-engineering, even as an opening gambit, dug in its heels and waited.

When Meciar's Movement for a Democratic Slovakia, the (Slovak) Party of the Democratic Left (PDL) and Jozef Prokes' Slovak National Party (SNP) took the most obvious path and cooperated in the Federal Assembly over representation they provoked full-blown conspiracy-theorising in the Czech press. Czech commentary insisted that a Slovak leftist/nationalist government would give Meciar the upper-hand in negotiations, where, with a "broad smile", he could "dictate the conditions", warmed by the "admiring glances... from Czech left-wing forces, mainly the Communists" (Ivo Slavik, in *Mlada Fronta dnes* 9.6.1992). Another commentator, Jiri Leschtina, warned that Movement for a Democratic Slovakia, Party of the Democratic Left and Slovak National Party unity in the Federal Assembly was intended to "assure left-wing control over Parliament"; a real bogey in the light of the now likely Slovak veto of Vaclav Havel as Federal President<sup>2</sup> (*Mlada Fronta dnes* 12.6.1992). Klaus in turn engaged the Czech right, whom he trusted not to retreat in the event of any showdown between a common state and the continuation of unmodified economic reform: the Christian Democratic Party (Christ.DP), the Christian Democratic Union-Czechoslovak People's Party (CDU-CPP) and the Civic Democratic Alliance (CDA) (*Mlada Fronta dnes* 9.6.1992:1). He also appealed to 'constructive' prejudices and stressed the cost of protracted negotiations<sup>3</sup>.

The details of the first round of Civic Democratic Party-Movement for a Democratic Slovakia talks, in Brno on June 8th, emerged amid acrimony. Meciar's spokesman announced that Klaus's CDP had demanded either a federation with a uniform economy

---

<sup>2</sup> As later chapters will clarify, Havel's presidency had become increasingly unpopular in Slovakia, where he was seen as aloof, patronising in relation to Slovakia's national preoccupations and neglectful of Slovakia's concerns.

<sup>3</sup> Though Klaus did not resist the claim that while the Czech right struggled for consensus the Communists exploited the situation to recover power (*Lidove noviny* 18.6.1992:1,3).

or a state split and “sanctions against Slovakia”. “A complete lie” according to Klaus, who said that not only was the term “sanctions” never used but the Slovaks had dropped the term ‘confederation’ for ‘economic and defence community / union’ (*Rude pravo* 11.6.1992:1,2). Undisputed differences had centred on Klaus’s definition of a re-centralising ‘functioning federation’, the continuation of radical economic reform and the re-election of Vaclav Havel as Federal President. The only agreement was on the need to reduce the size of the Federal government and the powers of the Federal Assembly Chairman (*Cesky denik* 15.6.1992). According to the pro-Civic Democratic Party Czech newspaper *Telegraf* the Movement for a Democratic Slovakia had proposed an interim federal government to transfer responsibilities from federal to republican bodies, with parity membership and without executive responsibilities; two independent states with a common leadership of two independent armies; the continuation of a common currency with two issuing banks; the declaration of sovereignty at the first session of the Slovak National Council (23rd June); approval of a Slovak constitution and finally, election of a Slovak president - in sum, a division of the state, according to Vaclav Klaus (*Telegraf* 11.6.1992).

As it turned out, the Movement for a Democratic Slovakia was ill-prepared to be taken literally on any of the above. If their agenda is interpreted as an opening strategy, a starting bid for the highest possible stakes, Meciar had acted on a fatal miscalculation of Klaus’s amenability to anything short of Slovakia’s full capitulation. On the question of forming new governments, the Civic Democratic Party’s Jan Strasky had assured that his party would wait on the outcome of “at least” two rounds of talks before distributing its forces. With this minimal commitment however, he had also delivered an unambiguous warning message. “In the case of a partition [*sic*] of Czechoslovakia” said Strasky, “Vaclav Klaus will lead a strong Czech government” (*Mlada Fronta dnes* 11.6.1992:1,2).

Before the next round of talks, in Prague on June 11th, the Civic Democratic Party’s Miroslav Macek maintained that “we are due to discuss a full federation or the division of the state. Not a third way” (*Cesky denik* 15.6.1992). As this round of talks concluded Klaus lamented the lack of progress, while Meciar remained

uncharacteristically silent. The negotiations had stalled again on the possibility of international personality for Slovakia (permitting membership in international organizations such as the United Nations, a point much cited by the Czech side), but also over the deadline for the formation of a Federal government and Czechoslovak presidential elections. The session had become further mired in a discussion of separate central banks and a single currency, rejected by Klaus as leading inevitably to economic and currency collapse. On the Slovak side, the MDS Vice-Chairman Michal Kovac insisted that his party programme made no provision for splitting the state and did not aim for that end. The Movement for a Democratic Slovakia, according to Kovac, wanted a free union of two 'sovereign' states and demanded a referendum to decide the matter - the referendum promised in the MDS election campaign - which would ask citizens if they wished to live in the federation, a free union, or in an independent state. Klaus's response was to claim wariness of 'continuing uncertainty' and to suggest that a referendum be held in Slovakia alone, making Slovakia potentially the seceding nation; he even offered to assist in hastening the deadline for its declaration. The Movement for a Democratic Slovakia, fearing for its successor rights, retreated, objecting that a referendum could not be rushed but was being considered for the end of 1992 (*Lidove noviny, Mlada Fronta dnes* 12.6.1992:1,2). Despite Strasky's warning, Meciar's Movement for a Democratic Slovakia thus squandered the last purportedly 'open' round of talks.

Having had his opening terms dismissed as preposterous Meciar stressed that his party's interests were to find a form of coexistence beneficial to both republics, claiming he 'did not understand' Klaus's doubts as to whether the Czechs would wait for the results. In Bratislava Meciar again declared to journalists "neither the Civic Democratic Party nor the Movement for a Democratic Slovakia has a mandate to divide the state!" (*Prace* 13.6.1992). Backpedalling swiftly on the prerequisites for forming a Federal government Meciar claimed that the MDS now agreed with the CDP in the sphere of central monetary policy but differed on tax, customs and pricing policy, which they maintained should be implemented at the republican level (*Svobodne slovo, Lidove noviny* 13.6.1992).

Both sides had agreed to continue negotiations on the following Sunday but the Movement for a Democratic Slovakia cancelled, broadcasting their confusion. Meciar told his party's presidium that if the Czechs continued to seek the *status quo* he would favour partition, a stand he later vociferously denied (*Mlada Fronta dnes* 15.6.1992). Though Meciar was clearly happier to bargain from a position of obstinacy if not as a credible negotiator the strategy carried a high degree of political risk. Given Klaus as an opponent this strategy would make divorce inevitable, and the Movement, as Meciar had pointed out, possessed no mandate for separation. In addition to public dismay, the prospect of a split appalled many of Meciar's own most able and senior colleagues within the party. In this dire predicament, the MDS presidium nevertheless instructed its deputies to oppose Vaclav Havel's re-election. They also issued an open letter to their 'fellow-citizens', thanking them for their support in spite of "slanders, crude invectives and intimidation spread in pro-federal and some foreign media...". The letter promised that talks would lead to results acceptable to both sides (*Mlada Fronta dnes* 15.6.1992).

Only days after the second round the Party of the Democratic Left retreated from its alliance with the Movement for a Democratic Slovakia, despite its long-stated interest in a federation with confederative elements. Balking at Meciar's already obvious inability to 'manoeuvre' without completing a *volte face*, the Democratic Left declared that it had quite different opinions on tackling mutual relations with the Czech Republic and that a full confederation did not constitute a common state. As it transpired, Meciar was determined to form a government alone (with 74 seats in the Slovak National Council he was only two votes short of an absolute majority), confident as he remained of the basic support of both the Democratic Left and Slovak National Party (*Svobodne slovo, Lidove noviny* 13.6.1992). The Czech opposition Left Bloc (LB), meanwhile expressed the state of general bewilderment among the Czech left, and protested to President Havel that the Civic Democratic Party and the Movement for a Democratic Slovakia had both exceeded their electoral and constitutional mandates (*Lidove noviny* 13.6.1992:8). The President met with Meciar on the 15th, and though Meciar expressed his party's willingness to tackle economic issues, he refused to compromise on Slovakia's international legal personality, the cornerstone of the loose confederative

arrangement. Dismayed, Havel promoted the calling of a referendum in both republics as soon as possible, maintaining that this was an issue for the citizenry (*Mlada Fronta dnes* 16.6.1992)<sup>4</sup>.

The third round of talks took place on June 17th at the Civic Democratic Party's Prague headquarters. Before the meeting the CDP declared itself for an unambiguous decision either to create a federal coalition or a caretaker federal government to oversee separation. The CDP also proposed that the week's meetings should constitute the final political negotiations (*Telegraf* 17.6.1992). In the midst of the talks Klaus was reported to have explicitly reproached the Slovak side for seeking "Czech finance for Slovak independence" and to have asked "[a]re you a proud nation or are you not?", to which Meciar is said to have replied: "Each for himself". This retort is supposed by many commentators to have been the Movement for a Democratic Slovakia's ultimate admission of implacable separatism (Vodicka 1993:94) and the motivation behind Klaus's subsequent decision to become Czech premier. This interpretation however, confuses real Czech decisions with the opportune moment for their announcement. The Rubicon had clearly been crossed before the meeting, arguably before negotiations had even begun, since compromise depended not only on the Slovaks' but on the Czechs' willingness to soften their demands<sup>5</sup>. It must be borne in mind that those Slovak (as opposed to Hungarian minority) parties of the centre-right that had *accepted* Klaus's course of re-centralising constitutional reform had failed to secure a single seat in the recent election in either of the chambers of the Federal Assembly or the Slovak National Council. It had been made abundantly clear in June 1992 that Klaus's vision was electorally unsustainable in Slovakia.

Following the announcement that Klaus would take up the Czech premiership Meciar called the decision "a wise step which will lead to good cooperation between the Czech

---

<sup>4</sup> Havel's undiplomatic spokesman, Michael Zantovsky, stated that in the event of agreement "remaining impossible" Havel would agree with Klaus to proceed without protraction. He added for good measure that when one looked at how Czechoslovak bonds abroad had dropped by 10 per cent it represented "an incentive for an accelerated course of action" (*Mlada Fronta dnes* 16.6.1992:2). According to the Czechoslovak State Bank the price of bonds was in fact quite stable (*Hospodarske noviny* 16.6.1992:1).

<sup>5</sup> A decision was acknowledged at least the day before, when CDP Vice-Chairman Macek suggested that the talks be seen as procuring a "velvet split" (*Telegraf, Mlada Fronta dnes* 17.6.1992). Following the first talks Klaus had declared "I am not interested in chairing a self-liquidating Federal Government" (*Mlada Fronta dnes* 10.6.1992:1,2).

and Slovak governments". He, as expected, took up the Slovak post. The subsequent agreement on government formation resembled the Movement for a Democratic Slovakia's earlier proposals; a federal government of ten members with five members from each republic. It survived, however, at crossed purposes; Meciar described the future interim federal government as a "working one", likely to last a minimum one and a half years.

In talks with President Havel the Party of the Democratic Left now expressed itself for a "loose federation" and Alexander Dubcek's Slovak Social Democrats appealed for the transfer of talks to parliament. Together with the Czech left, Slovak federalists now began to comprehend the need to array themselves appropriately in the light of a potentially lengthy and unpopular dissolution. Federal trade union representatives clearly recognised that Klaus had the upper hand and presumably with an eye to future labour relations, endorsed the CDP strategy wholeheartedly. Rather than draw attention to the scissoring performance of the Czech and Slovak economies in the previous two years, and the idea that diverging economic conditions might underscore Slovak grievances, the union echoed Klaus, asserting simply that "a prospering economy was the best social guarantee for employees" (*Prace* 19.6.1992:1).

The fourth round of negotiations began in Bratislava on June 19th. The fourteen hour talks confirmed that the new federal government would consider its mandate temporary and would seek to "prepare, if it is empowered to do so, conditions for the smooth functioning of two sovereign states with international personality" (*Mlada Fronta dnes* 22.6.1992:1,2). It was also agreed in writing that "the government will support a quick solution of the constitutional problem on the basis of an agreement between the two National Councils" - a startling agreement in that it apparently raised the authority of the National Councils above that of the Federal Assembly and thus stood in breach of the existing constitution. A Civic Democratic Party recommendation to arrive at agreement by the end of September 1992, "at the latest", was also included (*Telegraf* 25.6.1992:14). Both parties agreed that in the event of separation the National Councils would approve laws on the incorporation of members of the Federal Assembly into the legislative bodies of the two republics (*Mlada Fronta dnes* 22.6.1992:1). Clearly

Klaus's CDP had done its homework on the schedule of a rapid and uninhibited partition, in this case preempting any objections that might arise from federal deputies acting for reasons of their own job security. Klaus's persuasive case was that the Movement for a Democratic Slovakia had "refused CDP compromises" by persisting in the demand for international legal personality. As he insisted: "a Slovak compromise on this point would be to withdraw it. Non-withdrawal means the split of the state into two" (*Lidova demokracie, Mlada Fronta dnes* 22.6.1992).

The Civic Democratic Party's budgetary policy now prevailed and the redistribution of finances through the Federal Budget was set to end from the beginning of 1993 (*Telegraf* 25.6.1992:14). Though affirming that the Slovak National Council would declare sovereignty at an early (though no longer the first) session, Meciar insisted again that "this should not mean the split of the state" (*Mlada Fronta dnes* 22.6.1992:1,2)<sup>6</sup>. President Havel endeavoured to count the blessings of the talks during his regular Sunday broadcast. The process toward divorce, he argued, would at least be civilised (*Lidove noviny* 22.6.1992:8). The Federal government line-up was leaked to the press on June 24th. Jan Strasky (CDP) was to be Federal Prime Minister, Rudolf Filkus (MDS) Federal First Deputy Prime Minister, and Miroslav Macek (CDP) with Antonin Baudys (Christian Democratic Union - Czechoslovak People's party) Deputy Prime Ministers. Jozef Moravcik (MDS) was to be Federal Minister for Foreign Affairs (*Mlada Fronta dnes* 24.6.1992:1)<sup>7</sup>.

When Havel next met with Czech parliamentary party leaders his already faltering resistance to a purely elite process was further weakened. Though referenda were supported as the valid, constitutionally required method of separation, most parties, according to Vaclav Benda (Christian Democratic Party), emphasised "other forms of possible split, not dictated by the constitution, which would be suitable for a quicker

---

<sup>6</sup> After a meeting of the Democratic Left council Weiss announced that his party would not support Havel's candidacy (*Mlada Fronta dnes* 20.6.1992:2) thus guaranteeing the blocking of his re-election in the Federal Assembly.

<sup>7</sup> In the Slovak National Council, the Christian Democratic Movement protested that the MDS had pushed for undemocratic majorities in major committees. In reply, two Christian Democratic Movement members were demoted from the Security Committee to Education, and Christian Democratic Movement Chairman Jan Carnogursky was demoted from Foreign Affairs to the Environment. Even Pavol Kanis of the Party of the Democratic Left objected, insisting that the "tooth for a tooth" principle was inappropriate to politics (*Pravda* 24.6.1992:1,2).



and problem-free split”, *i.e.* parliamentary agreement. One-sided steps, such as a Slovak declaration of sovereignty, Benda insisted, would also render referenda superfluous since “there would be nothing to decide” (*Telegraf* 24.6.1992:1). On June 25th, President Havel tried for the last time to convince the Assembly that referenda remained the only constitutional option. The appeal was half-hearted however, and he conceded that the Assembly as the highest legislative body could invent another method which he would respect. In admitting this Havel collapsed the notion of profound constitutional constraint, resolving in a sentence any government fears that he might again take his cause to the people<sup>8</sup>.

As the decisive month drew to a close, the former Czech premier, Petr Pithart concluded that the “basic problem of Slovakia is that it does not know what it wants” (*Telegraf* 30.6.1992:2). While this was hard to verify Meciár evidently saw the need to manufacture a version of Slovak desires. Slovak television introduced its own current affairs programme on the national channel at 7 pm on the 27th, having reported to Czechoslovak Television that it could no longer process shots from federal television, including the weather (*Hospodarske noviny* 30.6.1992:2). Whatever the facade, however, Slovakia’s bold advances toward increased autonomy within a common state had nonetheless been thoroughly corralled. The very predictability of the impasse between the conflicting visions of Klaus and Meciár had lent, under Klaus’s direction, a great momentum to the Czech and Federal governments’ decisions. It was already settled that the federal system would be shrunk to the working minimum necessary to oversee the divorce: the number of federal ministries would be reduced from 12 to 5: Finance, Defence, Interior, Foreign Affairs and Economy. The Movement for a Democratic Slovakia could only briefly attempt to portray this as a victory against the centre and the beginning of a drawn-out process of compromise. Changes such as the preclusion of a federal budget for 1993 made it clear that whatever the legitimacy of the process, a separation was not in doubt.

---

<sup>8</sup> The Movement for a Democratic Slovakia suggested to the Party of the Democratic Left and Slovak National Party on the 27th that a referendum on constitutional arrangements be held in December, though all three objected to the current referendum law insofar as it enabled only one republic to withdraw from the federation and so risked Slovakia’s successor status (*Mlada Fronta dnes* 19.6.1992:1).

Meciar's tactic of overbidding, of asking for confederation from a Czech government that others appeared to have recognised as resolutely centrist, afforded the very alibi Klaus would need for hastening the split of the state. Klaus's CDP could charge that Meciar's vision of confederation flew in the face of political realities, that the Czech parliament could never endorse such a misalignment of administrative rights and financial liabilities and that, far from a Yugoslav scenario, Czechs preferred to aid and abet Meciar who was currently only mismanaging his own secessionist impulses. To avoid censure Klaus, citing Czech subsidy of the Slovak economy (estimated at 25 billion Czechoslovak crowns in 1992), could plead the political insanity of his Slovak opponents.

## July

At the beginning of July the now nervous Slovak government pursued its own placatory measures. Government members offered their May salary increase for charity purposes and Labour Minister Olga Keltosova suggested changing the Slovak budget to the advantage of social benefits<sup>9</sup> (*Mlada Fronta dnes* 1.7.1992:6). On July 1st the Czech coalition partners - Civic Democratic Alliance, Christian Democratic Union-Czechoslovak People's Party, Christian Democratic Party and the Civic Democratic Party - signed their consent to the transfer of federal responsibilities to the republics and urged the establishment of a Czech constitution and constitutional court. Agreed on the indivisibility of Czechoslovakia's legal personality they concluded that questions of alternative union would be solved post-independence (*Rude pravo* 2.7.1992). Their consensus is striking in the light of Slovak dismay, but also in the light of an IVVM opinion poll of the time. This reported that more than two-thirds of Czechs felt themselves to have good or very good personal relations with Slovaks and *vice versa* (*Mlada Fronta dnes* 2.7.1992).

Premier Strasky (CDP) was typically proactive in keeping federal deputies to Klaus's agenda, as was Milan Uhde, the CDP Chairman of the Czech National Council. When a dispute arose over whether the Council presidium should be formed on the basis of party proportional representation, Uhde objected that such a 'forum' would be too

---

<sup>9</sup>A fortnight later Keltosova admitted that funds reserved for unemployment benefits in the 1992 Slovak budget had already been exhausted (*Mlada Fronta dnes* 14.7.1992:2).

discursive to represent an effective “head of state” at this stage (*Mlada Fronta Dnes* 2.7.1992:2)<sup>10</sup>. Addressing the Council Klaus declared that he considered building the “firm foundations of Czech statehood... a positive and creative task” adding “we do not only want to adopt a defensive position, as the former government often did” (*Telegraf* 3.7.1992:1)<sup>11</sup>.

On July 3rd the Federal Parliament failed to elect the new Czechoslovak President, even in repeated rounds of voting. Vaclav Havel, the only candidate, was rejected by the House of the People and the Slovak section of the House of Nations; the repeat round eliciting only reduced support in the latter. A second election with new candidates was scheduled for July 16th (*Mlada Fronta dnes* 4.7.1992:1,2). Klaus concluded that the “Czech public will interpret the non-election of Mr. Havel as a further step toward questioning the common state” (ibid.). Later he added that, in the event that no-one was elected as Federal President, Havel would become the logical and CDP-endorsed candidate for the imminent Czech Presidency (*Telegraf* 7.7.1992).

---

<sup>10</sup> On the same day a Bill on the Sovereignty and State Symbols of the Slovak Republic, proposed by the Slovak National Party, was withdrawn from the Slovak National Council presidium agenda. The draft provided for the right to veto Federal laws. The Party of the Democratic Left objected that this would introduce an unacceptable legal dualism (*Mlada Fronta dnes* 2.7.1992:1).

<sup>11</sup> Two interviews illustrate how differently the two leaders depicted the motivation to separate. In *Mlada Fronta dnes* Klaus claimed to have opted for the Czech Premiership on June 17th. “At that time I understood that the efforts of [our] Slovak partners to attain independence for Slovakia were final and irreversible...that it was not simply pre-election rhetoric” but the profound aspiration of “all MDS representatives”. He claimed to see the symptoms of the split most visibly “in the economic sphere... The already existing non-homogeneous economies in Bohemia and Slovakia have been irreversibly moving away from one another. I cannot imagine a political force which would manage to thwart this process” - a statement completely at odds with his previous, positive assessments of economic parity. Acknowledging that “public opinion polls among citizens do not speak unequivocally about the split” Klaus nevertheless described developments as if observing a meta-political process beyond help; “I am only afraid that the dividing processes about which I have just spoken are beyond the hands of Mr. Meciar”. Personally, he said, “I define a viable nation differently” (*Mlada Fronta dnes* 3.7.1992:7). Interviewed by the French daily, *Le Monde* (6.7.1992) Meciar claimed: “[w]e do not want independence, we are being pushed into it”, and dated this pressure from the first meeting in Brno. According to Meciar, Klaus’s delegation had decided on state dissolution after a forty minute debate, yet since then Slovakia had withdrawn its request for a central bank and had admitted that Slovakia was unprepared to form its own currency. “Slovakia wants to continue the economic reform but with a new strategy, heeding regional specifics, and on the basis of more advantageous distribution of foreign investment. The Czechs keep rejecting this”, he explained (*Mlada Fronta dnes* 9.7.1992). Unfortunately for the Slovak cause, the credibility of Meciar’s claims was instantly undermined by his appraisal of Hungarian ambitions in Slovakia. In the same interview Meciar identified a “badly masked” Hungarian scenario wherein the minorities would gain territorial independence and be annexed by Hungary with appeal to the right of self-determination - an interpretation hastily amended by the more diplomatic Moravcik, the new Foreign Minister.

Only days after considering the threatening deep disruption of the Slovak economy (*Pravda* 8.7.1992) the presidium of the Slovak National Council discussed two draft declarations on the sovereignty of Slovakia in the expectation that one be approved on the 17th July. The first draft declared a national-cultural sovereignty - a statement of principle, the second, the state-legal sovereignty of Slovakia *i.e.* international legal personality (*Mlada Fronta dnes* 9.7.1992:2). Despite the weaker alternative the Civic Democratic Party only recited its policy that relations with Slovakia were no longer at issue until after independence (*Mlada Fronta Dnes* 9.7.1992:1).

The assumption of injured innocence was one of the few postures remaining available to Meciar in Slovakia, and at a Slovak press conference he called on the Czech government to publish its 'secret' timetable of separation steps. While admitting that Slovakia was not prepared for a split in the common market, currency and even in the realm of human rights, Meciar also compared the present coverage of Slovakia in the Czech and world press to a cold war determined by the Prague view (*Telegraf* 10.7.1992). Something of a cold war atmosphere had indeed developed. Meciar resorted to the most blatant conspiracy-mongering whilst the *Czech Telegraf* in turn reported the beginning of 'political purges' in Slovak ministries. Representatives of the Association of Slovak Journalists meanwhile, together with the Congress of Slovak Intelligentsia and the Slovak cultural organisation *Matica slovenska* ('Mother Slovakia') declared that celebratory bonfires would be lit across Slovakia in the event that sovereignty was declared (*Mlada Fronta dnes* 14.7.1992:1).

The Slovak National Council debate on the government's policy statement revealed Meciar's growing political isolation. The draft was criticised by both the Movement for a Democratic Slovakia's allies, the Party of the Democratic Left and the Slovak National Party. The nationalists reproached it for the lack of comment on the market economy. The Democratic Left criticised the statement as too dirigist; "one cannot wish for a common currency and draw up a policy which rules this out", complained Peter Weiss. Further disagreement came when the Movement for a Democratic Slovakia and the Slovak National Party together proposed that the vote on Slovak Sovereignty be by roll-call. The Christian Democratic Movement's (CDM) Frantisek

Miklosko objected that the proposal positively invited the nationalistic harassment of parliamentary deputies and the Party of the Democratic Left, the Hungarian Christian Democratic Movement (HCDM) and the latter's coalition partner, Coexistence agreed (*Mlada Fronta dnes* 15.7.1992:1,2). Continuing the debate next day, Jan Carnogursky (CDM) called the policy statement "the vaguest set of intentions submitted by post-November governments", and noted that while the activity of the government tended toward the state's separation the statement disregarded this completely. Meciar closed the debate with an epic plea. Present world changes amounted not only to the collapse of Communism, but the birth of a new civilisation he said; "adaptation to [this motion] means the struggle for survival". The speech degenerated further into the grandiloquent when Meciar again claimed to have read a 'horrific secret report' outlining retaliatory steps against Slovakia, prepared by the Czech presidium. These steps, Meciar railed, amounted to racism "as a programme". "If the new governments do not collect enough courage to disassociate themselves from the positions of the former government, the Slovak government reserves the right to make the whole affair public internationally. Let people know how an exodus of Romanies to Slovakia on the occasion of the split was prepared"<sup>12</sup>. He continued, now appealing to the deputies' increasing sense of fatalism; "you do not have to express confidence in this government. But I ask you - have you got a better one? ... Please, give your confidence to this government. The citizens have already done so" (*Pravda, Telegraf, Mlada Fronta dnes* 16.7.1992).

Klaus too had turned to domestic issues, instructing the Czech government to submit a draft constitution (*Hospodarske noviny* 14.7.1992:1). His tactics however, revealed a political leverage far superior to Meciar's. As before the election his preferred strategy was to harass the Czech left with accusations of 'disloyal opposition'. Though the left claimed the government was acting unconstitutionally, Klaus described their approach as "incomprehensibly negative" and indicative of "the fragility of our democracy" (*Mlada Fronta dnes* 15.7.1992:1,2).

---

<sup>12</sup> Petr Pithart explained that a so-called "catastrophic scenario" had indeed been prepared when a Slovak Declaration of Sovereignty first seemed possible - Slovak deputies had known of the report at the time and it carried no plans of deportations. Strasky, one of the authors, retorted that the only 'horrifying' document he had seen concerned the economic risks of a Slovak secession (ibid.).

The second round of presidential elections followed with only one candidate, the extreme right Republican leader, Miroslav Sladek, but he remained un-elected in either of two votes. A third round was planned, again with new candidates. The Federal Assembly nevertheless approved the federal government's policy statement and the vote secured, President Havel announced his intention to resign on the 20th (*Lidove noviny* 17.7.1992). On the same day, Friday 17th, the Slovak National Council approved a Declaration of Sovereignty - to Czech media eyes a coincidence of calamities which heralded the end of all hope for Czechoslovak statehood. In his resignation letter Havel had explained that he feared becoming an obstacle "to the emancipation efforts of the Slovak Republic, which found political reflection in the Declaration on sovereignty approved today" (*Lidove noviny* 18.7.1992:1,8).

In the vote - by roll call - 113 of the 147 Slovak National Council deputies present had supported the milder version of the declaration of Slovakia's sovereignty - *zvrchovanost*: Slovakia's right to pursue its own national life. All deputies of the Christian Democratic Movement and 7 of the allied Hungarian Christian Democratic Movement - Coexistence voted against the declaration. All deputies of the Movement for a Democratic Slovakia and Slovak National Party voted for it. In a speech notable for its relative dignity, Meciar concluded that: "The Declaration expresses the level of intellectual and social maturity of a Slovakia which is able to take its destiny into its own hands. The Declaration is a political and not a constitutional act, it does not mean an independent state but it is a clear signal for those abroad that we are taking into our own hands the intention to form our own statehood. The development so far means that the Federal Constitution will become invalid in Slovakia on the day when the Slovak constitution comes into force"<sup>13</sup>. Members of the Christian Democratic Movement asked for protection, and were flanked by the police on exiting the parliament (*Mlada Fronta, Svobodne slovo* 18.7.1992).

---

<sup>13</sup> The Declaration: "We, the democratically elected Slovak National Council, declare ceremoniously that one thousand years worth of efforts of the Slovak nation for sovereignty have been fulfilled. In this historical moment we declare the natural right of the Slovak nation for its self-determination as it is anchored in all international agreements and contracts on the rights of nations for their self-determination. Recognising the right of nations for their self-determination, we declare that we want freely to create the way and form of our national and state life while respecting the rights of all, of each citizen, nations, national minorities and ethnic groups, and the democratic and humanistic legacies of Europe and the world. By this Declaration the Slovak National Council declares the sovereignty of the Slovak Republic as a basis of a sovereign state of the Slovak nation" (*Svobodne slovo* 18.7.1992:1).

Unlike his coalition colleagues, Klaus considered the Slovak move insignificant. It could hardly change the situation created by the 'absurdities' of the 1968 constitution, he commented (*Mlada Fronta dnes* 18.7.1992:1), nor more importantly, the process he had set in train. Not missing the opportunity to identify Slovakia as secessionist Klaus nevertheless pointed to "the fact that the Declaration... does not mention the word 'Czech' as very surprising and significant" (*Mlada Fronta dnes* 18.7.1992:1). Even so, the Czech government waited to consider the Slovak declaration in its normal session: a level of indifference overlooked in later commentaries. When the Czech National Council met on July 20th the presidium announced itself "convinced of the necessity for accelerated negotiations" toward two independent states (*Hospodarske noviny* 21.7.1992:2). In his broadcast from Lany Havel considered separation a now irreversible development (*Mlada Fronta dnes* 20.7.1992:2).

At the 5th round of MDS-CDP talks in Bratislava, on the 22-23rd July, the two delegations agreed to the "delimitation variant"; having preliminarily confirmed the split of the federation into two independent republics they focussed on "the optimal course" for its demise (Klaus in *Lidove noviny* 23.7.1992:1). The talks thus shifted significantly away from substantive decisions and toward procedural issues. Meciar and Klaus told journalists "we shall together initiate, in the Federal Assembly, the Law on the Manner of the Dissolution of the Federation and on the settlement of property and other matters". In case their proposals failed they pledged "to maintain peace and regulate alternative processes for the dissolution of the Czechoslovak federation". Klaus expressed the hope that "all of this process will be discussed, approved and developed in the National Councils by August 31st *i.e.* one month earlier" than already timetabled.

In connection with tax and monetary policy the two representatives had spoken only of the potential for coordination - an ambiguity that raised Slovak fears for financial stability. Klaus had commented that "we are not sure whether it is possible or even purposeful and necessary to assure unity between the budgetary, tax and financial policies of the two republics. It would be irresponsible to say whether we will be able

to maintain a common currency". When Meciar professed uncertainty when asked about a date for the dissolution, Klaus reckoned on December 31st, when the 1992 budget would cease to be valid. "It is an important moment irrespective of whether we wish it or not" (*Mlada Fronta dnes* 24.7.1992:1) he said.

Meciar had argued that republican presidents should be elected before the federal one, a scenario which looked increasingly unavoidable since none of the three federal candidates gained the requisite votes in the third election round on the 30th. A Civic Democratic Party, Movement for a Democratic Slovakia amendment allowed for presidential elections to be postponed by eight weeks if the next round, the fourth, again proved fruitless (*Mlada Fronta dnes* 31.7.1992). Fruitless it proved to be - since no candidates stood (*Mlada Fronta dnes* 4.8.1992:1)<sup>14</sup>. At the close of the month Carnogursky's Christian Democratic Movement submitted a bill to the Assembly demanding a referendum and the question; "are you for the continuation of the common Czechoslovak state and for the declaration of new parliamentary elections?". The Civic Democratic Party rejected out of hand the idea that "with the help of the referendum it is possible to return life to the concept of a federation" (spokesman J. Schneider) (*Mlada Fronta dnes* 31.7.1992:2). According to an Institute for Public Opinion Research (IVVM) poll at the time only 16 per cent in each republic positively favoured a dissolution of the state. An entire 85 per cent of voters said they would participate in a referendum (*Mlada Fronta dnes* 24.7.1992:2).

### August

Meciar's obsession with the appearance of victory was by August pulling apart his own party's executive. At the Movement for a Democratic Slovakia presidium meeting, Federal Foreign Minister Moravcik warned that "full disintegration has no meaning for us". Rudolf Filkus protested the serious economic impact of continuing on Meciar's course and on the question of common currency and monetary policy he pleaded "a compromise must be found. We could make an agreement with the Czech Republic on

---

<sup>14</sup> The Social Democrats announced the candidacy of Jan Sokol (of the now extra-parliamentary liberal Civic Movement) for the fifth round of Presidential election - a widely respected and serious contender. Sokol was doomed by Slovak opposition, and on the 11th September he withdrew his candidacy (*Cesky denik* 12.9.1992:2).



cohabitation and define common interests" (*Narodna obroda* 3.8.1992). Meciar however, was confident of a different strategy. Within days these more forceful ministers were outflanked, not only in negotiations but within their respective portfolios, and Meciar turned instead to his own more reliable if less competent cabal, a cadre whose priorities were only to entrench the MDS's power. His increasingly autocratic strategy could also be seen beyond the party. Answering public complaints about the lack of media coverage Meciar said that "the Slovak government does not place sufficient confidence in the media to inform them about its most confidential activities". Newspapers, he said, citing an age-old anti-Semitic conspiracy theory, behaved like "money-makers" with information (*Lidove noviny* 8.8.1992:2).

Yet while Meciar's spurned colleagues genuinely hoped for continuing strong economic links with the Czech republic and met with the Czech opposition to try and secure a referendum, they too were seen as culpable, if only for seeking a marriage of convenience (*Mlada Fronta dnes* 5.8.1992:1). According to the right, both the consensus-seekers within the Movement for a Democratic Slovakia and the Czech left saw in a sustained deadlock or a less than heavily centralised federation only a tactical lever for softening Klaus's reforms. Moreover, as things stood it was highly uncertain that a referendum would do more than confirm the conflict of interests established by the election.

The next meeting of the Federal Assembly dissolved in chaos as the Civic Democratic Party coalition and the Movement for a Democratic Slovakia locked horns over candidates for committee chairmen. CDP and MDS deputies continued to obstruct the Assembly by non-attendance, sabotaging the second joint meeting of the Assembly - the third not scheduled until September 22nd-25th. The quarrel had erupted when Vaclav Benda's Christian Democratic Party had accused both Czech and Slovak left of attempting a *coup d'etat* (*Prace* 8.8.1992). Klaus too had attacked Meciar's reference to Civic Democratic Party 'hawks' with unusual ferocity; what did exist was "the understandable impatience of CDP deputies" intent on progress and disquieted by "the limitless arrogance and aggression of deputies from left-wing parties" he countered (*Mlada Fronta dnes* 11.8.1992:1). The signal of Klaus's ending patience had the

desired effect however. Fearing that he may have pushed Klaus too far again, Meciar re-emphasised the importance of the MDS-CDP agreements in future developments. He even asserted that on the question of state dissolution he himself had warned the left that whatever their actions, the federal parliament would still cease to exist (*Narodna obroda* 11.8.1992:8).

Addressing clubs of deputies, Klaus emphasised that no alternatives existed to separation since, in hindering Slovak desires, these would actually sour relations. To comments that the Slovaks had clearly been retreating in their demands, inviting the re-negotiation of the common state Klaus insisted that “Slovak representatives... started to realise there were concrete problems and became more realistic. They do not [however] change their basic standpoints and we must respect them”. To the opposite view, that Slovakia had withdrawn and should reap the consequences, Klaus replied “it seems to me impossible to push Slovakia into the role of unilateral liquidator. It would be unwise from the viewpoint of the future coexistence and our own interests” (*Lidove noviny* 19.8.1992)<sup>15</sup>. The first draft of the Bill on Dissolution of the Federation was thus duly prepared, but objected to by Klaus’s CDP for the *faux pas* of not including all those conditions agreed between the CDP and the MDS, namely the four official options for a split: a referendum, agreement between the National Councils, a Federal Assembly law and the withdrawal of one republic (*Mlada Fronta dnes* 20.8.1992:1,6).

The Civic Democratic Party was, if anything, swift to remind the Movement for a Democratic Slovakia that it should press on with looking self-determined. In the Slovak National Council, meanwhile, Milan Knazko angrily rejected complaints that time pressures would impair the Slovak constitution’s quality (*Mlada Fronta dnes* 20.8.1992:2). The MDS’s desperate haste was nevertheless palpable, doing little to stimulate sympathy in either republic. The Slovak government was particularly unwilling to admit what was already lost, that they had already failed to secure a single currency to bind the two economies in the future. It was left to the Czechs to reveal that divergent policies precluded agreement on tax or budgetary coordination, the indispensable conditions of prolonged monetary union. The MDS’s eventual

---

<sup>15</sup> Among these interests was clearly the amicable appearance of separation. Klaus, it should be noted, is married to a Slovak, and frequently employed this fact when quizzed by journalists.

explanation was suitably incongruous. Slovakia, claimed Slovak Finance Minister Julius Toth, had moved too far to the right for the regressive Czechs. "The policy of the Slovak government, when you take its orientation and acts, is more right-wing than that in Bohemia" (*Lidove noviny, Narodna obroda* 21.8.1992), he argued. Meciar again tried to switch his role to that of persecuted hero of common statehood: "with three more voices they [the CDP] could block the whole parliament" he declared, claiming the MDS had prevented a division of the federation no less than six times in the last two months (*Rude pravo* 22.8.1992:1,2).

The Movement for a Democratic Slovakia avoided the meeting scheduled for the 27th. Having cited among other grievances the Civic Democratic Party's failures to make good certain personnel changes, notably in the FBIS (the security services), Meciar concluded that negotiations could only continue when these agreements were fulfilled. To Klaus he nevertheless wrote "you are the only politician in the Czech Republic in whom the Slovak side can place trust". Klaus replied that these were matters too trivial to justify delays. He rejected Meciar's claim that the Czechs were resolving Czech party battles at Slovakia's expense and listed his agenda for discussion, including clearing-up "our attitudes over the draft principles of the Law on the Manner of Dissolution of Czechoslovakia". Meciar reiterated his letter and continued to call off the meeting. After speculating publicly that Meciar aimed at a unilateral Slovak secession, one further phone call from Klaus nonetheless secured the earlier date of the 26th (*Mlada Fronta dnes, Lidove noviny, Narodna obroda* 25.8.1992).

The 6th round of talks took place in Brno. Meciar and Klaus met face to face for two and half hours, mending party relations. "The Czech and the Slovak Republics should come into existence as independent states on January 1st 1993," declared Meciar to the assembled press. The timetable was brisk; by the end of September the Federal Assembly should have approved the Law on the Manner of Dissolution of the Federation, and in October it should approve the division of property. In November the National Councils should have discussed a basis for the future cooperation between Czech and Slovak Republics. In December, the MDS and CDP would "tackle their mutual problems".

The Federal Assembly's agenda had been developed almost entirely by Klaus's CDP. From their pre-talk grievances the MDS secured only the right to propose a nomination for the head of the FBIS - and the CDP's Miroslav Macek could hardly resist noting that proposals to abolish the FBIS would be submitted at the Assembly's next session (*Svobodne slovo, Nova obroda* 27.8.1992). Now quite patently in need of Klaus's favour the MDS had also agreed to a programme for ensuring 'transparency and cooperation'. This stipulated that deputies from the two parties would only submit matters to the Assembly already discussed by club representatives. Secondly, they would prefer to table questions concerning the constitutional arrangement. Thirdly, important agreements would always be recorded in writing and party chairmen would meet before important institutional meetings, including those of the policy committees of both parties. Lastly, and uninhibited by the democratic conventions of parliamentary opposition, both agreed that these principles should be applied by all other political parties (*Mlada Fronta dnes* 4.9.1992).

In another proposal bearing the hallmarks of Civic Democratic Party authorship, Klaus explained that a common currency would continue to exist in Czechoslovakia after January 1st 1993, and that a "crown zone" would be introduced from that date, controlled by a pared down version of the current State Bank. In the second stage the Czech and Slovak currencies should become independent with a firmly fixed rate of exchange. At the beginning this would be at the ratio 1:1, though this could not be maintained permanently. Klaus suggested that cooperation should start from the agreement on a customs union and this transitional model of monetary union. After the split, he insisted, there would be many common policies. Even so, the MDS's subsequent declaration, that Slovak citizens would be glad that they had retained all rights in the other republic bar that of voting, was patently misleading (*Mlada Fronta dnes, Hospodarske noviny, Cesky denik, Nova Obroda* 28.8.1992).

**September**

The Slovak constitution was passed on the 1st September, after Meciar rejected all Hungarian amendments as resulting from a failure to understand the constitution<sup>16</sup>. Of the 134 present in the Slovak National Council, 114 had voted in favour, 16 deputies of the Christian Democratic Movement against, and 4 Hungarian deputies from the Party of the Democratic Left abstained. The Slovak half of the Czechoslovak anthem was sung and a festive programme announced for the following evening. Remarkably few papers commented on the event, though columnist Ivo Slavik ascribed to Meciar a “wantonness... bordering on contempt” (*Mlada Fronta dnes* 2.9.1992). The occasion was overshadowed at least in part by the news of a road accident involving the Slovak Social Democratic chairman, Alexander Dubcek, an obvious candidate for the Slovak Presidency. Meciar had recently turned against Dubcek for his federalism and the suspicion that the still-popular champion of 1968 had been ‘silenced’ hung heavily in the air. An IVVM poll taken a week later, between September 8th-14th, revealed that more than 80 per cent of those polled in both republics now considered a split inevitable (*Mlada Fronta dnes* 30.9.1992:2).

The Slovak constitution was signed on the evening of the 3rd, attended by the CDP’s Jan Strasky and Milan Uhde but not by Klaus. Though the CDP was content not to see the signing as a violation of CDP/MDS agreements their coalition partners, the Czech Christian Democratic Union-Czechoslovak People’s Party, were purportedly outraged. Deputy Chairman Jan Kasal argued that Slovakia had withdrawn from the Federation and should face the consequences (*Mlada Fronta dnes* 4.9.1992:2). The signing certainly heralded a new belligerence in Meciar’s tactics. Journalists were lectured on the rules of “ethical-self regulation” and the liberal (and Jewish) politician Fedor Gal was threatened with a section of the penal code prohibiting the ‘spreading of inflammatory news’ (*Mlada Fronta dnes* 5.9.1992:1). The Hungarian Christian Democratic Movement and Coexistence movement in the National Council accused the

---

<sup>16</sup> The constitution failed to protect Hungarian rights - most obviously because it established Slovakia as the ‘state of the Slovak people’ as opposed to a state of the citizens of Slovakia. The Christian Democratic Movement objected to various provisions it deemed undemocratic, un-Christian and at variance with the valid constitution. Among the latter were clauses stipulating the establishment of a Slovak customs zone and a Slovak central bank (*Cesky Denik* 1:31.8.1992). The final vote was once again by roll-call. Meciar called it “a constitution which stems from the ideas within our society, one which rejects fascism, anti-Semitism, and nationalism, being a guarantee of democracy, freedom and respect for law” (*Pravda. Mlada Fronta dnes* 1.9.1992).

MDS leadership of a similarly escalating hostility toward members of the Hungarian minority and its leading politicians (*Lidove noviny* 8.9.1992:16).

Slovak events were juxtaposed to the now opposite strategy from Klaus, who had embarked on a less aggressive cooption of the parties arrayed against him. Meeting with Left Bloc deputies Klaus lobbied for a joint decision on separation by the two republican National Councils. He also publicly rejected any accusations that the left might be non-democratic, his own favoured allegation, as “pre-election rhetoric” (*Mlada Fronta dnes, Prostor, Rude pravo* 9.9.1992). To avoid controversy over the economy Klaus had announced that the Bankruptcy Law would not come into effect on 1st October but six months later and in a weaker version (*Prostor* 9.9.1992). Despite his efforts however the opposition still held out for a referendum and the incorporation of Assembly deputies into the negotiation process. CDP Federal Prime Minister Jan Strasky objected that a referendum was unrealistic and likely to draw the state nearer to a Yugoslav-style crisis. Klaus too adopted the argument against chaos, accusing pro-referendum politicians of adopting the principle “worse is better” (*Metropolitni Telegraf* 23.9.1992:2).

When the draft Czech constitution was rejected by committee however, even Civic Democratic Party deputies said that it had vested excessive powers in the hands of the premier - Vaclav Klaus, such as would be justifiable in a state of emergency (*Mlada Fronta dnes* 22.9.1992:1,2). Legislation was also delayed in the Federal Assembly. The Bill on the Manner of the Dissolution of the Federation was stuck at the committee stage while opposition parties insisted that draft amendments of the Law on Referenda and the carefully entitled ‘Bill on the Division of Property if the Federation Becomes Dissolved’ be discussed first (*Lidova demokracie, Mlada Fronta dnes* 16.9.1992). The Federal parliament was in fact buckling under the strain as an efficient legislature. The bill on changing the structure of the state administration (dissolving ministries) was approved by chance, despite opposition deputies walking out before the vote in protest - an effective action endowed by the supermajority requirement on constitutional legislation. The necessary quorum was rescued by two opposition deputies taking

minutes and another who returned to the meeting room to fetch his briefcase (*Mlada Fronta dnes and Zemedelske noviny* 24.9.1992).

Preparing for October's legislation negotiators had agreed the ratio 2:1 as a guiding principle governing the division of federal property, another being the 'territorial principle' for the division of real estate, whereby buildings became the property of the state in which they were situated (*Mlada Fronta dnes and Rude pravo* 10.9.1992). Klaus had rejected the Slovak ideas of a defence union and common army (*Mlada Fronta dnes* 11.9.1992) but Federal Defence Minister Imrich Adrejcak had asked the premiers to leave this issue until later (*Mlada Fronta dnes, Metropolitni Telegraf* 15.9.1992). As it transpired the more the CDP cut the ties that the MDS had assumed would bind the two republics, the more the MDS resorted to obstructing property agreements in the hope, presumably, that Klaus would then offer further concessions to keep the process on schedule<sup>17</sup> (*Mlada Fronta dnes, Hospodarske noviny* 17.9.1992). First Deputy Federal Prime Minister Rudolf Filkus (MDS) objected that the intention to divide the army was a change from the original CDP/MDS accords. Meciar called for a middle version: two armies and two ministries which would agree on common services, he also echoed Adrejcak's belief that the division would take years rather than months (*Mlada Fronta dnes, Narodna obroda* 17.9.1992). The Czech response to this Slovak 'challenge' merely re-emphasised their superior leverage however. The CDP's Miroslav Macek announced the army was "behaving as a third force in the state" and that its division was becoming the most difficult problem in the separation (*Metropolitni Telegraf* 1,3, 21.9.1992). The accusation was pitched to call the army to order and in little over a week Adrejcak had revised his agenda and publicised his hope that the army would be divided according to the 2:1 ratio and the territorial principle when the ratio could not be applied (*Hospodarske noviny* 1.10.1992:2). Chief of Staff General

---

<sup>17</sup> At this time Meciar's attempts to distract from events at home with events abroad became seriously counter-productive for Slovak international relations - ratification of the European Community Association Agreement, it should be noted, had been made conditional on Slovakia's maintenance of good foreign relations. After visiting Bavaria, Meciar declared himself for a new Slovak treaty with Germany, one which would tackle the unresolved problem of war reparations (*Metropolitni Telegraf, Prace, Lidova demokracie* 25.9.1992). To *Koridor* Meciar had suggested "we should consider pre-1948 for compensation to affected Slovak citizens for war damages, burnt-out villages, lost lives, concentration camps and other things" (*Nova obroda* 12:29.9.1992). German Foreign Ministry spokesman, Hans Schumacher replied unequivocally: Germany did not wish to and would not negotiate new treaties with either republic - the very reasoning behind ratification of the current treaty. Slovak violation of the federal treaty would release Germany from all its contractual obligations to Slovakia (*Mlada Fronta dnes, Narodna obroda* 28:9.1992).

Karel Pezl suggested forces could technically split even before December 31st, revealing that he had at his disposal a document in which all three Prime Ministers had earlier expressed consent with the ratio 2:1 for dividing army property (*Mlada Fronta dnes* 1.10.1992:1).

It being the end of September, Presidential election time had come around again in the Federal Assembly. This time Jiri Kotas was not elected as President of Czechoslovakia (only 16 deputies of the House of the People and 24 of the House of Nations voted for him). A sixth round was scheduled for the 2nd October, the day after the Slovak constitution would come into force (*Pravda* 25.9.1992:1). Asked under what circumstances he would not wish to become President of the Czech Republic, Havel stressed "I would not like to be a president who is doomed to wear a tie from morning till evening, to lay bouquets on memorials, make festive speeches on anniversaries and attend innumerable lunches and dinners..." (*Mlada Fronta dnes* 25.9.1992:24).

At a meeting of the State Defence Council Meciar rejected the territorial principle for *any* property under negotiation and then walked out, despite the MDS's prior agreement to the principle earlier in September. He told journalists, "if they want to play children's games I have no time for them, so I apologised and left the meeting" (*Metropolitni Telegraf* and *Mlada Fronta dnes* 29.9.1992). His headline-grabbing actions took on the quality of farce when next day Jiri Pospisil, First Deputy Federal Minister of Defence pointed out that the Council had rejected Meciar's proposals for a joint defence institution and a non-aggression pact because it had no mandate to accept them - both were constitutional issues subject to the talks, as was the division of property. Briefing the exasperated Slovak government, Meciar denied that he had caused uproar, insisting that he had in fact saved Slovakia billions of crowns. He also attacked Filkus's property proposals and the MDS's Federal ministers in general as in error in abandoning the idea of a financial settlement, though this had long been flatly refused by the Czech side (*Mlada Fronta dnes* 30.9.1992:1,2).

When Klaus again intervened, phoning Meciar and announcing that "I have mixed feelings on whether we shall succeed in discussing the Bill on the Dissolution of the



Federation by September 30th, as originally agreed” his doubts at least appeared to have been calmed. The Federal Assembly opened its debate on the 29th (*Pravda* 30.9.1992:2). Meciar’s rejection of the property principle was nonetheless practically disruptive. The Federal government had been preparing the Bill on the Division of Federal Property for three weeks and was galled by Meciar’s late rejection of its basic premise (*Hospodarske noviny* 30.9.1992:2). Next - for he was clearly closing the month with a campaign - Meciar queried the exchange rate projections, the fixed rate of 1:1 which he had already publicly endorsed, and proposed a floating rate. Slovak Finance Minister Toth broadcast that Slovakia had no means of introducing her own currency soon and was “not preparing to do so”, suggesting that the introduction of a Slovak currency would need a 200 million dollars subsidy to maintain its convertibility (*Mlada Fronta dnes, Metropolitni Telegraf* 30.9.1992).

## **October**

Though Klaus had chosen to disregard Meciar’s protestations and queries in late September (*Mlada Fronta dnes* 10.1992:1) there was a brief moment in early October when it seemed Meciar might actually railroad the Czech Civic Democratic Party into more radical concession-giving. The Federal Assembly failed to pass the Bill on the Dissolution of the Federation but passed instead, by one vote, a motion requiring the presidium to prepare a commission for drafting a bill on the transformation of the Federation into a Czech-Slovak Union. With opposition deputies, the MDS had voted for the motion, proposed by Milos Zeman of the Czechoslovak Social Democrats. Reacting in the Assembly, Klaus called the action a threat to democratic development. Returning to ‘pre-election’ language he stressed that the unexpected support of the MDS for a motion submitted by the Czech left represented not only a violation of CDP-MDS cooperation (and he noted that Czechs could likewise rescind all settlements), but a threat to the foundations of post-November (1989) changes. As for the process of separation he spelled out the CDP’s assessment so as to leave no doubts. “The existing division of tasks, according to which federal institutions manage the split of Czechoslovakia and republican institutions are responsible for the new arrangements, has been seriously questioned. We shall have to seek alternative solutions”... “For three years we have been resisting almost constant Slovak pressure for the destruction

of the common state of Czechs and Slovaks. We sincerely deplore the actual split but we repeat that we shall not allow any farcical transformation into a semi-detached house or Czecho-Slovak union. Such a form of state is not in the interests of the citizens of the Czech Republic and we shall not create it under any circumstances” (*Mlada Fronta dnes, Hospodarske noviny, Metropolitni Telegraf* 2.10.1992). The Assembly had been shown its place; when Klaus had finally designated the federal government a caretaker role he had expected the legislature to likewise consider itself temporary. If federal deputies now rejected dissolution he would describe them as instruments of leftist recidivism and would write them out of the process altogether<sup>18</sup>.

Federal government members were given until Wednesday 7th to submit their final opinions (*Svobodne slovo* 3.10.1992:1). The Slovak government in turn postponed the joint meeting under preparation for Zidlochovice and informed the Czechs that it should be held only after the amendments to the Laws on Responsibilities were passed by the Federal Assembly - laws devolving competences that the Slovaks needed urgently. They also proposed that the MDS and CDP delegations meet at Zidlochovice as parties. Though not ruling it out Klaus commented; “the Slovak side is putting itself in a complex situation as it is developing several games and will have problems in keeping them under its control” (*Mlada Fronta dnes, Pravda* 5.10.1992). This was undoubtedly true. Meciar, it appeared, was attempting to hold the state to ransom. Klaus and Meciar agreed to meet on the 9th, but before then Meciar expressed his regret that “[t]he arrival of Mr. Klaus at the Parliament resulted in the cancellation of all agreements, *i.e.* between the CDP and MDS”. Meciar also claimed to have warned the CDP that without compromises the Dissolution Bill would be blocked, that the preservation of a union remained an issue prior to the manner of state dissolution, and that a MDS-led coalition existed to defend this idea. Lastly, Meciar had suggested that the MDS might overcome its reservations about property division with mutual agreement, explaining: “[w]e do not care whether we lose a billion or 5 billion, but we are not ready to lose everything” (*Mlada Fronta dnes, Pravda* 6.10.1992). Klaus’s judgement as to what constituted a credible threat however, remained unmoved.

---

<sup>18</sup> The following day the Assembly also failed to propose a candidate for the sixth round presidential election. The seventh would take place on the 26th November.

Klaus's considered public reply exuded resolve. "At this moment" he maintained, "decisions are made about our future, the cards have been given out and the slightest hesitation, slightest weakness on our side, could have catastrophic consequences for the future of the Czech state and the Czech nation". To the point, Klaus explained that he had the document necessary for the declaration of Czech independence "in his drawer", and could use it at any time. In suggesting that Czech independence was an obvious solution, if complex so long as the Federal Assembly still functioned (*Metropolitni Telegraf, Mlada Fronta dnes* 6.10.1992), Klaus made it plain that Meciar's powers of obstruction were an irritant at most. The Czechoslovak Social Democrat chairman Jiri Horak swiftly disassociated his party from the union idea (*Mlada Fronta dnes, Cesky denik* 7.10.1992).

At Jihlava it was confirmed, after eight hours, that the federation would be dissolved on January 1st, 1993. Klaus said the talks had opened the way to making the Assembly and other Federal bodies 'operative' and treaties would be discussed between the two governments within the week and passed to the National Councils. Asked if the Movement for a Democratic Slovakia still supported a union, Meciar replied that the CDP had refused to accept either confederation or union and the MDS had decided to "respect" this fact, as it had also abandoned thoughts for a 1993 budget. Klaus confirmed that the Assembly might now pass the Competence Law. Both sides had agreed to support the Bill on the Dissolution of the Federation in the Federal Assembly and on CDP initiative, both had signed a communiqué:

*"Against its original viewpoint, CDP had come to respect, during the first-post-electoral negotiations, MDS disagreement with the continued existence of the Federation of the Czech and Slovak Republic, and has expressed its disagreement with transforming the federation into a confederation. Therefore it did not, and does not adhere to the existing Federal arrangement. Similarly MDS respects the fact that CDP disagrees with the formation of a union of the Czech and Slovak Republic, and with efforts to transform the Federation into a confederation. Both sides have assured one another that they will only proceed further in this matter on the basis of mutual agreement. MDS and CDP will promote the conclusion of partial agreements such as a*

*customs union, a monetary and payment agreement, etc. which should come into force on 1st January 1993” (Mlada Fronta dnes 7.10.1992:1).*

How had Klaus persuaded Meciar of the futility of attempts to form a Czech-Slovak union, so soon after he had staked CDP cooperation and all previous CDP-MDS agreements on the opposite? Before the Jihlava meeting began Klaus had told journalists “nothing can be agreed upon unless the Slovak side completely changes the approach it has been following in the past few days”... “[a]n elementary honesty is needed on the part of the Slovak side”. The CDP had then handed the MDS the communiqué at the beginning of the meeting together with a written pledge to desist from promoting a union, and had explained that they, the CDP, would leave the meeting unless the MDS signed. Anticipating, correctly, that Meciar would resist, Klaus had been careful to offer him a way out, even though the communiqué excluded the word ‘Union’ - the chief term of the MDS election campaign. The communiqué’s final sentence permitted Meciar to say with satisfaction that “one union with a capital U has been replaced by several unions each with a small u”, his expressed and prescient fear being that Vaclav Klaus would renege on these later (*Mlada Fronta dnes 9.10.1992:8*).

The communiqué had not, however, mentioned property and Meciar hung on to this Bill as still unacceptable - Slovakia would demand financial compensation. Property, he confided to the press, was the real cause of the current dispute and, bizarrely, he offered asylum to any Czechs fleeing that republic when the situation there “got worse” (*Mlada Fronta dnes, Narodna obroda 7.10.1992*). Czech Finance Minister Ivan Kocarnik reminded Meciar of the gravity of his economic situation, pointing out that on the 5th October the Slovak deficit had reached 5 billion Czechoslovak crowns and that the situation was becoming critical - foreign banks had ceased loaning money to Slovakia and government bond sales had collapsed. “Arguments over each crown are a dangerous game” he said, emphasising the generosity of the 2:1 ratio still being offered by the Czechs (*Hospodarske noviny, Mlada Fronta dnes 7.10.1992*).

The Bill on the Devolution of Responsibilities was passed on the 8th October. This stipulated that in the interim there would only continue to be six Federal ministries, the Ministry of Inspection being added to the original five (*Hospodarske noviny* 9.10.1992:1,2). Defending himself against charges from his own party that Jihlava represented a betrayal, Meciar once again promised a referendum (*Rude pravo* 8.10.1992:1). On a television panel discussing the first 100 days of the Slovak government Meciar again protested that the CDP had stepped beyond their original agreements: "I managed to claw at least two months back, otherwise the Czech and Slovak Federative Republic would not have been in existence now" (*Mlada Fronta dnes* 9.10.1992:1) he explained.

The two republican governments met at Prague-Kolodeje castle on the 10th October. Within only six hours the elementary principles of cooperation between the two independent republics had been agreed, including the establishment of a customs union. Some 90 per cent of the drafts had been submitted by Prague. As for future monetary arrangements it came out in the familiar three stages first promoted by Klaus, Meciar even echoing that the duration of the crown zone would depend on financial conditions. The debate foundered this time on new citizenship rules (*Mlada Fronta dnes, Metropolitni Telegraf* 12.10.1992).

The Federal government issued an extended policy statement, its agenda and priorities. These were entirely economic, true to the fixedly pragmatic role it had been assigned. The Federal government considered "as its main priorities the maintenance of macro-economic stability throughout the entire territory, a continuation of quick privatisation and the prevention of a deficit in the state budget". In its only allusion to the public's interest the statement promised to settle constitutional questions without jeopardising the savings of citizens, their property, or the property belonging to enterprises. Until completion of the constitutional arrangement the government pledged to ensure united action on foreign affairs and in international relations generally (*Hospodarske noviny* 13.10.1992:2)<sup>19</sup>. Adopting a non-confrontational response, Assembly Chairman Michal

---

<sup>19</sup> This last pledge came to haunt the Government when conflict over the Gabčíkovo Nagymaros dam erupted. The project had been agreed in 1977 but was condemned by democratic Hungary as a border change. The dispute forced the Federal Government to intervene and cooperate with international

Kovac (MDS) asked only that the government submit to the parliament a programme of the legislative activity of the Cabinet, and that the national legislatures meet more adequately the needs of the Assembly in evaluating Bills.

In Slovakia Meciar permitted himself another breach of the federal constitution. Though according to the Slovak constitution the Premier would inherit presidential powers in the absence of an appointee his government conferred on Meciar the immediate right to represent Slovakia abroad, to conclude and ratify international treaties, to receive and appoint ambassadors, to declare amnesties and most ominously, to appoint the General Procurator and members of the Constitutional Court. Federal Premier Strasky confessed himself surprised (*Pravda, Mlada Fronta dnes* 14.10.1992). Klaus dismissed it as “a unilateral act which is about as important as the approval of the Slovak constitution” (*Hospodarske noviny* 15.10.1992:1). In a memorandum for presentation to European Community President John Major the two governments pledged at their Javorina meeting (25th-26th<sup>20</sup>) to maintain a high level of economic integration and to apply the principles of free market and pluralist democracy. At the same time Klaus hedged as to the duration of a Czech/Slovak single currency with the statement that conditions would “not only be implemented by states, banks or governments, but by all citizens in their handling of the Czechoslovak crown”<sup>21</sup> (*Hospodarske noviny, Mlada Fronta dnes, Pravda* 27.10.1992).

Only limited demonstrations, for and against the separation, marked the state-founding anniversary. During his speech following the presentation of the T.G. Masaryk Orders, Jan Strasky regretted that “in intoxication from newly-acquired freedom and renewing

---

arbitration (*Mlada Fronta dnes, Cesky denik and Narodna obroda* 20.10.1992 *Telegraf* 21.10.1992:6) leaving Meciar free to threaten ‘force’ even though he excluded military aggression. Germany and the EC threatened Slovakia with diplomatic non-recognition (*Mlada Fronta dnes* and *Rude pravo* 24.10.1992) and the dispute did much to bolster the Czech reputation as the honourable party in the divorce.

<sup>20</sup> With 15 prepared draft agreements approved; customs union, cooperation over monetary questions, employment, social security, the environment, education, public health, cooperation of security bodies, legal aid, proceeding for evidence, and several on border questions. Having rejected the Slovak proposal for dual citizenship the CDP also prevailed at Javorina with the decision that each republic would regulate the issue separately.

<sup>21</sup> Earlier, several thousand attended the celebration of the renewal of the Czech state, organised by the CDP at Prague’s Vysehrad. Uhde observed that the Czech state was not being established at the choice of its inhabitants. “The Slovak nation did not feel free with us and we decided to respect that feeling”. Klaus was applauded when he said “Good relations with Slovakia are more important than haggling about a couple of billions” (*Lidove noviny* 26.10.1992:1).

democracy, the common state has gradually been questioned and dismantled with excessive ruthlessness” and he appealed for Czech “grandeur” throughout the divorce (*Hospodarske noviny* 29.10.1992:1,2). Klaus told journalists that to hold a post-independence election for the proposed Czech second chamber, the Senate, implied a huge waste of time, confirming that the “CDP is in favour of designing a method of transferring Federal Assembly deputies” (*Mlada Fronta dnes* 30.10.1992:2)<sup>22</sup>. In an IVVM poll from the second week of October, 90 per cent of respondents in both parts of the country considered the split of Czechoslovakia certain. (*Mlada Fronta dnes* 30.10.1992:2). In an early November poll 50 per cent of Czechs and 40 per cent of Slovaks considered the dissolution of the Federation ‘necessary’, and 43 per cent of Czech and 49 per cent of Slovaks ‘unnecessary’ (*Mlada Fronta dnes, Svobodne slovo* 27.11.1992:1).

## November

November was dominated by assertions of republican government authority and by horse-trading over legislation. Assertions of government authority in Slovakia were both relatively less assured and more arbitrary than in the Czech Republic. Representatives of the Party of the Democratic Left and even the Slovak National Party stated publicly that Slovakia was not prepared for independent existence and that legal chaos loomed<sup>23</sup> (*Mlada Fronta dnes, Cesky denik* 4.11.1992). After meeting with Coexistence the PDL’s Pavol Kanis concluded that both parties considered Slovak conditions anti-democratic<sup>24</sup>. “The government does not respect the decisions of Parliament and the Slovak National Council is pushed to the wall” said Kanis, claiming that all parties bar MDS had “been raped”. Though he speculated that his party’s parliamentary and non-parliamentary meetings might create a consolidated opposition, such coherent action was not forthcoming (*Mlada Fronta dnes, Narodna obroda,*

---

<sup>22</sup> Having agreed that it was important for politicians to avoid creating an atmosphere of confrontation (*Mlada Fronta dnes* 31.10.1992:1,2) Klaus and Havel personified the deal on TV’s “This Week’s Outcome”. Complementing each other and expressing their joint interests in the new Czech Republic, Havel even acknowledged his defeat on direct presidential election (*Rude pravo* 2.11.1992:1,2). Later Klaus further reduced his powers (*Mlada Fronta dnes* 6.11.1992:2).

<sup>23</sup> When the Party of the Democratic Left leader, Peter Weiss, offered a coalition if “MDS changes the policy statement and admits its errors” (*Mlada Fronta dnes, Cesky denik* 4.11.1992) Meciar only accused the Party of the Democratic Left of endangering the “calm domestic atmosphere”.

<sup>24</sup> The Bratislava Division of the Federal Police had stopped criminal investigation of St.B. (Communist secret police) files stolen from Trencin, a case that had loomed against Meciar before the election (*Lidove noviny* 6.11.1992:1).

*Metropolitni Telegraf* 5.11.1992). Alexander Dubcek, the one broadly respected pro-federal voice in Slovak public life, died of his injuries on the 8th November, aged 71 (*Mlada Fronta dnes* 9.11.1992:1).

The 5th joint meeting of the Federal Assembly failed to approve not only the Bill on the Dissolution of the FBIS (secret services) but also the policy statement of the Czechoslovak government - both blocked by the Slovak part of the House of Nations. Those MDS deputies present had voted for the statement (those from the Christian Democratic Movement, Party of the Democratic Left and Social Democratic Party of Slovakia against) but almost a quarter were absent at the vote. (*Svobodne slovo, Mlada Fronta dnes* 6.11.1992). Federal Premier Strasky was concerned: the rejection of the policy statement signalled a potential delay to the major bills of separation.

The republican governments meeting at Zidlochovice in the meantime agreed to sign a framework treaty on friendly relations and cooperation. Valid for 15 years and unless renounced by either party automatically extended for another five years, Klaus described it as a "standard treaty" which "resounded more as a friendly pact" than a treaty between two foreign states. The two sides continued to disagree over a defence treaty but expressed their desire for the early discussion of the Constitutional Law on the Division of Federal Property (*Mlada Fronta dnes, Lidove noviny* 10.11.1992). Even so, both the Dissolution and Division of Property Bills were supported only by government parties and the Slovak National Party. Deputies of Czechoslovak Social Democracy, the Left Bloc, Left Social Union, Party of the Democratic Left, Christian Democratic Movement, Communist Party of Bohemia and Moravia and Coexistence continued to insist on the declaration of a referendum, somewhat paradoxically, as a condition of their consent to the law on Dissolution.

On the 13th the Federal Assembly, after the third vote, approved the law on the Division of Federal Property, to come into force after the endorsement of dissolution. Of a total estimated at 633,700 million Czechoslovak crowns, the Czech Republic would get 430,000m and the Slovaks 202,000m. The Law was opposed by the far right Republicans, Coexistence, a substantial part of the Left Bloc, the Party of Democratic



Left and several Czechoslovak Social Democracy and Left Social Union deputies. The Assembly also approved the dissolution of the FBIS and an amendment to the Law on Large Privatisation, separating a further round of coupon privatisation (*Mlada Fronta dnes* 14.11.1992:1,2 and 16.11.1992:1). During a telephone conversation on the same day Meciar and Klaus re-confirmed that the mandate of the Federal deputies would vanish with the federal state and that the National Councils would decide these deputies' future. Designed for this purpose, the job transfer to a new second chamber in each independent state was now offered as a bribe for ratification of the end of the state. J. Horak objected that this was both legally and politically impossible. More of a realist, the Communists' J. Svoboda described it as "a form of corruption" (*Mlada Fronta dnes* 14.11.1992:2). Three days later Havel announced his candidacy for the Czech presidency with the words "we must by all means strengthen the culture of mutual relations, the civic culture, the culture of a free economic life and of course the political culture" (*Lidove noviny* 17.11.1992).

Meetings of the National Councils passed concurrently and without delay the Constitutional Bill on the Dissolution of the Federation. The Czech National Council passed the resolution by 106 votes where 67 opposition deputies were against. Two draft amendments were rejected: the right-wing Civic Democratic Alliances's, giving the Republics the right to conclude treaties before the dissolution, and the Czechoslovak Social Democrat's, providing that the dissolution be confirmed in a referendum. In the Slovak National Council the bill was passed by 73 to 16 votes against with 42 abstentions. The council rejected Carnogursky's (CDM) referenda amendment but passed that tabled by the Slovak National Party's J. Prokes, which insisted that those states succeeding the Czech and Slovak Federative Republic must not use its symbols. The version of the Bill going to the Federal Assembly included a provision that legislative power in the two republics would belong to legislative assemblies consisting of deputies elected to the Federal Assembly and the respective National Councils (*Hospodarske noviny, Mlada Fronta dnes* 18.11.1992). The bribe to the federal deputies thus remained on the table. On the anniversary of the November revolution (November 17th) there were public demonstrations in Prague by two groups,

cordoned off from one another, one advocating independence, the other federation (*Mlada Fronta dnes* 18.11.1992:1,2).

In the Federal Assembly the government Bill on the Dissolution of Czechoslovakia was approved on the 18th only by the House of the People and the Czech section of the House of Nations. In the Slovak section, where 45 votes were needed, 42 voted for it, 18 against and 11 abstained. In the House of the Nations the Bill had been unequivocally supported by the deputies of the Civic Democratic Party, Movement for a Democratic Slovakia, Slovak National Party and Christian Democratic Union-Czechoslovak People's Party. Conversely the deputies of the Christian Democratic Movement, Slovak Democratic Left, Coexistence, Left Bloc, Czechoslovak Social Democracy, Slovak Social Democracy and the Republicans either voted against or abstained. In the House of the People, the Deputies of the Civic Democratic Party, Movement for a Democratic Slovakia, Christian Democratic Union-Czechoslovak People's Party, Left Social Union and parts of Czechoslovak Social Democracy and the Slovak National Party supported the Bill. The Bill was rejected on the grounds of the government's unwillingness to compromise over a referendum. A committee was elected for further negotiations and a re-vote on the 24th November. The Czechoslovak Social Democrat's Ivan Fisera again put forward a referendum amendment which Klaus resolutely opposed; "none of those proposing a referendum mean it seriously" he protested (*Mlada Fronta dnes* 19.11.1992:1,2).

Having reminded journalists that the decision over dissolution could fall to the National Councils, Klaus stressed the importance of the Constitutional Bill on Measures Connected with the Dissolution of the Federation, already approved by the Czech government. Though formally dependent on the Dissolution Bill, Klaus suggested that this Czech legislation was applicable for any form of constitutional division. The Bill on Measures enabled the Czech Republic to function as an independent state while guaranteeing continuity over its existence within Czechoslovakia. Besides continuity in the legal system it tackled the responsibilities of the basic state institutions, the transfer of rights and obligations and continuity in foreign policy and succession. If approved in the National Council, this Bill would come into effect on the day of promulgation and

not on the first day of independent statehood (*Hospodarske noviny* 19.11.1992:1,2). Klaus thus made it clear yet again that if the Assembly was going to cause delays, its authority would be hollowed out.

On the 19th, the Czech National Council approved a resolution echoing Klaus's point: "The Czech National Council is motivated by an effort to ensure calm progress in the constitutional situation, particularly progress which is orientated towards forming an independent Czech state from January 1st, 1993. Aware of its responsibility to the citizens of the Czech Republic, the Czech National Council has declared that together with the Czech government, it accepts full responsibility for continuing state power throughout the Czech Republic and for the protection of the interests and the needs of the citizens of the Czech Republic". It was approved by 109 votes (from a government coalition of 105 in a chamber of 200). Their 'mandate' confirmed, Czech deputy premier Kalvoda (the nationalist-leaning leader of the Civic Democratic Alliance) insisted that from now on the Czech National Council and the Czech government had the right to approve, irrespective of the views of federal bodies, laws and measures which would ensure the full functioning of the independent Czech Republic from January 1st, 1993 (*Mlada Fronta dnes*, *Hospodarske noviny* and *Lidove noviny* 20.11.1992).

A highly contrasting but equally instructive scene was being played out in Slovakia, where the 8th meeting of the Slovak parliament finally approved the government bill on referenda. According to the law, Slovak radio and television would give ten broadcasting hours to a referendum campaign, equally divided among parliamentary parties (thus excluding the pro-federalist Public Against Violence-Civic Democratic Union, from which Meciar's MDS had first sprung as a populist faction) (*Lidova demokracie* 20.11.1992:1). The Chairman of the Constitutional Committee of the Slovak National Council, M. Secansky declared it impossible to call a referendum by the end of 1992, however, since it would cost Slovakia 100million Kcs (*Mlada Fronta dnes* 23.11.1992:2). The long-promised law was thus provided, along with justification for its permanent delay<sup>25</sup>.

---

<sup>25</sup> In continuing talks between the presidia of the Czech and Slovak governments in Bratislava (Klaus was absent due to a tennis injury) Meciar and Kocarnik continued to disagree over the division of the real estate

As the 5th joint meeting of the Federal Assembly reconvened it became clear the negotiations committee had failed. Government parties needed one more vote in the Czech section and three votes in the Slovak section of the House of Nations, and two more in the House of the People. The Slovak opposition in particular continued to block the Bill through several negotiating rounds, until all were confronted by a version of the Bill which lacked the bribing clause transferring federal deputies to their new national second chambers (*Svobodne slovo* 25.11.1992:1). Presented with this essentially private-interest ultimatum, eventually all three chambers approved the Law on the Dissolution of Czechoslovakia on 25th November, including the decision that no referendum on the dissolution would occur

The vote was met by stormy applause from the gallery and deputies. Klaus observed that it was an important sign to other countries who had feared a Yugoslav-type collapse. "I believe that the voting represents a gesture of calmness to the whole world". Vaclav Havel approved of the endorsement of the highest legislative body. Meciar commented that when Parliament had appeared at the threshold of its self-destruction, it became aware of its importance and approached the vote reasonably<sup>26</sup>. Federal premier Strasky concluded drily that it implied the "maintenance of a political culture".

With dissolution assured, the Czech side hardened its stance on property negotiations and threatened to bring coupon privatisation into the equation if the Slovaks persisted in questioning agreed principles<sup>27</sup>. The Czech government meanwhile met on the 27th and

---

property of Federal institutions. They did however agree that no common military doctrines would exist, so ending any vestiges of military union.

<sup>26</sup> The Law included Article four which confirmed; "legislative power in [both republics] will be transferred to a legislative body, consisting of deputies elected in the 1992 elections in [both republics] to the Federal Assembly of the CSFR, and those elected to the [National Councils]. The detailed conditions of this legislative body will be set in harmony with Article 7. Article 7 endowed the National Councils with the right, before the dissolution of the CSFR but having no effect earlier than 1.1.1993, to approve constitutional and other laws, which would ensure the activities transferred to the Czech and Slovak republic according to article 2" (*Mlada Fronta dnes, Narodna obroda, Hospodarske noviny, Svobodne slovo, Lidove noviny* and *Rude pravo* 26.11.1992). Realising the promise of transfer was now in the hands of the respective National Councils.

<sup>27</sup> During the four rounds of coupon privatisation so far, Slovak holders of investment coupons and Slovak investment privatisation funds had gained stocks of Czech enterprises amounting to Kcs 18,800 million

approved the draft budget for 1993 (*Mlada Fronta dnes* 28.11.1992:1). At a press conference Kocarnik announced “the first budget of the independent Czech Republic will be balanced” and reported that Czech inflation was the lowest among the post-communist countries and would not exceed 12 per cent by the end of the year (*Mlada Fronta dnes*, *Rude pravo* and *Lidove noviny* 1.12.1992).

The 6th meeting of the Federal Assembly was inquorate owing to absentees in the Slovak section of the House of the Nations. Fatalism had finally set in. The Houses recommended that yet another round of presidential elections could now, at last, be cancelled (*Svobodne slovo* 28.11.1992:1). Asked whether any new complications had arisen in the Czecho-Slovak Commission for the Division of Federal Property Strasky said no; “no new complications... The Czech side resolutely insists on the territorial principle of the division of federal real estate, without any further financial settlements. Slovakia reacts as always by playing the card of yet another enterprise which should be reassessed and its division adjusted” (*Mlada Fronta dnes* 30.11.1992:1,2).

## December

In the last month of the federation the republican governments turned to face the domestic issues sidelined over the previous months. The need to ratify a new Czech constitution demanded much of the Civic Democratic Party’s attention since the proposals were causing friction even within the governing coalition. In its last days, the Federal Assembly continued its task of dissolving the administrative centre - when it was not made inquorate by absentee Slovak deputies (*Mlada Fronta dnes*, *Svobodne slovo*, *Cesky denik* 3.12.1992). In Slovakia the political situation degenerated further as the government sought to prosecute journalists hostile to the Meciar regime (*Mlada Fronta dnes* and *Zemedelske noviny* 1.12.1992:2). In a statement lifted verbatim from the communist era, Meciar warned that “anyone who attacks the government, attacks the whole Republic and its citizens”.

Despite Klaus’s calls for a smooth transfer of power the Movement for Self-Governing Democracy-Society for Moravia and Silesia, the Republicans and Left Bloc deputies in

---

whereas Czechs had sought out only some Kcs 4,500 million of Slovak property (*Mlada Fronta dnes* 27.11.1992:1).

the Czech National Council still opposed the transfer of federal deputies, they also had sympathisers, though they were overruled, in the coalition Civic Democratic Alliance. Alive to such problems however, the Civic Democratic Party had carefully separated the transfer issue from ratification of the draft constitution<sup>28</sup> (*Hospodarske noviny* 4.12.1992:2 *Mlada Fronta dnes* 5.12.1992:1,2)<sup>29</sup>. Having first approved the reception law enabling the smooth transfer of federal legislation and powers (*Mlada Fronta dnes, Slobodne slovo* 16.12.1992:1) the Czech National Council approved the Czech constitution on the 16th. Of 198 deputies present, 172 voted for it, 16 against and 10 abstained. Klaus described the endorsement as the “logical result of the whole political development since the moment when the Czech public rejected the Communist regime” (*Mlada Fronta dnes* 17.12.1992:1,2): a remarkable verdict indicating that Klaus was unsurprised by the impact of democratic and radical market policies on Czech and Slovak coexistence, his previous statements notwithstanding.

The Federal Assembly marked the end of its activity on the 17th by singing the Czechoslovak anthem. In his closing speech Strasky declared that Czechs had regarded Czechoslovakia as the state which could fulfill their ideas about democracy, whereas the different attitude of the Slovaks had always been present, even before November 1989. Since then, he said, the Slovaks had shown their dissatisfaction. He congratulated the Czechs for their recognition of Slovakia’s natural right to independence, concluding that “Czechs owe nothing to Slovaks, and I venture to claim that Slovaks are aware of this fact”. Federal Assembly Chairman Kovac (MDS) confirmed that Czechoslovakia had indeed fulfilled the idea of Czech national statehood but pointed out that “Slovaks could only start to fulfill their aspirations after the 1992 elections”, and emphasised the considerable achievement represented by the peaceful and ‘constitutional’ end to the state (*Mlada Fronta dnes* 1,2, *Cesky denik* 18.12.1992:1).

---

<sup>28</sup> Meciar’s proposal to form a second chamber with federal deputies was rejected by the MDS Council, the Movement’s advisory body, and later by the MDS presidium, meeting on the 12th. Meciar, unperturbed, said the establishment of a second chamber would have anyway been too complicated (*Mlada Fronta dnes* 14.12.1992:2). As for the presidency Meciar announced a likely election in January 1993, the anticipated candidate being Michal Kovac (MDS) (*Cesky denik* 5.12.1992:2).

<sup>29</sup> By way of a reminder representatives of all clubs of deputies in the Federal Assembly (excepting the Republicans) wrote to the Czech National Council that: “A calm birth of the Czech state with full successor rights would be questioned if the Czech National Council disassociated itself from the constitutional Laws of the Federal Assembly set for the dissolution of the federation” (*Mlada Fronta dnes* 5.12.1992:2).

The Czech National Council approved the Law on state symbols on the 17th but, with some emphasis, broke the Slovak National Party's constitutional amendment in the process. Having harkened to Strasky's sentiments it was decided that the Czech Republic would continue to use the current federal flag without any change to the blue ('Slovak') wedge, along with other traditional symbols (*Mlada Fronta dnes, Cesky denik* 18.12.1992:1). By their decision the Czechs had "confirmed that they had regarded Czechoslovakia as the Czech lands and that Slovak had always been playing second fiddle" concluded Ivan Gasparovic, Chairman of the Slovak National Council. In retaliation Slovaks could also declare the Czechoslovak state flag as the Slovak flag, he suggested, though he assured that they would not (*Mlada Fronta dnes* 18.12.1992:2).

In these last weeks the Slovak government appeared harassed from all sides by the secretive manoeuvres of its own leader and a collapse of official information. Slovak ministers learned belatedly of Meciar's meeting with Russia's Victor Chernomyrdin. They also found themselves considerably beneath the Czechs in the estimation of international organisations. The majority of states did not reckon with opening diplomatic missions in Bratislava; ambassadors accredited to Slovakia would reside in either Prague or Vienna. Pavel Bratinka, Czech Minister of International Relations, told the European Parliament that the federation was dividing solely because most Slovaks had felt no loyalty towards the Czechoslovak Republic (*Metropolitni Telegraf* 2.12.1992:3)<sup>30</sup>. When Klaus announced that the International Monetary Fund (IMF) quotas would be divided in the ratio 2.29:1 and not 2:1, (the quotas affecting the granting of credits) H. Kocuch, chairman of the Slovak Budgetary Committee complained that they had not received the IMF Special Report at all. Kocuch's objections must have provoked wry comment in the Czech Republic. The document, Kocuch complained, should have gone to the Federal Premier, since "Czechoslovakia still exists" (*Mlada Fronta dnes* 19.12.1992:2).

---

<sup>30</sup> Slovakia's reputation fell under further scrutiny when an operative bugging device was found in the U.S. consulate in Bratislava (*Telegraf, Mlada Fronta dnes* 7.12.1992). Meciar claimed that the discovery was orchestrated by Prague to discredit the Slovak state and that, according to available information "a bug is to be discovered at the offices of the Christian Democratic Movement and the government is to be accused of bugging political parties or their leaders. Other provocations are under preparation. Of course we shall reject and withstand them" (*Mlada Fronta dnes* 12.12.1992:1,2). Few doubted that Meciar's forces were responsible.

A meeting of the Federal Assembly presidium agreed the mandate of federal deputies would not end following the dissolution of Czechoslovakia, since mandates could only be abolished by elections and not by the National Councils. They also decided that deputies' legal immunity should be dissolved by elections in 1996, though conceded that their material benefits were a matter for the successor states. Strasky responded to these federal musings with an abrupt letter to the presidium declaring the Assembly's autumn session closed (*Mlada Fronta dnes* 1,2, *Rude pravo* 23.12.1992:2). With the ultimate fate of federal deputies still in Czech government hands, it was agreed that National Council Chairman Milan Uhde could invite them to the planned gala meeting in Vladislav Hall on January 1st, 1993, as a mark of the public's appreciation of their work (*Mlada Fronta dnes, Rude pravo, Cesky denik* 23.12.1992:1).

The planned celebrations for independence were sedate, to be marked with speeches from Uhde and Vaclav Klaus, an ecumenical mass at St.Vitus's Cathedral and a gala concert of the Czech Philharmonic Orchestra at the Dvorak Hall in Prague: all to be broadcast on television and transmitted onto screens in Jan Palach Square (*Rude pravo* 22.12.1992:2). In Slovakia the National Council agreed that, together with the diplomatic corps and government they would attend a gala meeting on independence day with speeches from the Council chairman and premier Meciar (*Hospodarske noviny* 23.12.1992:2). On December 18th moreover, the Slovak government released 25 million Crowns - 5 crowns per capita - for the celebrations of the first day of Slovak independence. These finances would be covered by government reserves, set for extraordinary expenditures (*Lidove noviny* 31.12.1992:2).



## **Chapter 3**

### **Competing and Complementary Explanations of the Partition**

#### **Introduction**

This chapter sets out some theoretical perspectives with which to advance a deeper investigation of how and why the Czechoslovak state separated. Apart from the essential question ‘why?’, the end of Czechoslovakia poses two additional and in the circumstances of state separation, highly unusual questions - ‘why did it fall apart so quickly?’ - *i.e.* without any serious attempt at an alternative configuration, and ‘why did it fall apart in such a nice way?’ - *i.e.* without violence.

The circumstances in which the state collapsed, moreover, just three years after the re-emergence of democracy following the communist collapse, offers many possible approaches to these questions. Nationalism, the ambiguous nature of the state, the double political and economic transition, state-building, institutional failure, relative deprivation, latent grievances and populism were all present to some degree in post-1989 Czechoslovakia.

It is the post-communist political environment that constitutes the main focus of this thesis. The aim is, as far as is possible, to analyse the critical arguments, conflicts and decisions which hastened Czechoslovakia to its end. From these the thesis attempts to filter out those phenomena manifestly peculiar to a communist collapse and to consider their relative importance as causal factors in the separation. My method is to examine the available evidence as closely as possible whilst limiting the assumptions about the ‘transition’ from communism. Many transition theorists have tended to presume a developmental trajectory toward democracy. ‘Return of history’ arguments at the other extreme have tended to assume the return of the ‘worst’ history, *i.e.* authoritarianism and genocidal national conflict. As far as possible I try to avoid assumptions regarding expected developmental paths. The purpose of the remainder of this chapter to explain some of the theory-based approaches which might simplify the puzzle. (For some basic comparative context see Appendix I)

### The argument

The difficulties peculiar to the post-communist state and their causal relation to the state's demise may clearly be exaggerated. The coincidence of the socialist and federal collapse may be all too easily mistaken for a complete explanation: *post hoc, ergo propter hoc* - 'it followed therefore it was caused by it'. It is nevertheless the claim of this thesis that *one may demonstrate that the critical steps to separation resulted from elite-level disagreements over issues exclusive to the reform period rather than from elite responses to historic, mass-level societal conflicts.*

Though these elite disagreements fell most distinctly along the national fault-line in Czechoslovakia, it is a further claim of this thesis that *analysis of the conflict as a 'nationalist' or 'ethnic conflict' is deeply misleading.* This assertion, however, leads us to the problematic issue of whether a defence of 'national interest' in other than 'nationalist' terms *e.g.* 'protecting democracy' or 'economic necessity' may be sensibly designated as a nationalist impulse. As the thesis argues, the two leading political parties most important to the dispute, Vladimir Meciar's Movement for a Democratic Slovakia and Vaclav Klaus's Czech Civic Democratic Party, can not be compressed into any meaningful category of nationalist party, even though both proved skillful at manipulating the nationalist idiom, national stereotypes and even national grievances. The deeper and more problematic characteristics of both these parties lay precisely in their rootlessness in terms of constituency, in Klaus's continuing attachment to a technocratic sociology of reform, and the corresponding willingness of both leaders to adopt short term issues of the transition as the basis of their political programmes and electoral strategies.

My core argument - that the separation was caused by the distinctive politics of the transition period - rests upon two main pillars. The first is *that Vaclav Klaus's dogmatic definition of a 'functioning federation' - a definition derived from neo-liberal conceptions of economic reform - proved the main barrier to agreement in constitutional talks over the future of the state.* The definition carried 'an imperative' of a strong and sovereign 'federal' centre, and permitted of no confederal rights for the two republics. The definition promised a reversal in Slovakia's constitutional fortunes

at the very time when Slovaks expected some radical adjustment in their favour. Secondly, *the opportunities for opposition to separation were shaped neither by fully functioning democratic nor communist institutions but by the distinctive environment of inherited and newly animated communist institutions combined with nascent democratic institutions, such as the multi-party system.* This institutional ensemble continued to develop and adapt, undisciplined and unpatterned by broadly accepted rules of procedure and principle, up to the very day the state was ended. This is *not* to say that there was institutional chaos, a political vacuum without ruling precepts, unfathomable institutional flux. Indeed the prominent architects of institutional development between 1989 and 1993 may be readily identified and their impact assessed. *Electoral self-serving, short term arguments regarding optimal paths of reform acted as the framework of party contestation and as the dominant, guiding precepts governing parliamentary behaviour. Broad-based public opposition to the separation was ineffectual against elite-proclaimed 'reform imperatives'.* Unravelling the political interests behind the discourse of 'transitional reform' is the most appropriate task for understanding the separation.

To sort any such conclusions from the complex evidence at hand it is necessary to adopt consistent theoretical lines of inquiry. To this end I have chosen six alternative theories of state weakness in the hope that investigating their merits might illuminate and ultimately bring to the surface a satisfactory explanation of the state's demise.

### **Theoretical approaches**

Maurice Vile has pointed out that "[n]o federation has survived with only two or three units of government at the lower level. It is indeed very unlikely that such a federation could survive, because federal systems operate on the basis of the bargaining between shifting coalitions of groups, bringing about compromises because no single group or coalition of groups is in a continually dominant position. The danger of an irreconcilable confrontation between the units in a two-unit federation is so great that sooner or later it would lead to civil war, secession, or both". Further conditions of successful federations, he adds, "would be the requirement that no single member state should be in such a dominant positions that it can dictate the policies of the federal

government” and “the development of a party system which will provide those political linkages across the boundaries of the member states, without which the process of bargaining and compromise essential to federal politics cannot take place” (Vile 1982:222). The theoretical arguments set out below explore all of the critical points raised in the above statement, but they also explore the possibility that Czechoslovakia after 1989 was neither democratic nor federal, but a state in transition.

Vile’s argument raises the crucial question of institutional stability, and the capacity for institutions to structure politics, and thus, political conflict. Vile identifies the problem of communal intransigence compounded by the structure of the state, and anticipates a conflict without any source of arbitration. His assertions that the oppositional characteristics of a bi-communal federation doom it to a collapse are, however, potentially inadequate to explain our case, as they gloss over many of the distinct problems of the communist inheritance and the post-communist transition. The theoretical arguments set out below open up the debate to the possibility of an unstable, highly manipulable and still developing state.

The six alternative arguments, each framed around the major known facts of the Czechoslovak separation, have been chosen for their varying capacity to capture systemic change, their necessary depth of time horizon, and for their breadth of engagement with all levels of the state, (from the realm of social cleavages to that of elite decision-making and beyond to a geopolitical perspective). That said, they are not intended to be mutually exclusive. On the contrary, it will become clear that these arguments in various combinations are complementary to one another, despite a number of overlaps and contradictions. They are as follows:

**1) The inevitability argument - nationalism**

This contends that ethnonationalism was at the root of the separation and that the anti-communist revolution of 1989 did not so much engender conflict as reveal and unleash it.

**2) The inequality argument - relative deprivation**

Observing that economic relations between the Czech lands and Slovakia had always been fraught, and that after 1989 economic reform proved especially controversial, this argument suggests that it was Slovakia's persistent relative deprivation in particular that motivated secessionist impulses (in both republics), which in turn led to separation.

### **3) The democratisation argument - state-restructuring**

This argument contends that there were fundamental differences and incompatible notions of what kind of democratic state should be built and consequently, of how the state should be restructured. Diverging perceptions of democratising, and of concomitant state-restructuring needs among Czech, Slovak and Federal governing elites led to growing conflict and the breakdown of common institutions.

### **4) The institutional argument - path-dependency**

This view proposes that once pre-communist, communist and post-communist institutions, (in particular, separate party systems and communist constitutional rules), were animated in a democratic setting, political interests and contestation were structured in such a way as to make consensus building impossible. Divergence was, therefore, institution-led.

### **5) The party competition argument - party autonomy**

This argument contends that the process of party formation and the post-election fragmentation of the Czech and Slovak anti-communist civic movements into competing factions permitted the development of highly oligarchic and autonomous political parties, the most successful of which adopted 'catch-all' strategies of electoral competition. The vagueness of party programmes and campaigns, particularly on the alternative models of state-design, left the way open for unaccountable elite action.

### **6) The realist argument - leadership choices**

Following the party autonomy argument, this 'realist' account contends that in the absence of democratic and representative institutions the fullest rein was given to elite decision-making, and the separation was duly concocted by leaders with demonstrably rational private power interests in republican independence.

### **The inevitability argument**

It has been argued that whereas during the Cold War period even weak states could survive purely on their international juridicial status, in the post-Cold War era secessionist claims were peculiarly tempting and opportune, since eastern bloc states found themselves unable to draw upon outside resources with which to halt such claims (Bunce 1996:10). Nationalism, one might add, is more powerful in open and competitive regimes.

An 'inevitability' theory of nationalism has clear exponents among the many who see in 1989 post-communist Europe a 'return of history'. As Adam Przeworski warned back in 1991: "one should not forget that, except in Bohemia, the political culture that was suppressed by communists in the aftermath of World War II was a nationalist, religious, authoritarian amalgam that gave rise to several dictatorships during the interwar period. This culture was frozen under communist rule: it had no chance to evolve in the direction of democracy, as it did in France, Italy and Finland..." (Przeworski 1991:93)<sup>1</sup>. Others have made more positive arguments as to why nationalism in particular survived the communist repression. According to Miklos Szabo, national self-identification acted as one of the repositories of social autonomy in the face of a political system designed to eradicate non-socialist culture, as a welcome shield against the loss of cultural identity (in Schopflin 1991:14).

The doom-mongers who anticipate that the nationalist, religious and authoritarian politics of the interwar period will once again come to the fore may also draw upon an old line of argument within the nationalism literature, one which, unfortunately, has blunted our critical understanding of the variety of roles played by nationalism in twentieth century Eastern Europe. The popular view that Eastern European nationalism is of an unusually vicious variety has its roots in the historic absence there of state structures broadly corresponding to political cultures. The region, as a consequence,

---

<sup>1</sup> Adherents to this view it should be noted, come dangerously close to ascribing a profound malignancy to Eastern European politics. In Przeworski's view "The flare-ups of nationalist ideologies and of ethnic conflicts, and a burst of anti-Semitism constitute symptoms of the vitality of organicist ideologies in Eastern Europe" (ibid.).

has frequently suffered from different nations competing for the same populations, and the use of nationhood criteria for the often brutal extension and assumption of political power (Schopflin 1991:9). The resulting tangled web of actual and potential conflicts has prompted several scholars to condemn the Eastern European impulse to nationhood *in toto*. Hans Kohn (1944) saw Eastern nationalism as entirely negative even while he accepted the Western variant as largely positive. He identified the former with authoritarianism and irrationality and the latter with democracy and rationality (1991:9)<sup>2</sup>. For my purposes, Przeworski, Szabo and Kohn suggest that national sentiment may have remained a vital force in the region, that nationalism 'will out' whatever history delivers, but also that clear historical precedents exist here of opportunists, as well as nationalists, mobilising popular national sentiment as the obvious path to legitimacy and power.

The 'inevitability' argument contends that *ethnonationalism was at the root of the Czechoslovak separation and that the revolution of 1989 did not so much engender a national conflict as reveal it*. Following Przeworski, we may view the 'transition' as when the underlying cultures of the region 'defrosted', releasing a long-suppressed national self-identification and will to self-determination among Slovaks and a reformulation of Czech ideas about common statehood in recognition of the depth of Slovak national desires. This argument resembles the official Czech version of the causes of separation as offered by Klaus's Civic Democratic Party. In the closing session of the Federal Assembly on the 17th December 1992, Federal Premier Strasky (CDP) declared that Czechs had always regarded Czechoslovakia as the state which could fulfill their ideas about democracy, whereas the different attitude of the Slovaks had always been present, even before 1989, and he congratulated Czechs on their recognition of Slovakia's natural right to independence (*Mlada Fronta dnes* 1,2, *Cesky denik* 1:18.12.1992).

---

<sup>2</sup> That the collapse of Yugoslavia was greeted with fatalism in the West is arguably one of the great unintended consequences of this view. The belief that Serbs and Croats were 'at it again' blunted the edge of Western moral outrage. Similarly, when Czechoslovakia separated peacefully, the Western reaction was one of such relief that the parties involved were rather praised than criticised.

Given the evidence of the preceding chapter, however, we already have grounds to suspect this official Czech account. Meciar's political acrobatics in the last six months of the common state suggest the tactics of an outmanoeuvred opportunist more than those of a committed nationalist. The evident shock among Meciar's colleagues following his apparent capitulation to separation also contradicts the Czech claim that the Movement for a Democratic Slovakia was a secessionist nationalist party. The Czechs, meanwhile, showed an unmatched will to independence. Without deeper investigation of the politics of the preceding two years, however, the impressions of the last six months may prove misleading. We have not yet considered the levels of Slovak provocation and sentiment which may have driven Klaus to his unyielding attitude. Meciar's capacity for bluff and intrigue, and the basis of his original popularity, moreover, clearly require further exploration. Assuming that either Klaus or Meciar (or both) had at some time between 1989 and 1993 revealed themselves to be nationalist and secessionist therefore, we may offer a simplifying, short-hand version of this argument:



## The inevitability argument



Evidence in favour of the thesis that nationalism emerged spontaneously onto the political scene and caused the split would be i) the more or less rapid emergence of political movements which aimed to take and which achieved state power on the basis of a more or less separatist nationalist programme, ii) the existence of mobilised mass nationalist movements, iii) the existence of strong nationalist and separatist sentiment in public opinion data. Evidence against this thesis would be i) the electoral weakness of nationalist parties, ii) low levels of nationalist/separatist sentiment in the two republics, iii) minimal use of the nationalist card by electorally successful political elites. These questions are reviewed in Chapter 4.

Because we already know from the preceding chapter that the separation was a highly elitist affair, with almost no public protest nor public participation in the decision-making process, for instance, through a referendum, one of the critical questions of the thesis as a whole is 'on what ideological basis did the state-separating elites win and exercise power?'. For this reason I am content to adopt Breuilly's restriction of the term 'nationalism' to refer to "political movements seeking or exercising state power and justifying such action with nationalist arguments" (Breuilly 1993:2). 'Nationalist' action and argument are understood here as deriving from a doctrine with three basic assertions, that:

- (a) There exists a nation with an explicit and peculiar character
- (b) The interests and values of this nation take priority over all other interests and values
- (c) The nation must be as independent as possible. This usually requires at least the attainment of political sovereignty (Breuilly 1993:2)

As the evidence of the preceding chapter suggests, programmatic nationalism may not have dominated the Slovak republic to the extent that Jan Strasky would have us believe. Alternatively, the search for nationalist parties may uncover an hitherto unsuspected degree of Czech national grievance and national aspiration, previously hidden by the communist veneer of unity and the Czech record of national complacency. Connor has emphasised that the leaders of nationalist movements may be merely opportunistic, motivated not by a nationalist vision at all but by some ulterior end - he cites personal gain and class-oriented philosophy (1994:161), which they must cloak in nationalist garb in order to mobilise the national sentiments of the masses. Clearly, our conflict may still be identified as nationalist in character if the electorate is mobilised on that basis, whatever we may conclude about the 'real' motives of the elites.

### **Relative deprivation**

The image of the nationalist genie leaping from the bottle - or rather from the communist fridge - in November 1989 is loaded with assumptions as to the primordial,

organic nature of national identity and the capacity of a national conflict to survive communist repression unchanged and indeed, invigorated. The argument of nationalist revival should perhaps be modified, and more explicitly tailored to post-1989 conditions as they could be observed. The historical fact of unequal economic development between Slovakia and the Czech lands (though also, to a lesser extent, between Moravia and Bohemia) and the unique scale of the economic reforms proposed in 1990 together suggest that economic factors may have provided fertile grounds for the regeneration of the national idea. Among the many theories of nationalism, Ernest Gellner's insight that nationalism springs from modernisation or industrialisation and from its uneven diffusion (Gellner 1964:166), may serve as a starting point for empirical analysis. Following the principles outlined by Gellner, Tom Nairn's theory of 'relative deprivation' is particularly suggestive as a platform and sound basis for the 'resurrection' of secessionist impulses in our case.

Nairn proposes that nationalism is, initially at least, the political response of relatively less developed *i.e.* relatively economically deprived areas to the pressures and difficulties arising between themselves and more developed societies. Nationalism as such he understands to be essentially economic in impulse *i.e.* not ethno- but econational (Connor 1994:145). As Nairn argues, the intellectuals of a nationalist movement must mobilise the masses because, without economic strength (and we may perhaps add in our context - without recourse to other equally self-evident social cleavages), the "People is all they have got" - the essence, he argues, of the "underdevelopment dilemma" (1983:198). As he continues, framing the putative goals of nationalism in a way which certainly sits well with our knowledge of historical Slovak grievances, "they have to demand progress not as it is thrust upon them initially by the metropolitan centre, but 'on their own terms'. These 'terms' are, of course, ones which reject the imperialist trappings: exploitation or control from abroad, discrimination, military or political domination, and so on" (Nairn 1983:196).

Nairn is otherwise dismissive of the 'idealist' (as opposed to the materialist) explanations of nationalism: he argues that "nationalism is invariably characterized by a high degree of political and ideological voluntarism... It always imagines an ideal

‘people’ (propped up by folklore studies, antiquarianism, or some surrogate)... Such idealism is inseparable both from its creative historical function and its typical delusions” (1983:199-200)<sup>3</sup>. This skepticism too, would seem fitting in the Slovak case, given the relative ‘youth’ of the Slovak national identity in the hierarchy of the world’s ‘historic’ nations.

Confronted as such a theory must be, by the contradictory fact of nationalism within well-developed and indeed, prospering regions, Nairn admits of a cross-category he calls ‘relative over-development’. We in turn might view this as appropriate to the Czech case - creating then, a scenario of conflict between two essentially economically-motivated nationalisms. Again his category appears resonant with some, if not all of the basic facts. Those acting upon their relative over-development are apparently “nationalities who struggled to free their own strong development from what they had come to perceive as the backwardness around them - from some larger, politically dominant power whose stagnation or archaism had become an obstacle to their future progress”. Czechs might, at a stretch, have perceived the Slovak use of the inherited right of veto in the federal parliament to be a form of political domination, and at the very least as an obstacle to rapid and radical economic reform. Moreover, the typically over-developed territories are small, Nairn argues, “and tend to be in ‘sensitive’ zones of a larger political economy - alongside or in-between powerful neighbours” (1983:201) - in our case, Germany - Germany, Poland and Austria respectively.

The objections that have been weighed against this theory are considerable. One is that Nairn discusses the development of nationalism a-historically, as if imperialism and anti-colonial nationalism preceded the advent of nationalism in Europe (Breuilly 1993:412-4). A second and fundamental flaw is identified by Walker Connor in his broad critique of relative economic deprivation theory. Connor points out that causal connections between economic forces and ethnonationalism should not be inferred

---

<sup>3</sup> It should be noted, in fairness to Nairn, that he no longer swears by these maxims. Here, however, he is again echoing Gellner, who argues that “the self-image of nationalism involves the stress of folk, folklore, popular culture, etc. In fact, nationalism becomes important precisely when these things become artificial. Genuine peasants or tribesman, however proficient at folk-dancing, do not generally make good nationalists” . According to Gellner it is not until the peasant is educated and urbanised and his interests fully vested in the language in which he was educated that folk-dancing takes on the constructive nation-building overtones invoked by the movement’s leaders (Gellner 1964:162).

simply because they tend to coexist (1994:160). The comparative evidence moreover is against such an inference, which overlooks two elements in particular. The first is that the ‘law’ of uneven regional economic development more or less guarantees apparent discrepancies between nationally bounded economies, moreover, economic conditions on the immediate edge of a national border are likely to shade imperceptibly into those on the other, leaving conflict over that particular border unexplained by purely material factors. Secondly, the greatest economic discrepancies are those between and not within states (ibid.). Comparative data shows that while the economy might constitute the exacerbating factor or the battleground of an ethnonational dispute, ethnic identity may be shown to stand as the prior, causal element in that dispute. The comparative data confirm the following rule: one can remove economic equality or reverse it and a national conflict may remain; on the other hand, where one removes the prior ethnonational issue while retaining an economic inequality between regions, the conflict dissolves (Connor 1994:153)<sup>4</sup>.

Yet while we may accept that a theory of ‘relative deprivation’ is unsatisfactory as a general paradigm and as an explanation of nationalism *per se* - ignoring as it must many contradictory examples - it is nevertheless at least highly suggestive. If we follow Connor’s conclusion that at minimum “economic factors are very apt to serve as catalytic agent, exacerbator, or choice of battleground” (1994:161), then Nairn’s suggested patterns may at least shed some light upon the mobilising tactics of Czech and Slovak nationalists after 1989, and thus upon the transitional political environment generally. *It may be that given a case of latent national self-identity, emphasis upon a renewal of sharp economic differences and discrimination provided the optimum strategy of Czechoslovakia’s nationalists elites.*

Evidence in favour of this thesis would be i) the existence of strong economic grievances - in Slovakia’s case, against Czech economic manipulation; in the Czech

---

<sup>4</sup> Accepting this logic has some implications for my thesis. It suggests, for instance, that the Czechs were equally damned if they did, and damned if they did not pursue economic equality between the two republics. I am not contesting this insofar as I do believe that Czechoslovakia was likely to suffer from some form of nationalist conflict after Communism *whatever the country’s economic performance*, which may even, in time, have escalated to the point of causing a separation of the state. This thesis argues, however, that it was a not a nationalist conflict which led to *the* separation of the state.

case, against Slovakia's debilitating economic archaism, ii) we should then find these grievances translated into separatist nationalist political movements which succeed in mobilising mass support, with or without the aid of 'idealist' nationalist rhetoric and folk-dancing. Uniquely, so the evidence may show, the more complex interests of a fully developed and functioning political system could not impinge upon these economic arguments, before the state itself was lost. Evidence against this thesis would be i) that economic grievances were not translated into separatist nationalist sentiment, ii) that nationalist or openly separatist parties were seen as performing badly on economic issues. The evidence is reviewed in Chapter 4.

### **The relative deprivation argument**



#### **Democratisation - state-building**

Amidst all the talk of democratic 'transition' and 'consolidation', the post-communist 'state' has remained a neglected and ill-defined artifact. While a growing number of authors concur on the problems of state 'weakness' in this region still others simply assume that long after the revolution the state remained a bureaucratic monster, needing to be 'rolled back' from its former territory. The way in which political

scientists conceptualise the state is of course hotly contested. The problem of definition had nevertheless seemed superficially easier when considering Soviet-type-states, since these evolved from totalitarian thinking and along all-too coherent totalitarian lines. The blue-print functions of the communist state and even the deviations of practice from concept had for many years seemed relatively transparent. More than a few observers (Samuel Huntington, Clement Moore and Zbigniew Brzezinski among them), felt it reasonable to present unidimensional and collapsed views of their development (Jowitt 1992:13). Just as Brzezinski's critics pointed to the highly varying capacity of the Party-states to absorb dissent, however, so did the diverging paths of these states after their revolutions confirm that here were structures of diverse legitimacy and strength, suffering under different stresses.

If we look back to the Czechoslovak state during its first days of 'democracy', with the 'leading role of the Party' struck decisively from the constitution, as the defining democratic act, it is evident that a crisis of definition took its place - one that struck at the offices of state at every level. Without the Party and the Party's web of authority and its leverage through industry, the military, police, and the welfare state, it was profoundly uncertain as to what kind of state was left, not to mention what kind of state should take its place<sup>5</sup>. Without the Party it was unclear what constituted the long resented 'centre', whether still centralised powers remained strong, and how much less the average individual was really encumbered by 'state authority'. State-restructuring, if only as a function of institutional re-defining at the Czech, Slovak and federal levels, presented itself as a priority, and for the new politicians charged with this duty, as a personal and political opportunity of the first order.

The public accountability of 'the new state' furthermore appeared a dreamlike aspiration when the powers and status of the bureaucracy *and* public expectations together were a little known quantity, at least in the first months. With the death of the communist dictatorship many, particularly at the republican parliamentary level, opposed central power 'in principle', even though parliamentary deputies could hardly

---

<sup>5</sup> That is, beyond a profound longing for broadly accepted civic, *i.e.* private rather than political norms. As the pre-democratic joke had it: 'democracy is when the doorbell rings at the milkman's hour - and it's the milkman'.

possess a clearer picture of where that power lay<sup>6</sup>. The oppressively centralised nature of the previous regime thus left residual political tensions between the centre and both of the hitherto largely symbolic republican parliaments even before the pressures of future-oriented conflicts, *e.g.* over constitutional reform and resource distribution, impacted further upon republican and federal state relations.

And yet for all the associations of liberation with decentralisation, the bureaucratic and ministerial structures of the state were not gargantuan, either at the republican level or at the supposedly overbearing federal centre. Since significant quarters were inoperable without Communist policy or the Party 'whip' the operational and *acceptable* administration was arguably minuscule and in policy-implementation capacity, inadequate. To say that democracy engendered conscious and opportunistic 'empire building' from the very beginning would be to assume too much by the way of transparency - as if ministries and their ministers had the information to tread with any precision on the newly emerging and rapidly changing preserve of others. It might nevertheless be argued that even a patently accidental process of encroachment, most notably by republican upon federal responsibilities, would encourage a radical re-education of Czech, Slovak and federal elite expectations, and eventually public expectations, as to where power should properly reside.

According to the testimony of new, former-dissident hires brought into many of these ministries to be active in their re-design, the dynamically operating administration after 1989 was a mini-state within a state, huddled around ministers (amongst others) who attempted to extend, organise and link up the new web of 'live' administration further, as they saw fit. Policy formulation and implementation were achieved through identifying and marshalling operative centres within each ministry, however tiny - by finding efficient networks and fostering them, often necessarily regardless of past orders and strict rank. Some ministers were clearly better placed and more adept at this than others.

---

<sup>6</sup> Coincidentally, Margaret Thatcher's call to 'roll back the state' was made for such occasions, and political representatives quickly caught on to its peculiar effectiveness when addressing Western audiences - their ear for diplomatic appropriateness being less surprising when one remembers that for decades the high political art of the satellite states had been that of assessing and mimicking the 'correct line'.

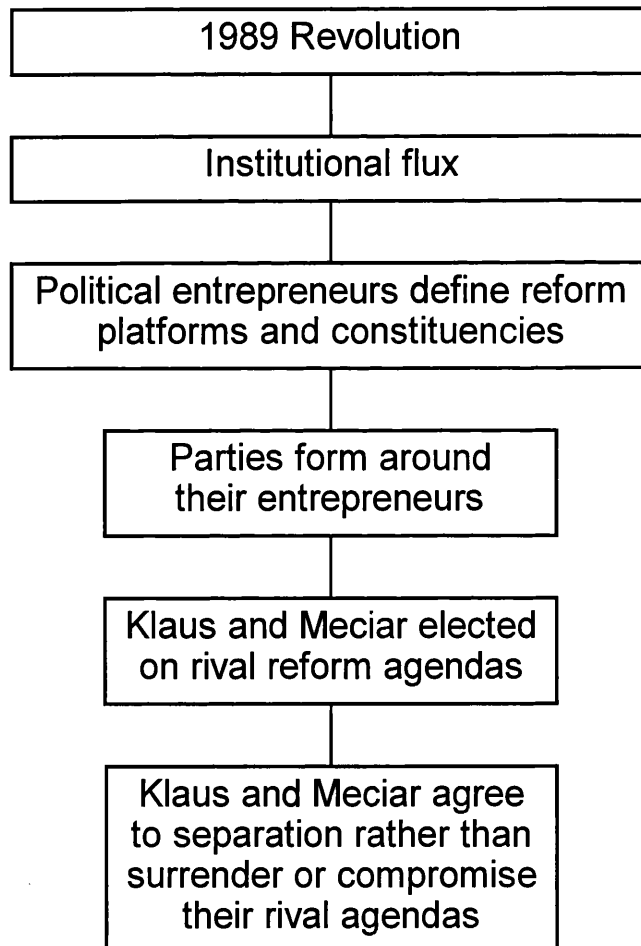


Vaclav Klaus, the Federal Finance Minister until June 1992, was able, not least because of his key to the federal purse and his comparatively strong mandate for economic reform, to establish new administrative offices and to assert at least an internally coherent scheme of operation. Having assembled an effective arm of administrative strength within his own ministry, Klaus aimed in cabinet to give it and his chosen economic ministers the kind of executive clout enjoyed, for example, by the Treasury in Britain. In such a context the personal clear-sightedness of individual ministers was evidently important in determining the form and codes of the new state. As party politics developed, moreover, these opportunities for highly entrepreneurial political leadership also heightened the party/political content of the conflicts between federal, Czech and Slovak republican authorities as to the demarcation of new jurisdictions.

Did the machinery of state: the 'factor of cohesion in a social formation', the 'authoritative allocator of values' (Dunleavy and O'Leary 1987:6) in the immediate post-1989 reality operate under any coherent political scheme, any overriding identity? Examining the very first days of democracy there is much to suggest that *the state-restructuring efforts of the republics and the federation, and the post-revolutionary openness of the opportunity-structure for competing priorities would together create tremendous tensions within a geographically and economically polarised state. In the absence of significant, well-respected constraints, such as a unifying presidency, and given the existence of two quite separate party systems, it looked highly likely that these state-restructuring tensions would be resolved most predictably by a state-dissolving clash of interests between these pre-set national boundaries.* These national boundaries were, it may be remembered, already articulated by separate, inherited administrative structures. Evidence in favour of the democratisation thesis would be i) if the observable tensions between centre and periphery, and indeed, between the two republics, were formulated as democratising or reform arguments (as contrasted with programmatic nationalistic arguments for the nation-state as the vehicle for national realisation), ii) if those forging dominating state-building arguments were primarily pro-democracy / reformists elites and, iii) if the latter elites argued that democratic

reform was potentially incompatible with a common state, iv) the prioritisation of 'reform' in public opinion polls, v) a weak presidency and a weak constitutional court. Evidence against this argument would be i) that pro-democracy/pro-reform elites supported the continuation of a common state as an overriding public good, ii) consensus on constitutional reform among pro-democracy/reform elites, iii) the prioritisation of common statehood in public opinion polls. The evidence for this argument is reviewed in Chapters 5, 6 and 7.

### The democratisation argument



#### Institutional argument - path-dependency

The thesis here is that *separation was from the beginning institution-led, specifically, that institutions designed to serve one purpose, i.e. the communist 'federal'*

*constitution, served quite another when inherited and put into effect by new, democratic political actors.* Incentives and strategic choices, this argument contends, were fatally determined by the inherited institutional environment.

Many of the political-theoretical assumptions concerning the character of post-communism have been dismissive of continuity, or rather, of inheritance. David Stark has pointed out that the collapse of communism breathed new life into the theory of 'transition', a term which has otherwise tended to designate the crumbling of traditional structures (1996:994). Such an emphasis is at least partly due to the fact that, having failed to predict the communist collapse, many scholars aimed for the 'decisive account' *post hoc*. Most reached the same conclusion on one important point: that the revolutions had been coherently 'against' the old regime, as opposed to positively for some other order, hence an emphasis on dislocation. Now that the academic emphasis, following developments on the ground, has turned to the longer-term issue of democratic consolidation, the peculiarities attached to the process in each separate country are once again becoming evident, and so strikingly evident as to make even those who were once comfortable with generalisation more circumspect. At the same time as declaring that "If new democratic regimes are to be consolidated, they have to deal in some way with transitional problems such as coping with the legacy of authoritarianism and establishing effective control of the military", Samuel Huntington goes on to admit that "more persistent challenges come from the contextual problems endemic to individual countries" (1991:253).

The contextual problems endemic to Czechoslovakia were apparently monumental. Two in particular were striking, the first, the inherited and newly animated parliamentary right of minority veto within the Federal Assembly as the most important of several institutional guarantees of republican representation, and secondly, the development of two almost entirely separate party systems, located within the two republics, and the absence of federal parties.

Not everyone has seen the consociational right of veto in the Federal Assembly as divisive. Arend Lijphart made a confident categorisation of Czechoslovakia as "a

textbook example of consociational democracy” published in the last year of the state’s existence. Lijphart argues that Czechoslovakia’s use of proportional representation after 1989 was an integral part of its overall consociational character as a state<sup>7</sup>. “Proportionality” he maintains “is one of the four basic principles of consociationalism, and Czecho-Slovakia is also thoroughly consociational in the other three respects: (a) it has a power-sharing cabinet including representatives of both the Czech majority and the Slovak minority, as well as a Czech president and a Slovak prime minister; (b) it is a two-unit federal system consisting of autonomous Czech and Slovak republics with their own governments; and (c) it has a mutual veto in the form of a concurrent majority requirement stipulating that constitutional amendments and major legislation require not only approval by extraordinary majorities but also by such majorities in the upper house among Czech and Slovak representatives voting separately” (Lijphart 1992:217).

The fact that the nominally ‘consociational’ system was inherited from the communists is a political hiatus Lijphart just ignores, however, even though it represents a potentially crucial contradiction between the ‘formal’ (communist) Czechoslovak state as inherited and the ‘legitimate’ (democratic) Czechoslovak state as perceived and operated by the new political elite after 1989. History tells us just how important the disjunction between formal rules and the operating practices of a regime can be - communist Czechoslovakia under one-Party rule was only as dynamically consociational as it was democratic: the practice, and not the constitutional rule, being the key. In practice, the consociational legacy, precisely because it was communist, and precisely because it had never operated in practice, was doubly vulnerable to the new ‘democratic’ elites.

The need for a careful distinction between inherited institutional problems and those contrived by competing political elites is made clear by the more obvious flaws in the snapshot form of analysis represented here by Lijphart<sup>8</sup>. His final diagnoses was that

---

<sup>7</sup> Proportional representation was supposed to be an important consociational aspect of the state but of course this was merely a carry-over from the First Republic - not a consociational state.

<sup>8</sup> It is hard to resist the thought that if this had been Northern Ireland in 1974 under discussion Lijphart would hardly have dared to dive in and flatly infer the depth of ethnic consensus from institutional configurations - as he does here.

the “[m]aintenance of political unity will probably require an increase in the already strongly federal and consociational character of the system” (Lijphart 1992:220) - a dubious judgement given that it rests entirely on his own, never justified assumption of ‘political unity’ concerning the inherited consociational structure he made so much of. In effect Lijphart appears to have made two mistakes: he over-determines the basic power of institutions by “reading” them in a simplistic way, and secondly, his entire assessment seems to have been based on a total misconception that the consociational constitution was new, based on and sustained by a current political consensus. His more famous theoretical conclusion: that centrifugal tendencies will result when elites attempt to compete in deeply fragmented cultures, looks far more appropriate to our case. His prognosis as a rule is that the most realistic alternative to consociation is partition.

It has been argued elsewhere that to work, consociationalism in fact requires three prior conditions; firstly, that rival ethnic segments must not be strongly committed to integrating or assimilating the ‘other’ into their nation or nation-state; secondly, political leaders must be motivated to engage in conflict regulation and to shore-up the consociational system with consensus-building actions<sup>9</sup>; and thirdly, the political leaders of the relevant communities must enjoy sufficient political autonomy to manage compromise within their own or constituency territory and to avoid ‘outflanking’ political manoeuvres from other quarters’ (McGarry and O’Leary 1993:37)<sup>10</sup>. What we must assess therefore, is whether any one or all three of these conditions were in pivotal respects absent in the Czechoslovak case - absences which would indeed suggest that the inherited consociational rules in parliament could act not as expressions of a broadly accepted *status quo* but as deeply antagonistic institutional rules lending themselves to dangerously centrifugal forces within the state. These questions are addressed in Chapter 6, which examines the legal deadlocks central to the separation.

---

<sup>9</sup> In a statement that resonates rather strongly through this thesis, O’Leary and McGarry argue that “the moment rival elites believe that the benefits of war exceed the costs of peace a consociational system is doomed (1993:37).

<sup>10</sup> McGarry and O’Leary also cite Horowitz’s judgement that consociationalism might only function in moderately rather than deeply divided societies (1985:571-2) - the contrived nature of elite disagreement in the Czechoslovak case, where mutual national animosity at the mass level was extremely low, is thus a subject of particular interest throughout the thesis.

The other main institutional argument concerns the state-weakening tendencies we might expect to emanate from two separate party systems. This issue fits less easily into the category of path-dependency. The competitive multi-party system was new: an inheritance if at all, only from the First Republic and the immediate postwar years. The inherited fact of separate republican parliaments and governments nevertheless clearly provided some institutional underpinning to the early settlement of party politics into the respective republican territories. It may also account for a profound skepticism toward central authority. In such a significant development there would also appear to be intimations of a deeper social separateness - one that was entrenched by, even if it did not originally inspire, the formation of purely republican-based parties<sup>11</sup>. Clearly, the absence of federal parties relieved politicians of pro-federal pressures on several levels. Firstly, and in striking contrast to the Canadian example, parties themselves did not act as institutions of consensus-building internally, *i.e.* between their own internal national factions. Secondly, in the absence of federal-level competition parties were drawn into a discourse framed in the language of 'us' versus 'them', be it concerning either the 'other' nation, or the federal centre.

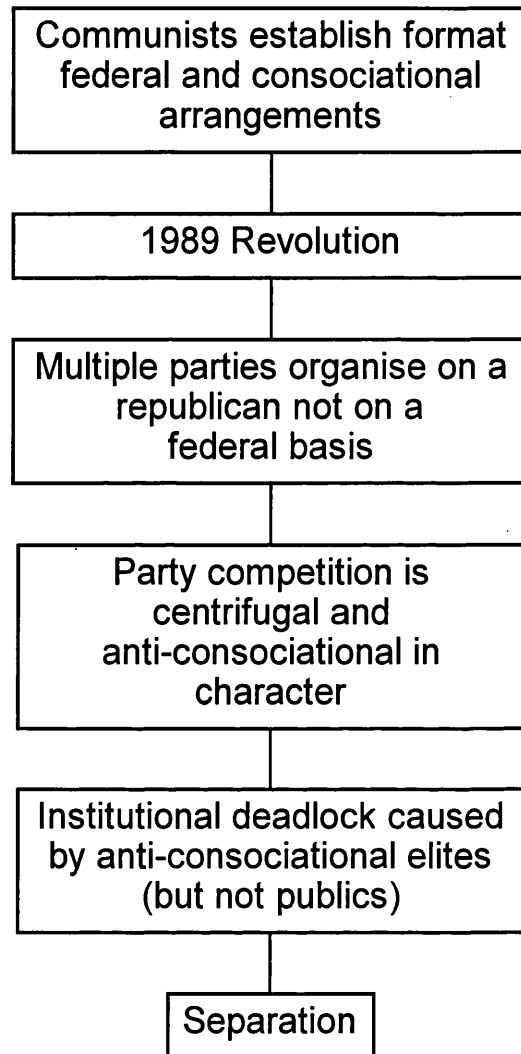
An institutional, path-dependency argument may go far in identifying inherited pressures toward conflict, pressures which may have been felt with a particular strength in conditions where party agents were necessarily seeking out issues over which to fight. Such arguments must nevertheless retain their proper scope. Precisely because institutionalism has proved powerful in explaining different policy trajectories in different countries there is a tremendous temptation to seek answers in outright institutional determinism (Steinmo and Thelen 1992:14). The opportunity for nationalist politics it should be noted, however, is not necessarily enhanced by the fact that party competition occurs only at the separate national level - ultimately a sufficient political will-to-the-common-state on the part of political actors may neutralise the most institutionally bifurcated environment, and may certainly reform it.

---

<sup>11</sup> Immediately following the revolution Slovak suggestions that a federal level civic movement be formed were rejected in Prague, which encouraged consolidation in Slovakia in the form of the purely Slovak Public Against Violence (PAV), the sister movement to the Czech Civic Forum (CF). The reasons for this Czech dissident unwillingness to unite with their Slovak colleagues has been attributed to a combination of their doubts as to its practicality but also an anxiety on the part of the Czechs that they would be deemed to be meddling in Slovak affairs and might thus endanger the PAV's support.

Evidence in favour of this thesis would be i) the absence of the prior conditions for consociationalism as outlined above, ii) that the minority right of veto blocked and foiled constitutional reform and that institutional arrangements otherwise impacted on the various processes of legislation and negotiation, prohibiting agreement or consolidating predispositions toward conflict with added incentives toward deepening that conflict, iii) that the separate structure of the party political system encouraged and deepened the conflict by structuring politics toward national competition. Evidence against this thesis would be i) institutional weakness/absence to the extent that institutional factors clearly failed to structure those political battles which were pivotal to the conflict. In the broader setting it is important not to be duped by the accusations of politicians who charge that institutions stopped them from advancing to consensus when other interests were demonstrably at work. The evidence for the institutionalist case is reviewed in Chapters 5 and 6.

## The institutional argument



### Party competition and party autonomy

Breuilly is unusual in his sober assessment of the situation before the split. He in fact identifies an absence of nationalist mobilisation in Czechoslovakia, arguing that it was a matter of varying socio-economic development which gave significance to national difference. He also observed that “this difference [wa]s more strongly represented in political parties than the population as a whole” (Breuilly 1993:353). Taking the implications of this observation several steps further, this argument contends that the question of economic reform was but one of the issues that parties *over*-developed for the purposes of distinguishing themselves in the emerging party competition. *In the*



*absence of other well-defined social cleavages (as distinct from the absence of such cleavages per se, as some of the early East European transitions literature implied), the most competent parties sought 'catch-all' or constituency-maximising strategies. These parties presented themselves as representatives of 'reform' or 'sensitive reform' as such, rather than seeking to find more precise, but also electorally more risky, policy positions. Thus (the argument continues), even as the nature of predominant social cleavages and public concerns became more apparent parties persisted in avoiding over-identification, preferring to fight on the basis of credibility as the deliverers of broadly popular public goods, such as 'democracy', 'prosperity', 'security' etc.*

An important consequence of this strategy may have been the equally vague treatment of issues of state design or existence. Parties may have been particularly wary of clear policy offers on this subject since the majority preference for 'some kind of common state' was problematically divided between different models. Such a finding would obviously contradict Klaus's claim that the election had functioned as a referendum on the future of the state. Indeed, the contradiction would be absolute; as Claus Offe has pointed out, "if the options concerning public policy are effectively reduced to one, democracy is reduced to zero" (1995:18). Given an unwillingness to compete over state models, voter allegiances would necessarily be based on other issues, leaving the question of a common state hostage to divergent public preferences on these other issues when it came to election time. One does not have to go so far as the more conspiratorial elite theorists to see the difficulty: the omission of the state issue would not necessarily result from elite collusion - an agreement to gag the issue - but from the oligarchic nature of the parties themselves<sup>12</sup>, unpressured by grassroots preferences and analytical media as they were (see Dunleavy and O'Leary 1987:155-6). Only at the very crisis point of the state - the weeks following the election of Vladimir Meciar in

---

<sup>12</sup> Even without explicit collusion the problem arises when representative elites exercise more control over constituencies than constituencies can exercise over representatives - to quote Offe again - "Political parties, government bureaucracies, monopolistic associations, and mass media are often able to determine the configuration of 'critical' issues, the range of choices of the electorate, as well as the actual choices made, to an extent that makes the "will of the people" appear a virtual artifact of strategic elite action... Such a reversal of the direction of control - and the concomitant escape of supposedly representative elites from meaningful accountability - is part of the inherent pathology of democratic regimes. Citizens depend on strong representative actors... for their meaningful political participation, but they are also threatened by the monopolistic power positions that this dependency can provide to these corporate intermediaries" (1995:17).

Slovakia and Vaclav Klaus in the Czech Republic - would it become clear what the full consequences of this 'gagging' of active competition over the state issue might mean, namely that the two leaders with irreconcilable visions of the common state might meet as the two respective republic heads and opt *immediately* for separation.

The evidence for or against such an argument would potentially be most enlightening as a general finding on the post-communist state. One of the preoccupations of early writings on post-communism concerned 'civil society', and its alleged non-existence. According to this argument however, civil society, as measured by associations, clubs, leagues and churches, may have been quite alive, and increasingly animated within months of the revolution. The more important absence may in reality have been that of a meaningful connection between civil groups and interests and the actions and debates of political parties and government, a connection not merely formally democratic, but one with some dynamic issue-representational content.

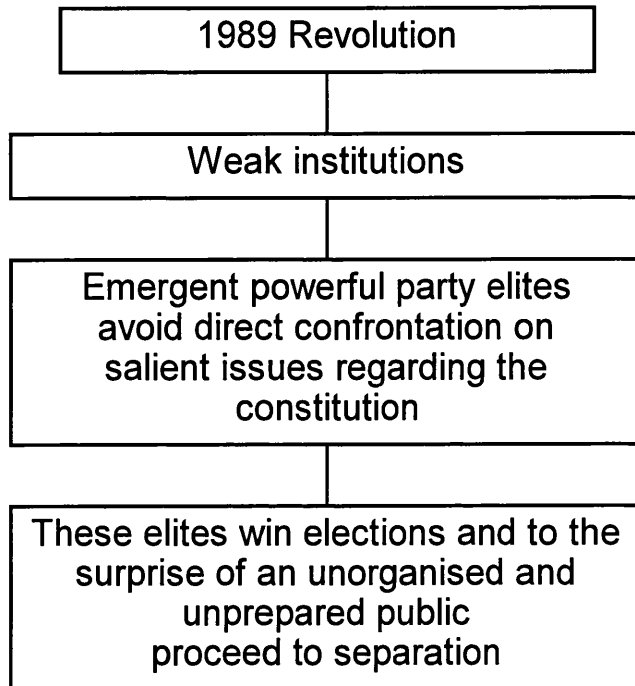
To get at the more general problem of collective, public action against the separation it is worth drawing upon certain principles developed within the social movements literature, in particular the idea of 'collective action frames'. If we understand the latter as "action oriented sets of beliefs and meanings that inspire and legitimate social movement activities and campaigns" (Snow and Benford 1992 in Gamson 1992:7) we might surmise that the effective 'gagging' of the state issue within the main democratic institution of representation - the party system - might, particularly in the absence of a more illuminating media and given the otherwise 'standing start' facing political debate - have a significant effect on people's ability to generate such frameworks. Alternatively we may find that while public opinion was indeed well-formed in many respects it remained thwarted by the absence of a clear agency against which to act, in order to prevent separation.

By breaking down 'collective action frames' into three components: 1) injustice, 2) agency), and 3) identity, the difficulty becomes clearer. In addition to an *injustice component*, following Gamson, referring to the "moral indignation expressed in this form of political consciousness" and an *agency component* "referring to the

consciousness that it is possible to alter conditions or policies through collective action”, we may begin to isolate the problematic component in our case. The *identity component* “refers to the process of defining this “we,” typically in opposition to some “they” who have different interests or values. Without an adversarial component, the potential target of collective action is likely to remain an abstraction... *Collective action requires a consciousness of human agents whose policies or practices must be changed and a “we” who will help to bring that change about*” (my italics) (Gamson 1992:7-8). Whose ‘policies’, we might ask, were to be changed in an electoral system that had failed to produce a clear diversity of opinion over the specific form of the future state: in which all mainstream actors claimed to be pro-common-state and in which any threat to Czech Slovak accord could be attributed to party policies in the ‘other’ republic?

In conclusion, the line of argument presented here is that pro-common state voter preferences failed entirely to impact on state development even in conditions of free elections. Evidence in support of this thesis would be i) a diversity of public and media opinion on the state issue and a uniformity of party policies. This would suggest not only a failure of the party system to mediate Czech Slovak relations but a further difficulty in creating a social movement able to oppose the separation. Evidence against this thesis would be i) open electoral competition on the constitutional question, involving a variety of clearly articulated alternative models of the state. The evidence if reviewed in Chapters 4 and 5.

## The party-competition argument



### Leadership choices - the realist argument

When one considers the essentially rebellious nature of the November revolution, a revolution against the existing state machinery rather than for a particular vision of the future, and when one adds to this the fact that the first free election in June 1990, brought to power monolithic 'civic' movements in both republics, it seems fair to conclude that a blanker cheque has rarely been written for a democratic elite<sup>13</sup>. From such a starting point a variety of claims as to the nature of governing elite behaviour might follow. Following Geddes, the basic assumption of this last theory is that "to further their careers, politicians need, above all, to be elected and reelected. They will thus prefer institutions - parties, electoral rules, constitutional provisions - that give them an electoral advantage over others" (1995:242).

<sup>13</sup> If we adopt even the minimalist Schumpeterian definition of democracy - "an institutional arrangement for arriving at political decisions in which individuals acquire the power to decide by means of a competitive struggle for the people's vote" (Schumpeter 1944) we might argue that this elite remained essentially pre-democratic, since the great majority of pro-democracy forces stood under the umbrella of the monolithic civic movements, thus avoiding the more demanding competition witnessed in the second election - in June 1992.

As already explored in the previous argument, one possible theoretical answer to apparent elite autonomy - their freedom to choose unhindered - may lie in how issues and conflicts are in fact omitted or deliberately excluded from the political agenda as presented for election - i.e. public acceptance or condemnation. A complementary argument is that the 'gagging' tactic was not only manifest in the party system in general but that it was used to particular effect by Klaus and Meciar as individual political actors. In their hands the loss of the common state was ultimately presented as the 'price' to be paid for other, allegedly more desirable public goods, such as effective economic reform. In circumstances where a common state was in fact compatible with these allegedly exclusive goods, this forced trading-off of alternatives may be seen as a more sophisticated version of the tactic of issue-omission. Such an account (following Schumpeter) in our case does not however immediately explain how or why the elite actors involved intended to 'get away with' the separation decision after the fact - a fact they could hardly disguise - and here we must explain both their incentives and their strategy.

Partly following Nordlinger, this argument starts from an assumption that the strongest<sup>14</sup> form of 'democratic' state autonomy occurs when *elected* state officials act on their own preferences even when their favoured options clearly and self-consciously diverge from society's preferences - *including those of their own political constituency* (Nordlinger 1981:11-38, summarised in Dunleavy and O'Leary 1987:191). Accepting this, we might suggest that the post-communist Czechoslovak state fulfilled this definition, insofar as the decision to separate the state was taken against both the known majority will and against the first preferences of a majority of voters for both Klaus's Civic Democratic Party and Meciar's Movement for a Democratic Slovakia<sup>15</sup>: a will which was assiduously persuaded of support after the fact. To make the 'leadership'

---

<sup>14</sup> Since the only definitional criteria of democracy fulfilled appears to be the formal fact of election it is only the possibility of rejecting these officials at a future date that keeps the state within the democratic category.

<sup>15</sup> According to one account, only 19 per cent of would-be voters for Meciar's Movement for a Democratic Slovakia were adherents of an independent Slovakia (Kipke and Vodicka 1993:99). Though no equivalent information exists for Klaus supporters there is evidence of an implicit support for common statehood and certainly of their good faith in Klaus as a federalist. 74 per cent of Civic Democratic Party supporters believed that the Slovak left and the insufficient will of Slovaks as a whole to maintain the state might lead to its division. Civic Democratic Party supporters were particularly hostile to the left and Slovak national parties, with less than average agreeing that the Czech right and economic reform might contribute to any splitting of the state (Mlada Fronta 22.5.1992).

case in full we might usefully examine whether Vladimir Meciar and Vaclav Klaus had wielded extraordinary leverage over the future state arrangement and the development of party politics and political discourse generally, even *before* their election to the head of government in June 1992, we might also inquire as to the sources of this leverage, and whether this leverage had been exercised to serve coherent, self-serving ends.

A 'pure' version of this argument is that *entrepreneurial politicians, both of them party leaders, may be identified as having built dichotomous arguments for state and 'other' reforms. They then persuaded the electorate that they must separate the state to pursue their rival reformist platforms. The separation was an outcome on which they colluded.* In the absence of the 'blocking' rival Klaus and Meciar could steer their 'own' states more completely along their own desired paths whilst removing the most significant threats to their continuation in power. As Bunce has it, "the economic and political interests of the two leaders, while opposed, were nonetheless easy to reconcile"<sup>16</sup>.

The issue of the leaders' power of decision following their election is of course complex. The assertion that the machinery of state - the parliament and civil service included - was ultimately co-opted into the hands of two party-leaders is, however, less outrageous when one remembers the difficulties of state definition. The most plausible line of argument regarding leadership strategies is not that our political entrepreneurs finally brought a strong state to heel, but that they effectively redefined the state, or rather the conflict over the now entirely ambiguously defined state, in a way which served their own ends. Having persuaded others of the validity of their state visions they brought effective decision-making power into their own personal hands. In this, they might have been greatly assisted by the atmosphere of imminent crisis prevailing in post-communist countries, an atmosphere extremely conducive to the accretion and legitimation of overarching authority.

It is difficult to apply many of the conventional empirical tests of existing elite theory as developed for liberal democratic states. Czechoslovak institutions in no way possessed

---

<sup>16</sup> She concludes that "the dissolution of the Soviet, Czechoslovak and Yugoslav states could be construed less a story in its own right than as the final chapter in the unravelling of state socialism" (Bunce 1996:28-30).

the structural stability to be found in the West. The relevant evidence in support of this thesis rather concerns i) identifiable opportunities uniquely available to political actors in conditions of top-down party development and institutional flux, ii) the domination of the policy-defining and policy-making process by these two leaders before June 1992, iii) opinion poll data which supports the claim that separating the state was in the self interest of both Vaclav Klaus and Vladimir Meciar, iv) evidence of collusion between Klaus and Meciar. Evidence against this argument might include i) examples of collaborative, consultative and/or consensus-seeking behaviour on the part of either Klaus or Meciar, ii) seemingly irrational risk-taking on the part of Klaus and Meciar, iii) strong attachment to the common state idea on the part of either leader. From this we might begin to generate an essentially elite theory account of state power in the transition, if not a theory of persistent authoritarianism in post-communist Czechoslovakia. The evidence for this thesis is reviewed in Chapters 5 and 7.

### **The realist argument**



## Conclusion

David Stark notes that within the notion of 'transition', "the present is studied as an approximation of a designated future (Blanchard, Froot and Sachs 1994), risking an underlying teleology in which concepts are driven by hypostasized end-states (1996:994). We need to consider whether a discernible academic shift from studies of communist collapse to the study of democratic consolidation has resulted in a misreading of the peculiarities of 'transition' politics. By conceiving of events teleologically, as either 'transitional' or as indicative of an expected consolidation, observers miss and will continue to ignore essential elements that might prove causally critical in recent and future regime collapses. In this particular case, the distinctive political environment of post-communism constitutes not only a significant part of our explanation for Czechoslovakia's separation, but also one of the gravest potential threats to deeper democratic consolidation in the two independent states. Rather than assuming that Czechoslovakia had automatically embarked upon a 'transition to democracy' in 1989, this thesis assumes that the value of the democratic order derives from the significant accountability of the political elite to the masses in their care, *i.e.* beyond the fact of mere election, and categorises political behaviour between 1989 and 1993 on this observable, rather than teleological basis.

The argument I propose, and which I hope to test via the six arguments outlined above, is that Czechoslovakia was partitioned by its own governing elite despite the absence of significant nationalist movements. Specifically, the state was partitioned by the Czech right as a natural corollary to their technocratic approach to the state and to social reform, which the Slovak political establishment found electorally unsustainable. The Klausite rationalist plan of transition had the same functional effect as a strong Czech nationalism, and Vaclav Klaus rose to power and secured the separation through a deliberate exploitation of the state's institutional weaknesses, including those of the party systems in both republics. Despite the fact of 'free' election after 1989, Czech and Slovak citizens may be shown to have remained subject to authoritarian - in this case, technocratic authoritarian - modes of control.



## My argument



## **Chapter 4**

### **The Weakness of Nationalism in the 1992 Elections**

#### **Introduction**

Before investigating the disruptive effects of the post-communist transition upon Czech-Slovak relations it is necessary to assess the more conventional, and in our case apparently well-grounded explanation for separation - that here was a fully-fledged national conflict just waiting to erupt. Jiri Musil has argued that a 'Czechoslovak society' was never created in the state's seventy year life, despite growing structural homogeneity and the best attempts of social engineers on both sides (Musil 1995:77). Moreover, entrenched national stereotypes, the historically deep conflicts over resources and political culture, and the alacrity with which terms and conditions were eventually settled - in just six months in 1992 - are all supportive of a case of *fait accompli*. Musil's argument supports the argument that the anti-communist revolution did not so much engender problems as reveal them, casting into daylight the fact that political interest in the federation was dead by 1989, if not long before. This chapter will consider the merits of a nationalist conflict analysis.

By adopting a simple definition of 'nationalism', and trawling with it across the period between 1989-1992, this chapter aims to show the weaknesses in the nationalist case, be it attached to the theory of released national conflict after November 1989, or the relative deprivation theory of regenerated and ultimately fatal nationalist conflict based on perceived economic disparities - the two theoretical arguments set down in Chapter 3. The chapter is structured to survey rather than explain levels of nationalism existing after 1989.

#### **What is nationalism?**

There is a sizeable interdisciplinary literature devoted to theorising over what nationalism is, what its origins are, and how it has appeared across the world. The result has been a proliferation of functionalist theories arguing for any number of functions that nationalism has 'really' served (Breuilly 1993:418-9): *e.g.* as an instrument of class interest or as a response to 'relative deprivation' /

underdevelopment, or as furnishing a need for a communal identification in the face of modernisation and urbanisation. The Czech and Slovaks with their mutual apprehensions of economic exploitation and religious differences have been taken to exemplify more than a few of these accounts<sup>1</sup>.

More striking than the variety of these competing functional explanations are their deeper common weaknesses when it comes to providing convincing or generalisable reasons as to why nationalism, as oppose to some other idea, has served the functions accredited to it (ibid.). As Anthony Smith has argued: it is a working definition “stripped of essentialist notions, that is the only possible and fruitful one in the empirically indistinct field of nationalism” (1983:165-6). Addressing this need, Breuilly has argued for the importance of understanding nationalism as a form of politics, emphasising that politics in the modern world is concerned with the attainment and maintenance of power in general but with power over the state in particular (Breuilly 1993:1). Following this observation, Breuilly has offered a simple and deliberately core proposition, restricting the term ‘nationalism’ to nationalistic political action. ‘Nationalist’ action and argument are set down as derived from a doctrine with three basic assertions, that:

- (a) There exists a nation with an explicit and peculiar character.
- (b) The interests and values of this usually nation take priority over all other interests and values.
- (c) The nation must be as independent as possible. This usually requires at least the attainment of political sovereignty (Breuilly 1993:2).

For my purposes it is not necessary to resolve the deeper questions of what caused this nationalism in the first place, so Breuilly’s definition of nationalism has the merits of both coherence and parsimony, even though he may be criticised for assuming that the masses are not (or not especially) nationalist unless manipulated by political elites. I am looking only to identify “political movements which aim to take state power on the

---

<sup>1</sup> See, for example, Hans Kohn’s *Nationalism: Its Meaning and History* (1955:82), E. J. Hobsbawm’s *Nations and Nationalism Since 1780* (1990:135), or Anthony D. Smith’s *Nationalism in the Twentieth Century* (1979:23).

basis of a nationalist programme or which use state power in certain, specifically nationalist ways (to destroy 'sub-national' identity, to make irredentist claims beyond present state borders)"<sup>2</sup>. This then excludes inter-ethnic conflicts which do not produce movements or organizations aiming to take state power as well as any assertive foreign or domestic policies pursued by governments of nation-states" (Breuilly 1993:421).

It may appear that the very parsimony of Breuilly's definition makes it insensitive to nationalism's more subtle manifestations. The Czech tendency to regard 'Czechoslovakia' and 'Czech' as synonymous is particularly awkward. After anguishing over their own national status since their respective mid-nineteenth century national revivals, both the Czech lands and Slovakia considered Breuilly's first trait, (a), and some would argue (b) also, to be axiomatic. But on this point Breuilly is again clear, since he insists that his criteria be applied strongly he will accept only those statements "which make the idea of a peculiar nation explicit; make this assertion the foundation of all political claims; and which are the central ideological statements deployed by a political movement or organisation" (Breuilly 1993:3). A more loose interpretation of these rules would evidently be biased to turning up positive results.

To take an important hypothetical example, where an economist bent on saving particular economic conditions or a programme of reform proves willing to lead his 'nation' out of a federation to preserve that programme, we are now able to set some rudimentary thresholds. Under a loose application of (a), (b) and (c) this man is a nationalist. Under the recommended strong application, I can say that as a manic economist, with no explicit thought for the nation, but motivated by his professional beliefs and reputation, he should be counted out. Should his notion of economic health be pegged explicitly to his deeper and politically all-defining concern for his nation and its independence, on the other hand, then we can count him in. If he is somewhere in-between the possibility of his partial exploitation or mobilisation of nationalist feeling,

---

<sup>2</sup> This definition is close to Smith's. According to Smith 'nationalism' is "an ideological movement for the attainment and maintenance of self-government and independence on behalf of a group, some of whose members conceive it to constitute an actual or potential 'nation' like others" (Smith 1983:171). Arguing for the persistence of nationalism in the absence of a state Smith points out that "for the nationalist, the state is, as it were, the protective shell for their nation, and a *sine qua non* of its political self-realisation, especially in the modern world. He therefore aims at communal self-government and native political institutions. *But he does so in the interests of another, higher entity - the potential or existent 'nation'* (my italics) (Smith 1983:178).

particularly if smuggled through the long-harboured notions of a single Czechoslovak identity or 'national interest', must be investigated. Breuilly is equally specific in distinguishing between opposition and government nationalism. Domestically, he suggests, one could describe as 'nationalist' "actions taken against specific groups or individuals and justified on the grounds of the anti- or non-national character of these groups or individuals" *e.g.* state-sponsored anti-Semitism (Breuilly 1993:8).

As the remainder of this chapter aims to show, nationalist parties as set within Breuilly's definitional limits were by no means decisive in Czechoslovakia after 1989. Those parties which more successfully took up the issues of social and economic reform, indeed of social and economic grievances demarcated in national terms, prove too eclectic and populist in their political agendas to be placed meaningfully within the 'nationalist' category.

#### **The verdict on the federation at the end of the 1980s?**

The legitimacy of the state was not a strong suit in communist Czechoslovakia at the end of the 1980s. Though the deficit was clearly profound, the exact nature of that illegitimacy was unclear. Friction at the elite and counter-elite level was more transparent than the attitudes of the politically incarcerated masses, and assessments of the prevailing biases of Czech and Slovak national identity through the 1970s and 1980s remain unevenly informed. Free intimations of a nationalist or oppositionist self-identification were by definition restricted to dissident circles: a very particular cross-section of the religious, artistic and intellectual elite of the two republics. When these same dissidents came to power through the anti-communist revolution of November 1989, their perceptions of national tension became deeply significant, even while the character of public opinion, particularly as regarding future and *possible* national relations, remained mysterious.

Though reliable data is recognised to be limited on this issue, the evidence suggests that the Czechoslovak Communist Party's manipulation of national relations since 1968 had resulted in a remarkable shift in public perceptions. In a survey conducted by Radio Free Europe based on 1,200 interviews conducted among Czech and Slovak visitors

temporarily in Western countries between 1974 and 1975, the traditional, *i.e.* inter- and immediately post-war roles appeared to have been reversed. The sense of being discriminated against - so important to pre-1968 political developments in Czechoslovakia - was encountered more among Czechs than among Slovaks. 72 per cent of Czechs as set against 81 per cent of Slovaks considered the federal government to treat both republics 'equally'. 17 per cent of Czechs as against 2 per cent of Slovaks felt the government favoured Slovakia whereas only 12 per cent of Slovaks felt the government favoured the Czech lands, as against 1 per cent of Czechs. Not surprisingly, the opinion that the Federal government played no favourites ran highest among the small minority of pro-Communists (91 per cent) and lowest among the self-confessed 'conservatives' (63 per cent). The perception of equality was also markedly higher amongst those below the age of 25<sup>3</sup>. What is striking in this data is that less than ten years after the trauma of the Soviet invasion and the national rancour allegedly stirred by the federalisation of 1968, public antagonism over the nature of the state seemed slight.

While it appears that national feelings were thus running low, with hindsight, the limited Radio Free Europe data reveal an attitudinal time bomb for the constitutional debate of 1989/90 - a latent conflict. A majority of Czechs in the sample thought that federalisation had equalised Czech and Slovak conditions already in the mid-1970s, even before the achievement of economic parity was routinely claimed in Party propaganda<sup>4</sup>. Thus any subsequent Slovak appeals for a deeper, more substantive federalisation would be perceived as an attempt to become the *dominant* republic, at least in political rights. A poll taken in March 1990, though vaguely worded, also suggests that Slovak complacency was short-lived, since by then some 68 per cent of

---

<sup>3</sup> The survey was carefully weighted to counteract the over and under-representation of certain groups, so that it closely approximated the socio-economic composition of the Czecho-Slovak population above the age of 14 (Radio Free Europe 1977).

<sup>4</sup> As Leff points out, following the recentralisation of the early 1970s, the concept of two national economies was treated as a "rightist heresy propagated to disintegrate the state" (Leff 1988:248) - the declaration of full economic parity would have to follow and it duly appeared as the latest achievement of socialism. Political 'achievements' were hardly to be attempted following the invasion, making Czech/Slovak economic parity one of the few available foci of Party propaganda. Under normalisation economic achievements had to fulfill the legitimating role normally ascribed to the entire panoply of government - an unsustainable social contract as it turned out.

Slovaks polled thought that Czech and Slovak relations in the past had relied on a preferential treatment of the Czechs (*Prace* 16.3.1990).

What we know of the respective dissident elites, the democratic party leaders of the future, is that they acted as a repository of some of the most comprehensive national stereotypes, uninhibited by any open ethnic conflict or palpable weakness in the state. Their respective national views, already established by 1968, were greatly reinforced by the diverging development of anti-communist protest between the two republics under normalisation. When the dissident Charter 77 was founded in a desperate effort to hold the communist regime to its commitments to the Helsinki Final Act of 1975, those that risked everything to sign it were disproportionately Czech. Among the first 243 signatures collected when the charter was created, only 1 was that of a dissident living permanently in Slovakia (Wehrle 1994:254) - a fact which did not go unnoticed in either republic. As Frantisek Kriegel<sup>5</sup> complained to *Die Welt* in 1977: "The Slovak minority exercises power over the Czech majority, although the federation meant to establish parity. But today, Slovaks hold all the key positions, and considerable financial resources are flowing to Bratislava. They [the Slovaks] have thus accomplished much more than they had been aiming at, and therefore, they will also not identify with our cause [Charter 77]" (*Die Welt* February 17, 1977 in Radio Free Europe 1977).

Alexander Dubcek, ever the federalist, described the Charter as "a courageous initiative in the tradition of Czech political and cultural defiance going back to Austria-Hungary" (Dubcek 1993:264). The overbearing 'Czechness' of its organisation, however, was later cited by others as accounting for Slovak non-participation. The Slovak writer Vladimir Minac went so far as to call the Chartist movement "Czechoslovakising" (in *Nevraty k prevratu*, quoted in Kirschbaum 1995:248). Indeed, no Slovak input into the Charter had been sought before its release (Leff 1988:266) - as

---

<sup>5</sup> One of the first signatories of Charter 77 Kriegel had been a close follower of Dubcek in 1968 and was one of the six leaders taken to Moscow for interrogation following the Warsaw Pact occupation on August 21st. Following his statement to *Die Welt* the regime broadcast that he had shown "boundless hatred against the Slovak people", and emphasised Kriegel's Jewish origins (Radio Free Europe 1977:10). Kriegel's statement was echoed by others in the movement. The Charter's spokesman, Jiri Hajek commented on how Slovaks were "sufficiently enlightened" to be soft on each other (quoted in Wehrle 1994:254).

with Ludvik Vaculik's trenchant Two Thousand Words issued in 1968<sup>6</sup> - an important reflection of the deep and persistent Pragocentrism of Czech dissidence.

Leff, along with the majority of commentators, nevertheless identifies a systematic discrepancy in the level of activism (see also Precan 1983, Wehrle 1994). Of the individual instances of regime retaliation against dissidents in the late 1970s, only 4/5 per cent occurred in Slovakia, and over half of these targeted just two Slovak individuals. Though the Slovak proportion of dissident activity increased steadily into the 1980s (Leff 1988:264) the advance was evidently both too limited and too late to change the basically separate cultures of protest and the national perceptions that accompanied them.

Regardless of other plausible and more favourable explanations, the Czech interpretation of this unequal national participation in dissident protest was often stereotypical. The Czech dissidents' unfavourable view was bolstered by the belief that Gustav Husak, the author of the grayest days of communist normalisation, was reasserting through Party favouritism the Slovak nationalism for which he had been imprisoned after the Second World War. In the Czech view, the milder punishments exacted from the Slovak Party after 1968 and the concentrated efforts of the Soviets to promote increased Slovak membership in the federal government in the 1970s (even as other ministries and powers were recentralised) was ample proof of Slovak co-option and advantage under federalism. Such 'favouritism' was eminently reversible, however, based unstably as it was on the Soviet expectation of a corrective, disciplining Slovak influence at that time and compensation for the otherwise profound recentralisation of 1970<sup>7</sup>. Such tactics were anyway only a minor part of the Soviet's wider plan through the 1970s - the accelerated assimilation of Slovak and Czech identity (Connor 1984:447).

---

<sup>6</sup> "2,000 Words to Workers, Farmers, Scientists, Artists, and Everyone" was signed originally by selected workers, artists, writers, scientists, farmers, sportsmen and engineers before being published in their respective journals in June 1968 - interpreted by many as a call for 'action from below' (Golan 1971:297).

<sup>7</sup> National representation in government seemed well established by the 1980s; between 1969 and 1983 Slovaks received about one-third of ministerial portfolios - a proportionate level hitherto never achieved, though Czechs continued to monopolise the head of security and control operations. While the advance was impressive it was also due to the persistence of individuals in office. It is thus difficult to separate the changes in 'principle' from the hard facts of "oligarchic petrification" in the last twenty years of the state (Leff 1988:253).



The real and unprotected locus of Slovak dissent - persistent religious affiliation<sup>8</sup> - did little to contradict the Czech intellectuals' recourse to stereotypes. And yet despite the regime's attempts to co-opt the Catholic Church throughout the 1970s, mass pilgrimages and religious demonstrations were proof of a profound and sizeable Slovak opposition. If the communist regime of the 1970s pursued a carrot and stick policy toward religious believers it was always clear, at least to Slovaks, that any independent religious initiatives and associations would face the same catalogue of abuses experienced by the Chartists in Prague. In a signature campaign in 1988 calling for religious freedom some 300,000 of the 500,000 collected names were Slovaks. By way of reaction, the regime brutally repressed the subsequent candlelight gathering of 2000 believers led by Frantisek Miklosko in Bratislava (Kirschbaum 1995:248). That Slovak religious protest was disregarded by the Czechs is noteworthy, particularly since Czech dissidents were content to view religious protest in Poland as anti-communist *and* pro-democratic.

Clearly, among many in the Czech intellectual elite there was a mistrust of this separate religiosity which bordered on the chauvinistic. Religious affiliation was not readily accepted as indicative of the liberal yearnings predominant in Prague dissident circles. It was instead considered a sign of an essentially unreconstructed and pre-democratic political culture, implicitly, the culture of the clerico-fascist Slovak state of the Second World War.

The reasons why the limited pockets of liberal dissent in Slovakia failed to produce a support or information network, capable of inspiring others to protest, were more complex, however. It was not only 'political culture' dividing those opposed to the Leninist state. Slovakia's isolation from Czech dissident activity was actively enforced by the regime<sup>9</sup>. Moreover, by focussing on Slovakia's lack of secular anti-state

---

<sup>8</sup> Some 55 per cent of the Slovak activities cited by Precan between 1981 and 1982 fell under the rubric of religious demonstrations (Precan, *Human Rights in Czechoslovakia*, quote in Leff 1988:265).

<sup>9</sup> As Miroslav Kusy has testified, Czech dissident visitors to their Slovak colleagues were typically arrested and returned back to Prague before reaching their destination. Havel moreover has indicated that Charter 77 was exclusively Czech at least at the very beginning so as to ensure against police detection and intervention (Wehrle 1994:253).

organisation as positive evidence of apathy, and by maintaining so low an opinion of Slovak political culture, many in the Czech counter-elite unintentionally reinforced the regime's own efforts (see also Wehrle 1994:253).

While "traditional rivalry between Czechs and Slovaks" may thus have been "at an encouragingly low ebb in 1974 - early 1975" (Radio Free Europe 1977:9), a resurrection of the kind of alliance of the national counter-elites witnessed in the 1960s appeared ever more elusive in the 1980s (Leff 1988:262). The Slovak dissident elite was particularly isolated, having lost not only the sympathy of the Czechs but the strength of their own numbers in 1968, most deliberately divided as they had been by the advent of federalisation and the softer purges inflicted on the Slovak wing of the Party.

As for the regime itself, its last twenty years could be characterised as a phenomenal and ultimately unsustainable balancing act. The prevailing post-invasion policy of "no surprises" (Leff 1988:254) which emanated from the unchanging, albeit not yet decrepit, leadership of normalisation, engaged only minimally with the national question and only then predominantly in economic terms. Just over two years before the regime's demise, Leff assessed the limits of the national conflict imposed by communism thus: "The current regime still faces the same two choices with which earlier leaders have wrestled. The acceptance of political arrangements that honor the assumptions of bipolar politics will only serve to institutionalize and reinforce the national distinctiveness of each region still further, perhaps irreversibly. Integrationist policies, on the other hand, given the current social structure and national sensitivities, are out of step with the character of the bi-national society and will thus breed conflict. The current regime must therefore either make its peace with decentralized power or seek integration in the knowledge that this course is likely to provoke protracted tension in the indefinite future. The interests of conflict reduction recommend the former course. Yet the pressures for unity inherent in socialist power, Czechoslovakia's vulnerable geographic position, and Czech resentment of Slovak assertiveness all give incentive to pursue further integration on key issues. The erosion of some aspects of the

federal solutions since 1968 suggests that the question is still open. It is not an enviable choice for a regime to make.” (Leff 1988:297).

In November 1989, the entire character of the state was thrown into question by the anti-communist revolution sweeping at last across Central and Eastern Europe. Leff’s ‘unenviable choices’ were made pivotal by the collapse of the holding-operation that had substituted for nationality policy in the recent past. The so-called ‘Velvet Revolution’ not only endeavoured to rubbish the previous rules of the political game but it more successfully broke the bi-national political ties sustained by the factional balances, personal connections, understandings, obligations and deals maintained within the Party. The already ambiguous political relationship between the two republics was now reduced to its most unstable institutional basis, a dubiously confederative constitution and parliament, a legal framework which, in the absence of the all-regulating Party was extremely decentralising in some of its provisions and yet respected neither by the centre nor the republican periphery.

Without consensually established and binding connections it seemed unlikely that the market and democracy would diminish national friction, at least in the short term. On the Slovak side it seemed more probable that Slovaks would see democratisation as the opportunity for achieving in practice the deep federalisation that until now had existed only in the unexamined texts of the constitution. On the Czech side it appeared that a dissident government more than others, would treat such overtures with suspicion.

After 1989 the argument that nationalism emerged as a fallback in the absence of other ideologies or identities in post-communist Eastern Europe gained currency. Those who make such arguments, however, never take the next logical step to look at the fact that such ‘fallback’ nationalism might be very weak (Cohen 1997:29). In Slovakia the wartime Slovak state had left a deeply tainted past and for the next forty years communism attempted to wipe out what remained of Slovak historical consciousness, essentially leaving only family stories intact (ibid.:302). This next section demonstrates the weakness of nationalism in post-communist Czechoslovakia.

### **Slovak and Czech Nationalism 1989-1992**

It was not until months after the formal defeat of Communist Party power that nationalists raised their heads above the parapet. Though the Slovak National Party (SNP) was conceived of as early as December 1989 - its founders saw political opportunity in taking on the trappings of the First Republic Slovak National Party - their founding Congress was not until May 1990, making them the latecomers onto the electoral scene. Nationalism, let alone separatism, had not featured as the predominant preoccupation of either the secular or religious Slovak dissidents who had emerged in the years before the revolution, though the latter elite, uniquely, retained a still rooted nationalist perspective.

Following the revolution tensions eventually arose within Slovakia's new Catholic Christian Democratic Movement (CDM) over such issues as the appropriate place of the Slovak L'udak state in the party canon. The cautious Christian Democratic Movement leadership nevertheless managed to steer the party's more nationalist factions away from a militant separatist Christian nationalism<sup>10</sup>. The Slovak National Party meanwhile seemed unable to develop deeper lines of economic and social policy to accompany the single and on its own, the strikingly impractical theme of national sovereignty. In many respects the most coherently programmatic nationalists arrived in Slovakia only in the form of lobbyists from historically militant Slovak emigrant organisations (Kusy 1995:143)<sup>11</sup>. As returning émigré evangelists moreover, they found it hard to gain a foothold in the obvious candidate groups, the nationally-self-identifying Slovak National Party and Christian Democratic Movement (see Cohen 1997). Public opinion polls at the end of May 1990 gave the Slovak National Party a mere 3.8 per cent in popular support (Kirschbaum 1995:255).

The Slovak National Party rose to some prominence in the first June elections in 1990 by winning a surprise 13.9 per cent of the Slovak National Council vote, making it the rival third largest Slovak party in the Council along with the Communist Party, though

---

<sup>10</sup> Quashing aspiring L'udaks within the Christian Democratic Movement was no easy matter for its leader, Jan Carnogursky. His father, Pavol Carnogursky, had been a member of parliament in the wartime Slovak state and he was one of the first in the post-1989 period to call for rehabilitating that state (Cohen 1997:206).

<sup>11</sup> Throughout the period the Toronto-based World Congress of Slovaks remained vocally and militantly nationalistic.

the fourth in the Federal Assembly, following the Communist Party. Following as it did the tortuous, and for both sides, disturbing dispute over the renaming of the state<sup>12</sup>, this result raised eyebrows in Prague, where both expectations and anxieties of Slovak separatist nationalism ran high. In Slovakia, however, the Slovak National Party had deliberately made no demands for independence until after the elections were over, prevaricating instead with evidently popular aspirations to enhanced autonomy. Once 'outed' as separatists, the aim of drawing Slovaks behind the nationalist cause proved straightforwardly over-ambitious, and it was further dissipated when small and insignificant rival nationalist parties emerged and stubbornly refused to integrate (Kusy 1995:143).

While the Slovak National Party's ultimate aim was Slovak independence their monothematic programme, ill-developed even at the levels of alternative economic or social policy, left them little choice but to campaign on essentially symbolic and racist issues: "renaming or preventing the renaming of towns, streets and squares; establishing Slovak as the official language 'without exception' (by means of the 'language law'); repeated attempts to declare sovereignty in the Slovak National Council; and seeking and detecting enemies of the Slovak nation among people who were not 'one of them' or 'renegades'... *i.e.* federalists" (Kusy 1995:143). Despite their best efforts, as Kusy points out, "the Slovak nation as a whole remained relatively indifferent towards this movement; nationalism did not become a mass, nationwide movement". The fracas over the Slovak National Party's proposed anti-Hungarian 'Language Law', finally defeated in October 1990<sup>13</sup>, represented the high point of nationalist militant action and provocation. The Slovak National Party thereafter endeavoured to join with the recently politicised and now nationalist cultural organisation, *Matica slovenska* ('Mother Slovakia'), in organising rallies and demonstrations. It horrified many in both republics by participating, along with members of the Christian Democratic Movement, in celebrations of the First Republic populist, Andrej Hlinka. In Ruzomberok on August 26th 1990, pro-Tiso calls were heard, and Christian Democratic Movement leader Jan Carnogursky was jeered as a moderate (*Mlada Fronta dnes* 27.8.1990:1,2). Having endorsed L'udak heritage thus

<sup>12</sup> For an account of this dispute see Chapter 6.

<sup>13</sup> For an account of the language dispute see Chapter 6.

far put the Slovak National Party put itself beyond the pale for a sizeable Slovak majority, which evidently rejected any sentimental rehabilitation of the fascist Slovak state.

A more politically astute response of the Slovak National Party to what was clearly a public concern for political stability was its attempt to appeal to 'Europe', though entirely and openly excluding Hungarian, Roma and Jewish identities and interests<sup>14</sup>. The appeal was to a nineteenth century nationalist ideal of a community of equal nations. "An integrated Europe will be stable only then, when all nations which live in it will have equal rights and duties. If there were so much as one unhappy nation, it would be an instrument of tension", claimed Slovak National Party leader J. Prokes, "for while it is possible to suppress the national factor or a national movement, it is not possible to eliminate it" (quoted in Kirschbaum 1995:266).

Public opinion polls nevertheless showed that the vast majority of Slovaks shared very different preoccupations. Civic problems such as unemployment and inequality regularly topped the league of concerns followed by anxiety over social breakdown as expressed through crime, drug abuse, family break-up *etc.* (Butorova 1993:60). Concerns about the environment and health-care surpassed those about Slovak sovereignty, and the attempts of the Slovak National Party and the militant Christian Democratic Movement breakaway faction, the Slovak Christian Democratic Movement, to have Slovak sovereignty proclaimed in parliament provoked remarkably little public reaction. When nationalist propaganda failed to accommodate these public worries there was a clear falling away in sympathy for the cause in general<sup>15</sup> (Kusy 1995:143-4).

Kusy rightly includes the breakaway Slovak Christian Democratic Movement within his category of nationalist party. This nationalist and leftist faction, which openly supported the wartime state, had plagued Carnogursky's moderate brand of religious nationalism until breaking away from the Christian Democratic Movement just before the June

---

<sup>14</sup> It may be noted that there were scarcely 6,000 Jews remaining in the entire federation following the Holocaust and communist repressions.

<sup>15</sup> Confirmed by monthly polls carried out by the Association for Independent Social Analysis (A.I.S.A.).

1992 election. Kusy also includes Meciar's Movement for a Democratic Slovakia as nationalist. But here I would add an important caveat. Meciar was pro-autonomy but not separatist, and his position on autonomy was highly changeable, so much so as to make a categorisation of Meciar's party as merely 'nationalist' inadequate. After splitting off from and thereby demolishing the anti-regime mass movement Public Against Violence in April 1991, the Movement for a Democratic Slovakia streaked ahead of its competitors with a populist programme of quite startling ideological elasticity.

*Electoral performance of nationalist parties in the Slovak National Council (% votes)*

Parties: in order of separatist militancy	June 1990	June 1992
Slovak National Party	14	8
Slovak Christ. Democratic Movement	-	below 5% threshold
Christian Democratic Movement	19	9
Movement for a Democratic Slovakia	-	37

All importantly, for example whereas the Scottish National Party has managed to cultivate the perception that its emphasis on 'Scotland first' directly assists the Scottish economy (Breuilly 1993:322), neither the Slovak National Party nor the Christian Democratic Movement achieved such a connection with the Slovak economy. The result was a majority feeling in Slovakia that nationalism alone represented an inappropriate instrument with which to tackle Slovakia's ills. In the June 1992 election, Slovak National Party support dwindled to 7.9 per cent of the vote in the Slovak National Council: almost half its 1990 level. Timoracky has claimed further that in Slovakia up until mid-1992 the ratio of those who supported the common state stayed basically stable at 8:2, and had hit the ratio 7:3 only at its very lowest point (Timoracky 1992:89). Of the majority of Meciar's Movement for a Democratic Slovakia supporters it should be noted some 59 per cent expressed their preference for a continuation of a common state even against the offer of a confederation, supported by 22 per cent (Butorova 1993:61).

The distinction between the separatist politics of the Slovak National Party and the populist/autonomist politics of the breakaway Movement for a Democratic Slovakia under Vladimir Meciar is all-important. In autumn 1991, some 30,000 demonstrated for the Initiative for a Sovereign Slovakia recently announced by the Movement for a Democratic Slovakia, and their rally included speeches from the Slovak National Party<sup>16</sup> (*Rude pravo* 25.9.1991). As is explained more fully in Chapters 5 and 6, however, the use of the national issue by Movement for a Democratic Slovakia was facile, tactical and un-programmatic, an addition to a populist agenda that had already included highly vocal commitments to the federal idea and support for the 'Czechoslovakist' President Havel - a former pillar of the Charter 77 movement. The Initiative for a Sovereign Slovakia was notable as the Movement for a Democratic Slovakia's opening shot for the 1992 electoral campaign. It secured public support early by promising not independence but a full post-election referendum on the constitutional future - an open public choice on the future structure of the state. The Slovak National Party meanwhile consistently opposed the referendum option, because that would guarantee defeat in any public consultation on the issue. The Slovak National Party's consistent opposition to Havel and the Presidential circle in general was arguably one of the better mainstays of limited Slovak National Party support, annoyed as many were by Havel's lapses into Masarykian language and 'Czechoslovakist' perceptions of national identity. The Movement for a Democratic Slovakia's later mimicry of these complaints close to the 1992 election, as with the 'Initiative for a Sovereign Slovakia', illustrates not programmatic separatist nationalism on the part of Meciar's part but more simply a strategy of vote-maximising on 'soft' nationalist sentiment.

With the Slovak National Party, the Movement for a Democratic Slovakia and the Party of the Democratic Left (PDL) together in opposition in Slovakia after April 1991, it remained important for the Movement for a Democratic Slovakia to distinguish itself from these nationalist and leftist rivals whilst poaching their strongest electoral issues - which did not include separatism. The Movement for a Democratic Slovakia's rhetoric

---

<sup>16</sup> A mere 2000 attended the parallel Initiative for a Common State demonstration, also in Bratislava (*ibid.*)



of patriotic reform nationalism, with its attendant, scarcely veiled anti-Semitism, was but one plank in Meciar's platform for achieving government power.

In the Czech Republic there existed only a small openly nationalist party of the right, the Civic Democratic Alliance, but also a party of the extreme nationalist right led by Miroslav Sladek, whose Association for the Republic-Republican Party of Czechoslovakia was and remains neo-fascist. Sladek's political sophistication resembles that of Russia's Vladimir Zhirinovskiy more than that of Austria's Jorg Haider. Formed in Bohemia in 1990 the Republican Party set itself the singular policies of political disruption, racism and xenophobia, garnering some 6 per cent of the Czech National Council vote in June 1992, mainly from the north-western reaches of the country. Here, long-unsolved economic and social problems have combined with environmental devastation to alienate younger voters in particular from the political mainstream. Kostecky also reports a positive correlation between Republican voters and concentrations of the ever-persecuted Roma minority (Kostecky 1995:87). While abusing Havel, Klaus, and Meciar alike, Sladek stayed on the fringes of the country's national problems, kept there at least during the life of the federation, by the mainstream Czech right's refusal to collaborate.

Back within the boundaries of the mainstream there was clearly a discrepancy between Czech rhetoric and policy; both right and left within the Czech republic insisted on their adherence to the values of 'federation', even as they failed completely to produce a common policy in constitutional negotiations with their Slovak counterparts between 1990 and 1992. Programmatically, there was certainly little discernible nationalism among Czech parties yet, as Chapter 7 will show, the insistence of Czech federal ministers upon a unified reform strategy across the federation and to its most blatantly uneven results amounted to a dire provocation in Slovakia.

The intellectual and conservative Civic Democratic Alliance (CDA) emerged as the one mainstream nationalist party in the Czech republic, but its programme proved electorally suicidal. In the June 1992 election the Alliance failed even to cross the 5 per cent threshold of entry into the Federal Assembly. Whatever the forms of oppression

exercised by the Czech republic upon the Slovaks, an explicitly and self-consciously nationalist rationale was evidently not acceptable to the Czech electorate. An investigation of the 1992 election will show more systematically the lack of nationalist ideology extant, even at the very crisis point of the state.

### **1992 June elections - Hobson's choice**

It was only when constitutional negotiations collapsed that the full weight of party attitudes came to bear on the republican conflict. They did so decisively through the June election. Victory for Klaus's right-wing Civic Democratic Party - Christian Democratic Party coalition in the Czech Republic and Meciar's Movement for a Democratic Slovakia in Slovakia amounted to the presentation of two ideologically opposed forces for the purposes of agreeing to a new constitutional arrangement. Instead the victors not only chose dissolution within the course of a few weeks, but set it in train. Olson, amongst others, has misled subsequent analysts as to their mandate to do so. "These elections gave decisive power to one party in each republic, which came to embody republic-level solidarity in relation to the other republic" he asserts, claiming that "federalism ... became the vital issue in the 1992 election and culminated in the dissolution of the common state" (Olson 1994:105-109). The election, he claims, became "a referendum on the metapolitical question of 'stateness'" (Olson 1994:112).

This typical assumption that the elections results remain self-explanatory - that in leading to the split they must have expressed some deep nationalistic conflict - obscures how the two election victors both claimed to have the best interests of the common state at heart. When the rhetoric was about the nation (and so implicitly, about the Czechoslovak state) it largely concerned the nation as a willing partner *on both sides*. The Movement for a Democratic Slovakia promised national sovereignty and emancipation in the same breath as it claimed to aspire only to an equal common state. The Czech Civic Democratic Party spoke for 'Czechoslovakia'. The aspiration to state-power defined both sides, but neither side could go all out for national argumentation in the absence of a significant nationalist constituency. As it transpired neither the Civic Democratic Party nor the Movement for a Democratic Slovakia needed to be 'nationalist' as their defining trait, since there were other profound and less potentially

alienating interests (albeit nationally encapsulated interests) that could deliver the powers of the state into their hands.

The pre-election campaign was not dominated by discussion over federal options, indeed, by any specific policy options as such (bemusing detail in macro and micro economy policy being the exception). Instead it was republic-centric and characterised by repeated statements of ideological belief and normative priorities. The Czech Civic Democratic Alliance (CDA) hedged its bets and was possibly the most rhetorical of all. Though espousing the benefits of Czech separatism in the face of Slovak intransigence the party's slogans proclaimed; "Nationality principle? in life YES - in politics NO!" and "no lasting prosperity without freedom!" (Sociologicke Actuality 5/1992).

Campaigns aimed at mobilising the moral and ideological beliefs of the electorate and a judgement as to who might most realistically deliver on their promises. The issue of the common state was discussed either fatalistically, 'it is for the victors to decide', or ingenuously, with parties asserting their own ideal preferences whilst avoiding the *realpolitik* of either achievable compromise or of the implications of their own most favoured state arrangement - which for all, bar the Slovak National Party, still centred allegedly on a common state. President Havel was moved to castigate "the cowardly inability of politicians to say clearly what they are aiming at" (*Zemedelske noviny* 13.5.1992:3). The campaigns of 1992 had focussed on other issues.

## The results of the 1992 Election

*Elections: 5-6 June 1992 - Federal Assembly of the Czech and Slovak Federative Republic*

	House of the People (150 seats)		House of the Nations (150 seats)	
	Votes (%)	Seats	Votes (%)	Seats
<i>Czech Republic</i>				
Civic DP + Christian DP	33.9	48	33.4	37
Left Bloc	14.3	19	14.5	15
Czechoslovak Soc. Dem.	7.7	10	6.8	6
Republican Party	6.5	8	6.4	6
CDU - Cz. People's Party	6.0	7	6.1	6
Liberal Social Union	5.8	7	6.1	5
Others	25.8	0	26.7	0
Total	100.0	99	100.0	75
<i>Slovak Republic</i>				
Mov. for Dem. Slovakia	33.5	24	33.9	33
Slovak Democratic Left	14.4	10	14.0	13
Slovak National Party	9.4	6	9.4	9
Christ. Dem. Movement	9.0	6	8.8	8
HCDM* + Coexistence	7.5	5	7.4	7
SDP in Slovakia	4.9	0	6.1	5
Other Parties	21.3	0	20.4	0
Total	100.0	51	100.0	75

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

Czech National Council	Votes (%)	Seats
Civic. Dem. P + Christian Dem. P	29.7	76
Left Bloc	14.1	35
Czechoslovak Social Democracy	6.5	16
Liberal Social Union	6.5	16
CDU - Czechoslovak People's Party	6.3	15
Republican Party	6.0	14
Civic Democratic Alliance	6.0	14
MSD - SMS**	5.9	14
Other Parties	19.0	0
<b>Total</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>200</b>

Slovak National Council	Votes (%)	Seats
Movement. for Dem. Slovakia	37.3	74
Slovak Democratic Left	14.7	29
Christian Democratic Movement	8.9	18
Slovak National Party	7.9	15
HCDM + Coexistence	7.4	14
Other Parties	23.8	0
<b>Total</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>150</b>

\* Hungarian Christian Democratic Movement

\*\*Movement for Self-governing Democracy - Society for Moravia and Silesia

### **Nationalist issues in the election in the Czech Republic**

Rather than using the controversial issue of public-sector 'vetting', an issue left to the allied Christian Democratic Party, Vaclav Klaus's Civic Democratic Party (CDP) demonstrated its anti-communism by presenting the election as a democratic

crossroads. The electorate was asked, frequently at outdoor rallies and in the most urgent tones, if it wished to go on or be deflected from the course of *democracy* as such. The Czech electorate was encouraged not to distinguish between their loyalty to the political system and their attitudes to the sets of competing politicians, contrary to mature competition in an established democracy (Lipset and Rokkan, in Mair 1990:92). It was not the nation that was said to be at stake, but the nature of the state - the whole, bi-national state. The Civic Democratic Party claimed that it was the one party of the democratic state<sup>17</sup>. The liberal dissident Civic Movement (CM), formerly the Civic Democratic Party's main rival, was portrayed as a party of crypto-communist utopians. "In a functioning parliamentary democracy", Klaus argued, "non-political politics doesn't have a chance" (Klaus 3.4.1992 in 1993:9). In early April 1992, Klaus stated that together with the Civic Democratic Alliance, the Civic Democratic Party had "apprehensions of a distinct upsurge of anti-reformist forces, striving to thwart the post-November [1989] development. We are determined not to allow it and strive jointly for a victory of the right-wing (*Mlada Fronta dnes* 3.4.1992:2)". The implication was that anti-November forces included the dissidents of the Civic Movement, who had, of course, formed the very nucleus of democratic opposition to communism for over twenty years<sup>18</sup>.

Regarding the structuring of the state, the Civic Democratic Party stuck to its advocacy of a so-called 'functioning federation'. It called for an end to and reversal of the republican erosion of federal powers begun in 1990, and opposed 'experiments', including confederation (*Mlada Fronta dnes* 4.6.1992). The right, by 1992, were united in Klaus's view that a federal state was not to be bought at the cost of jeopardising any economic reform. Klaus distanced his party from the debacle of the

---

<sup>17</sup> When Klaus was asked if he was trying to repeat the election of 1990 by threatening the electorate with renewed authoritarianism he replied that the obvious rejection of secret police, tinkered margins and leading tasks of the party in 1989 was only "a superficial rejection of one type of common system", and that it was necessary now for the electorate to decide "in which direction to begin" (*Lidove noviny* 14.5.1992:6).

<sup>18</sup> The main weapon of the campaign against the real left was the invocation of the ghosts of totalitarianism but also its economic other-worldliness. Klaus spoke scathingly of the left "fretting and blaming this government that the former Soviet Union no longer buys textiles (Klaus 4.6.1992, in 1993:23)". The Civic Democratic Party rejected any "third way between communism and democracy" (as opposed to between communism and capitalism). Klaus nevertheless avoided the word capitalism, employing 'market economy' in preference (*Lidove noviny* 29.5.1992:8). The Civic Democratic Party's strongest resource was clearly the absolute association of economic reform with the figure of Vaclav Klaus. In a series of articles entitled: *A short guide to the 'election goulash'*, Klaus was sufficiently confident to conclude with the following advice - "when deciding for whom to vote, it is enough with economic arguments to use your common sense" (5.5.1992, in 1992:17).

constitutional talks and was outspoken only when explicitly questioned about a Slovak 'third way'. The question was thus played down, often not appearing at all in party campaign literature. Klaus preferred a strategy of shifting responsibility for the conflict entirely onto the Slovak side and claimed that it was now "evident, that votes for the Movement for a Democratic Slovakia are votes for the division of the state... Slovak voters, self evidently, have the right to decide this, but not for all days on end (*Lidove noviny* 14.5.1992:6)". Igor Nemeč confirmed that if the party faced "a choice between a common socialist Czechoslovak state and two independent states, it would choose the latter" (*Telegraf* 2.6.1992).

To call this nationalism would be to lose the heart of the matter: Klaus was and remains a rationalist, not a nationalist, and before June 1992 he spoke of the nation as his last resort - the state into which he would be forced. Though not a nationalist, and though motivated by his vision of a technocratic market utopia, threatened, as he saw it, by Slovak nationalists, Klaus took the nation-state - a Czech nation-state - as his next available frame of reference. As will be explored further in later chapters, to Klaus, the nation's value was that in encapsulating the idea of a common past and a common future it more obviously provided the social homogeneity necessary to sustain a difficult economic reform. When the federal state failed, the nation-state suggested itself as a more efficient means to an end. The Czech nation-state was not, for Klaus, an end in itself. Given the nature of Czech national self-identification, moreover, there was an obvious way to finesse this shift toward a state-separation. If Czechs throughout Czechoslovak history had laid claim to a superior rationality then this was a uniquely post-communist manifestation of that claim: to appeal to the sentiment and value of the nation *per se* was crude and barbaric; to appeal to its integrity as the citadel of democratic reform was every good citizen's duty.

In a survey taken in April 1992, Civic Democratic Party supporters more than any others, expressed satisfaction with the course of social and political development (86 per cent) and the economy (78 per cent). They were the least afflicted with feelings of powerlessness, hopelessness and surrender (33 per cent as opposed to the notably high 55 per cent national average). Another prominent characteristic in an Civic Democratic

Party voter's profile was support for the current legal strategy *vis-à-vis* the communist past. Civic Democratic Party supporters were particularly hostile to the left and Slovak national parties, and less likely to agree that the Czech right and economic reform might contribute to any splitting of the state. 74 per cent of Civic Democratic Party supporters stood by the view that the Slovak left and the insufficient will of Slovaks as a whole to maintain the state might lead to its division - a result which insured Klaus against losing too great a part of his own constituency should he take it upon himself to end the federation (Marek Boguszak/AISA in *Mlada Fronta dnes* 22.5.1992.)<sup>19</sup>.

The Civic Democratic Alliance (CDA) was ideologically almost indistinguishable from the Civic Democratic Party, with which it had an electoral "non-aggression pact" (*Prostor* 12.5.1992:2). Having failed in its repeated attempts to abolish the minority right of veto in the constitution, and seizing on the Federal Assembly deadlocks of 1992, its chairman, Jan Kalvoda, voiced the logical conclusion of the economic right and openly campaigned on the benefits of Czech separatism. The Civic Democratic Alliance's strategy to render itself visible relied on this more colourful use of the Czech national card and personal attacks against Meciar, which Klaus avoided. Yet even the Civic Democratic Alliance, the nearest thing to a nationalist party one could find in the Czech mainstream, argued explicitly against using the 'nationality' principle as a political or even a politicising issue. The Civic Democratic Alliance exemplifies how Czech parties had actually abdicated the responsibility of resolving state-legal issues by opting to discuss only the most abstract, if not fanciful, idealised models. The Civic Democratic Alliance considered optimal "federalism without the nationalistic point of view (*Prostor* 12.5.1992:2)".

The Civic Movement (CM), despite conciliatory efforts towards the Slovaks for which it was frequently criticised, had actually shifted its position towards Klaus's by 1992. The anti-communist movement, the Civic Forum had split not least as a reaction to the

---

<sup>19</sup> Whereas only 13 per cent among those with basic education supported the Civic Democratic Party, among high qualified specialists their support reached 45 per cent and among private owners and businessmen, some 35 per cent (Marek Boguszak/AISA:ibid.). The results were from 1363 respondents from 1 - 9 April. Clearly the Civic Democratic Party managed to mobilise the support of a significant proportion of the technocratic elite, the frustrated class considered among the most potentially destabilising forces within stagnating communist regimes.



power-sharing talks of August 1990 which distinguished those for whom economic reform was the highest priority from those who felt the market provided “only the means to a working state, preferably a federal state” (Pavel Rychetsky in *Hospodarske noviny* 29.4.1991:1). By June 1992 the Civic Movement clearly no longer felt able to campaign on subordinating market ends to the preservation of a common state. What distinguished its electoral campaign was the Civic Movement’s preoccupation with the integrity of the legal state as a *sine qua non* of democratic development. They took the ‘legal state’ and anti-communist ‘vetting’ issues to election apparently as an act of defiance (*Co Chceme/What We Want*). Though the Civic Movement could justly claim to be “the most consistent advocate for a common state and referenda over its future” the remainder of its programme rang perhaps too resoundingly with noble generalities. The Civic Movement claimed to ‘know’ that “the conditions of prosperity and of a dignified life are decency and mutual respect, healthy reason, social responsibility, health, education, culture and clean air” (*Sociologicke aktuality* 5/1992). The party evidently reduced its own chances of being taken seriously by standing for “radical economic reform which must lead to the resolution of all social and ecological problems” (*Co chceme*).

The Civic Movement campaigned for, as opposed to merely acknowledging support for the idea of, a common state. It stated frankly that “jeopardizing Czechoslovakia is not only nationalistic, but also the dangerous dream of a unitarian state. We support a referendum as the single legitimate condition of the division of the state or its reshaping with more members” (*Respect* 21.5.1992). Federal Foreign Minister, Jiri Dienstbier accused Jan Kalvoda of irresponsibly playing the Czech national card. He in turn appealed not only to emotional and socio-economic reasons for continuing the common state, but, for the first time in two years of wrangling, raised seriously the issue of international security (Interview with Jana Smidova *Lidove noviny* 30.4.1992:9). Such a late appearance scarcely convinced that Slovakia was indeed the touchstone of Czech geopolitical stability (even if the left apparently feared Bohemia's incorporation as a sixth new German *länder* (Wehrle 1994:32). More convincing, given its greater currency in the Czech media and immediate resonance, was the rightist innuendo that

(as in the 1980s) a gradualist Slovakia would arrest Czech development and continue to bar it from its 'European destiny'.

The coalition between the Christian Democratic Union and the Czechoslovak People's Party, (CDU-CPP), carried a broad manifesto essentially endorsing current progress including, with little elaboration, its preference for a federal constitution. The remaining election successes regarding the Federal Assembly were for the far right Republican Party of Czechoslovakia, led by Miroslav Sladek (53 per cent of Republican support stemmed from the under 34s (*Lidove noviny* 29.5.1992)) - and on the left. The Left Bloc (LB) (coalition of the Democratic Left and the Communist Party of Bohemia and Moravia) rejected apologetics and hoped that the "expectations of our citizens from November 1989 are fulfilled". They supported a 'federation', but, given their lack of internal evolution, with all the potentially Marxist-Leninist connotations of their use of the term. The Czechoslovak Social Democratic (CSD) programme varied little from that in 1990. Honest, if lame on the issue, the party stated: "we consider a federal constitution the ideal, but at present difficult to implement" (*Mlada Fronta Dnes* 4.6.1992). A coalition since 1991, the Liberal Social Union (LSU) represented an uncomfortable alignment of Greens, (urban) Socialists and cooperative farm interests, as represented by the Agricultural Party<sup>20</sup>. There was little common policy ground between leftist Agriculturalists and the centrist Socialists (Kostecky 1995:81) and other issues dominated their muted claim to support a 'federal state'.

### **Nationalist issues in the elections in the Slovak Republic**

Slovak liberals in the guise of the Public Against Violence/later: Civic Democratic Union, (PAV/CDU), were the major casualty of the Slovak election. Again, however, the political scene in 1992 has been misleadingly characterised by Evans and Whitfield as displaying, in contrast to the Czechs, only 'limited dimensionality'; described as "redistributive, authoritarian, anti-West versus pro-market, liberal and cosmopolitan" (1993:542). In fact the range of opinion represented by Slovak parties comprised of pro-federal and pro-reform liberal, Christian Democratic parties of two more or less nationalistic shades, a range of minor populist nationalist parties running the gamut of

---

<sup>20</sup> The Electoral Commission recognised the group as constituting a political movement as opposed to a 'coalition', to which a higher parliamentary threshold would have applied.

economic preferences and, finally, a renewed social democratic left. Even Meciar's Movement for a Democratic Slovakia carried supporters for rapid economic reform. The structure of the state was certainly a dominant electoral issue in Slovakia but as already stated it combined, in order of concern, with fears over the standard of living, unemployment, health care, social security, crime and the environment (Butorova 1993:8). The electorate was confronted with a plethora of constitutional options, most of which were ill-defined and rarely discussed in relation to what was known to be politically acceptable or otherwise to the other partner republic<sup>21</sup>.

The Movement for a Democratic Slovakia (MDS) claimed to represent "democracy, humanism, a legal state, human rights and free enterprise in a market economy" and to aim at the "all-round elevation of Slovakia". Thus far it based its manifesto squarely on what had been the anti-communist civic movement's, the pro-federal Public Against Violence's 1990 manifesto, called 'Chance for Slovakia'. In 1992 however, the Movement for a Democratic Slovakia also asserted a "state-legal arrangement on confederal principles, the basic social orientation of the economy, complex and sovereign development of the national economy and advantageous linkage to European integration" (*Rude pravo* 27.5.1992:2). The presentation of economic policy, as with elastic discussions of Czech Slovak relations, illustrated only how the party projected itself as the natural party of government whilst evading detail<sup>22</sup> - it carried the trappings of nationalism without actually daring to put them on. The Movement for a Democratic Slovakia depicted itself as championing a transition appropriate to Slovak national specifics with answers for pro- and anti-federalists alike. It took an important step just before the election and called for the proclamation of the sovereignty of Slovakia as a subject of international law, even though it had up to then effectively blocked such calls

---

<sup>21</sup> This phenomenon has been described as "confusion and cognitive helplessness, evident in persistent misconceptions on issues related to the constitutional arrangement (Butora and Butora 1995:118)". However, the same authors put it down to 'brainwashing' that Slovaks "failed to appreciate that economic prosperity could best be achieved through the existing economic reform programme". The Czech media represented the Slovak electorate as fatally mesmerised by Meciar's populism. One campaign manager claimed that "in a political campaign in Slovakia we would work with emotion...Slovakia needs personality, it needs its Janosik" (chief of Mark/BBDO marketing agency quoted in *Cesky denik* 28.5.1992). In fact a pre-election A.I.S.A. poll showed that 64 per cent of Czechs surveyed would prefer to vote for personalities than parties, as against 54 per cent in Slovakia (*Mlada Fronta dnes* 13.5.1992:14).

<sup>22</sup> In contrast to Klaus's rejection of the economic mafia as a hangover of communist practice however, Milan Knazko located this problem as at the heart of the privatisation process, which he depicted as "the cheap selling off of national property to foreigners and the concentration of ownership in the hands of a narrow group" (ibid.).

from Slovak Nationalists and nationalist Christian Democrats within the Slovak National Council. Within the manifesto the Movement for a Democratic Slovakia nevertheless hedged by offering to follow the introduction of a Slovak constitution with a referendum on the form of appropriate coexistence with the Czech republic, resulting in a treaty (*Mlada Fronta dnes* 8.4.1992:2). Crucially it claimed not to be fighting for any 'true Slovak path' so much as for the right of Slovaks to choose freely that path, whatever it should turn out to be. In this sense Meciar succeeded in making a virtue out of his very lack of programmatic principles. In an equally populist move Meciar announced that he would not support Havel's candidacy for re-election as President. He exploited the suspicions felt against Havel's clique in both republics and attributed this decision as much to Havel's choice of advisors as to his mistakes in office (*ibid.*). On 14th May Meciar stated that after elections he would not assume any federal post (*Czech Sociological Review* 1993:136). In so doing Meciar signalled an intention to maximise the leverage power of the Slovak National Council in any further talks. According to Meciar's promises, the direction of these talks would be dependent upon the results of a referendum.

The confident election style of the Movement for a Democratic Slovakia played upon a clear wave of support. In 1991, the attitudinal profile of those supporting the Movement for a Democratic Slovakia was still unclear. By April 1992, however, it was obvious that supporters more than usually rejected the direction Slovakia had taken since November 1989. More than three quarters stated that Slovakia's post-November development brought great disappointment (as against a high 64 per cent in the whole Slovak population) and 71 per cent judged the economic reform too radical or basically misconceived; 84 per cent believed that other conceptions of economic reform would be better than those currently in place. As to the state-legal arrangement 79 per cent of Movement for a Democratic Slovakia's supporters judged that Czechs insufficiently understood Slovakia and that this was a crucial factor in 'coercing' Slovaks towards independence (68 per cent in the whole population). Less than half, 48 per cent, stated that for the population of Slovakia it was more important to slow the pace or at least

change economic reform, than to maintain the common state (41 per cent in the Slovak population as a whole)<sup>23</sup>.

Clearly the stresses of post-communism were highly important in drawing support behind Meciar. The election, however, demonstrated only that Meciar was a populist skillful in pooling as many constituencies as possible. Within his party stood key former Public Against Violence figures opposed to overtly nationalistic sentiments and as shown in Chapter 2, these people were absolutely dismayed, as initially Meciar was too, by the pace of dissolution talks following the June election.

The Party of the Democratic Left's (PDL) shift to west European social democracy and its social orientation had allowed for a resurrection of the former Communist Party's fortunes since 1990. Remarkably, by 1992, the Christian Democratic Movement was held in greater suspicion as a potential threat to democracy (35 per cent), compared to 20 per cent for the Slovak Democratic Left (Butorova 1993:63-65). The Slovak Democratic Left argued that the election would decide both the form of the common life of Czechs, Slovaks and other nationalities, and that it would set the future priorities for the economy and society. For the former, the party proposed a "loose federation with elements of confederation", thus managing to escape suspicions either of Slovak nationalism or Czechoslovakism.

When Jan Carnogursky, the leader of the Christian Democratic Movement (CDM) could get beyond defending his views on liberalism he explained that his vision was for a strong, stable and ultimately independent Slovakia and that national consciousness could grow slowly into a stable identity (*Lidove noviny* 21.5.1992). The Movement was nevertheless embattled by the intense aversion felt against them by a portion of the population. Of eight negative characteristics pertaining to parties the Christian

---

<sup>23</sup> Sociologically, there were parallels in Civic Democratic Party and Movement for a Democratic Slovakia support. The Movement for a Democratic Slovakia support was strongest among both those threatened by reform - the lowest qualified and high-school educated population, but also among high qualified specialists where support reached beyond 50 per cent (data from A.I.S.A. survey conducted by Marek Buguszak 1 - 9 April from sample of 1363: *Mlada Fronta* 22.5.1992). Again it seems reasonable to argue that the 'technocratic elite', or 'grey zone', constituted an important body of support. Their support could rationally follow their expectation of professional benefits arising from a party that championed the Slovak economy without, so it could yet seem, rejecting links to the Czech republic.

Democratic Movement scored highest on six: only pretending to support the common state, use of devious political tactics, poor quality personnel, elitism, a poor defence of economic standards, and the likely introduction of totalitarianism. They scored positively only in their perceived tolerance of national minorities (Butorova 1993:63, 64), even while many Czechs considered the Christian Democratic Movement, with its echoes of L'udak clericalism, the epitome of nationalist intolerance.

The Civic Democratic Union (CDU) (formerly the Public Against Violence) projected itself as a "liberal and conservative party of the centre. It stands behind rapid economic reform and the dignified station of Slovakia in the common state" (*Hospodarske noviny* 1.7.1992). Any doubts that the affinities of this party were largely with those on the Czech right, inclusive of support for lustration, were nonetheless dispelled by the electoral coalition with the Czech Civic Democratic Alliance, the most recognisably 'Czechoslovakist' and the most unwilling to see change in the structure of the common state of all the Czech parties.

The right-wing coalition between Klaus's Civic Democratic Party and Slovakia's Democratic Party (DP) - a former communist satellite party - targeted businessmen and the intelligentsia in Slovakia. The Democratic Party supported a common state with the two republics joined in 'some form of common contract' (*Hospodarske noviny* 1.7.1992) but echoed to a policy the manifesto of the Civic Democratic Party. That Klaus assisted in splitting the liberal vote in Slovakia is perhaps less significant than the value of the coalition in underpinning subsequent Civic Democratic Party claims to have gone to the limit of its powers to secure a common state.

The small Social Democratic Party in Slovakia (SDPS f.1918), obscured by the increasing popularity of the Slovak Democratic Left, had nevertheless received the fillip to its electoral chances by the recruitment of Alexander Dubcek as party chairman. It sought a moderate left image and the political stability of Slovakia within a federation.

The Slovak National Party (SNP) proposed immediate Slovak statehood, the single other acceptable possibility being a confederation of three subjects (Bohemia, Moravia, Slovakia). Even in June 1992 it remained a single-issue party (Butora and Butorova 1995:15). It was the only party (Movement for a Democratic Slovakia included) to clearly attract those against a common state. Where 44 per cent of Slovaks (compared to 57 per cent for the Movement for a Democratic Slovakia) viewed the Slovak National Party as a defender of Slovak interests, another 37 per cent ascribed to them the negative characteristic of inciting racial tensions.

### **Conclusions**

The avoidance of nationalist programmes and the fact of the end of the state some six months hence is surely one of the most startling juxtapositions in the history of Central Europe. It conjures up not so much the tortuous developments of European separatism observable in present-day Spain, the United Kingdom and Italy but the perfunctory decisions of a colonial partition or the pragmatism of the Versailles state-builders. As the comparisons imply it was not the existence of rival nationalist populations which brought the Czechoslovak conflict to a head, though nationalists existed in both republics and though they were politically active. Rather the separation occurred as the result of an elite process dominated by reform elites rather than nationalist elites, though both Klaus and Meciar successfully exploited soft nationalist sentiments.

As this chapter has attempted to demonstrate, a separatist nationalist movement as set within Breuilly's practical definition had only very limited minority support in either republic. The most significant nationalist party, the Slovak National Party, garnered support that fluctuated between 12 per cent and 15 per cent in the last half of 1991 and the first half of 1992 (Wolchik 1995:238), but which fell in the Slovak National Council from the first election in 1990 to the second in 1992. Other Slovak parties, most notably the Christian Democratic Movement and the Public Against Violence faction that would become the Movement for a Democratic Slovakia, had taken up important aspects of the national cause already in 1990. In the case of the Movement for a Democratic Slovakia, however, the aim was to strip the national question of its separatist implications and to furnish it for more immediate electoral use. In doing so

the Movement for a Democratic Slovakia remained out of the separatist nationalist category even as it legitimated the more militant nationalist parties from which it stole. As was argued elsewhere back in 1992: "Nationalist groups that have sprung up in Slovakia in the post-revolutionary period, such as the Stur Association, the Slovak National Party, and the Slovak National Renewal Party, are strong enough to keep the issue alive, buoyed by resentment at the treatment of the 120,000 Slovaks in Hungary and what they see as Prague's patronizing dismissal of Slovak feelings and needs. Local support may be less important in maintaining their fervor than the money they can raise from the Slovak population abroad (over three million strong), which is especially receptive to requests for help in advancing the more extreme nationalist cause" (Judt 1992:105). The implication is that separatist nationalism as a force capable of seizing power had not yet arrived in Slovakia in 1992. Populist forces quite capable of assimilating nationalism had nevertheless been elected to government in both republics in June 1992.

Nationalisms as old as those within the Czech and Slovak republics should perhaps be accepted as sliding beneath the radar of Breuilly's definitions. The very failure of programmatically nationalistic parties in both republics might indicate nationalisms so mature as to be beyond protesting themselves: commonly understood as implicit in the chosen debates on reform, investment, subsidy and the role of church and state, the promises of prosperity which might just look like populism to an outsider. The two republics appeared to live in political worlds of their own, and each historically, has clearly had a case against the other. The apparently expansive appeals by Czechs to the good of 'Czechoslovakia' were arguably, as they had ever been for Czechs, synonymous with appeals for the interests of their own nation.

The problem with trying to account for the persistence of nationalism, particularly separatist nationalism, as a dynamic political ideology in this way is that the connection between cause and effect ceases to be demonstrable as political and instead becomes blandly deterministic. A bi-national federation, where the 'other' nation is always the opposition, is of course particularly prone to such arguments and inferences. To argue that Klaus was 'really' elected as a nationalist is to argue for a kind of reclusive



electoral consciousness that is hardly robust under analysis - historically plausible as it may sound. Meciar on the other hand, may be labelled a nationalist with more certainty, but one who crafted his position according to electoral expediency, which made him a Slovak autonomist and not a separatist.

Clearly the Czechoslovak split was not caused by rival nationalist populations, though they existed and though they were exploited. In the proven absence of strong separatist nationalist movements the more general analytical question should again be asked as to what other weaknesses existed in the state and its political structures as to have made it unsustainable in its existing form. Why was broad-based public support for a bi-national state unable to condition a political settlement?

The peremptory nature of the dissolution in the absence of either heightened nationalist feeling, explicit electoral mandate (though the Civic Democratic Party carried a tenuously implicit mandate), or the constitutional required referenda in the case of a separation all suggest a significant imbalance in the power structures of the state - they also suggests a deeply under-developed party system. The unconstrained assumption of elite authority following the June election clearly represented the pre-emptive-strike option in the treatment of one of Central Europe's more manageable quarrels. Such an approach is equally unimaginable in the developed democracies of Britain, Canada or Belgium. It is to the influence and impact of the post-communist transition that the rest of this thesis now turns. Though it is sorely tempting to stretch the definition of nationalism - to infer a state-splitting nationalist conflict from Czechoslovakia's numerous national conflicts after 1989 - such an argument remains unsubstantiated and consequently deeply uninformative of the process of separation as it could be observed. It is surely possible, in this post-communist case, to better account for the uninhibited power of the governing elite, the unwillingness of federal authorities to soften economic reform in Slovakia, and the relative weaknesses of those mediating institutions which continued to function well in states more nationalistically divided - but more democratic - than Czechoslovakia in 1992.

## **Chapter 5**

### **The Impact of Party Development on the Separation of the State**

#### **Introduction**

This chapter focuses exclusively on the role played by the new institution of party politics. By colouring in the political map of the Czechoslovak inter-election period (1990 - 1992) the aim is to demonstrate a party-systemic contribution to sundering the state, specifically, to show that identifiably *transitional* imbalances in the fledgling party system inhibited the clear mediation of Czech Slovak relations.

As it turned out, the first free democratic election in June 1990 was a poor indicator of public preferences. The electorates were offered only the plebiscite issue of 'Are you for change?', and only afterwards did the victorious Czech and Slovak anti-regime movements splinter into factions which then instituted themselves as parties. Of their offspring the two (*i.e.* centre-right) parties attributing a transcendent value to the common state found themselves marginalised but not, so this chapter claims, straightforwardly because of their bi-'national' views. Czech and Slovak rivalry, though divisive, proved useable by party agents only in a highly constrained way, stuck as they were in republic-centric party competitions. From 1990 the anti-communist movements, the Czech Civic Forum (CF) and Slovak Public Against Violence (PAV), competed within their republics and splintered rather on issues of regime-transfer, approaches to state-building, economic transformation and the purging of the communist *nomenklatura*. The Czech and Slovak party political scenes moreover, developed according to a different ranking of these problems.

#### **Political party development from November 1989 to June 1992:**

##### **Ghosts in the party machine - The Czech Lands**

A March 1990 opinion poll put the Czech Civic Forum second only to the interim<sup>1</sup> Federal Government of National Understanding as the most trusted institution in Czechoslovakia (Radio Free Europe 6.4.1990:7). At the same time, however, the

---

<sup>1</sup> The transition government until the first free elections in June 1990.

Socialist Party's youth section launched a complaint that became widespread, that the Forum's all-embracing style gave it unfair advantage over conventional parties (*Svobodne slovo* 12.3.1990). The Civic Forum's chief goal was indeed sweeping. It was, as it had been in 1968, to 'return Czechoslovakia to Europe' (Kusin 1971:99), culturally, economically and politically. The Socialist youth also had a point in that the Forum's rhetoric of non-partisanship from the very beginning obscured a very real political bias. Traditional Czech financial rigour was couched as a call for austerity. Together with advocating the rapid introduction of a market economy, the Civic Forum sought to describe the 'reformed' economic space as entirely beyond government, in the sense of 'political' jurisdiction - to carve out free-market liberal territory.

The June 1990 election campaign evolved around social justice, democracy, the confiscation of Communist Party assets, the Party's future, and implicitly, the need to redesign constitutional relations between Czechs and Slovaks. Personalities played a prominent role in the subdued campaign; unavoidably, given the few salient differences between programmes, and the resulting reluctance to enter a substantial debate. Even the Communist Party advocated political pluralism and a market economy, though it balked at the abolition of state property (Radio Free Europe 15.6.1990 Peter Martin). The election results are displayed in Table 5.1.

*Election results: 8 - 9 June 1990 (percentage share of the vote)*

	Federal Assembly		Czech/ Slovak National Councils
	House of the People	House of the Nations	
<i>Czech Republic</i>			
Civic Forum (CF)	53.1	50.0	49.5
Communist Party of Czechoslovakia (CP)	13.5	13.8	13.3
Christian & Democratic Union (CDU)	8.7	8.7	8.4
MSD - SMS*	7.9	9.1	10.0
Others	16.8	18.4	18.8
<i>Slovak Republic</i>			
Public Against Violence (PAV)	32.5	37.3	29.3
Christian Democratic Movement (CDM)	19.0	16.7	19.2
Communist Party of Czechoslovakia (CP)	13.8	13.4	13.3
Slovak National Party (SNP)	11.0	11.4	13.9
Coexistence and HCDM**	8.6	8.5	8.7
Democratic Party (DP)	4.4	3.7	4.4
Slovak Green Party (SGP)	3.2	2.6	3.5
Others	7.5	6.4	7.7

*Election results: 8 - 9 June 1990 (percentage share of seats)*

<i>Czech Republic</i>			
Civic Forum (CF)	68	50	127
Communist Party of Czechoslovakia (CP)	15	12	32
Christian & Democratic Union (CDU)	9	6	19
MSD - SMS*	9	7	22
TOTAL	101	75	200
<i>Slovak Republic</i>			
Public Against Violence (PAV)	19	33	48
Christian Democratic Movement (CDM)	11	14	31
Communist Party of Czechoslovakia (CP)	8	12	22
Slovak National Party (SNP)	6	9	22
Coexistence and HCDM**	5	7	14
Democratic Party (DP)	-	-	7
Green Party (GP)	-	-	6
TOTAL	49	75	150

\*Movement for Self-governing Democracy - Society for Moravia and Silesia

\*\* Hungarian Christian Democratic Movement

If anything the Civic Forum's success, paralleled by that of the like-mindedly consensus-seeking Public Against Violence and the Christian Democratic Movement (CDM) in Slovakia, seemed to bode well for the resolution of regional conflicts. A threat to stable relations, however, lay in the inevitable disintegrative tendencies of the umbrella civic movements and the direction such fragmentation might take, a pattern foreshadowed by varying aspirations to economic control and economic autonomy.

### **The disintegration of the centre: June 1990 - Spring 1992**

In the first year after the revolution the role of political parties was deeply contentious. As a debate this related not just to the sour experience of one-party rule, but also the strong party dependency of deputies in the First Republic. This ambiguous status was reflected in the two distinctive characteristics of the Czech party system in 1990: the proliferation of single-issue parties (without any hope of scaling the 5 per cent vote threshold for entry to parliament) and the persistence of the monolithic Civic Forum, with its ambivalent attitudes to party competition<sup>2</sup>.

It was not only a moral, (*i.e.* anti-dogmatic) but a pragmatic attitude that dictated the Civic Forum's disorientation, however. To accept that the Forum was apolitical would be to ignore the strong factions evident within it but also the practical difficulty of operating in sectional terms after an anti-communist revolution. In a society where ideas of class had declined in political currency the liberal dissidents and the right-wing within the Forum replaced it differently: the dissidents with a hybrid of romantic metaphysics and liberal jurisprudence, a philosophy evolved in resistance to the state; the right with an individualistic, and economy-driven technocratic answer, to be underpinned by Christian/rightist social values. In 1990 there was little incentive for these alternative views to brave open competition. When the Civic Forum formally split in 1991 both sides still claimed to represent the interests of the whole society, though now thoroughly divided by reform philosophy and political strategy.

---

<sup>2</sup> An affinity with Polish Solidarity has been remarked along with the observation that such movements are essentially 'pre-pluralist', insofar as they claim to represent all of society, implying the inferior moral worth of sectional interests (Batt 39:1993).

The partial clarification of political forces in the June 1990 election diminished the Civic Forum's appeal as a 'broad umbrella'. Accused more and more of opportunism (the breakaway Democratic Initiative criticised the Forum's 'leftist bias') any remaining illusions of consensus disappeared in October 1990 when finance minister Vaclav Klaus was elected as the chairman of the Forum, prompting an immediate paring down of the movement. The emergence of an Interparliamentary Group of the Democratic Right, and a parallel group of the centrists and centre-left, the Liberal Club, spelled the Forum's end. The liberals protested that the metamorphosis of the Forum into a party was illegal and, in transforming the character of the movement, would destroy its popularity. Klaus and the Club of the Democratic Right insisted that the days of loose organisation were numbered. Klaus argued that 'ideological indiscipline' blocked decision-making and allowed ministers to pursue personal policies (Radio Free Europe 19.4.1991:9,10), though he was clearly motivated by the Forum's unwillingness to embrace his entire strategy.

The formal division into liberal and Klausite<sup>3</sup> camps came at the February Congress. The Liberal Club, led by federal foreign minister Jiri Dienstbier, renamed itself the Civic Movement (CM) while Klaus's group became the Civic Democratic Party (CDP). The Civic Movement retained the core of the dissident movement and the much disputed loose internal structure of the original. The Civic Democratic Party in contrast, declared a disciplined internal hierarchy and official party registration. Both agreed to remain in coalition until just before the June 1992 election, but as allegiances settled the parliamentary caucuses - both federal and Czech - disintegrated<sup>4</sup>.

With the Forum finally destroyed its offspring faced the defining problem of open competition. Personal popularity was uncertain grounds for competition if indecisively attached to policy. A reputation for the delivery of policy was likewise a long term endeavour when basic design remained the immediate task in most policy arenas. Clarity in priority setting offered some room for contest, but to divide the economic right and liberals a distinctive note was required. It was found in an aspect of those differences that

---

<sup>3</sup> The Finance Minister had successfully stolen the initiative from the earlier-formed and more intellectual right of the Civic Democratic Alliance (CDA).

<sup>4</sup> Other deputies opted between remaining independent or entering one of the various smaller groups which had left the Forum in January. On April 2nd, Czechoslovak Social Democracy, which had failed to win representation in June 1990, announced that six deputies had joined, or rather, created its ranks.

had just divided them, namely social tolerance and the approach of society to its communist past.

### **Setting the agenda: cleavages and party development - June 1990 to June 1992**

It has been concluded that “regional, religious and ethnic” and only potentially economic cleavages “underpinned party diversification in 1990 and 1991” (Wightman 1991:67). Though this claim might describe Czech-Slovak differences, these were not the issues to dominate Czech party evolution. The only regional difference to spawn a party here was the issue of greater Moravian/Silesian autonomy. This one party, having split in Spring 1991 over whether to seek republican status or simply greater self-management, looked set to dissolve altogether in the event of minimal self-administration actually being granted. The Catholic church was not consistently divisive; Church heads fought with Klaus over the restitution of Church property but Klaus claimed to represent the “Christian traditions in Europe” (*Mlada Fronta dnes* 7.1.1991). Finally, ethnic animosity toward Slovakia as such (as opposed to conflicts over a constitutional arrangement) was discouraged by public opinion poll data, which professed a mutually fraternal regard. The Civic Democratic Alliance (CDA), the only Czech party to play openly the ethnic card in June 1992 failed to enter the Federal Assembly altogether. That said, the positive value of the relationship with Slovakia was reduced in the prevailing political discourse to its most utilitarian components. The Czech political right and left held different legal and economic conditions as mapping the minimal prerequisites of a common state but across the spectrum, with the exception of the Civic Movement, all substantive difficulties were assumed to emanate from the Slovak side.

The debate over the reconstruction of the federation was not therefore driven by nationalist rhetoric but by the significantly divisive issues of the period, notable precisely for their lack of pre-communist roots. Economic reform and questions of anti-communist retribution were certainly products of the transition, and products lending themselves more to political polarisation than compromise - essential for the election-oriented Civic Democratic Party whose main concern remained the need to distinguish itself from other urban liberals (the historic urban/rural cleavage being here of little use to strategists). In

the absence of discernible party constituencies, party-builders had a limited range of strategically attractive issues and these pivoted on ideology-based dichotomies.

### **Not so much a programme, more a way of life**

Economic policy dominated general party development in two ways. Firstly, the economy was widely considered the linchpin of political stability and thus of the whole transformation. Some 73 per cent of Czechs and Slovaks believed that democracy ‘only functions in rich countries’ (Beyme 1993:423). Oppression in the 1980s had been political and social but also accompanied by the steady decline of living standards. By autumn 1991, 88.9 per cent of Czechs agreed that a market economy was necessary for economic development<sup>5</sup> (Kipke 1993:48). Party ownership of the policy seen as most likely to reverse these negative economic trends had the potential to capture credibility on the delivery of other democratic benefits. More importantly, a party seen to be competent on the economy could deprive competing parties of the same essential credibility. Finance Minister Klaus laid claim to the authorship of an economic reform package that managed, even during formal privatisation, to maintain exceptionally low unemployment in the Czech Republic - though not, as we shall see, in Slovakia<sup>6</sup>.

Secondly, this claim to authorship gave Klaus leverage to discipline the Civic Democratic Party and the authority to introduce a unique tone into political debate: decisive, confident and pragmatic. In the preamble to a television interview it was commented that “Vaclav Klaus functions a little like a man from another world... He is almost the perfect antithesis of the long-standing picture of a Czech, not genial, but scathing, not idle, but unbelievably hard-working. Not evasive, but direct... he alone declared himself to be a conservative. Yet a conservative is he who somehow retains traditions. In this sense Klaus is the most radical revolutionary against the Czech character” (Gen 1994:13). The charismatic appeal of such a personality was not surprising when 72.8 per cent of the

---

<sup>5</sup> In findings from July 1992, 57 per cent of Czechs over 18 endorsed and agreed on the meaning of the term ‘capitalism’; attributing to it the following, stark, features: private ownership without state restrictions; inequality as a natural phenomena dependent upon the ability of individuals; poverty as a result of personal inability; minimal intervention of the state into the economy; unemployment as a consequence of individual’s lack of enthusiasm for their occupations; emphasis on rapid economic transformation, specifically a rapid privatisation process (Kudernatsch 1993:115).

<sup>6</sup> See Chapter 7



population claimed feelings of anxiety and insecurity when looking into the near future (Tucek and Manek 1993:28).

Klaus had indeed claimed, unusually, to be a conservative, thus wedding a natural supporting argument for gradualism to a programme of rapid economic transformation. The ideological allusion helped to distinguish the Civic Democratic Party from other parties of the right, but more importantly, blunted the much feared sharpness of the reform project. Self-avowedly 'Thatcherite Conservatism' proffered reassurance with the argument that all reform, however drastic or innovative, was fundamentally a return to the "most valuable social values, formed as the fruit of a thousand year evolution" (Klaus 1990a:17). Moving forward into reform (supplemented by de-bolshevisation) was sold as a device to regain the positive aspects of the past (the Czech equivalent of Thatcher's so-called "vigorous virtues") and to return to the western path. Such claims, that the process of reform not only generated the strategy necessary for the present but also re-invoked what had been known before communism, forged a form of politico-economic mysticism that looked remarkably like an inversion of Marxist-Leninist historical dialectic.

Much to the consternation of historians and dissidents the demands of party competition and the avowed anti-communism of parties to the right of the Civic Movement led them to belittle the events of the Prague Spring. Denying its status as a popular insurrection, the events of 1968 were dismissed as an irresponsible contest between Communist Party factions. While leading this assault on the country's history and collective memory, the Civic Democratic Party nevertheless expropriated those central tenets of the '68 platform expressing the historical aspirations of Czech political culture, the most important being the aspiration to Europe. In 1968 Milan Kundera, then a leading voice, had fought for the re-emancipation, the re-Europeanisation, of Czech cultural life. Under Klaus, aided by his Czech role model stature as the 'skilled engineer', the Czechs would 'return' on solid modern ground with a thriving economy abounding with enviable industrial talents. Without such an economy he threatened, Europe would remain a mirage. The fact that many 1968 reformers had, at one time, been committed Stalinists<sup>7</sup>, permitted the Civic

---

<sup>7</sup> Kundera wrote of 1968 that "instead of the standard pattern of one group of people (a class, a nation) rising up against another, all the people (an entire generation) revolted against their own youth. Their goal was to recapture and tame the deed they had created, and they almost succeeded" (Kundera 1987:13-14).

Democratic Party to espouse the traditions that had underpinned the Spring whilst damning the reformers of the time (among them the Civic Movement's leader, Jiri Dienstbier) as collaborators, unfit for office.<sup>8</sup>

From his platform of economic credibility Klaus projected himself as a sympathetic realist whilst satirising the rival, intellectual core of the old Civic Forum. According to Garton Ash, Klaus displayed an "almost comical desire to be taken seriously as a writer" (Garton-Ash 1995:36). In practice, Klaus's lucid rejection of the priorities of the former-dissidents was devastating - he blamed the discursive style of the Civic Forum for delays in economic policy and harped on the intellectual elite's chronic Pragocentrism. By projecting the Civic Movement programme to be an apology for the past and a page of philosophy in regard to the future, he distinguished the Civic Democratic Party as the most forward-looking and efficient heir of the November revolution. Finally, by taking early to writing articles outlining his policies and beliefs, often in Havel-style state-of-the-nation essays, Klaus pulled a stunt unsuspected by Garton Ash. Imitating dissident intellectuals proved a most effective way of framing their esotericism. The right-winger Peter Gandalovic wrote that "while the inter-parliamentary Club of the Democratic Right concentrated right from the beginning on the drafting of legislation towards more radical reform, one cannot avoid feeling that the Liberal Club rather produced statements suggesting it was the last saviour of democracy, social certainties and culture" (*Mlada Fronta dnes* 30.1.1991).

### Screening the past

Czech party politics after 1989 were marked by the impulse to exorcise the ghosts of communism. Though power had been transferred peacefully, battles emerged immediately after the revolution which signalled deep tensions between legal and political remedies to old structures and their influence. When the People's Party was besieged by pre-election scandals the liberals in the Civic Forum had risked their reformist reputation to insist on a fair hearing for the former Communist Party satellite. Similarly, when a lack

---

<sup>8</sup> A foreign correspondent, Dienstbier was expelled from the Party in 1969 and fired after participating in anti-occupation broadcasts. From 1970 he worked predominantly as a stoker, was among the first signatories and spokesmen of Charter 77, and was imprisoned between 1979 and 1982.

of self-redefinition in the Communist Party (CP)<sup>9</sup> led the former satellite parties and Social Democrats to propose the Party's banning, many in the Civic Forum objected that in a mature democracy the communists and their legacy should be defeated through electoral competition and not forbidden legalistically<sup>10</sup>. Clearly the liberals, then at the head of the Civic Forum, intended to frame their anti-communism in a strictly democratic way. With a population more concerned by the threat of instability than the rule of law, such a priority proved a poor electoral strategy for the coming competition in June 1992.

The intense party politicisation of anti-communist 'screening' (*lustrace*) in the Czech lands may be seen as the fusion of a demonstrated (though not the leading) public preoccupation and the intense pressure of party competition within the confines of a two-year election cycle. As an issue it possessed rare potential for a display of strong government. Victory over the drafting of restitution laws only confirmed Klaus's evident grip on reform. 'Screening', in contrast, provided the Civic Democratic Party with victory in an area considered the preserve of the dissidents - that of public morality.

Various commissions, notably that investigating the violent events of 17th November 1989, had had access to state security files and had engaged in a process of vetting public officials for past collaborations. This initial process had been criticised by deputies for its arbitrary application under the People's Party Interior Minister, Richard Sacher. Even after Sacher's departure in June 1990 the vetting procedure remained controversial, becoming the focus of public concern over continuing communist influence. Public disquiet was mobilised by anti-communist groups of the right, notably the Confederation of Political Prisoners and the Club of Committed Non-Party Members ('KAN'). These very vocal groups were the heartfelt opposition to continuing communist power and stood, militantly, for their disqualification. They found allies both in the press and academic commentary<sup>11</sup> and, so it transpired, a champion in the parliamentary right.

---

<sup>9</sup> Having lost a third of its members, the Party seemed willing only to 'federalise' itself by establishing a Communist Party of Bohemia and Moravia to complement that of Slovakia (an action the Slovaks called for in 1968 to signal some autonomy of the Slovak Party).

<sup>10</sup> The government nevertheless announced that all party property would be confiscated as of 1st June 1990.

<sup>11</sup> Exposing Communist infiltration in the new system was the clearest way for the Czech press, un-purged and still under the old titles of Youth Front and Red Truth *etc.*, to rehabilitate themselves as editorially independent. Eager for conspiracy, new newspapers, notably *Respekt*, endeavoured to push de-bolshevisation to the fore. Having set out to 'vet' public life the press fastened onto personalities with greater rigour than onto policy.

Lustration was never out of the press in 1990 and 1991, the implication being always that a coherent communist force remained, larger and more recidivist than the observable Communist Party. Newspaper stories in Spring 1991 centred on screening the administration, particularly on how parliament could acquire the right to dismiss deputies found to have collaborated. In February the Christian Democratic Union and smaller parties of the right had demonstrated for 'universal and legally reliable vettings' (*Mlada Fronta dnes* 26.2.1991). That same month, the head of Prague's Charles University politics faculty and KAN member, R. Kucera, made a straight comparison between communism and fascism and called for communism to be criminalised and its governmental members condemned. Kucera warned that another 'victorious February' (as in 1948) awaited in the wings (Kucera 1992:43). It was thus possible to capitalise on the issue of screening without appearing driven by revenge, despite liberal appeals for reconciliation. The right claimed that political prudence should outweigh civic and human rights considerations in this case. The threat was animated by figures such as Vaclav Benda who insisted that "former collaborators of state security have relatively high representation in the Presidium of the parliament and its Constitutional-Legal Committees" (*Mlada Fronta dnes* 10.1.1991). When Deputy Interior Minister (and former *Respekt* editor) Jan Ruml described changes in his ministry he emphasised "[the] dozens of new people, active fighters against the totalitarian regime" (*Obcansky denik* 5.2.1991).

Non-communist political forces began calling unanimously for a screening bill. The reasons for legislating were amplified for deputies by leaks to the media and a general increase in the abuse of files for political blackmail through 1990 and 1991<sup>12</sup>. On 27th June 1991, the federal government approved a bill presented by the Civic Movement and at this point the real disunity among those calling for regulation was revealed. The original draft had intended to disqualify from public office only those proven to have violated human rights. However, on the basis of comments by federal committees under pressure by the right, specifically the Civic Democratic Party, fundamental changes were made which widened the scope of the draft to an extent making

---

<sup>12</sup> For detail of a legally tortuous example see Lawrence Weschler (1992).

endorsement of the bill impossible by any party concerned with liberal legal norms. The bill emerging in September 1991, covered members of state security, registered residents, agents or holders of 'conspiracy flats', informers or ideological collaborators and other deliberate collaborators (Stein and Scarrow 1994:25). The draft was extended to cover former Secretaries of the Communist Party at District or higher level, members of the Presidium of Central committees who implemented political control of the National Security Corps, and members of the security departments of the Communist Party Central Committees. By 31st December, 1996 these people were no longer to hold elected or appointed positions in state administration bodies, in the army, police, the President's office, the Federal Assembly Office, the Czechoslovak Government Office, Czechoslovak Radio, Television and CTK (press agency) or republican bodies to be delineated by their governments. The ban was to last for five years, the duration of the law, but in specifying positions it protected the employability, most obviously in the private sector, of much of the old technocratic and political elite (*Mlada Fronta dnes* 5.10.1991).

According to objections by the General Procuratory and other ministries the bill contradicted the Charter of Human Rights, the 1958 International Labour Organisation convention No. 111 on non-discrimination in work, it implied collective guilt, and intervened in the competencies of the republics. It was also thought profoundly unsafe that state security files were to be used as evidence (Marek, T. in *Mlada Fronta dnes* 2:4.9.1991). The bill was, nevertheless, approved on October 4th, 1991, with the majority composed of the Civic Democratic Party, the Civic Democratic Alliance and the Christian Democratic Party.

In illustration, the Civic Democratic Party had found an issue against the party they perceived to be their main rival, the Civic Movement, who had looked in danger of dominating government after the Forum fell apart. Though the Civic Democratic Party was the larger parliamentary party, the CDP's only federal cabinet member was Klaus, who single-handedly opposed the moderate impulses of liberal ministers (Stein and Scarrow 1994:24), but effectively given his hegemony over economic policy-at-large.

Before the issue of lustration was raised it was unclear how much value the electorate ascribed to Civic Movement's dissident roots and civic priorities. The latter's determination to institute liberal legal norms clearly set them at odds with the prevailing public mood<sup>13</sup>. The differences established by lustration were exploited to the full by the Civic Democratic Party, even though for Klaus the need for lustration was scarcely a deeply held belief. Indeed, his neutrality had earlier provoked consternation among the right. The issue was first pushed by the political right at a joint press conference<sup>14</sup>, in which the Christian Democratic Party's Vaclav Benda argued that they wished to change the situation whereby reform communists still controlled various bodies, not as a result of free elections but due to the undemocratic policy of the Civic Forum (*Mlada Fronta dnes* 2:19.2.1991). Klaus was thus pushed to endorse wholeheartedly the militant supporters of vettings, even if the Civic Democratic Party's sponsorship of lustration situated it plainly in Michnik's scathing category of the 'new Party of the clean and prudent'. This was a peculiarly post-communist party, made up of those prudent people who for years had worked in safety, inside the official legal structures, avoiding both Party and opposition activity, only to later express a belated, compensatory aggressiveness toward communism and toward anyone who had dirtied their hands in the fight for reform (Michnik 1993:20).

The pressure to manipulate lustration was considerable. It was only in April 1991 that the Civic Democratic Party had built a public lead over the Civic Movement in economic policy. Moreover, public allegiance seemed to be waning for both groups by the summer. By mid-1991, polls revealed that fewer than half of the Civic Forum's supporters assigned themselves to either party. Grassroots political activity was minimal, and in lustration, best of all, was an issue where the press had already done the work of the missing party infrastructure (Stein and Scarrow 1994:24). Until now Klaus had wielded the past against the Civic Movement through populist anti-

---

<sup>13</sup> It would be wrong to characterise those against the lustration law as the former dissidents *en bloc* (many of whom, notably Vaclav Benda were at the fore of the most impassioned called for legalised disqualifications of past collaborators). The important distinction was between those strict liberal dissidents that balked at the potentially abusive sweep of the law, and those, like Havel, who opted for an anti-Communist line, either out of conviction or from the perception that the government had yet to convince the public of its wholehearted rejection of past practices.

<sup>14</sup> Attended by the KAN, the Liberal Democratic party, the Civic Democratic alliance, the Club of the Democratic Right Wing, the Republic Union, and notably, the right-oriented Prague Civic Forum Council.

intellectualism, indicting the unbridled intellectual as a dangerously utopian force in politics. What he had lacked was the contemporary evidence to drive this message home. The Civic Movement's attitude to lustration was made to look like proof, not only of collaboration, but of this utopianism. In *Why I am an Optimist* (1990) Klaus had played down the role of the people at large in maintaining socialist order. Where the Civic Movement's Jan Urban talked of the compromises forced on every individual under communism, Klaus insisted of the regime that: "it was not 'we' who did this. None of 'us' would ever have had the audacity, for we do not know this type of ambition. Behind every arrogant attempt to draw up completely new social institutions, there lurks the cerebral and sometimes physical violence of a handful of self-important intellectuals... The attempt at socialism... was not some 'mob rebellion',... but rather a revolt by a group of leftist intellectuals" (Klaus in *Literarni noviny* 26.3.1990). Such asides about the problems of intellectual/bureaucratic sabotage now underpinned both a popular policy and a direct attack on the ex-1968 reformers within the Civic Movement. This, it has to be remembered, came from the man who at one time asserted that "no litmus test exists which could precisely divide good and evil between Communists and non-Communists" (*Respekt* 7,13:1990, in Stein and Scarrow 1994:25).

Lustration as a party issue badly exposed the liberal ex-dissidents. In plainly crossing the fence from the Civic Democratic Party, the Civic Movement acted anti-pragmatically, as if responsibility rested with the political parties to establish the bedrock of democratic culture, the rule of law being the rock in question. The vote-seeking right on the other hand had tapped successfully into a vein of public concern not dependent on economic performance<sup>15</sup> and the Civic Democratic Party capitalised where it could. Deputy interior minister Jan Ruml was wooed into the party in the spring of 1992 - just before the elections. During the official electoral campaign the Civic Democratic Party tethered lustration firmly to economic reform, (previously tied to the Forum-splitting issue of 'party'<sup>16</sup>). They alleged the fundamentally anti-

---

<sup>15</sup> Anxiety had been fuelled by the attempted *coup d'Etat* in the Soviet Union in August 1991 following which the CDP had advertised for the publication of lists of collaborators and as sponsor of the new lustration bill (*Mlada Fronta dnes* 22.8.1991:2).

<sup>16</sup> As early as November 1990 Klaus had argued the "forces which are against economic reform are identical with those which are against the formation of a political party" (*Lidove noviny* 2.11.1990).

democratic character of those who could both oppose the government's chosen method of screening and have reservations over reform progress. This conventional use of 'intellectual terrorism'; where an advocate/enemy of 'a' is alleged automatically to advocate/oppose also 'b', 'c', *etc.* was the Civic Democratic Party's most successful device for destroying Civic Movement who quite failed to retaliate, considering such tactics the lowest form of 'politicking'.

The lustration debate also had a national aspect, though one played out mainly against Federal Assembly chairman Alexander Dubcek. The increasingly nationalist Civic Democratic Alliance<sup>17</sup> insinuated much from the fact that the Czech right could not oust Dubcek for signing the Moscow Protocols in 1968 only because he was too popular a figure in Slovakia (*Mlada Fronta dnes* 3.5.1991:1,2). Dubcek, actually a staunch federalist, opposed the vettings procedure for human rights reasons and because these damaged the prestige of the Assembly. His popularity, it was not too subtly implied by the Civic Democratic Alliance, originated in Slovak preferences for the old regime. In July 1991, when Dubcek left the Public Against Violence objecting that it had departed the centre ground and had moved rightward, Klaus leapt the hurdle of being too apparently anti-Slovak by pointing out that the Slovak Public Against Violence now also opposed Dubcek. Klaus's implication being that 'good Slovaks' would follow such a line. Polls found that Czechs, far more than Slovaks, felt the legislation to be necessary (Stein and Scarrow 1994:26:).

The vote on lustration thus not only set the Civic Movement apart from the Civic Democratic Party but aligned it with the forces of Slovak nationalism and the left, who abstained with Civic Movement or voted against the bill. According to Vaclav Zak, the Civic Movement's opposition to the bill, particularly to the principle of collective guilt, lost it two thirds of its support (Zak 29.3.1995). Despite this most dire warning, the Civic Movement insisted on running the 1992 election campaign on a platform 'for the rule of law' - electorally falling on their own sword in a manner readily imitated by their liberal Slovak colleagues.

---

<sup>17</sup> Having made much of its membership rules excluding ex-Communists the Civic Democratic Alliance proceeded to make a few exceptions for popular ministers e.g. Vladimir Dlouhy.



### Slovak party development 1990 - 1992: liberalism versus 'the nation'

*"There is a direct conflict between the needs of the Czechoslovak economy and the national interests of most Slovaks"* (*Rude pravo* 8.12.1990). Petr Pithart (Civic Movement), Czech premier

The new Slovak ruling elite to emerge from November 1989 was in fact a combination of dissidents and 'laundered' communists, the latter split between 1968 veterans and those who resigned in the wake of the '89 revolution (Szomolanyi 1994:63). It was, moreover, evident that Slovak preoccupations (at both elite and mass level) centred on matters other than purging the past. This relative absence of retributive impulses has prompted some to suggest that Slovaks were unrealistic about democracy (Mihalikova 1994:54-55). An alternative interpretation, borne out by electoral choices, is that a more recently favourable experience under communism had aroused less resentment against its existing personnel. Czechs and Slovaks clearly held in common the impulse to defend, if not improve, the socio-economic developments achieved in the last twenty years.

To the detriment of their agenda Slovak dissidents<sup>18</sup> possessed an even greater distaste for politics than did their Czech colleagues. Led by the sociologist, Fedor Gal, the Public Against Violence (PAV) had been the first apparently non-communist movement to emerge, but its deep infiltration by 1968 reform communists and the 'Revival' group<sup>19</sup> soon became apparent. The Public Against Violence was joined by Vladimir Meciar, a lawyer who had already managed to get himself elected mayor of Bratislava, and who in January became Slovak Interior Minister on Dubcek's recommendation, an appointment which elicited warning letters to Havel suggesting that Meciar would misapply his powers (Radio Free Europe 10.4.1992). The Public Against Violence had begun to lose support as early as January 1990. The unwillingness of the dissident group to take parliamentary seats, let alone government posts, had made them seem both in power and yet antipathetic to it. Their reticence allowed for the politically less inhibited, (and to the dissidents,

---

<sup>18</sup> As discussed in Chapter 4, the repressive conditions of post-invasion 'normalisation' (1968 - 1989), particularly Communist Party purges, had been more moderate in Slovakia than in the Czech lands. Artistic and intellectual circles were less violently harrassed and consequently dissident groups were small and isolated, not only from the public but from one another, amounting only to what have been termed "islands of positive deviation" (Szomolanyi 1994:66).

<sup>19</sup> 'Revival' (Obroda in Slovak) was founded in February 1989 under the name 'O'. This political movement extolled democratic socialism and the principles of the Prague spring and was legalised in November 1989.

unknown) former communists, such as Meciar, to lead the Public Against Violence in the Slovak National Council, the significant forum of Slovak party development. With 9 per cent of public favour at the end of April 1990, Public Against Violence trailed the Green Party (SGP), the Democratic Party (DP)<sup>20</sup>, the Communist Party, but most of all the Christian Democrats, (CDM - under Jan Carnogursky)<sup>21</sup>. The Public Against Violence's desire to recover their losses consolidated the pragmatic coalition of dissidents and ex-Party members. Eventually it prompted the offer of ballot places to the one-time reform communists Marian Calfa, Alexander Dubcek and Milan Cic, respectively the first, second and third most popular Slovak politicians at the end of April 1990 (Zajac 27-28). The most popular non-communist politician ranked ninth overall in a pre-election poll<sup>22</sup> (Szomolanyi 1994:71).

Slovak party programmes for June 1990 were no less vague than the Czech - sociologist, Milan Simecka feared voters might be overwhelmed by their 'democraticity' (Simecka 1990). A majority of Slovaks divided nonetheless clearly between the Public Against Violence and Christian Democratic Movement - the Catholic Church having constituted the main opposition to Slovak communism since 1968 - results which confound Wightman's claim that Slovaks failed to reject the old regime (Wightman 1995:61). Turn-out was an impressive 95.4 per cent<sup>23</sup>. Havel persuaded Carnogursky to put the Christian

---

<sup>20</sup> The Democratic Party (DP), offspring of the Slovak Freedom Party, a former member of the 'National Front'. The DP stressed allegiance not only to democratic values but to a strong federal Czechoslovakia. It was led by Martin Kvetko, a returned exile and former leading member of the pre-Communist DP.

<sup>21</sup> At its founding convention at Nitra on 17 February 1990 the Christian Democratic Movement had formed around three theses; an 'Erhard type' social market economy; two [European Community] stars and seats [Czech and Slovak]; and thirdly, if more implicitly, that the Christian Democratic Movement would gain the support of the 70 per cent of the Slovak population considering itself Catholic. The first two clearly addressed Slovak anxieties about national and economic conditions more explicitly than did Public Against Violence, a point not lost on Vladimir Meciar. Its third thesis, linking support with attitudes to the church, proved counterproductive. Slovak society had clearly begun to differentiate church and state since 1945.

<sup>22</sup> The Communist Party meanwhile, re-launched itself under the vitalising leadership of Peter Weiss. A member of the young Communist intelligentsia which had genuinely intimidated the Party before November '89, Weiss was determined to drag the Party into line with the progressive Communist and social democratic parties of western Europe. In contrast to the Czechs, the Slovak Communists also renamed themselves after the June 1990 elections. Under their new title the Party of the Democratic Left (PDL) required re-registration of its membership in the hope that this might further alienate the die-hards of the old regime. A Slovak National Party (SNP) also emerged just before the June election and despite its occasional denials and expressions of soft versions of autonomy, was the only party to advocate Slovak independence. The nationalists were the rogue element in the election, coming third with 13.9 per cent of the vote, (22 Slovak National Council seats), despite only gleaning 3.8 per cent support in opinion polls at the end of May.

<sup>23</sup> Only the DP, and Slovak Nationalists projected unequivocal positions on preferred state-arrangements. Radio Free Europe was unusually off the mark when it claimed the issue of autonomy became an electoral rallying point (Radio Free Europe 15.6.1990:16).

Democratic Movement's 26 deputies behind the federal Public Against Violence/Civic Forum governing coalition, believing that the Christian Democrats were likely to outstrip the Public Against Violence if Slovakia reverted to its pre-communist clericalism. Carnogursky himself returned to the Slovak parliament. With only 48 seats out of the 150 in the Slovak National Council, Public Against Violence premier elect Vladimir Meciar was obliged to seek a Slovak government coalition with the Christian Democratic Movement (with 31 seats) and the Democratic Party (with 7), in order to secure a governing majority. Carnogursky became vice premier. Coalition rules were established with difficulty, though as we shall see, a majority system would have also run into trouble.

#### **Party diversification 1991 - 1992**

The Public Against Violence had responded to the break-up of the Forum by promising cooperation with all former associates. By 1991 however, the Slovak organisation was itself no longer intact. Even the anti-hierarchical Gal assumed the PAV's right to approve their premier's decisions and to hold him accountable, yet in this it was frequently frustrated by Meciar. By March, the Slovak premier had formed a faction, the 'Public Against Violence - for a Democratic Slovakia', publicly splitting the Public Against Violence in half. Fatally for the PAV the real causes of friction were unclear to the broader public until this open conflict.

Assisted by a nervous media, Meciar had in many ways appeared a diligent advocate of the Public Against Violence programme. It was obvious to the public was that, in contrast to the rest of PAV's leadership Meciar believed that of the main pillars of the PAV's agreed programme (September 1990) Slovak national issues should receive particular priority. Many in the Public Against Violence feared that since August 1990, Meciar had adopted too confrontational a style in negotiations with the Czechs, which, combined with his known reservations over economic policy would lead to an un-looked for clash. These 'pillars' were supposed to enjoy parity of esteem. Meciar, however, believed that the PAV had little choice but to respond to the rising tide of Slovak national sentiment, a tide he perceived as behind the growing popularity of the rival Christian Democratic Movement.

At the Public Against Violence's Congress on February 23rd 1991, Meciar attempted to take over the leadership only to be defeated by the incumbent, Fedor Gal. Gal not only rejected the possibility of turning the PAV into a party but pointed to the danger of populism which "misuses people's national thinking for the narrow power ambitions of individuals". Josef Kucerak likewise slated Meciar for his rosy portrayal of the Slovak economy's potential under a modified reform (*Mlada Fronta dnes* 1.3.1992). In March, 89 per cent of Slovaks nevertheless cited Meciar as their most popular politician, (*Lidove demokracie* 4.3.1991:1) and no doubt emboldened by such support he exacted political revenge, accusing the liberal economist Kucerak of state security collaboration on the one hand and Gal of censoring his television appearances on the other (*Rude pravo* 5.3.1991). When Gal sought to play down the now deep rift in the PAV, Meciar identified it as professional jealousy<sup>24</sup>.

By the end of the first week of March, Meciar and his colleagues, Rudolf Filkus and Milan Knazko, had left to form the Public Against Violence - Movement for a Democratic Slovakia (MDS). Declaring to the press that it 'starts out from the original base of the PAV movement' they co-opted the June 1990 PAV platform *Chance for Slovakia* as they departed (*Mlada Fronta dnes* 6.3.1991:1,2). Meciar suggested he might collaborate with the rump of Public Against Violence if only it could get rid of its 'undemocratic working methods'. In the same period some 10,000 demonstrated for Meciar in Bratislava and 20 PAV district councils pledged their support (*Rude pravo* 7.3.1991). Prompt Czech 'assistance' destroyed what little chance the Public Against Violence had of recovering the situation. Czech Premier Pithart quickly endorsed his Slovak liberal colleagues with the unsupported suggestion that Slovaks falling in step behind Meciar were less apprehensive of authoritarianism than Czechs, a line guaranteed to antagonise Slovaks (*Mlada Fronta dnes* 8.3.1991:4). Havel's spokesman, Michael Zantovsky, destroyed Gal's last efforts at damage limitation with the comment that a new Slovak coalition had emerged between 1968 reform communists, present communists,

---

<sup>24</sup> A ludicrous claim given Gal's keen desire to avoid power beyond the Public Against Violence. The sinister aspect of Meciar's tactic is the spite he reserved for the Jewish Gal and the effect this had on mobilising deep-rooted Slovak anti-Semitism. In January 1993, 53 per cent of a representative sample claimed there was "excessive influence of Jews on economic and social life" (Butorova (ed) 1993:9)

separatists “and people who recall the Slovak State as the golden period of the Slovak nation” (*Mlada Fronta dnes* 12.3.1991). In equating Meciar’s tactics and support with fascism Zantovsky took the shortest available route to comprehensive Slovak indignation.

The Public Against Violence accused Meciar of jeopardising reform with an unwarranted nationalist diversion, failing to realise that Meciar’s support lay precisely in his overlaying pre-existing national concerns with an economic and social platform. Meciar claimed a centrist orientation and that his goal was only to stop the deviation of the PAV to the right, a claim endorsed by Alexander Dubcek (*Mlada Fronta dnes* 12.3.1991). On March 22nd it was announced that a new caucus had formed in the Federal Assembly and of the 58 deputies elected for PAV in June, 32 had joined Meciar. An AISA poll found that 65 per cent of Slovaks replied a ‘definite yes’ to the question; “Is Meciar a guarantor of free and democratic development?” and 86 per cent said the current form of the federation suppressed the interests of Slovakia, with an unusually high 22 per cent claiming to be separatist.

Finally, if elections were to be held in March, 42 per cent said they would vote for the Movement for a Democratic Slovakia and 1 per cent for the Public Against Violence (*Pravda, Lidove noviny* 20.4.1991). At this point the PAV committed what could only be described as political suicide, and ousted Meciar as premier on April 23rd, 1991, releasing him into unfettered opposition at a time of PAV’s lowest ever political legitimacy. From here Meciar could pursue freely the politics of ‘overbidding’ (Sartori 1990:334), introducing massively inflationary demands into the policy arena - from the state arrangement to the economy, and foreclosing, in Sartori’s terms, any nascent system of fair party competition. It has been concluded that, “when [Meciar] was forced into opposition, only one path was left for him to fight successfully for a return to power, the national one” (Jicinsky 1993:75). Judging by his subsequent strategy, not of playing the independence card but of simply bundling constitutional alternatives as the public mood dictated, it is more accurate to argue that Meciar, having exited on the tide of PAV support took the nationalist card into his eclectic, populist pack.

Meciar's ouster inaugurated an unambiguously non-communist Slovak government, a coalition between the Christian Democratic Movement and the Public Against Violence rump, now under Kucerak's leadership. It has been claimed, with hindsight, that the PAV had only ever won because the names of '1968' politicians "evoked the belief of a continuity of reform socialism among the majority of those 29 per cent of voters" (Szomolanyi 1994:72). There were nevertheless, significant supplementary reasons as to why the remainder of PAV, soon to be renamed Civic Democratic Union, CDU, failed to revive. The first, following Szomolanyi, was the result of the electorate's aspirations to continuity and stability. Opinion poll data stressed repeatedly that the public's overriding concern was over declining social welfare and living standards, above all other issues (Butorova 1993:60). Having reconciled themselves to a transitional 'valley of tears' - as an article of liberal economic faith - the metropolitan liberals of the Civic Democratic Union rejected as naive any soothing adjustment of economic reform to worsening conditions. This rejection might not have been so inflammatory had it not been wedded to public knowledge that the reform's Czech authors governed over markedly different conditions. As it was, most Slovaks did not react to growing national inequality with an equally zealous faith in the free market.

The second reason concerned 'the nation'. The main question to arise spontaneously onto the political scene, Slovak political equality with the Czech lands had long been, and remained, an issue of change. Here the liberals took on the role of conservatives, again apparently more sensitive to Prague than to Bratislava. The Public Against Violence/Civic Democratic Union overshot its constituency. Goaded by Meciar's supposed 'nationalism', they insisted upon an ultra-secular, a-national image than was strictly true of its politics. As with the economy, its arguments about the state were read as a pretentious liberal monopoly on realism and rationality. By discussing the majority of its citizens as if they were Caliban at the gate, the Civic Democratic Union actually appeared to sneer at the electorate, an unconventional electoral strategy at the best of times.

### **Party formation - agenda-setting in Slovakia 1990 - 1992: The Language Law**

What then, were the issues that allowed Meciar to sustain the kind of support he clearly enjoyed after the collapse of Public Against Violence? The evidence is that whereas his

rivals sought to align or root themselves in ideologies and traditions, Meciar acted from the beginning as an ideological property developer, garnering every available coalition with little scruple for consistency. In a nascent party system such behaviour might appear as sensitive domestically as it appeared populist to the outside world.

What is striking is that Meciar was capable of acting strategically. Two alternative language bills had emerged in the Slovak National Council in Autumn 1990. One, drafted by the cultural organisation *Matica slovenska* and sponsored by Slovak Nationalists and the nationalists within the Christian Democratic Movement, stipulated the exclusive use of Slovak as the official language of the state and clearly discriminated against the sizeable Hungarian minority in Slovakia's south. Meciar defended the government version, which made no such exclusionary attempts. On October 25th the Slovak National Council approved the latter draft after a 12 hour debate during which parliamentary speeches were relayed to demonstrating crowds. Meciar had, nonetheless, opposed 'irresponsible nationalism' throughout the dispute, even if many in the Public Against Violence felt his rhetoric changed drastically according to his audience (Gal 4.4.1995). As with Klaus's pragmatic adoption of lustration, Meciar took into his armoury only those aspects of nationalism befitting his needs. At this point, in the middle of talks on Czech-Slovak power sharing, Meciar's first priority was his image as a responsible national representative. To cultivate such status he accused those provoking student unrest over the bill as irresponsible, threatened legal action against hunger strikers settled in front of the Council (*Svobodne slovo* 7.10.1990:1), and even, on television, berated *Matica slovenska's* Jozef Markus for his nationalism. Had Meciar sided with the Slovak Nationalists he would have been branded a demagogue. Instead, at the end of the month, alongside Fedor Gal, Petr Pithart, Jan Carnogursky and Vaclav Klaus, he signed an avowal that "we shall energetically withstand all attempts to violate the integrity and sovereignty of our state" (*Lidove noviny* 29.10.1990).

### **Meciar finds a platform**

If the Slovaks appeared to be the "motor of the discussions" (Havel, in Kirschbaum 1995:256) over the reorganisation of the federal state, this, again, had everything to do with the fusion of an issue of observable public concern with looming elections. The talks

between the presidia of the National Councils and the federal government were the formal locus of the constitutional debate. In party political terms the failing process of the talks allows us both to map Vladimir Meciar's switch to nationalist rhetoric, and to account further for the failing credibility of the Civic Democratic Union-Christian Democratic Movement coalition. For the sake of clarity it is enough to limit our account to the four most significant meetings on constitutional reform which took place between 1990 and the June election in 1992. The first in Trencianske Teplice in August 1990, discussed provisional power-sharing arrangements and finally concluded in December. The second took place in Lany on 10th May 1991 (after preparatory meetings with Havel in February and March). The third occurred in Budmerice on May 31st, 1991, and the last in Kromeriz on June 17th, 1991.

### **Trencianske Teplice**

The talks at Trencianske Teplice set the tone of premier Meciar's approach to his Czech federal partners. To their surprise he had preempted negotiation by arriving with a preset agenda, and though little of the talks was publicised Meciar's style made the headlines in both republics, as did his demands that a re-division of competences between the federal centre and the republican parliaments be made as quickly as possible. The Czech response was that Meciar practiced the politics of the *fait accompli*, and that such serious intervention in the state arrangement would disrupt economic reform. This seemed suspiciously evasive. The Czechs badly misjudged the depth of Slovak expectations, but also Slovak party political reality. When premier of the Public Against Violence Meciar kept the national issue away from all talk of secessionism. Having presented himself as at the head of institutional change whilst at the same time damning the impulse toward separatism, Meciar had warned, to the very echo of his Czech liberal detractors, that: "A split in the country must not occur, we see how nationalism develops in the USSR or Yugoslavia" (*Svobodne Slovo* 1,3:20.8.1990). In August 1990 he had made every show of aiming at a new, more equal relationship with the Czechs, even adopting a style that conceded the frequent Czech illusion to Slovakia as the 'younger brother'; a phrase harped on notoriously by the Czech writer, Ludvik Vaculik. "I want to emphasise" said Meciar "that nobody in Europe wants a poor relative he would have to maintain. That



would be the case of Slovakia if it broke away from the federation” (*Svobodne slovo* 7.8.1990:1,2).

By October 1990, when the detailed discussion of a new division of competences began to run aground, Meciar’s stance was backed by demonstrations of over 10,000 in Bratislava. When agreement was finally achieved the Slovak National Council unanimously approved the resulting draft constitutional amendment. To the public eye, and there were complaints at the secretiveness of the talks, the more nationalist force to emerge at the this time was the Christian Democratic Movement, whose second congress had insisted on the right of the Slovak republic to exit the federation; on its ‘full sovereignty’ and on its own system of taxes and a separate central bank (*Svobodne slovo* 5.11.1990). Jan Carnogursky’s concept of a separate Slovak ‘chair and star’ in Europe, a policy of separatism for the propitious moment, seemed bound to irritate nationalists, federalists and certainly Czechs, alike<sup>25</sup>.

Czech federal comment again only directed Meciar away from the centre. When federal minister for the Economy, Vladimir Dlouhy accused Meciar of populism for having evoked the “so-called economic dis-advantage of the Slovak people” (*Zemedelske noviny* 29.11.1990) the Public Against Violence had the political sense to back Meciar in all respects, accusing Dlouhy in turn of violating the “basic principles of coalition partnership”. The federal government, exhibiting the tone of transcendent federal authority so opposed in Slovakia assumed the moral high ground, claiming Dlouhy had not only the right but the duty to use professional but also political arguments to support his views (*Zemedelske noviny* 3.12.1990). Meciar and the PAV represented at this point, not only the Slovak government, but also, excepting the diminutive DP, the most avowedly pro-federal force existing in Slovakia. When the law on the provisional division of competences was passed finally in December, the Slovak National Party commented

---

<sup>25</sup> Though he envisaged Slovakia entering the European Union in the year 2000 as an independent state, Carnogursky evidently feared damaging fragile rapprochement with the west by a fractious separation. Carnogursky’s vagueness over exact constitutional conditions (despite being a lawyer) often elicited bewilderment from those involved in negotiations. Dagmar Buresova, chair of the Czech National Council called the state treaty ‘absurd’ since it presumed the sovereign status of the signatories (*Hospodarske noviny* 7.3.1991). Carnogursky was in fact constrained by two Christian Democratic Movement factions, which threatened to come apart over economic policy and the national issue.

scathingly that: “Slovakia clings by such laws to non-democratic Prague centralism which seriously damages Slovak interests” (*Lidove noviny* 13.12.1990).

As news of disagreements between Meciar and the Public Against Violence filtered into the press, it seemed clear whose faction could manoeuvre with public support (IVVM poll in *Mlada Fronta dnes* 25.1.1991:2). At the end of February, Carnogursky had made clear to Havel that the two republics should draft their constitutions first and then conclude a state treaty. Thus in terms of Czech Slovak relations it was again the Christian Democratic Movement which proved the divisive force at the second ‘Vikarka’ dinner, where the Public Against Violence and Civic Forum positions were close, the dispute within the Public Against Violence notwithstanding<sup>26</sup> (*Mlada Fronta dnes* 8.2.1991:1,2). Again, Jicinsky’s claim that Meciar could only opt to take the nationalist path implies the PAV split either cut loose a ‘really’ nationalist Meciar, or steered him irrevocably toward nationalism. I would argue more simply that Meciar had only to retain his credibility on the national issue already won within PAV.

From his ouster in April 1991 onwards, Meciar positioned himself to win on the national and economic front by default. Default in the constitutional arena meant avoiding identification with the increasingly unpopular new Christian Democratic Movement / Public Against Violence governing coalition and distinguishing himself from the already established separatism of the Slovak National Party. Meciar immediately embarked on the latter by reassuring Havel of his pro-federalism, stating to the Czech Press Agency that those in Slovakia against the federation “are no greater than a year ago... a small minority” (*Zemedelske noviny* 11.3.1991:1,2). To position himself in the long term, his new Movement for a Democratic Slovakia adopted “appealing emancipation rhetorics which aptly blurred the constitutional issue” (Butorova 1993:66). Constitutional talks were now entering their most tortuous phase. By the spring of 1991 they were stalemated on the issue of whether a state treaty could be a legal document and not just a political declaration. Both Czech and Slovak governments had managed to regress the talks to impasse over the very same issues to have emerged already in August 1990.

---

<sup>26</sup> This impression was reinforced when the Slovak National Party took up Carnogursky’s proposal suggesting the new constitution be seen as preparatory to the constitution of a sovereign state, able, of its own will, to link up with other states.

'Emancipation rhetorics' it is important to note, could not be dismissed as less clear than the statements of the Slovak government, attempting to explain the repeated deadlock in negotiation.

### **Lany**

Before the Lany talks in May 1991, Carnogursky had reiterated that while separatism was quite unacceptable he would insist on the state treaty (*Prace* 8.5.1991:2). At Lany it was agreed that an accord on the principles of the new constitutional arrangement would be signed by the National Councils - the treaty would be inner-state but with state law characteristics. Unfortunately, at Budmerice, cross-party representatives fully rejected the results. The continuing ambiguity of constitutional arrangements positively invited the opposition Movement for a Democratic Slovakia into the fray to suggest that Slovakia be a subject of international law and that the state treaty should be concluded on an international state level. This appeal was typical of several installments of the policy overbidding to come.

The Movement for a Democratic Slovakia next 'intended' that the delegation of competences to a higher centre should be such as in negotiations over a confederal Europe (*Prace* 13.6.1991:3) - thus pushing the state treaty idea yet further beyond the pale for the Czechs. Within a few days of the Movement for a Democratic Slovakia having raised the state treaty stakes Klaus accused Carnogursky's position of being 'hysterical', even populist (*Mlada Fronta dnes* 15.6.1991). That Meciar could so easily drag Carnogursky down with this sniping from the sidelines is testimony, Klaus's tactics apart, to the willingness of Czechs in general to believe that all Slovak politicians essentially shared a vision of independence. Klaus had managed to cloak Carnogursky in Meciar's colours. This tendency, certainly exhibited by the Czech press, led one Slovak commentator in *Slovensky narod* to object that: "When a Czech identifies with his nation, he is considered to be a great patriot - But if a Slovak so much as identifies himself in a national way, the Czech political machinery labels him a nationalist, chauvinist, clerico-fascist and destroyer of the state" (M. Bohus 14.8.1991 quoted in Kirschbaum 1995:260).

### **Kromeriz**

In Kromeriz it was of course finally agreed that a federal commission would draft a legal treaty between the two republics which could then be passed to the federal parliament for approval (*Mlada Fronta dnes* 18.6.1991), only for the whole package to fail in the Slovak National Council, where Carnogursky could no longer manage his own party's vote. Talks through that summer and autumn had considered the division of competences, had run aground first on the division of economic competences and then again on the state arrangement<sup>27</sup>. The idea of the state treaty had provoked insurmountable opposition among the Czech right wing, particularly the Civic Democratic Alliance. By the beginning of 1992 both the talks on the constitutions and the treaty arrangement were stalemated, the one waiting resolution of the other in the face of the rapidly approaching election. By February 1992, it was again the nationalist faction of the Christian Democratic Movement which helped vote down the final text produced by treaty talks at Milovy. The governing coalition under Jan Carnogursky had been beset by disagreement over both the values and interests to characterise the Slovak transition. It has been remarked since that this coalition "consisted of politicians who looked as if they had come from different historical periods and had spoken political languages of different worlds" (Szomolanyi 1994:74). Given the increasing hardships of economic reform in Slovakia the Civic Democratic Union - Christian Democratic Movement coalition, profoundly split on the issue of nation, was extraordinarily badly placed to take a pro-federal package to the electorate by 1992.

### **A schism in the Christian Democratic Movement**

The issue of statehood had been most dramatically played out in the Slovak National Council and its presidium. Sovereignty, proposed on three occasions by the nationalist faction of the Christian Democratic Movement, was voted down four times between 1990 and 1992. Szomolanyi has argued that Carnogursky "unleashed nationalist forces assuming that it was possible to keep them under his control (1994:75)" and certainly he primed the issue which Meciar deployed more skillfully through the 1992 election and

---

<sup>27</sup> Carnogursky had outraged Czech opinion in September by asking Foreign Minister Dienstbier to change the preamble to the imminent Czechoslovak-German treaty to include the legal continuity of the Czechoslovak state from 1918. While he deplored the politics of the clerico-fascist Slovak state, Carnogursky proposed its existence be acknowledged in deference to the nationals oppressed under communism (*Pravda* 17.9.1991:1,2). This appeal condemned Christian Democratic Movement in the eyes of a Slovak electorate frustrated by the poor progress of talks and now widely suspicious of the Christian Democratic Movement's potential, as the party of the clerical right-wing, to re-introduce black totalitarianism (Butorova 1993:68).

beyond<sup>28</sup>. At the beginning of March 1992 the two factions of the Christian Democratic Movement finally came apart, with the nationalist wing led by Jan Klepac, deputy chairman of the Slovak National Council, splitting off to form the Slovak Christian Democratic Movement<sup>29</sup>. The Christian Democratic Movement welcomed the split, arguing that it freed the party to present itself as a true right-of-centre Christian Democratic party. Unfortunately, by this stage Carnogursky's claims to want to stand once again behind a negotiated settlement, including a referendum on the state's future, had few partners in the Czech republic.

A week after the separation of the Christian Democratic Movement, Alexander Dubcek, whose popularity rating according to an IVVM survey stood at 75 per cent approval, compared to 73 per cent for Meciar, turned his allegiance to the Slovak Social Democrats<sup>30</sup>. His move confirmed his pro-federal position, and this, because of the national esteem in which he was held, seemed to represent a blow to the Movement for a Democratic Slovakia. As a condition of his entry, however, Dubcek had secured a Social Democrat promise not to enter into pre-election coalition with the Party of the Democratic Left - thus splitting the only realistic opposition to the Movement for a Democratic Slovakia (Jan Obrman: Dubcek Joins the Social Democrats in Slovakia Radio Free Europe 3.4.1992).

### **Sovereignty - the issue too far for Meciar**

---

<sup>28</sup> Carnogursky's was an Catholicised, holy nation belief in the Slovak nation as repository of slavie purity, a potential core for a new Christian Europe. In a spirit akin to that of the 19th century pan-slavists he rightly admitted; "I shall give an argument which might not be well received in the Prague intellectual milieu: The Apocalypse of St. John says that on the day of judgement nations will be admitted to heaven. Not therefore citizens, the Czech and Slovak Federal Republic, the European Community, or other man-made units" (*Lidove noviny* 3.6.1991:16). Petr Pithart estimated correctly that Carnogursky wanted to save his nation from the marasmus of consumerist, godless Western European teaching; "the marasmus of the secularised modern society that Czechs appear to wish to be" (in *Zemedelske noviny* 14.8.1991).

<sup>29</sup> Though the two sides essentially acted *en bloc* through the autumn it was increasingly obvious that Carnogursky was managing only through an unsustainable level of concession-giving. After Klepac's supporters voted against the draft constitutional agreement in the Slovak National Council vote of the 13 February 1992 Carnogursky presented them with an ultimatum; conform or leave. Thus on the 7 March the two factions announced their separate candidacies for June 1992. Eleven of the Christian Democratic Movement's thirty one deputies in the Slovak National Council defected to the Slovak Christian Democratic Movement, five from the twenty five federal deputies.

<sup>30</sup> An independent since resigning from the Public Against Violence in July 1991, many had expected him to follow his frequent and controversial endorsement of Meciar into the ranks of the Movement for a Democratic Slovakia. Had he joined the MDS Dubcek would have been used as a figurehead. Moreover, he opposed Meciar manipulation of the national question. After lustration it was clear that no Czech party of the centre/right would nominate him, thus ruling him out of a federal position.

Meciar's manipulation of the sovereignty question represented a simple exploitation of the confusion surrounding the issue. Though Meciar claimed that the Movement for a Democratic Slovakia sought all possible forms of 'sovereign Slovak statehood', with special emphasis on those forms ensuring international legal subjectivity, Meciar consistently opposed attempts to declare sovereignty in the Slovak National Council and consistently fought shy of the term 'independence'. His strategy was to leave his options open for the post-election negotiations where he believed, erroneously it turned out, that the Czechs might ultimately be persuaded into some form of confederation.

Demonstrations for sovereignty and the frequent endorsements from the Slovak National Party, *Matica slovenska* and the nationalist wing of the Christian Democratic Movement had kept the issue as a background pressure throughout constitutional talks, but also as fuel for the Czech press. In April 1990, 20,000 had demonstrated for an independent Slovakia and 20,000 again on 11th March 1991 and September 19th, always under the auspices of *Matica slovenska*. Czechs took these manifestations with the utmost seriousness. Sovereignty, as we have already seen, was one of the most profound barriers to negotiation, with the Slovak desire to possess at some point a moment of entire legal sovereignty - which it would then delegate to a new federation - taken by all Czech negotiating parties as either a devious separatist tactic, or as legally nonsensical. To complicate matters further, sovereignty as a term in Slovakia was frequently used synonymously with autonomy and was increasingly discussed as if various grades of sovereignty were obtainable<sup>31</sup>. With such elisions in the terminology it was possible for Meciar to take sovereignty into his agenda, but in such a way as left Slovakia's potential legal status completely ambiguous. The document with which Meciar stole the whole limelight came with the Movement for a Democratic Slovakia's *Initiative for a Sovereign Slovakia* launched on 13th September 1991. This promised the achievement of Slovak sovereignty and the adoption of a full Slovak constitution by constitutional and democratic means (*Lidove noviny* 14.9.1991) - 30,000 demonstrated in its favour (*Rude pravo* 25.9.1991). By February Meciar declared that the two republics would declare

---

<sup>31</sup> This may have originated from the semantic difficulties arising from the existence of two Slovak words for sovereignty: *zvrchovanost* and *suverenita*, which have the same meaning in a dictionary. Their meanings diverged during the constitutional debate, with the first referring to the sovereignty of the nation in metaphysical terms. The second meaning is sovereignty as understood in international legal terms (Kirschbaum 1995:263).

sovereignty, and then decide through a referendum on alternative state arrangements, but above all Czechs should regard Slovakia as a 'sovereign' subject (*Zemedske noviny* 6.2.1992).

### **The last liberal mistake**

On 23rd March 1992 the Defense and Security Committee of the Slovak National Council released the second part of a report on the activities of the Slovak Interior Ministry. It revealed solid evidence of Meciar's collaboration with state security and strong pointers to the abuse of his powers as the former Interior Minister. The report, timed just as the election loomed, stormed into the Czech and Slovak media. The most damaging allegations were that security files, kept in State Security safe houses in Bratislava and Meciar's home town of Trencin, had disappeared. Several pages of registration documents concerning Meciar and his appointees had also vanished. The report concluded that Meciar had gathered documents on government members, the Catholic Church as well as influential journalists in order to harass them. His successor, the Christian Democratic Movement's Anton Andras, had apparently made the mistake of trying to dismiss some of Meciar's recruits and had suffered accordingly (Jan Obrman, Radio Free Europe 10.4.1992).

Meciar dismissed the report as a smear campaign orchestrated from Prague and the Federal Interior Ministry. A few days later Meciar alleged the Ministry had a master plan not only to discredit him, but also, if necessary "to liquidate him physically" (*Narodna obroda* 1.4.1992). Both the Slovak National Party and Party of the Democratic Left supported Meciar while Dubcek remained silent. The federal and Czech parliaments, wisely, kept a low profile. Unless stripped of his parliamentary immunity, requiring a simple majority in the House of the Nations, Meciar could not be prosecuted and even had this been secured, the trial would not have taken place before the election (*ibid.*). The chosen timing of the accusation could not have been worse; it came too late to dissuade those already persuaded by Meciar's national and economic promises, and, however unfairly, it destroyed the civic credibility of the PAV/Civic Democratic Union as a party above the manipulation of information deemed too characteristic of political life. Meciar brushed off the affair as being only the first in a series of pre-election slanders (*Lidove*

*noviny* 31.3.1992), portraying a swaggering indifference to the inevitable Czech censure that contrasted sharply with the historical self-image of the Slovak and immediately with the ultra-Czechophile stance of the PAV/Civic Democratic Union.

The failure of these revelations to dislodge Meciar led the Civic Democratic Union to take a step that condemned their election chances. The last remaining strategy for ‘decapitating’ the Movement for a Democratic Slovakia remained lustration. Believing that a strict implementation of the law sometime in the near future might finally purge Slovakia of the demagoguery the Civic Democratic Union so feared, it opted for a coalition with the Czech party felt to be both intellectually sympathetic and which most supported this aspiration, the Civic Democratic Alliance. Having selected as their electoral partner the one mainstream voice of Czech nationalism, the Civic Democratic Union sealed their electoral fate before the official campaign had even begun<sup>32</sup>.

## Conclusion

The June 1992 election<sup>33</sup> erected an insurmountable barrier against retaining a common state. Its outcome meant that both election victors appeared to possess greater short term incentives to separate the state than to seek state-maintaining compromise. Consequently, since public opinion had consistently rejected dissolution a referendum was not in the interests of either would-be secessionist, making it impossible to formulate in the Federal Assembly. Even if by some miracle referenda had been secured their likely outcome would have been a demand that the Civic Democratic Party and Movement for a Democratic Slovakia form a federal coalition to secure a common state - an apparently unhelpful result. In the Czech Republic the status of the Civic Democratic Party had depended substantially on its reputation for competence and the continuing success of rapid economic reform - a reform threatened in several

---

<sup>32</sup> In a later interview with *Mlada Fronta dnes* Klaus cited three major steps toward the separation: The meetings of Lnare in April 1990, when the Czech and Slovak Governments began to discuss future relations, fatally bypassing the federal authorities. Secondly, the Trencianske Talks in August 1990, when an overpressured Federal Government carrying “all the burdens of social and economic transformation” again lost the initiative. The third moment, Klaus argued, was in the “failure of the PAV”. “Public Against Violence and later the Civic Democratic Union did not manage to produce personalities capable of addressing Slovak citizens, to move the Slovak scene in a certain direction. Thus PAV vacated a space for something quite different...”. He made no judgement about the causes of PAV’s subsequent electoral failure. (*Mlada Fronta Dnes* 7: 3.7.1992).

<sup>33</sup> See Chapter 4



ways by the election of a 'gradualist' reform government in Slovakia. In Slovakia, on the contrary, Meciar's power base had grown essentially from his appeal to those fearful of too harsh a transition. Given, in addition, the negative attitudes of CDP supporters toward the MDS and *vice versa*, the damage to the popularity of either compromising party would have been considerable, possibly fatal to the party leaders. For Klaus, in particular, it was both politically and ideologically imperative that the Civic Democratic Party entered new talks with the ultimatum 'federation or bust' - to which it stuck.

Meciar had raised the political stakes enormously high for the purposes of victory, however, the paradoxical nature of his visions for the future Slovakia strongly suggests his nationalism was secondary, insofar as it was functional, to the aim of achieving enlarged, rather than total state powers. His position remained ambiguous and opportunistic through to the beginning of negotiations (see Chapter 2) until he was confronted by Klaus's ultimatum. If, as Klaus made it clear, he could win *no* confederal privileges for Slovakia, particularly greater economic powers, Meciar could deliver neither on any of his election promises nor his own ambitions. Despite Klaus's professed willingness to enter negotiations, he had entirely cornered Meciar. The threat of imminent political suicide, not surprisingly, overrode Meciar's evaluations as to the good of the common state *per se*. In terms of his own political career, independence was the next most fruitful option, even if it required the high risk reorganisation of his own party and the subsequent creation of a *post-hoc* legitimating myth, the dire losses of federal income being made up in the short term by the released powers of patronage and coercion in an independent Slovakia.

The apparent duality arising from Meciar's pure populism - his championing of Slovak equality combined with his apparent rejection of all-out independence rhetoric is vital when assessing his popularity. The explicitly nationalist and separatist vote was a small minority - the Slovak National Party secured a mere 9 per cent in June 1992. Many of Meciar's Slovak supporters could vote for him believing themselves to have protested against 'Pragocentrism' whilst at the same time expressing their desire to maintain a common state (Vodicka 1993:92). According to one account, only 19 per cent of

would-be voters for the Movement for a Democratic Slovakia were adherents of an independent Slovakia (April 1992, the Bratislava Centre for Social Analysis, in Vodicka 1993:99). Some 50 per cent of MDS supporters had apparently voted for the Public Against Violence in the previous election in June 1990 - a clearly pro-federal group (Jungmann 1993:69). If this suggests a gulf in information available to Slovaks as to the real opinions of Vaclav Klaus and the CDP, opinion poll data rather attests to the electorate's perspicacity on this point. Feelings behind both Czech and Slovak voting patterns were marked by frustration. By May 1992, 73 per cent of Czech respondents and 86 per cent of Slovaks were either rather or very dissatisfied with the overall political situation (from 1320 surveyed by IVVM, Prague 2-9.1.1992 in Wolchik 1994:171). The election had clearly revealed an elite-level competition hopelessly divorced from the public's aspirations.

Contrary to the subsequent claims of the Civic Democratic Party the 1992 election could not, by any stretch of the imagination, be taken as a fair referendum on the future of the state. The electorate was offered no clear range of alternative state arrangements and the question as a whole was bound up hopelessly with apparently dichotomous choices concerning the political economy of each republic. As if this were not manipulation enough, the Civic Democratic Party and the Movement for a Democratic Slovakia had both always proclaimed themselves 'in spirit' for a common state. The point at which the spirit would be overcome by circumstances was ultimately something the electorate could only guess at since, for each republican electorate, 'circumstances' would be dictated by the votes of the other republic, without subsequent redress.

Those Czechs who valued current economic reforms had little choice but to vote for a party which held only pragmatic respect for the common state, and even less for the principles of self-determination - as expressed through the ambition of the majority. Those Slovaks who had taken the step of voting for Meciar, a vote possible under a wide spectrum of motives, were interpreted by the CDP *a priori*, and by the majority of its supporters, as having voted for the destruction of the state. This interpretation freed Klaus's hand to dissolve the state at his own speed, absolved from blame as the CDP would now claim to be. With only 16 per cent of the population supporting

separation as the best solution in the first week of July 1992 (IVVM poll in *Lidove noviny* 29.7.1992:3), the legitimacy of the separation was nevertheless unresolved beyond the borders of the Civic Democratic Party.

The limited time available for the development of a competitive party system emerges at the root of many of the problems contributing to the division of the state. At the simplest level, the two victorious parties out-stripped all others in political entrepreneurship to an extent highly unusual in a developed democratic setting. The party system was evidently both unstable and ill-formed. The two victorious parties of June 1992 were scarcely 'solid' and certainly not more 'real' than the personalities at their head, Sartori's definition of a structured party system (in Mair 1990:77). Again of comparative interest, the intensely abstracted ideological nature of party rivalry up until the very end of the state precluded the expressive function normally attributed to parties in a democratic system, whilst accentuating the power of political parties to manipulate electoral preferences. Thus, party rhetoric bore little resemblance to a "translation of contrasts in the social and cultural structure into demands and pressures for action and inaction" (Lipset and Rokkan, in Mair 1990:93). Evidence of the underdeveloped state of the political scene in both republics can be further seen in the fact that the centre/right parties the Civic Movement, the Civic Democratic Alliance, and Civic Democratic Party in the Czech republic, and the Democratic Party and Civic Democratic Union in Slovakia competed over more or less identical ideological space. All (excepting the victorious CDP), with some predictability, failed to even enter the Federal Assembly.

In both republics, programmes originated from the 'top down', bypassing the majority preference for a common state altogether, complex as these latter preferences were. With little incentive to change the system in which they operated, the Civic Democratic Party and the Movement for a Democratic Slovakia acted appropriately. As fledgling catch-all populist parties<sup>34</sup> both built on conditional support rather than on a sense of identification; they sought the endorsement of voters rather than their encapsulation (Mair 1990:6). It

---

<sup>34</sup> Kirchheimer's thoughts on the development of catch-all parties are oddly resonant of the strategies adopted by the post-communist successors: "the mass integration party... Is transforming itself into a catch-all people's party. Abandoning attempts at the intellectual and moral encadrement of the masses, it is turning more fully to the electoral scene, trying to exchange effectiveness in depth for a wider audience and more immediate electoral success" (Kirchheimer, in Mair 1990:52)

was, as a consequence, possible in the Czech case to offer the electorate the extraordinary and only implicit Hobson's choice of most favoured economic/transition path as potentially mutually exclusive of the preferred state arrangement - some form of common state. In both republics (and not simply in Slovakia) the electorate was entirely misled, and most certainly misrepresented, as to the feasibility of the various constitutional choices on offer.

The national dispute impacted on republic-level developments but without evoking any parallel mechanisms for its mediation. In Slovakia, the dominance of the national issue and the existence of the Czech/Slovak relationship as potential scapegoat for many ills inhibited the development of a realistic party political discourse on internal developments, leaving many issues untreated until the country awoke to find itself independent on January 1st 1993. In the Czech lands the stereotype-ridden images of Slovakia as wishing to pursue a gradualist path, unfazed by the prospect of authoritarianism, and simply as a backward place, cross referenced into many domestic policy debates. Those Czech politicians - primarily those of the Civic Movement - seeking a more graduated and grass-roots reform, who opposed the draconian lustration law, and who opposed centralised and strong executive power in principle, found themselves viewed as recidivist; as having entered, in effect, the Slovak orbit.

The party environment seemed slow to develop systemic features precisely because it lacked the conditions for party competition. Such conditions were undoubtedly forestalled by the electoral strategies of both the Civic Democratic Party and Movement for a Democratic Slovakia. The Civic Democratic Party's demolition of the dissident competition and subsequent reenactment of the 1990 election in June 1992, this time as the uncontested 'democratic' party, together with Meciar's well-directed over-promising from the safety of opposition, succeeded in provoking defensive reactions and blocking debate. By June 1992 the two parties seemed elevated beyond reach, a remarkable similarity between them being their adoption of optimistic rhetoric and their avoidance of over-identification with specific historic political identities and constituencies. The CDP's rhetoric was not only free market but essentially about the transition - the market as both 'natural' means and end, all other paths being the 'constructs of ideologists'. Implicitly,

the process of liberalizing was not only democratic in itself but democratising. The CDP's competitors in the meantime spoke (realistically) of laying foundations and necessary conditions and so, gratingly, echoed the unfulfilled promises of the old regime. Meciar used a similar technique, only employing the release of Slovak national potential as the long-suppressed natural transition path, most recently suppressed, he argued, by the policies of the Czech right.

Finally, if one compares the positive rhetoric of the election victors with that of the dissident liberals who faced political extinction after June 1992, a last, crude explanation for the choice of the electorate immediately presents itself. The Slovak liberal elite in particular came too close, too often, to insulting its electorate. One choice phrase amongst Slovak dissidents accounting for the public aversion to reform was 'post-communist panic'. The 5 per cent threshold had the effect of eliminating both Czech and Slovak liberals - the moderate centre parties in both republics - thus removing many of the post-November leaders, the core of the pro-federal elite, from both the Federal Assembly and the National Councils (Olson 1994:112). Their brief and economically painful experience of liberalism, nonetheless, was not one to encourage the Slovak electorate to change its choices.

## **Chapter 6**

### **The Legal Deadlock**

*“Forms are likely to be accorded special normative (legalistic) status if a society has experienced a deep break-down in conventional order... That is, forms matter to the extent that they are needed as surrogates for norms in the conduct of social life”.*

(Eckstein 1979:14-15)

#### **Introduction**

The post-revolution decision to create new constitutions for both the Czechoslovak federation and each of the constituent republics inaugurated a series of inter-governmental and cross-party talks and even legislative proposals which failed, creating an impasse in Czech Slovak relations broken only through the general elections of June 1992. This chapter investigates the character of the constitutional deadlock. Section one provides a detailed account of the major constitution-related events following the November revolution. The second considers the institutional and legal obstacles inherited from the *Ancien Regime*, and distinguishes these from more overtly political barriers to agreement. The conclusion considers the extent to which the pressures of democratic stabilisation established a hard choice in the already complex constitutional debate, one in which economic reform and authentically federalising constitutional reform were conceptualised as two mutually exclusive possibilities.

Between immediate political needs and the normative goals of democratisation resided some of the trickiest dilemmas facing post-communist states generally. They faced a double-bind. On the one hand they wanted to avoid a legal ‘state of nature’, (Arato 1994:159) a legal vacuum wherein all inherited laws were invalidated as contaminated by communism. On the other they faced the difficulty of employing the morally bankrupted constitutional rules of the past to produce legitimate constitutions for the future<sup>1</sup>. More problematic still, the competing demands to establish legitimate and stable political institutions and an entirely new economic order concurrently encouraged

---

<sup>1</sup> As Arato, following Elster, observes, post-communist states had little alternative but to repeat Munchhausen’s feat of pulling himself out of a swamp by his own hair” (Arato 1994:161).

political polarisation on the form of these public goods. It was possible in post-communist circumstances to argue that market reforms required 'energetic' and autonomous state-forms<sup>2</sup> (see Maravall 1994).

A further difficulty, and one that remained unresolved beyond the collapse of the Czechoslovak federation, was the elusive nature of *constitutionalism*. It has been argued that "a constitution will be coupled with constitutionalism only if mechanisms are provided ensuring the compliance of the branches of power with fundamental law" (Arato 1994:155), the public expectation of the rule of law being among the most important of these mechanisms. Forty years of one-party rule had had nevertheless a readily exploitable effect on people's conception of legitimate government. In an April 1992 poll for example, 69 per cent of Slovak respondents demanded the accountability of members of the government directly to the people and not to parliament. At the same date moreover, 66 per cent of Czech and 64 per cent of Slovak respondents considered that "there is too much democracy" in the federation: "the government and parliament should restore law and order". The paper presenting these opinions argued that neither republic possessed the consensual preconditions of constitutionalism before 1992 (Butora 1994:324-8) - a situation highly conducive not just to the continuation of strong executive power.

That this was the case was self-evident to the former dissidents within the Civic Forum (CF) and the Slovak Public Against Violence (PAV/CDU), who dominated the federal and republican governments until ousted in June 1992 (see Chapter 5). The dissidents' abiding concern had been that executive actions should at least encourage and exemplify the principles of legitimacy and the rule of law. As the monolith civic movements fractured and the party system developed more fully such principles proved extremely difficult to sustain, most particularly as the agenda of the Czech right began to emerge. As Butora concluded of the dissidents: "[i]t was not only they and their parties who lost [in June 1992]: a certain political style was also defeated" (1994:327).

### **An early controversy: the naming of parts...**

---

<sup>2</sup> "Federalism, it has been noted "is concerned simultaneously with the diffusion of political power in the name of liberty and its concentration on behalf of unity or energetic government" (Elazar 1987:33).

Political rhetoric in the aftermath of the revolution was dominated by the imagery of 'new beginnings', in the economy, civil society, and in Czech Slovak relations. New constitutions were needed to create a legitimate state. Slovakia, stressed Bratislava, had to be made more 'visible' in international relations, not only because of its past humiliations, but because of the competition for foreign economic assistance and investment on which the two republics were now embarked. Visiting the already revitalised Slovak National Council in January 1990, President Havel acknowledged the inadequacy of the communist federal arrangement and anticipated that major constitutional revisions would follow the first elections in June. These he warned; "must not petrify some outworn structures which exist as the result of an administrative conception of federation. The federation was not understood as a friendly cohabitation of two integral nations in one state but as one of the forms of totalitarian government" (*Lidova demokracie* 13.1.1990:1,3). Thus far, federalist constitutional redress seemed prudently high on the political agenda: the transparent equality of the Czech and Slovak nations was prominent in Havel's new year's wish list (New Year's Speech *Rude pravo* 2.1.1990:1,3).

The event which signalled conflicting expectations occurred only weeks later. On January 23rd 1990, President Havel availed himself of his right to propose new legislation and suggested deleting the term 'Socialist' from the state name - the Czechoslovak Socialist Republic<sup>3</sup>. To the incredulity of domestic and outside observers alike, the ensuing disagreement lasted almost four months. The discussion had soon engaged with two alternatives: the original name, 'Czechoslovakia', or a hyphenated version of the same, 'Czecho-Slovakia', which according to the Slovak National Council implied greater parity. Havel's proposed 'Czechoslovak Republic' prompted protests in Bratislava and the objection that it returned the state to the assumptions of the First Republic. The Slovak National Council's approval of 'Czecho-Slovakia' on the other hand dismayed Czechs who recollected the miserable connection of the same name between post-Munich (1938) Czech territory and collaborationist Slovakia. The rejection of the Slovak proposal and continuing support for Havel's 'Czechoslovak

---

<sup>3</sup> Havel was dismayed at the Assembly's rejection of his proposal and he attacked the Assembly publicly on February 25th (*Zak* 1995:251). This continuation of his tribune-like authority soured the relations between Havel and many parliamentary deputies.



Republic' by Czech deputies prompted a demonstration of an estimated 20,000 in Bratislava, where a petition was handed to the Council chairman demanding talks on the full recognition of Slovak sovereignty and independence<sup>4</sup> (*Svobodne slovo* 31.3.1990:1,3). The unhappy solution was a compromise in which Slovakia could use the hyphen internally, while Czech and federal authorities would adopt the unhyphenated spelling (Kirschbaum 1995:255).

Negotiations between the republic-level governments at Lnare on April 11th<sup>5</sup> eventually produced lasting agreement on the name 'Czech and Slovak Federative Republic' (CSFR). Reviewing the meeting, Slovak premier Milan Cic called for an end to the ambiguity surrounding Slovakia's constitutional status and insisted that the decision represented "a fundamental starting point; we want the federation to be understood as a union of two nations on the principle of their independence and original sovereignty" (*Rude pravo* 12.4.1990). For Slovakia, evidently, the hyphen-war represented the moment wherein the rules of the future constitutional game would be set - an attitude reflecting at least a surviving expectation that the constitution should act as the ultimate arbiter of state rights. In the Czech republic, however, the broader implications of the debate were clearly unrecognised. The lengthy quarrel had struck Czech press opinion as signifying that Slovak deputies in particular were willing to waste parliamentary time on purely symbolic wars - 'sterile linguistic disputes' according to *Lidove noviny*, whose editor insisted he would use the term Czechoslovak Republic notwithstanding (*Lidove noviny* 12.4.1990).

### June-December 1990: Power-sharing talks

---

<sup>4</sup> The Slovak National Council's decision to ban broadcast coverage of the demonstration invited accusations of censorship, particularly damaging before the election (3.4.1990). The following day the Czech and Slovak premiers broadcast strikingly contradictory statements: Czech premier Pithart noted that "if the arguments and will of the Slovak nation are diverging from the joint road... we have no other option than to accept that will calmly". Slovak premier Milan Cic meanwhile reassured that "the Slovak National Council, Slovak government, Public Against Violence and the absolute majority of political parties and movements and citizens are unequivocally supportive of the principle of co-existence... in the common federation", rejecting the recent upheaval as rooted in "outworn Czechoslovakism and, on the other side, in separatist extremes" (*Svobodne slovo* 4.4.1990:1,3).

<sup>5</sup> Where it was also agreed that much of the 'national' disputes had their roots in the bureaucratic command system of the past. The republican governments agreed confidently between themselves that the new federal constitution should "emerge" from the Czech and Slovak constitutions.

The task of constitutional re-negotiation began in earnest after the June 1990 elections<sup>6</sup> when the new federal government, comprised of the Slovak Public Against Violence, the Czech Civic Forum and the Slovak Christian Democratic Movement, announced that new constitutions would be drafted for both republics and the federation before the next election - within two years. The simple mechanics of constitutional design looked problematic however. Each of the three governments was to undertake drafting and ratification with no independent arbitrating force between them, and the two year deadline exerted a further polarising pressure upon debate. To make matters worse, in these early days in particular, both National Councils, Czech and Slovak alike, sought an ostentatious decentralisation from federal authority, which was identified with the previous powers of the Communist Party. The post-election programme of the Czech National Council was typical in its impulse to redraw the federal contract with free and 'clean' hands: it declared boldly that "the federation will have such authority as granted to it by the republics... after mutual agreement" (Council report, July 2-3 1990 p.36 in Zak 1995:252). It may be noted that in the Czech press, similar calls from the Slovak Council were labelled secessionist. In 1990 the only remotely mediating mechanism available to the process was the office of the federal presidency: Havel, and his advisors. Not until February 1991 was a constitutional court established and this avoided political entanglement altogether before being bogged down by its own jurisdictional controversies. The passivity of the constitutional court would prove damaging in two respects: not only did it ultimately fail to insist upon the constitutionally required staging of a referendum to ratify the dissolution of the state, but more pertinently to this discussion, it failed to intervene with clear definitional rulings when the negotiating parties, virtually from day one, became bogged down in terminological disputes.

The first talks were held at a two day meeting at Trencianske Teplice beginning August 8th, 1990. Here Slovak premier Vladimir Meciar presented to "astonished federal government representatives" a plan for the extensive transfer of power from the

---

<sup>6</sup> Few significant changes were made before June 1990 following the removal of Party rule clauses (November 1989). Powers over agriculture, metallurgy and local government were formally devolved to the National Councils in July and, on the insistence of Slovak deputies it was agreed to establish commissions with a view to further transfers by January 1991.

federation to the republics (Zak 1995:255)<sup>7</sup>. According to Zak, Meciar proposed “a really fundamental change to the country’s constitution!”, one derived from the so-called ‘dual model’ set down in the Public Against Violence election manifesto, *Chance for Slovakia*. In this model the integration of two national states represented the basic idea of the federation; federal powers were to be understood as delegated from essentially sovereign republican powers (Zak 1995:247-256). In reality, however, Meciar’s agenda only reiterated the essentially confederalist principles set down in the ill-fated ‘Prague Spring’ constitutional amendment 143/1968, swept aside by the Soviet-imposed amendment of 1970. This had stated that the relationship between federation and republics was based on cooperation rather than subordination and had based this equality on the recognition of the essential sovereignty of the two republics. The Slovak proposals in August 1990, that the federation keep defence, currency, foreign policy, the legislative framework and overall economic decision-making power (basic taxation), and that the republics obtain greater visibility in international-legal jurisdiction did not in fact amount to a radical departure from the discussions of the sixties<sup>8</sup>. In their main assumption, the Slovak proposals nonetheless struck Czech federal delegates as an assault upon the federal state *per se*.

What Meciar’s proposals revealed was that the Czech federal right, still largely subsumed for the moment within the monolith Civic Forum, adhered not simply to the American federalist vision that the centre must be sovereign *in its sphere*, but to a classic view of indivisible nation-state sovereignty, a conceptualisation normally associated not with federal but with unitary states (Elazar 1987:34-5). According to this view, federal *i.e.* state authority was prior and indivisibly sovereign not only externally, in the eyes of international law, *but internally, vis-à-vis* the republics. Following the state’s formation, as it were, after the contractual fact, the re-diffusion of power to the republics according to this logic was a matter of grace and not of right. In the immediate aftermath of the talks the right responded with the pseudo-legal objection that “it is only possible to speak of the federative nature of the state if the authority of both national republics is based on the authority of the federation” (viewpoint of the

---

<sup>7</sup> Prior to the meeting neither the participants nor the likely agenda were disclosed to the public.

<sup>8</sup> A fact later acknowledged by Czech premier Pithart (1995:209).

Democratic Right-wing Group at the 9th meeting of the Czech National Council, 28-29 November 1990, in Zak 1990:256) - as if this was a watertight rejection of the principle of intrinsic national sovereignty. Their political reasons for this rejection were already clear and would not change: the prospect of a re-negotiation of power in which the federal authority could make no *prior* claim as the legitimate centre *vis-à-vis* the two sovereign nations - the two original 'contractees' - was irreconcilable with the Czech right's vision of a rapid reform process, under federal control.

The only consensus at Trencianske Teplice was that negotiations had to continue. Federal delegates refused to sign any communiqué. Continuation of the process was proposed in the form of three government commissions empowered to draft principles on jurisdictional problems - by the end of the month. Though all parties had publicly agreed to a "strong republics, strong federation principle" (*Svobodne slovo* 10.8.1990:1)<sup>9</sup> the respective reports to parliament revealed the deeper clash of concepts. Addressing the Federal Assembly, deputy premier Pavel Rychetsky described the conclusions of the talks as "both unexpected and problematic". Slovakia's "surprisingly" unequivocal proposals had included the devolution of powers over transportation, power generation, telecommunications and foreign trade and the Slovak government had already established its own Ministry of International Relations in breach of federal sovereignty. These Slovak steps, supported by separatists<sup>10</sup>, he maintained drove only to one end: serious intervention into the integrity of the state which would have to be withstood. The economic exigencies facing the country as a

---

<sup>9</sup> At Lnare in April 1990 the two republican governments had taken the remarkable decision that the simplest way to resolve all disputes over who subsidised whom was for each republic to live off the taxes collected on its own territory respectively. The federation would receive, from the republics, its necessary expenses (Zak 1995:251). Given the current tax and budgetary arrangements the two governments had effectively proposed removing the tax-gathering and coordinating powers of the federation. Vaclav Klaus, following his strengthened position after the June election, returned the agenda directly to this issue, aware that if legislated, the Lnare agreement and the principles underpinning it would emasculate federal powers and authority over reform. To the Federal Assembly he argued "the national governments are working towards the dissolution of the federation, because without an economic centre and autonomy of revenues in all three budgets, it is impossible to imagine a unified economy" (Zak 1995:252). At Trencianske Teplice the principle of independent budgets at the Czech, Slovak, and federal levels was agreed - see Chapter 7 for detail. This issue nevertheless became a parallel, but critical element in what was to become a conflict set out like a musical canon: a piece in which the different parts take up the same themes successively.

<sup>10</sup> The results of Trencianske Teplice were in fact fully rejected at a meeting of ten minor Slovak parties convened by the separatist Slovak National Party and Slovak Independence Party (*Lidove Demokracie* 15.8.1990).

whole, Rychetsky argued, made this essential (*Svobodne slovo* and *Zemedelske noviny* 14.8.1990).

Czech premier and former dissident Petr Pithart was more sympathetic to Slovak aspirations. He had called the talks constructive and insisted there was nothing inherently bad in Slovakia holding the initiative (CTK 11.8.1990). Nonetheless he assured the Czech parliament that the meeting was purely consultative, a follow-up to Lnare (*Svobodne slovo, Mlada Fronta dnes* 5.9.1990). In both the Czech and federal parliament the talks were evidently playing a key role in the fight for the political soul of the Civic Forum. Crucially, the rightist preoccupation with the uniformity of economic reform across the republics had now clearly produced for the Czech majority nation an attractive constitutional corollary. An hostility to re-defining the federation by its national characteristics and the assertion of indissoluble federal sovereignty implied the retrenchment of Czech political and financial power: it amounted in fact to a discrete reassertion of hierarchic majority rule under the guise of centralist federalism. Federal non-centralisation, it should be noted, has been conceptualised more conventionally “as a matrix of governments, with powers so distributed that the rank order of the several governments is not fixed” (Elazar 1987:37). Klaus’s election to the chair of Civic Forum in October marked the verdict, a decisive shift in the movement rightward (*Lidove noviny, Rude pravo* 2.11.1990).

Meciar, meanwhile, was buoyed by the commotion, “the Slovak government went to Teplice with a comprehensive concept, the Czech government with a partial concept and the Federal government with almost no concept at all. From Teplice all left with the Slovak government concept”. Though the talks had achieved little concretely he pronounced, “we withstand the resistance of the Federal apparatus, which will lose jobs; of Czechoslovakists who see it as an imperiling of the state’s integrity; and of separatists who consider it as not enough”. “[N]othing else than Federation is feasible” he insisted, though his proposals had apparently revealed a definitional conflict of remarkable and as it were, ‘instantaneous’ depth. At home the talks at Trencianske Teplice nevertheless distinguished Meciar as a stronger Slovak champion than the more nationalist-sounding Christian Democratic Movement, which had divided internally on

the talks. At Meciar's insistence Carnogursky was forced to choose between observation of the Slovak government resolution - for an 'authentic federation' - and resignation from the coalition. The Christian Democratic Movement eventually withdrew from the talks and stayed in the government (*Lidove noviny* 17.8.1990:8).

It was left to Havel to coordinate some preliminary closure to the competences question. Meetings duly followed at Piestany on 11th September (after which Havel criticised the commissions for producing over-detailed drafts), on October 23rd in Prague and October 28th in Slavkov. At these last talks, following nationalist agitation at the Slovak Language Law debate in Bratislava, federal premier Marian Calfa, Pithart and Meciar together adopted a declaration condemning all attempts to destabilise Czechoslovakia, and pledged to continue the federation (*Rude pravo* 29.10.1990). On November 5th, the three met again in Prague and declared that they had resolved most of the issues outstanding from the August talks. They had agreed to maintain the federal government's right to make decisions on economic strategy, defence, foreign policy, banking and federal taxes and this agreement was submitted, as a draft constitutional amendment to the three governments for approval. The Slovak and Czech republican governments gave their approval on November the 6th and 7th respectively. The federal government agreed "only in principle", objecting that the draft was too decentralising.

Further meetings, described by participants as emergency negotiations, were held in Modra on November 10th and 11th, and in Prague on November 13th. Here it was agreed that defence, foreign affairs, foreign trade, the central bank, taxation and customs and price reforms would remain solely under federal authority. The federal government would establish its budget through direct federal taxation in both republics and the CSFR economy was defined as based on an internal single market and the free movement of labour, goods and money. The republics would establish their own budgets through a system of local taxation. It was also agreed that all assets originating in the republics, not including natural resources (which would be treated separately in the new constitution) would remain their sole property and would not be transferred to or redistributed by federal authorities. As for international affairs, the *republics* would

be permitted to conclude international treaties having gained the permission of the central government. Unilaterally, they could also undertake agreements in specified fields with other units of other federal states. While every clause remained controversial, the last two in particular exposed how the rapid bartering behind the Bill had produced jurisdictional principles of such incoherence on the status of the 'nation' as to make the law inherently unstable<sup>11</sup> - a necessary characteristic for many in the Federal Assembly who only very reluctantly supported it (Competences Law in *Svobodne slovo* 21.12.1990:20).

Though the whole package looked set to be superseded it was still strongly, if not flamboyantly resisted by the federal Czech right<sup>12</sup>. Federal economy minister Vladimir Dlouhy took the offensive and appeared on state television denouncing Meciar as a populist<sup>13</sup>. "The federal government", complained Dlouhy (of the Civic Democratic Alliance), "is under constant pressure to retreat from reasonable principles" (*Zemedelske noviny, Obcansky denik* 28.11.1990). Supported by Klaus, his accusations managed to alienate even the Slovak right, a considerable achievement given that many of the former-dissident members of the Public Against Violence were themselves profoundly alarmed by Meciar's manipulation of nationalist rhetoric. The role of peacemaker again fell to Havel. Sensing an imminent second failure of the Competences Bill he alerted the Federal Assembly to the potential crisis, on December

---

<sup>11</sup> On the evening of the 12th Calfa spoke on state television and laid down a more forthright statement of appropriate future federal powers. Amongst other things, Calfa argued that the federation had to have, as a matter of minimal necessity, a unified international policy and must ensure its internal security; it should have a single currency, a single monetary system and a unified system of taxes, finance, price and customs policies, including the issue of united regulatory price measures; the federation had to be able to finance state administration, defence and other federal authorities and create financial reserves; it must have a unified concept of economic strategy and of external economic relations; it must have unified power generation policy and be economically responsible for its network-creating infrastructures, including crude oil and gas pipelines. Finally, he declared "we cannot imagine a Federal state without basic legislative competence for affairs which have an immediate impact on the rights liberties and position of its citizens" (*Svobodne Slovo* 13.11.1990:1,4). Calfa's arrogation of total responsibility for the welfare of 'the people' directly contradicted the basic federal principle that federations are founded upon dispersed majorities, and that the two planes of federal power: central and non-centralised [republican] are each possessed equally of such powers as have been delegated and guaranteed to them by 'the people'.

<sup>12</sup> The Slovak National Council approved the draft on the 19th.

<sup>13</sup> Klaus joined Dlouhy in condemning Slovak actions, concluding that "These attempts spring above all from the activity of some Slovak Government representatives who demagogically confuse the failings of the surviving centralist system with the indispensable unifying role of Federal bodies" (*Svobodne slovo, Rude Pravo* 8.12.1990)

10th<sup>14</sup>. “The Slovak premier himself”, had “made it quite clear that, if you fail to approve the law in the wording submitted by the Slovak National Council, the latter might declare the pre-eminence of its laws over the laws of the Federal Assembly”<sup>15</sup> Havel announced. By doing so he cast Meciar, without any heed to the federal Czech right’s apparent presumption of unitary state rights, as the devious state-wrecker. To ward off such an eventuality Havel proposed that the Assembly pass as soon as possible two proposals aimed at tackling future deadlocks. The first was to form the constitutional court, the second, to provide a law on public referenda. He also asked for an extension of his presidential powers. The first two suggestions were greeted warmly, the last, less so (*Svobodne slovo, Mlada Fronta dnes, Prace* 11.12.1990). The Federal Assembly finally accepted the Power-Sharing Bill on the 12th December 1990 - an antagonistic proposition though it was.

### **New constitutions**

Despite the fact that the power-sharing conflict had exposed fundamental definitional disagreement between federal and republican players, the presidiae of the National Councils had begun to meet at the end of September 1990 to discuss in earnest the creation of new constitutions. Their negotiated agreement was that the federal constitution would be drafted by a commission of ten deputies from each National Council and fourteen deputies from the Federal Assembly (Zak 1995:258). There was, however, no consensus on the most basic issues: the nature of federal power; the number of chambers; the continuation of the existing consociational defence against majority rule in the federal parliament; the need to ratify constitutional changes in the National Councils; the relationship between the federal constitution and a prior ‘agreement’ that both sides had agreed should ‘symbolise’ a ‘fresh start’ (Zak 1995:258). Conflicts over the order in which the constitutions might be passed indeed looked more than equal to those over the basic division of authority - both required

---

<sup>14</sup> During the speech Havel drew deputies’ attention to a recent opinion poll showing that 70 per cent of respondents in Slovakia and 74 per cent in the Czech republic considered the possible division of the state as an indulgence of politicians which would not reflect the interests of ordinary people.

<sup>15</sup> Meciar responded by pointing out that “in Bohemia there exist quite real and strong currents which think in the same way”. The Christian Democratic Movement paper *Slovensky Dennik* objected that “it is the Czech political representation which puts the future of Czechoslovakia at stake when it places political and economic interests above the natural efforts of Czechs and Slovak to live together in a democratic and economically strong political state” (*Slovensky Dennik, Svobodne slovo, Lidove noviny and Obcansky denik* 12.12.1990).



consensus on the rights due the present, let alone the future federal centre, an issue around which the republic-centric party systems themselves were clearly still forming.

When the thirty-four selected deputies proved incapable of allocating a coherent mission to constitutional lawyers, Havel ordered a draft which might be presented to the commissions for discussion. In his next New Year Address Havel appealed for the approval of three new constitutions “by the end of the year at the latest” as the basic task of 1991 (CTK 2.1.1991). The continuing failure to proceed with drafting nonetheless provoked the Federal Assembly into taking its own initiative, changing the constitution piecemeal (Zak 1995:258). The result was the Bill of Fundamental Rights and Liberties (emerging from National Council drafts), passed on the 9th January 1991 - formally providing the CSFR with at least a liberal code of civil rights<sup>16</sup>. Even so, the preamble to the Bill entertained “the right of the Czech and Slovak nations to self-determination”. As soon as Havel, intervening again, convened party talks in February 1991 in an attempt to kick-start the constitutional process<sup>17</sup>, this ‘right’ duly took its place in republican claims against ‘innate’, *i.e.* inherently sovereign federal powers.

The issue that can at least be identified as having ‘played the lead’ in undermining the next series of party meetings, nicknamed Havel’s ‘touring castles and palaces’ (Zak 1995:259), was that of a state treaty, suggested by the Christian Democratic Movement chairman Jan Carnogursky as a precursor to any new constitution. When Carnogursky suggested the idea to the president in January Havel commented that it looked more like a confederal than a federal suggestion (*Mlada Fronta dnes* 31.1.1991:1,2), an astute observation as it turned out. Contentious distinctions between federal and confederal principles, a rerun under different vocabulary of the most basic August 1990

---

<sup>16</sup> One disputed clause was that on the Rights of Nationalities, which appeared inconsistent with the Slovak Language Law passed in October. The failure to approve more amendments protecting minorities provoked Hungarian members of Egyutteles and the Christian Democratic Movement to walk out before the final vote (*Lidove noviny* 10.1.1991).

<sup>17</sup> The Federal Assembly subsequently created the constitutional court, and in July 1991 established the basic instrument of a referendum. The bill on referenda was passed at the second attempt, after the Slovak National Party and some Christian Democratic Movement deputies were persuaded to approve. The law stipulated that referenda could be declared in the solving of basic questions and forms of the state system, and when one of the republics proposed to secede from the federation. The referendum would be declared by the president at the proposal of the Federal Assembly if seconded by the National Councils. The results of the referendum were valid if voted in favour by more than 50 per cent of those entitled to vote in each of the republics (*Svobodne slovo, Mlada Fronta dnes* 19.7.1991). Of significance in 1992 was the stipulation that a referendum could not be declared in the 5 month period before a general election.

dispute concerning prior federal versus innate republican rights, immediately stalemated this next round of talks, intended though they were to be less formal, more flexible pre-negotiations.

### **The 'Vikarka' restaurant meetings**

Havel's first meeting at Vikarka foundered on its own chaotic informality, leaving the participating government parties determined to formulate their positions in writing (*Mlada Fronta dnes* 5.2.1991). The tensions between the centre and right within the Civic Forum were, in the meantime institutionalised, as the movement declared its intention to split into two groups - Klaus-ite right and Dienstbier-ite liberal centre/left<sup>18</sup> - the future Civic Democratic Party (CDP) and Civic Movement (CM) respectively. The next Vikarka meeting ran more decisively into the obstacle presented by the state treaty concept. Carnogursky insisted that a treaty would represent merely another incarnation of the preamble to the new (and indeed the old, 1968) federal law. The right of the Civic Forum and the Public Against Violence now together objected that a state treaty formulated between the two 'sovereign' National Councils actually necessitated the prior dissolution of the federal state. The third round at Vikarka (4th March) proved a rerun of the second. Though all participants perceived the public pressure to achieve some compromise, the subsequent joint statement attempted in vain to portray progress.

It was declared that "Czechoslovakia will be a federal state consisting of two sovereign and equal republics, linked voluntarily and at the free will of their citizens", that "the two National Councils will approve the declaration on cohabitation on the eve of the approval of the three new constitutions" and that "the National Councils will approve the respective national constitutions and the Federal Assembly will approve the Federal constitution. This will happen simultaneously". It was noted separately, but all-importantly, that while the Christian Democratic Movement agreed that Czechoslovakia would be a federal state, it wished to signal its insistence on the conclusion of a treaty with the proviso that the treaty would be a legal document and not just a political declaration (*Svobodne slovo* 6.3.1991:1,4). Such an explicit recontracting, with its

---

<sup>18</sup> See Chapter 6.

demonstration of republican sovereignty, remained entirely unacceptable to the political right.

### **Fragmentation on the Slovak political scene - perceptions of crisis**

On the 5th March 1991, the next development in party politics came in Slovakia, where Meciar's faction of the Public Against Violence walked out of the Slovak National Council declaring they would form their own platform of the Public Against Violence - the Movement for a Democratic Slovakia (MDS). The event again institutionalised the diverging constitutional attitudes of the movement into two distinct streams: the rightist, consensus-seeking view for greater republican equality but conceding a strong centre, led by the liberal Fedor Gal, and a more indeterminate but apparently confederalist view represented by Meciar. It also signalled the end to a stable government majority in the Slovak section of the House of Nations within the Federal Assembly, essential for passing constitutional legislation.

Havel's reaction was to warn of imminent disaster: the combination of demonstrations, "the constitutional proposals of the Slovak National Party and *Matica slovenska*, the approaching anniversary of the Slovak state on 14th March and at the same time the draft declaration on sovereignty [proposed by the Slovak National Party and later rejected in the Slovak National Council]" all added up to "a very disturbing situation" (*Zemedelske noviny* 11.3.1991:1,2). At this delicate stage, however, while positions were forming around the state treaty idea, such a grim evocation of evils was all too evocative of Prague's own prejudices. Havel's remarks were likely only to frustrate a far larger number of Slovaks, bemused by a presidential recounting of Slovak nationalist sins<sup>19</sup> (*Mlada Fronta dnes* 12.3.1991:2).

When finally submitted to the constitutional commission, the adjustments in Havel's draft constitution were derived, not from Meciar's popular faction, but from Gal's now

---

<sup>19</sup> More melodramatically still, Havel visited army officers in Meciar's home town of Trencin, where he warned; "Our young democracy is experiencing very dramatic movements today... I would like to emphasise that our Army must not intervene or enter into this complex process in any circumstances or in any way. Nobody should cite such an option as a threat or speculate about it.... I would like to point out in this place that the Czechoslovak Army will perform any tasks only as a united Army" (*Mlada Fronta, Prace* 15.3.1991)

considerably weakened wing of the Public Against Violence (*Mlada Fronta dnes* 26.3.1991:2). In Prague, Meciar's manoeuvre was evidently misread, if only briefly, as having strengthened the liberal rump of the Public Against Violence, an interpretation which prompted the most outspoken criticism of Carnogursky's treaty proposals yet, from Dagmar Buresova, Chairwoman of the Czech National Council and even from Petr Pithart, who declared it a "legal nonsense" (*Mlada Fronta dnes* 14.3.1991:1,2). Frantisek Miklosko (Public Against Violence), Vladimir Meciar and Jan Carnogursky met Havel at Lany on 17th April in order to try and clarify the Slovak position, but as Meciar rightly pointed out, the problem was not so much the obscurity of Slovak desires but an all too apparent disagreement between the prevailing Slovak notions of federal rights and those acceptable to the Czech side.

When Meciar was ousted as Slovak premier on 23rd April, the Czech's misinterpretation of Slovak events was more pronounced still. Pithart suggested that "if the non-functioning of the Slovak economy is the reason for this dramatic change in the Slovak government, then this change is simultaneously a promise for the seeking of one economy, one reform, and that we shall tackle the problem of the state arrangement (*Obcansky denik, Mlada Fronta dnes* 24.4.1991). The 'non-functioning' of the Slovak economy' was indeed one of the main political forces separating the Public Against Violence but a failure for which the liberal right was held to account. Not only was the Christian Democratic Movement's position in the coalition strengthened, but the populist Meciar had been freed to engage in both the constitutional and the economic debate as an opposition member, indeed, as the leading critic of the government's performance. Following Meciar's ouster, the Movement for a Democratic Slovakia rallied in opposition with the Slovak National Party (SNP) and the Party of the Democratic Left (PDL) and gathered a growing constituency behind its own eclectic set of arguments for a federation built "from below".

The timing could not have been worse for the negotiation process. Talks thus far had achieved only a well publicised deadlock over a treaty of undecided status to introduce constitutions the actual content of which had yet to be decided or drafted. A permanent division within the Slovak governing coalition seemed certain when Carnogursky, as

the new Slovak premier, confirmed that he favoured an independent Slovak state - 'eventually' (*Prace* 30.4.1991:3). His pronouncement that Slovakia should remain part of Czechoslovakia until it joined the EC (to the Austrian weekly, *Profil*, quoted in *Mlada Fronta dnes* 3.4.1991:7)<sup>20</sup> assisted only in persuading Slovak voters that of the two would-be champions of Slovakia, Meciar was the political realist.

### Lany

At more talks in Lany, in May 1991, the thirty assembled representatives of all three legislative bodies, governments, parties, government coalitions and legislative experts seemed to agree that some form of republican-level accord on the principles of the new constitutional arrangement would be recommended to their respective parties. Experts would be entrusted to work on the text on the basis of existing proposals. Buresova concluded that both sides had made concessions (*Hospodarske noviny* 13.5.1991:1) and indeed they had, but only through the omission of all substantive issues from the talks, postponed, yet again for future discussion. The Slovak side by now moreover aspired to an inner-state agreement with certain state law characteristics, and this remained in dispute, as did the nature of the authority of the National Councils in signing the document.

Cross-party talks on the state treaty held at Budmerice, attended for the first time by opposition parties, demolished the minimalist consensus at Lany and threatened postponement of the upcoming elections. The respective government leaders together emphasised the importance of forming a "well-functioning state", apparently intimidated by the opposition's destructive impulses (*Mlada Fronta dnes, Lidove noviny* 1.6.1991). It was at this choice moment that Meciar intervened with the insistence that the state treaty should be concluded at an international state level. Meciar's suggestion, a logical extension of Carnogursky's aspirations and a blatant attempt to draw the fire back to the Christian Democratic Movement, succeeded insofar as it provided the Czech right with easy justification for publicly despairing of the direction the entire

---

<sup>20</sup> Meciar meanwhile had become embroiled in a dispute over appropriate cooperation with the Federal Ministry for Foreign Affairs, with whom he failed to consult before travelling to the already imploding Yugoslavia and the USSR.

talks process had taken since February 1991. Klaus determined to reassert the basic principles of a 'functioning federation' at the imminent cross-party talks in Kromeriz<sup>21</sup>.

### **Kromeriz**

With talks on the brink of collapse, the meeting at Kromeriz seemed to achieve a remarkable breakthrough. A 19-point questionnaire prepared by Havel proved instrumental in drawing the talks toward consensus and it was agreed that the National Councils would prepare a treaty on the principles of the future state arrangement. This would formulate the shape of the state, the scope of federal responsibilities, and other basic elements of the constitution. The treaty would then be presented to the Federal Assembly, which would approve any constitutional law on the approval of constitutions or anything similar beforehand. A particular point of breakthrough for the Slovaks was that the federal constitution would be subject to ratification by the National Councils - a one-off event designed solely for the adoption of the new constitution, after which federal decision-making would revert to "another way". In this way, it seemed, the much disputed legal continuity of the CSFR could be maintained and a new federation built on the ground of the existing federation (*Svobodne slovo, Mlada Fronta dnes* 18.6.1991). It was also agreed, under pressure from Klaus, that future debates on the constitution would be transferred to the parliaments (*Mlada Fronta dnes* 18.6.1991).

In the Slovak National Council, however, Carnogursky proved unable to marshal the votes of the nationalists within the Christian Democratic Movement, who joined with the opposition in rejecting the Kromeriz line. Presenting a draft state treaty between the two National Councils on the 1st July, Gal's successor as Public Against Violence chairman, J. Kucerak concluded that "we have two options - federation or divorce. Musing about confederation or union means disintegration of the common state" (*Zemedelske noviny* 2.7.1991:1). Following the collapse of Kromeriz, the now heavily

---

<sup>21</sup> "The opinion currently expressed by J. Carnogursky that Slovakia wants to be in the federation for the moment but that it will withdraw when the time is right is absolutely unacceptable to us. In Kromeriz I will put it clearly and bluntly - I will say that the Czech public is fed up with such opinions and that a clear barrier must be erected in this matter" (*Zemedelske noviny* 13.6.1991:2). Regarding Kromeriz, Klaus also commented beforehand that the time when it was suitable for the talks to carry on in the extra-parliamentary arena was over as voters were under the impression the parliaments were being completely bypassed (*Mlada Fronta* 17.6.1991) - a comment designed to tap into the growing public frustration with the negotiated deadlocks, though Klaus was surely aware that neither parliament nor its commissions could prove more successful in the absence of a pre-negotiated consensus.

divided Slovak National Council, which had already formed its commission for the preparation of its new constitution, decided only to prepare two parallel constitutions: one with all the responsibilities of a sovereign state, the second bound by existing legal competences.

In these circumstances it was relatively straightforward for Meciar to blur constitutional issues still further. Following a Civic Movement 'goodwill visit' (by Dienstbier, Rychetsky, Pithart and Buresova) Meciar found it necessary to 'clarify' his non-separatist position, and he declared the Movement for a Democratic Slovakia's opposition to any declaration of sovereignty by the Slovak National Council. Such a step, he said, could have no meaning in the process of emancipation of Slovakia which needed, above all, a state treaty with the Czech republic and its own constitution. At the same time, however, he pointed out that 'sovereignty' should be achieved now and that speaking about it as a thing for the future was dangerous (*Hospodarske noviny* 5.9.1991:2).

### **Gridlock**

At a joint meeting of the two National Council presidiae in Bratislava, the two sides reiterated the points of agreement and disagreement already set out at Kromeriz. Once again they declared that the process of preparing constitutions would be based on maintaining the continuity of the CSFR and on constitutional methods. The Slovak side pointed out that they wished to pursue the principle of sovereignty for the Slovak Republic in the preparation of the Slovak constitution, and the two presidia "exchanged opinions" on the division of competences. Though they agreed a common state required a common economic policy its attributes remained to be specified. To this end they agreed to form commissions comprising experts and representatives of all three governments to prepare proposals on the division of competences - again. These conclusions were again rejected by the Movement for a Democratic Slovakia and Slovak National Party (*Svobodne slovo, Mlada Fronta dnes and Zemedelske noviny* 7.9.1991).

Meeting with Carnogursky, Klaus argued that in the light of the clear stalemate future decisions should be postponed until after the June 1992 elections (*Mlada Fronta dnes* 10.9.1991:2). A few weeks later, Carnogursky effectively guaranteed this outcome by proposing to foreign minister Dienstbier (Civic Movement) that the provision on the legal continuity of the Czechoslovak state be deleted to the pre-amble of the Czechoslovak-German treaty, currently under preparation - a continuity guaranteed by numerous international treaties establishing the nullity of the 1938 Munich dictat. Not only did the request horrify Czechs, but it drove yet another wedge between Christian Democratic Movement and its coalition partners Public Against Violence-Civic Democratic Union, who objected that only other fascist states had ever recognised the Slovak state - a situation they hardly wished to alter now (*Mlada Fronta dnes, Obcansky denik, Hospodarske noviny* 18.9.1991). In the first Federal Assembly session of Autumn 1991, Havel warned deputies that they faced the choice of a rapid construction of a joint state or dissolution, later admitting that he personally favoured a referendum to decide the issue<sup>22</sup> (*Hospodarske noviny, Rude pravo* 25.9.1991)

From November 1991, the constitutional process entered a period of both intensification and further disintegration as parties set out their respective stalls for the June election. For Czechs, the Slovak Christian Democratic Movement pushed itself further beyond the pale by claiming, quite incidentally, that the attitudes of the Christian Democratic Movement and the Communist Party of Bohemia and Moravia were close on many questions, not least in their rejection of liberalism and their criticism of the pace of economic reform (*Rude pravo* 1.11.1991:3). Havel resorted to inviting leading government representatives to the pub, "In Hell", in a desperate attempt to thrash out a plan for completing negotiations. Havel himself presented a draft treaty, and while his visitors agreed to use it as the basis of future talks, and even seemed closer on the substantive division of competences, they remained stuck over the question, yet again, of the shape, legal character and meaning of the treaty to be concluded between the two republics (*Lidove noviny, Hospodarske noviny* 4.11.1991).

---

<sup>22</sup> As of October, an IVVM poll revealed the following, unhelpful results; in the Czech republic 38 per cent favoured a unitary state, 31 per cent a federation, 18 per cent a federal land system (*i.e.* Bundesrepublik), 4 per cent a confederation and 6 per cent two independent states. In the Slovak republic 16 per cent favoured a unitary state, 34 per cent a federation, 6 per cent a federal land system, 25 per cent a confederation and 15 per cent two independent states (*Mlada Fronta Dnes, Rude pravo* 1.11.1991)



Just over a week later, the Federal Assembly failed to agree on questions that might be put to the citizenry in the event of a deadlock-resolving referendum - a debate broadcast live on state television (*Lidove noviny* 14.11.1991:1,12)

On the 14th November 1991, the federal government, for too long, according to its representatives, conceded the most minimal political 'weight' in the constitutional talks, re-entered the fray in some style. It did so by issuing a statement on the talks that read: "The federal government refuses further to sanction the perpetuation of the present state of affairs because it has extraordinarily unfavourable repercussions on economic development, the social situation, relations among people, and the international standing of Czechoslovakia". The Federal government had decided, the statement continued:

- to apply all of its power to halting the destruction of legal and institutional prerequisites of the functioning of the common state,
- consistently to promote the further transformation of society and tackle pressing economic and social problems,
- to prepare draft principles of the new constitutional arrangement in the field of legislative and executive power using the results of all negotiations so far and submit it to parliaments,
- to request that all three parliaments discuss those principles as soon as possible in the presence of members of the governments (*Mlada Fronta dnes, Hospodarske noviny* 15.11.1991)

These requirements were designed not only to force the issue of the common state but also to return the debate, in a public and assertive way, to the top-down argument as expressed in premier Calfa's speech just before the December 1990 vote on power-sharing.

### **Havel's last stand**

Despairing of the chances for agreement before full-scale campaigning began for the 1992 election Havel made his last major intervention, declaring on state television his

intention to submit five new laws to the Federal Assembly. Resurrecting the tribune role which he had fulfilled to such great effect in November 1989, he appealed directly to the people to “express more loudly than hitherto your longing to live soon in a wisely and justly organised, prospering state, and thus to help our hostile parliaments find a way from the blind alley in which they find themselves”. His first proposal was an amendment to the law on referenda enabling the President to initiate referenda unilaterally, if unopposed by the Federal Assembly and supported by 20 per cent of the voters in one republic. His second was an amendment to the constitutional law which would set the new federal constitution to come into force after ratification by the National Councils. The third proposal concerned the conditions of the disbandment of the Federal Assembly and the declaration of new elections. This would give the President the right to issue law, after the disbandment of the Assembly, through a form of decrees, with the proviso that they would be subject to additional approval by the newly elected parliament. The remaining bills concerned a constitutional law on the new structure of the Assembly and an adjustment to the electoral law (*Lidove noviny* 18.11.1991:1,8).

Havel’s speech provoked several days of demonstrations of up to 40,000 in Prague’s Wenceslas Square, and brought out the students - ever faithful to Havel, the anti-communist Club of Committed Non-Party Members, the Civic Movement, Czechoslovak Social Democracy and the People’s Party in favour of the changes. The Czech right-wing Civic Democratic Alliance and Klaus’s Civic Democratic Party meanwhile, though at first internally split moved into a position of discrete opposition within a week. In Slovakia the death-knell of the proposal’s legislative chances was rung by a Movement for a Democratic Slovakia statement accusing Havel of personal ambition and of only deepening the crisis. After prolonged meetings with the president, Klaus’s Civic Democratic Party expressed concern that Havel’s efforts had been misunderstood by some as an appeal to civil disobedience. Press commentary foresaw that the proposals would go the same way as the referendum proposals, voted down in the previous week<sup>23</sup> (*Mlada Fronta dnes, Lidove noviny, Cesky denik* 19.11.1991).

---

<sup>23</sup> According to an IVVM poll 73 per cent of Czechs and 59 per cent of Slovaks would vote in favour of a common state if a referendum took place in November (*Mlada Fronta dnes* 19.11.1991:2)

On the 19th members of the now deeply unpopular rightist Slovak government<sup>24</sup>, on the initiative of the Public Against Violence-Civic Democratic Union, the Democratic Party (DP) and the Hungarian Independent Initiative, issued a statement regretting the turn taken by constitutional negotiations. Following Klaus, the statement lamented that the dispute had spilled over into economic management: “the unsolved questions are concentrated in the budget preparation to such an extent as to make its preparation impossible. In this situation the preparation of state budgets for 1992 can trigger the split of the federal state rather than be an integrating factor” it argued. Consequently, it concluded “the Slovak government is of the opinion that the state treaty must not become an extra-constitutional instrument. It rejects any untested procedures and experiments and supports only tested constitutional steps and mechanism”. The statement was in effect a declaration of loyalty to the existing federal state in Klausite terms, over the heads of their own coalition partners, the Christian Democratic Movement. Not surprisingly, Carnogursky opposed it as unnecessary and prejudicial to further talks (*Mlada Fronta dnes, Lidova demokracie, Lidove noviny* 20.11.1991)<sup>25</sup>. Caught up by the generally tense atmosphere, however, the Czech National Council reneged on the budget agreements achieved in Bratislava at the end of November 1991, apparently in protest against Slovak intransigence on the constitutional question. Their action returned the division of the budget to the limelight as both a symptom and vehicle of the by now full-blown constitutional crisis.

Amidst the discussion of Havel’s legislative proposals it emerged, in the eyes of many Czechs like the visitation of a curse, that the Christian Democratic Movement intended to incorporate the republican state treaty into Havel’s parliamentary bills. The treaty, Carnogursky argued, should first be concluded and then the constitution should be approved by the Federal Assembly and later ratified by the National Councils. The problem which the presidia of the National Councils had completely failed to solve thus

---

<sup>24</sup> In May 1991 - one month after Meciar’s ouster as Premier, only 33 per cent of Slovak respondents to a CSA poll agreed that the results of democratic elections should be binding during the whole electoral period, while 54 per cent disagreed (Butora 1994:325).

<sup>25</sup> As it transpired however, a potentially fractious meeting of the Financial Council was influenced favourably by the Slovak statement and a compromise was for the time-being reached over the division of the proceeds of the turnover tax and profit tax. The existing ratio of division (1.6:1 Czech Slovak) would be replaced by a level of 1.77:1 - a concession by the Czech Republic which had originally demanded a division proportionate to the number of inhabitants (1.95:1) (*Mlada Fronta dnes, Cesky denik* 21.11.1991)

entered the Federal parliament, even though the Christian Democratic Movement was fully aware that the Czech and Slovak right-wing clubs within the Assembly opposed the treaty in principle (Leschtina and John, in *Mlada Fronta dnes* 10.12.1991:6). The Federal Assembly eventually voted to postpone the debate on Havel's initiatives until the January session 1992. By December 1991 only Slovakia had submitted its constitutional proposals, despite Havel's warnings that the process was nearing collapse.

On the 21st January 1992, the Slovak section of the House of Nations in the Federal Assembly threw out the President's proposed amendment on referenda as well as his Bill on the method of approving the new Czechoslovak constitution - designed as deadlock-breaking measures (*Lidove noviny* 22.1.1992). The next day the opposition MDS's Milan Knazko suggested that "the treaty between the Czech Republic and Slovakia could replace the Federal constitution" *i.e.* entirely - a comment timed apparently for the sole purpose of irritating Czech deputies before the Federal vote on the remainder of Havel's proposals (*Lidove noviny, Lidova demokracie* 23.1.1992). The Assembly meanwhile postponed future votes until February on the basis that this might provide a last window in which the National Councils could reach agreement. Their statement to the Councils read, "by interrupting the debate on constitutional changes, the Federal Assembly wants to meet the National Councils in their co-responsibility for the creation of the new constitutional arrangement" (*Mlada Fronta dnes, Lidove noviny* 24.2.1992). On the 28th the Assembly nevertheless rejected Havel's proposal permitting presidential rule by decree. By February electoral preoccupations dominated overwhelmingly, calming the constitutional crisis by signalling the impotence of further talks. The loss of momentum in the general debate influenced the cool response to talks at Milovy, which months earlier might have represented a real advance.

At Milovy it was agreed, thanks to a last minute concession on the Slovak side, that the treaty could be based on the present constitution and could have the form of a constitutional initiative addressed to the Federal Assembly. Commenting on the talks, however, federal premier Calfa (Public Against Violence) insisted "the Slovak side has

reached such a point that it cannot relinquish its intention to promote the establishment of a qualitatively new state. On the contrary, the Czech side holds the opinion that the principle of sovereignty can be fulfilled in two ways: either withdrawal from the common state or a voluntary decision to stay in it. Apparently, the future of the Czech and Slovak Federative Republic will be decided by the winners of the general election” (*Mlada Fronta dnes* 10.2.1992:1,2). It was the nationalist faction of the Christian Democratic Movement (the future Slovak Christian Democratic Movement) which finally chose to vote with the Slovak National Party and the Movement for a Democratic Slovakia against the Milovy text - parties which evidently wished to have their hands free for a variety of constitutional promises in the oncoming electoral campaign. This vote closed all coordinated constitutional episodes, a process formally adjourned with some despair by the respective chairs of the National Councils on the 11th March. Frantisek Miklosko blamed breakdown on the Czech failure to accept the principle of the treaty, whilst Dagmar Buresova blamed the Slovak National Council praesidium (*Hospodarske noviny* 12.3.1992:1). This bitter conclusion left the issue at the mercy of the electoral battle, which as we have already seen<sup>26</sup>, proceeded both to distort and bypass the substantive issues of conflict even more than had the actual negotiation process itself.

### **Formal legal barriers and polemical constitutionalism**

It has been argued in several quarters that the rigidity of the institutional framework inherited in 1989 aggravated in a systematic way the problem of replacing constitution legislation (Arato 1993, Batt 1993, Mathernova 1993, Zak 1995:245). The existence of a minority veto for constitutional legislation is identified in particular as “the single most important institutional roadblock preventing law-makers in Czechoslovakia from proceeding with constitutional reform” (Mathernova 1993:64). Though championing a path-dependency argument Mathernova nevertheless anticipates the crucial point that a consociational voting rule of itself might have proved quite sustainable in conditions of elite consensus. She thus concludes that it was specifically the combination of the legislative structure and severe political deadlock at the party political level that proved

---

<sup>26</sup> Chapter 4

fatal (Mathernova 1993:77). This latter phenomenon is nonetheless left largely unexplained.

Though expressing a basic truth of the constitutional crisis such formal accounts of the vulnerability of constitutional legislation are inadequate on two counts. Firstly, they too baldly identify the Slovaks as the obstructive side in the constitutional process - since it was the oppositionist Slovak bloc which vetoed among others Havel's deadlock-breaking Bills of January 1992. Secondly, in locating the source of the conflict so cleanly in procedural questions, institutional/path-dependency arguments tend to neglect the highly problematic blurring of constitutional and political discourses which prevailed during the period in question.

The over-emphasis on institutional rules also brings us to a specific third difficulty, this time with Mathernova's further account of the effect of the legislative set-up. In Mathernova's reading the minority's ability to paralyse the Federal Assembly meant that though the federation persisted, the supreme legislative body lost most of its ability to influence constitutional developments to the respective National Councils and their governments - an impasse completed in January 1992 (Mathernova 1993:68). With the debate essentially in the hands of the Councils the issues allegedly became strictly oppositional - in the hands of politicians with national rather than federal ambitions. Not only does this argument accept the federal government's account of events at face value, but it also ignores the initial reasoning behind National Council involvement, namely the initial aspiration to federal legitimacy prevalent in the Civic Forum / Public Against Violence / Christian Democratic Movement governments of June 1990 - June 1992. More curiously still, Mathernova interprets the shift of debate to the National Councils a-historically, as a consequence of already collapsed authority at the centre, rather than as an active choice of the post-revolution liberal dissident elite, over-optimistic though that choice clearly was.

Though Mathernova's most plausible-sounding case is that the shift in debate to the National Councils was attended by a deepening of the national conflict, scrutiny of the talks suggests otherwise. At the end of 1990 it should be noted, the disputes in the

power-sharing talks between the three governments, the battles in the Federal Assembly, and the lack of progress in the constitutional talks between the National Councils ran *concurrently*. More importantly, the disagreements that dogged presidia, cross-party and inter-governmental talks right through from 1990 to March 1992 qualitatively-speaking, did not change.

It is this very lack of movement in the issues under discussion and the constant recycling of stalemates in the full panoply of institutional arenas that begs analytical attention. The framework of objections established between the Czech right and Slovak representatives at Trencianske Teplice marked out the dispute as it continued, and eventually collapsed, into 1992. Though certain parties attempted to shift the debate onto less intractable issues and into more informal negotiating environments (ending "In Hell"), the result was a recitation of the fundamentalist and never-resolved positions aired in August 1990.

It is thus unsatisfying to explain the constitutional deadlock merely by looking at the fate of legislative proposals. It was, after all, an essentially political impasse which translated into a procedural impasse. The right of veto in the Federal Assembly is better understood as distinct from the stalemate in every other arena only because it represented a nominally final, institutional closure of debate, though one thoroughly anticipated by the negotiation-rigamortis induced by the brewing electoral battle. To attribute to the Slovak veto the prime role in having prohibited new constitutions is to ignore the profound failure of the negotiation process that went before it<sup>27</sup>. The remainder of this section turns to a characterisation of the substantive causes of stalemate<sup>28</sup>.

---

<sup>27</sup> The consociational veto was of course originally conceived to restrain the Czech majority (roughly 2:1 in the population): to "exclude politically and constitutionally, the possibility of outvoting the Slovak nation as far as the state relations between the Czechs and Slovaks and the constitutional status of Slovakia are concerned" (p39 Action Programme 1968). To the Czech right, notably the Civic Democratic Alliance, the constitutional protection of Slovakia in the Assembly represented an infringement of the 'established' sovereign powers of the Federal Assembly. The implication of the objections *per se* was a habituated Czech unitarianism. Czech and federal authority had evidently been synonymous for so long that sections of the Czech political elite considered effective Slovak intervention highly nationalistic.

<sup>28</sup> It should be noted that the potential for impasse in the Assembly was significant in the public presentation of the conflict - it offered the Czech media evidence for a virulent Slovak nationalism at work in the highest representative body. In *Literarni noviny* no.5 1990 the renowned dissident writer Ludvik Vaculik unleashed an article entitled 'Our Slovak Question', which effectively broke the taboo of public annoyance at Slovak actions, articulated with vigour by the press thereafter. In this Vaculik suggested that the Slovaks had no

The semantic 'black hole' that constituted Czechoslovak constitutional terminology after 1989 (Peter Brodsky "v Tatrach bez občanských práv" in Mathernova 1993) has been exaggerated, implying as it does a hopeless terminological confusion on the part of the political actors involved<sup>29</sup>. The evidence argues rather the contrary, that what did exist was a straightforward and very well understood deadlock on terms and, on the part of Klaus's Civic Democratic Party and Meciar's Movement for a Democratic Slovakia, a transparent manipulation of Czech Slovak friction. Though there was indeed a proliferation of terms supposedly denoting 'types' of federation - 'true', 'dual', 'authentic' and perhaps the most consistent, 'functional federation' it nevertheless seems an unsafe assumption to infer that this derived from the inexperience of the politicians concerned or even, as Mathernova does, their willful adoption of arguments as a "pretense, a playground for political ping-pong" (1993:71).

Rather than assuming either non-comprehension or entrenched, increasingly nationalist conflict, the stalemate was exactly as it appeared: a narrowly politically motivated stalemate over constitutional terms which brooked of no obvious compromise. Though any party may consistently claim to be both federalist and peculiarly concerned with the needs of energetic governance, with that extreme of the federal continuum represented by concentrated unity, there is little evidence that the Czech federal right felt themselves to be speaking from within such a continuum, with recognition of the equal claim for the diffusion of powers at the other extremity. Vaclav Klaus's term 'functional federation', which first appeared in the Civic Forum manifesto for June 1990, was a concept ever more clearly elucidated - it denoted a federation with a sovereign and sufficiently strong centre to legislate and administer unhindered a radical

---

genuine history of their own and could only be supported with the assistance of other nations. He also claimed that Slovaks had been uncritical of the Slovak fascist state, renewing their adherence to "good Czechoslovakia" only when it suited them, and finally, that Slovak complaints about the Czechs were "sociopsychological" (Radio Free Europe 7 September 1990). Perhaps most incendiary of all, Vaculik implied that the Slovaks had acted as a Quisling nation since 1968: "Misled by their history, spoiled by Czech intervention on their behalf, the Slovaks do not know how an autonomous and proud nation should act", he asserted - a phrase Klaus would use to very precise effect at a later date (see Chapter 3).

<sup>29</sup> For example, as late as November 3, 1991 the Civic Movement (OH) representative and Chairwoman of the Czech National Council Dagmar Buresova was still explaining in talks that "we are certainly willing to acknowledge that their must be confederative elements, but in principle to be a federation in must be a common state. Mr. Premier [Marian Calfa][has confirmed that] a confederation is not a common state, it is a union of states" (*Slovenske Listy* 1994:88).



economic reform package, requirements laid out frequently and ever more explicitly. For two years Klaus argued that he was uniquely realistic about the new democratic federal state, that less than his arrangement was not a federation at all, and in the run up to the 1992 election the Civic Democratic Party platform made explicit a position which been implicit throughout. Unless such a federation obtained, the optimum solution would be the cessation of *all* constitutional ties. In the light of such a statement, accepting that federalism is a system designed to “prevent tyranny without preventing governance” (Elazar 1987:29), one is hard-pressed to recognise a federalist in Klaus. The idea of committing to a system of open-bargaining had proved entirely alien to his state-building methodology.

By 1991 the position on the Czech right, moreover, clearly underpinned all basic deadlock concerning ‘sovereignty’ or state legal personality, including that over the state treaty. This development could only deepen the stereotypical assumption on the Slovak side, that the Czechs remained Czechoslovakist and on the Czech side, that the Slovaks would sacrifice nothing to a common state. As J. Kalvoda (Civic Democratic Alliance) insisted, at the end of yet another failed meeting of the National Councils, the existence or non-existence of the Slovak wish to live in a common state was the cardinal question of the state treaty. He also observed that Slovak politicians who favoured an independent Slovakia had simply not yet dared to say it publicly (*Hospodarske noviny, Mlada Fronta dnes, Cesky denik* 13.11.1991). It is the fusion of such national stereotypes with highly politicised perceptions of the requirements of democratic stabilisation: which we may call state-building arguments, that holds the key to understanding the legal deadlock.

#### **A realist argument - the problem with new institutions**

In an institutional landscape in which ultimate conflict-regulating power had rested with a single Party for over forty years, political representatives after 1989 were faced by a relative wealth of potential institutional environments for resolving their differences: parliaments, inter-governmental meetings, inter- and intra-party meetings, inter-parliamentary executive meetings and so on. Through 1990 it was also already evident to parliamentary insiders that political affiliations and the political constellations in each

republic were shifting and unstable entities, providing further scope for future coalitions of consensus just as shifting negotiating environments might provide more or less conducive conditions for problem-solving. That the main political actors of the constitutional debate could be observed repeating themselves to the echo through almost two years of negotiations, in various combinations of negotiating fora is in this perspective, less surprising.

Rather than indicating persistent cognitive helplessness, the repetitiveness of the debate reflected the initial desire for legitimacy and the relative unchartedness of the new institutional landscape facing the negotiating parties. It also reflected the reasonable expectation that bargaining positions should be sustained and the modification of claims resisted given the reasonable prospect of shifting coalitions and the imminence of a second election. Far from merely 'touring castles and palaces' what we observe is that the question of constitutional re-design went on a full round-the-institutions exploratory trip - it also engaged phenomenal numbers of political representatives. Together these tendencies ran entirely counter to the lessons of successful negotiating processes elsewhere, which typically minimise the number of actors involved and which rely on the ability of these actors to sell their compromise position to their respective constituencies once a full negotiated consensus has been reached. In the Czechoslovak case the one major misconception throughout the process, indeed one prolonged by the process itself, was the republican deputies' under-estimation of the persistence of federal government self-interest and the identification of the Czech public with their position, implicitly majoritarian as it was.

The federal government's exasperated re-statement of the basic 'minimum conditions' for the continuation of the state represented a 'reality check' for the negotiation process. It is clearly from this period in late 1991 onward that the realisation finally dawns that institutional adjustments (*i.e.* negotiating environments and the stabilising constellation of political parties) were unable to take the dispute further. If the electoral term had been longer it is arguably *at this point* that fruitful negotiations, as opposed to position-taking, would have begun. Instead, from this point on the federal government, the Czech government, and lastly, the Slovak government, finally conceded that the

issues would have to wait on the ultimate shift in political distributions already widely expected: the installation in the June 1992 election of the Czech right and Slovak national populists (Movement for a Democratic Slovakia) in government - that is, after a new and potentially decisive *vacuum* of consensus had been created at the federal level.

What then was the substance of these recycled deadlocks between 1990 and 1992? The issue of sovereignty was clearly a focal point of conflict. The opposition Slovak Nationalist Party clearly aspired to full sovereign international recognition as a fully independent state. The Christian Democratic Movement meanwhile visualised some form of transitory relationship with the Czech republic, leading eventually to the full flowering of sovereign Slovak statehood within the European Union - an aspiration which divided it utterly from its coalition partner Public Against Violence-Civic Democratic Union. The less nationalist majority of Slovak deputies on the other hand were preoccupied not so much by *suverenita* (sovereignty) as by *zvrchovanost* - a right to pursue one's own national life and culture, a metaphysical imperative theoretically consistent with a federal common state. Those Slovak sympathetic with the latter aspiration endorsed the pursuit of symbolic signifiers - of terms and agreements which would indicate the essential 'equality' of the two nations. It was for these rather than for secessionist reasons that the state treaty idea had resonated favourably with many Slovak deputies.

The majority of Slovaks conceived of constitutional reform as an opportunity fundamentally to redraft the federal contract, this time by two equal, consenting nations in conditions of political freedom. To the Czech right the authority of the established federation, however flawed in its constitutional detail and however coerced its formation and structure, already existed and was, as embodying the international sovereignty of the CSFR, superior and binding. Any attempt to assert republican sovereignty (the sovereignty of national 'peoples' as against the invoked sovereignty of 'the people') if only momentarily and symbolically, destroyed the 'sovereign rights' of the federation. A state treaty moreover, appeared to leave open even confederal options. This was not, however, a purely legalistic objection on the part of the Czech

right but an objection inspired by (and dependent upon) the assertion that federal powers had to be maintained, uninterrupted, for the purposes of continuing Klaus's state-wide, state-building economic reform, massively resented in Slovakia though it was.

Indeed, the extent to which treaty discussions remained mired in formal legal argument and abstracted from their underlying political agendas on both sides is one of their most remarkable aspects. In this respect moreover stereotypes played a crucial part, fortifying the driest legal arguments - the status of the treaty in international law *etc.* - and keeping entirely discrete purely party political motivations. Such a prejudiced legal discourse proved a particularly effective method of keeping policy positions stable whilst affecting to enter into an argument<sup>30</sup>. The recital of stereotypes among Czechs emerged as follows: the Czechs - tolerant, conciliatory, but finally robust in the face of legal ignorance and absurdity; the Slovaks - irrational in regard to their 'best interests' (at best romantic), nationalistic, parochial in outlook and inexperienced in the art of the possible.

Preston King, qualifying the appropriateness of using a contractual framework to characterise federations has pointed out that "[a]ny agreement, which is not derived from compulsion, must feature relevant equality among those agreeing" (King 1982:106). It was clearly a formal expression of this "relevant equality" which motivated Carnogursky in his bid for a state treaty. Such a treaty, formally delegating republican power to the centre, would have represented a lasting legal caveat to the age-old assumption of top-down federalists (and Czechoslovakists before them), that the highest legislative body, the Federal Assembly (previously the National Assembly) was *a priori* and indivisibly sovereign. Slovak suspicion of the centre, however, was interpreted in Prague as a function of nationalist hostility, and not as deriving from their unhappy experiences under Czechoslovakist and pseudo-federal practice. The state treaty was thus an opportunity missed on the Czech side, and their hostile response forced the pace in Slovakia's internal political development, greatly to the benefit of Vladimir Meciar. What resulted was a sharpening polarisation of debate. The main

---

<sup>30</sup> For an exploration of the benefits of evasiveness, see Stephen Holmes 1988.

body of Slovak representatives argued that the new state should be built 'from the bottom up' and the Czech right in both the Czech Council and Federal Assembly insisted the new state could only be built from the top down - as it were by grace and not by right - if it was to survive at all.

One final question posed by deadlock was whether there existed outside forces capable of altering to more profitable ground, if not ending the political impasse - a role conventionally ascribed to president Vaclav Havel. Havel's most significant power, apart from his own standing among the political community, was his independent right to introduce legislation. In this, however, he was as subject to the unfavourable weaknesses of the Assembly as much as any other legislator - a real obstacle at the point at which it was attempted. Havel's other resource, his prestige, was nonetheless always more vital; and had he been able to represent a vision more favourable to the Slovak side he might conceivably have mediated more than a pre-election stand-off. Havel's failure resided in his own politics, and his growing allegiance to (indeed, given the prospect of an independent Czech republic, his dependence upon), the Czech right. In practical terms Havel's efforts were unceasing and heartfelt - he convened some twenty meetings between federal and republican representatives in the space of two years, encouraged the Assembly to introduce referenda, and offered his own draft constitution. When it seemed the federation was dying on its feet in 1992 Havel intervened with an assertive referendum bill and proposals for rapidly completing a new federal constitution. In any reading of Havel as the lone reasonable man is nonetheless an erroneous assumption that his avowed pro-federalism amounted to an ability to act as a disinterested arbiter.

A series of diplomatic mistakes thoroughly doused Havel's reputation in Slovakia, enough to remove the aura of impartiality that had crowned his election to the Presidency<sup>31</sup>. His lack of consultation over the naming of the state back in 1990 (following his first official visit to Germany, rather than Slovakia) was particularly alarming to Slovak deputies - though his tribune style annoyed Czechs deputies for

---

<sup>31</sup> In March 1991 the Slovak nationalist cultural organisation *Matica Slovenska* agreed to sue Havel's spokesman, Michael Zantovsky, under the Penal Code paragraph 198 outlawing defamation of a race, nation or conviction and paragraph 199 - the spreading of alarmist reports (*Zemedelske noviny* 21.3.1991:1)

different reasons. In many cases Havel also appeared to veer early toward the *laissez faire* posturing of the Czech right, siding early with the defence of solid central powers over macro-economic policy coupled with non-intervention at the micro-level. In relation to the state treaty, Havel had accused the Christian Democratic Movement of adopting a position that endangered federal institutions, the implication being that the stability of the state as a whole was not a Slovak priority. Such an accusation was readily reminiscent of the Vaculik view, that Slovakia would typically put parochial national interests before those of the state. The loss of confidence in Havel as free of partisan allegiance undermined his capacity to act as 'third force' even while his attempts to bring the two sides together continued to be appreciated. It was unfortunate to the minds of many non-Public Against Violence Slovak representatives that "by and large, Havel... used his authority to support the [federal] government rather than compete with it" (Batt 1993:48).

#### **Conclusion: Placing the federal idea under siege**

Economic radicals, notably those on the Czech right, the Civic Democratic Alliance and Vaclav Klaus's Civic Democratic Party, nevertheless framed constitutional choices not between non-centralisation and centralisation or between liberty and unity; but as residing between an 'optimal' future, achievable only by strong government implementing radical economic and state reform, and an economically 'sub-optimal future', that is, de-centralised federation. Prerequisites for the 'optimum solution' comprised of a sovereign and highly responsive centralised executive and strong administration, and for purposes of legislative efficiency the absence of disruptive constitutional conflict - as if that were possible in the chosen multi-reform conditions of transition - if not a consolidated unitarian constitution. The ascendancy of the Czech right's political agenda (victorious in splintering of the Civic Forum and decisively in the June elections in 1992) successfully 'froze out' Slovak demands for a deeper federalisation, seen by the right as injurious to developments in the Czech Republic. This never-challenged but simplistic discourse of entirely conflicting economic and state-forming constitutional exigencies created irreconcilable goals as perceived by the two Republics.

The constraint, in these terms, produced the main 'transition effect' on the constitutional dispute. The backlog of state and economic reforming legislation accumulating in 1990 certainly required an efficient legislature, more or less immediately depending on one's appraisal of the role of reform and the stability of the state. It nevertheless remained particularly unlikely that Slovaks would be persuaded of the importance of economic reform so long as they lacked the most basic sense of the legitimacy of the system in general, and the dogmatically presented economic reform in particular.

It has been argued that the bi-national nature of the dispute 'over-politicised' every constitutional issue and that no swing vote or third force existed to break the impasse (Mathernova 1993:66). The point is well taken but underplays the very particular 'transition effects' of attempting reform of the state and economy simultaneously. I would argue the reverse, namely, that the constitutional debate was 'under-politicised' because the party political as opposed to the supposedly 'objective reformist' motivations behind the Czech right position of federal 'realism', of 'functioning federation' and 'federation or bust' were accepted uncritically into the debate over the proper constitutional structure of the state - a conflation of interests compounded by the still underdeveloped party system.

Far from 'the centre' being too weak, as has been so widely claimed as to have become the accepted wisdom, the federal executive retained both the political will and the authority to force and define the entire issue of common statehood, as it did with its declaration of 'minimal conditions' for the continuation of the state in late 1991. As is observable in another, but this time relatively stable democratic state, suffering simultaneous difficulties with resource distribution and national relations, *i.e.* Canada, far clearer clarity exists here as to the relationship between constitutional and political interests - a fact which, while it may not make the problems more tractable, at least has cautioned Canadian politicians away from framing constitutional arguments in strictly dichotomous and dogmatic terms. More importantly still, the perceived relative stability of both the economy and democratic institutions in Canada has tended to mitigate the sense of time pressure felt so acutely in Czechoslovakia in 1989 - a sense on which the

Czech right largely depended. A strong case can be made that English-speaking Canadians and Quebecois have not had, and do not have, even in more fraught times, high expectations of a full or decisive 'closure' of their own constitutional wrangling, however desirable this might be in opening those opportunities for radical governance closed to a necessarily consensus-seeking centre. Closure would anyway have been achievable up to now only by the top-down imposition of a solution - something politically inconceivable in a stable democracy.

The exigencies of 1990, particularly as defined by technocratic notions of rapid economic reform, installed a profound stalemate of perceived state-building interests at the earliest point of constitutional negotiation: a stalemate not fully comprehended until the second election. Though significant decentralisation was conceded at the end of 1990, the evident desire of the federal government to retrench its power clearly divided Slovak perceptions of Czech goodwill. Slovak pessimists moreover had reasonable grounds for suspicion. As Klaus made clear in November 1991, "the meeting of governments at Trencianske Teplice last year began the disintegration of our state in which the legitimate federal bodies (both the Federal Assembly and the federal government) were in principle isolated and, step by step, pressed away from their constitutional rights and responsibilities. The participants in those talks [implicitly Klaus's political rivals from the liberal Civic Movement] began to spread a false opinion that this process of weakening the federation represents the only means for its preservation. Petr Pithart (CM) cannot rid himself of the responsibility of having been one of the initiators and chief protagonists of that process" he argued, though he himself had participated at the close of these talks at Hrzan palace in December 1990 (*Lidove noviny, Hospodarske noviny* 12.11.1991)<sup>32</sup>. The missing (or rather discrete) logic in Klaus's continuing advocacy of a uniquely sovereign and uniformly reforming federation unfortunately was that no Slovak partner existed for such a practically

---

<sup>32</sup> This peculiar ire for Petr Pithart was in retaliation to his highly conciliatory television speech on the 9th November. Pithart had acknowledged not only the flaws of Czechoslovakist ideology, declaring that the conception of the Czechoslovak federation in 1969 had been "strange and not too democratic" but he had also identified widespread Czech paternalism. Czech Education Minister P. Vopenka lambasted Pithart for having "taken over the Communist interpretation of Masaryk's republic and some inventions of primitive Slovak nationalists". KAN chairman B. Dvorak advised Pithart to resign. Jan Carnogursky of the Christian Democratic Movement and Peter Weiss of the Party of the Democratic Left on the other hand thanked Pithart for extending "a friendly hand" and for his "sober assessment" respectively (*Svobodne slovo, Lidove noviny* 11.11.1991).



unitary state. When stalemate in negotiations translated so seamlessly into parliamentary deadlock at the federal level, the Czech federal right could nonetheless claim to be provoked.

## **Chapter 7**

### **Sweetening the Reform Pill - the Uses of Conservatism**

#### **Introduction**

By the second half of 1990, Federal Finance Minister Vaclav Klaus dominated the federal government's economic agenda, despite being occasionally constrained by more moderate ministers. This consequently rightwing-leaning governing coalition produced a comprehensive federal package of marketisation and privatisation reforms under Klaus's leadership. The immediate impact of these reforms was, however, far more severe in Slovakia. In order to develop arguments already hinted at in previous chapters, this chapter concentrates on the national biases of the reform's negative impact, and on its political effect - the isolation of Slovak neo-liberals and the provision of the Slovak opposition with a popular, anti-reform platform. The chapter determines that the federal government relentlessly undercut Slovak liberals by refusing to moderate reform or to accommodate Slovak difficulties - a policy supported with total and politically suicidal faith by Slovak liberals themselves. I conclude that the ideology of the New Right, as contained in the federal economic programme, impacted significantly on the Czechoslovak split; the unnegotiable nature of the economic reform and its pro-majority bias provided Meciar with fertile political ground and, concurrently, undermined absolutely the credibility of Slovak liberals.

This chapter outlines the 'Economic Reform Scenario' passed in September 1990. The second section reiterates in the light of economic circumstances why Slovak neo-liberals alone in Slovakia were blamed for poor economic performance. The third section notes assumptions prevalent among Czech economists which influenced reform implementation. The fourth discusses the impact of reform in the crucial areas of industry policy, privatisation, social policy, employment policy, budgetary and fiscal policy.

#### **The scenario**

Supported by the Civic Forum, the key economic positions in the post-revolution federal 'Government of National Understanding' went to the former (Czech) staff of

Prognost - the Forecasting Institute of the Czechoslovak Academy of Sciences. Vaclav Klaus, never a Party member, became Federal Minister of Finance, whilst Valtr Komarek, returning his Party card, became a Deputy Premier, with overall authority for reform<sup>1</sup>. Vladimir Dlouhy, one of Klaus's most important allies in the future, headed the State Planning Commission before becoming Federal Minister for the Economy following the June 1990 election.

The Slovak's lack of such an economics team, educated and skilled in liberal theory, reduced their bargaining power from the beginning. Josef Kucerak of the Public Against Violence was a liberal economist isolated in too many ways. When the issue of republican power-sharing came up in the summer of 1990, Kucerak was so concerned that economic factionalism might paralyse the reforms from Prague he too, along with Meciar and more nationalistic voices, actually supported devolution of significant reform powers - a novel version of the national impulse that his Czech federal colleagues found most unflattering. The liberal credibility of Jozef Markus, the new deputy premier of the Slovak government responsible for economic affairs, was tarnished not only by his real nationalist sympathies but also by his 'positive vetting' after the June election<sup>2</sup>. The authorship of federal reform thus appeared distinctly 'Czech'.

In 1990 Czechoslovakia saw an overall drop in industrial output of 3.7 per cent. The three months following the November revolution had been worse. These conditions followed declining exports to the former Soviet-dominated Council for Mutual Economic Assistance but also the exit of many enterprise directors and executives, thus fracturing, at least temporarily, the personal economic networks of the past. Though collapsing output signalled economic breakdown beyond the government's control (Myant 1993:168), Klaus saw that the degree of former state authority over economic matters would mean a continuing association of economic failure with political / administrative failure. The neo-liberal assertion that people's economic conditions

---

<sup>1</sup> Having occupied centre stage in the closeted economic debates of the late 1980s, Komarek was quickly outflanked after November 1989 by his professedly neo-liberal colleague Klaus. Komarek recruited Klaus from the State Bank to the forecasting institute, Prognost in 1987.

<sup>2</sup> He moved on to lead *Matica slovenska* (Marcincin 1994:4).

should be in the realm of the market rather than the political was, fortunately for him, a belief that cohered well with the lingering pre-communist Czech self-image - to which Klaus hastily began to appeal - and one whereby responsibility and blame might mercifully be detached from government. In Slovakia, the confluence of persistently declining conditions through 1990-1991 with aspirations to improved status - "an explosion of nationalist tendencies" according to Dlouhy's former advisor, Jan Klacek (Klacek:interview 8.2.95) - cast an early frost on neo-liberal ideas.

Unable to formulate a sufficiently fresh agenda Komarek quickly lost the confidence of his colleagues, even of those opposed to Klaus's radicalism, and he was replaced in April 1990 (after the intervention of President Havel) by Vaclav Vales, a veteran of the 1968 reforms. Komarek's fault had lain in his continuing egalitarianism and repeated warnings against the shock therapy already underway in Poland. State restrictions meanwhile continued to hamper the minimal emerging private sector, and foreign investment scarcely trickled in (Myant 1993:170). Komarek had personified other obstacles to change, and the expressed public desire to see immediate change was increasingly harped upon by the right as a request to rule out all 'gradualist experiments'.

The initiative fell to Klaus, and the macro-economic reform line he had already partially developed before the 1989 revolution. For several reasons Klaus believed that the secret of reform lay in the macro-economy. He believed that one had to begin with equilibrium, and that using macroeconomic tools, it was possible to bring supply and demand into equilibrium in all the most important markets. This policy would be combined with a change in ownership - to which industrial restructuring and growth were essentially secondary (Myant 1993:162). The formal de-etatisation of industry was the first objective, and one with obvious political advantages. According to Klaus, much would follow from the removal of "easy money". As he and his colleague Jezek agreed: "As true liberals, we should start with a very heavy dose of monetarist medicine - with economic policy measures, not with formal institutional reforms - because with 'easy money' no real changes can be achieved in economic behaviour of any agents, private or public" (Klaus & Jezek 1991:39).

The federal government produced an outline reform strategy in May 1990, together with a detailed timetable for implementation. There were however, expert reservations within the government over Klaus's chosen form of 'voucher' privatisation, and over the pace and ordering of price and import liberalisation. Their doubts held up programme approval until after the June 1990 election: a mandate would have freed Klaus's hand in claiming a complete end to the debate. Nonetheless, he ensured that only one draft of reform went forward and though it contained some concessions to his more cautious Czech colleagues, many of these remained on paper as the finance ministry line increasingly asserted itself through 1990 and 1991. It has been pointed out since that one reason the left did not return to power in the early 1990s, as they did in the ostensibly unlikely cases of Poland and Hungary, was that social democrats were in power at the beginning in Czechoslovakia - in 1990<sup>3</sup>. The point is well taken since, as we shall see, Klaus 'borrowed' much from the moderate liberal cabinet colleagues he affected to despise for their economic naivete. Between 1990 and 1992 Klaus would make his own several of the suggestions originating from his 'soft' political colleagues, which had evidently contributed to maintaining the Czech social peace.

This reform draft duly became the basis for parliamentary debate following the Czech CF / Slovak PAV / CDM election victory in June 1990. Amidst continuing criticism from economics institutes (though Klaus was on record as seeing no benefit in broad public discussion (*Rude pravo* 27.4.1990), the final debate in parliament was handled as a confidence vote. Criticism was tantamount to outright opposition - a strategy implicitly intended to expose the transition's 'Luddites'. At this stage there appeared to be few in either republic.

Klaus understood the market intellectually and explained his position rhetorically in neo-liberal terms *i.e.* as a self-regulating system based on the price mechanism within which any government intervention was a source of unwanted distortion. His 1990 programme started from the establishment of equilibrium on all markets, to be followed

---

<sup>3</sup> This point was raised by the sociologist David Stark at the Harvard conference on Eastern Europe, May 1996.

by demonopolisation and steps to define ownership - after which prices could be freed. As the weeks passed, demonopolisation - the micro-level restructuring of industrial enterprises, became an ever lower priority. Competition was to be encouraged at the macro-level by a freeing of imports. The dominant themes of reform were the need for a restrictive fiscal and monetary policy at the republican and federal levels, and the need to avoid inflation - "a socio-economic evil, which must be prevented at any cost" (*Rude pravo* 11.4.1990). The latter agenda formed the basis for deflationary policies. Most importantly, the uniform reform preconceived of the federal state as a fully integrated single-market, an already homogeneous entity implying uniform reform measures and, as far as possible, a nationally undifferentiated strategy and it was always presented thus. Institutional changes such as price liberalisation, privatisation, exchange rate and foreign trade reforms were all necessarily federation-wide. To a broader public unschooled in the assumptions of liberal economics, however the *a priori* requirement of a strong and absolutely decisive federal centre meant that economic reform was left a hostage to fortune as far as federal / Slovak relations were concerned, and *vice versa*.

The government's Scenario for Economic Reform, finally accepted in September 1990, comprised of seven sections. The first four represented Klaus's strategy, the remaining three were peripheral to his vision; only the former were fully realised. The first concerned the absolute priority of blocking inflation - to be secured by a further tightening of monetary and fiscal restraint in 1991. Professional economists largely concurred on this point, despite the fact that the inevitability of price rises within the programme suggested that inflation itself (as opposed to continuing subsidy) was not unacceptable (Myant 1993:177). The second section covered denationalisation and privatisation, with the full plan to be approved in October 1990. Small businesses could be auctioned or returned to former owners. A commitment to 'commercialise' large enterprises by the end of 1990 and some variations permitted within a voucher privatisation system represented the main concession to Klaus's rivals (Myant 1993:78). Given the neo-liberal domination of the federal finance ministry and both the Slovak and Czech ministries of privatisation (after June 1990 the latter were under Klaus's colleague from Prognost, Thomas Jezek), Klaus's view of privatisation prevailed in

many respects, the practice tending to secure Klaus's ultimate ascendancy in policy design, consolidated by the federal ministry of economy's dominance of the equivalent Czech ministry (Klacek:interview 8.2.1995).

The third section concerned prices, and contained a commitment to continue the abolition of negative turnover taxes. January 1st 1991, was set as the date for price liberalisation and the establishment of internal convertibility. Monetary and fiscal policies were to restrain price rises, as would a restrictive wages policy and some regulation of particularly sensitive prices (Myant 1993:179). The fourth section, and probably the most controversial at the time, covered internal convertibility, with a proposal that enterprises could buy foreign currency but would be forced to sell all their foreign currency earnings.

The remaining three sections, brief and apparently of little interest to Klaus, concerned agriculture, the social aspects of the transition and structural policy, which did come in for some criticism. Structural policy at this stage comprised of cutting armaments production and the mining of uranium and some other ores. Academic criticisms pointed to an inconsistency, namely the persistent notion of an ill-defined (interventionist sounding) structural policy, and the absence of the more usual 'mixed' economic policies for export promotion or technological advance. The latter section anticipated a regional development policy for which finance, perhaps fatally for the federation, was never forthcoming, though never as explicitly repudiated as industry policy (Mladek:interview 21.2.1995). The Slovak-led (as Dlouhy acceded to the Ministry for Economy) Federal Ministry for State Planning, moreover, became an ever more moribund and persistently underfunded organisation (Klacek:interview 8.2.1995). The 'withering away' of these latter policies was managed discretely. Nevertheless, their disappearance ensured that later, pivotal conflicts in economic policy were by no means simply between Slovaks and Czechs, but between moderates, such as Vaclav Vales and Petr Miller in the federal cabinet, Vlasak, Kouba and Sulc in the Czech parliament, and the Klausite team of the federal finance ministry.

The Scenario failed to mention specific Czech and Slovak conditions in any form. Such differences were considered factually negligible and as providing no grounds for special treatment in a neo-liberal scheme. This stemmed not only from the absence of disaggregated data (not available until mid-1992) which left claims as to national economic conditions notably unsupported, but also from a deep Czech economic assumption that similarities were more significant than differences between the two republics (Mladek:interview 21.2.1995). Klaus would defend not only the right of the federal government to control macroeconomic policy, but would claim as a transcendent necessity that all three government policies remain as determined within the Scenario's monetarist strategy, despite an increasing divergence in economic performance.

Within the still ill-defined Civic Forum, Klaus argued for three fundamental changes: a total commitment to his economic strategy; a total opposition to socialism 'in all its forms'; the conversion of the Civic Forum into a properly organised party - thus decisively leveraging the split of spring 1991. Following the collapse Komarek joined the Social Democrats in April. Dlouhy, despite his previous Party membership, was welcomed into the neo-liberal Civic Democratic Alliance (CDA) in March. The former liberal club of the Forum, including many of the dissident core, and the federal ministers, Jiri Dienstbier, Peter Miller, Pavel Rychetsky and Lubos Dobrovsky, meanwhile became the Civic Movement (CM).

### **Meciar versus the liberals: setting up shop**

Whatever conclusion is drawn concerning the parity of Czech and Slovak economic performance in the 1980s, significant differences were apparent even in 1989. Inequalities prevailed if only because of the different sectoral structure of the two republics and more basically still, greater Slovak energy dependency, and the Czech's comparative advantage geographically. Slovakia was, for many reasons, unequally equipped to ride out the external shocks engendered by the collapse of the Council for Mutual Economic Assistance, and the corresponding exposure to world markets and the shift to hard currency for Russian fuel. Such was Slovakia's structural vulnerability quite apart from the internal shocks likely to emanate from a rapid reform process.



One of the most significant ways in which national relations stood at the mercy of reform followed from the federal insistence that economic parity - existing economic parity - was a precondition of the Federal Reform Scenario. The claim flew in the face even of recent communist economic policy, renowned if anything, for its claim that economic equality between the two republics stood as one of the lasting achievements of socialism. Emergency reforms proposed back in 1988 had indicated crisis precisely because they were based explicitly on the conclusion that the 'equal' Slovak economy was fundamentally less able to absorb investment compared to the Czech. In 1988 even the Panglossian Czechoslovak Communist Party had understood crisis management as necessitating a reorientation of investment to the more profitable Czechs lands. It was hardly surprising then that as Slovak conditions worsened through 1990, Meciar quickly reorientated his initially pro-market rhetoric to a reassertion that Slovakia laboured under particular difficulties, and that adjustment should be made to the grand plan of federal reform.

The economic issue played a key role, not so much in the causes of the political divisions within the Slovak Public Against Violence but in the public presentation of these differences as early as the latter half of 1990. Through 1990, radical reform was backed wholeheartedly by the Public Against Violence's Jozef Kucerak, but many other self-proclaimed liberals in June 1990, such as Jozef Markus, Rudolf Filkus, Augustin Huska and Michal Kovac veered increasingly toward Meciar's arguments for the greater adaptation of reform to Slovak conditions. Even Huska, the Minister for Privatisation, who had advocated rapid reform at the June 1990 election, joined Meciar in his exit from the Slovak Public Against Violence within a year.

Though Public Against Violence's eventual split in 1991 was unambiguously due to Meciar's struggle for power, he understood that his championing of economic adjustment represented the most important platform by which to distinguish himself from the liberals he wished to leave behind. The quarrels within the power-sharing talks in the autumn of 1990 had established Meciar with the aura of a Slovak champion, rather than a Slovak nationalist. It may also be noted that Meciar later described the

climactic divisions within the Public Against Violence as between two factions, holding different views on future constitutional arrangements and on the means of economic reform, in which he cited as close to his own heart, the importance to Slovakia of arms conversion and unemployment. Though the ex-dissidents understood his motives as less public-spirited, Kucerak had in a sense obliged this version of events by lambasting Meciar for his rose-tinted presentation of economic alternatives. Meciar revealed his real political acuity when he described his Movement for a Democratic Slovakia's platform as supporting "full self-determination of the Slovak nation (expressed by a common democratic federation with the Czech nation and support for social policy)" (*Zemedelske noviny* 11.3.1991:1,2).

The executive move ousting Meciar as Premier in April 1991 was co-led by Jozef Kucerak, which again set apart the right-wing economic 'stall' from the Movement for a Democratic Slovakia's still rather ambiguous, but 'more sensitive' other. Next day, Kucerak, for his pains, received a vote of no-confidence at the 13th meeting of the Slovak National Council<sup>4</sup>. Meciar's executive was duly replaced by the Public Against Violence /Christian Democratic Movement coalition headed by Jan Carnogursky. Carnogursky's aspirations to an independent Slovakia within the European Union did not prevent him from supporting common reform, but he did so without the secular liberal convictions of his Public Against Violence colleagues. This ambiguity brought him into constant disagreement with Vaclav Klaus and added to the popular perception within Slovakia that Carnogursky fell between ideological stools. Kucerak went on to lead the liberal rump of the Public Against Violence, (which became the PAV/Civic Democratic Union in October), identifying that party once and for all with neo-liberal policy. They and the Christian Democrats thus found themselves situated on the radical, rightist side of a superficially more polarised debate - ranged against the Slovak Nationalist Party, the Movement for a Democratic Slovakia, and the Party of the Democratic Left.

---

<sup>4</sup> The Presidium also removed Huska and Knazko, and the Minister for Labour and Social Affairs, Stanislav Novak, was replaced by the former Deputy Federal Minister, Helena Wolekova. Ministers Kovac and Filkus resigned on the 24th April.

As Carnogursky's government launched privatisation, the Christian Democratic Movement became associated with an unequal distribution of state property, a process referred to by Meciar as "the biggest swindle in history" (Marcincin 1994:11). Meciar, now in opposition, had with surprising simplicity positioned himself to thrive on the progressively more unequal impact of reform in Slovakia, which already looked set to produce reliable political capital<sup>5</sup>. The Public Against Violence complemented perfectly the picture of an 'alien' reform formulated at the Czech and federal level, and 'imposed' on Slovakia by co-opted so-called 'federal Slovaks'<sup>6</sup> or, more insinuatingly still, by Jews such as Fedor Gal. The darker corners of Slovak political life were not above recycling haggard anti-Semitic myths of international financial conspiracy.

### Cultural differences

That federal neo-liberals overlooked the possibility of adverse Slovak reactions would be a weaker point of criticism if the economic parity argument had ever held water. In the chaos of transition who could have known the consequences of reform one might ask? That Czech neo-liberal economists swallowed the communist declaration of parity seems curious to say the least, and here certain cultural assumptions among the Czech economic intelligentsia are of paramount explanatory importance. Federal economic policy is a less significant factor in Czech accounts of the split than the 'inherently more interventionist' character of Slovak political economy, apparently borne out by their lack of liberal economists. A forthcoming book on the economic aspects of separation, authored by Czechs, has the revealing subtitle: "an example of culturally different nations" (Dedek: proof).

Following Bulir it seems appropriate to emphasise the heightened importance of public expectations over experience in an assessment of radical reform (Bulir 1992:1). Yet Bulir's view is unusual among the bulk of Czech political economy literature, which tends not to dwell on the issue of impact and rather operates under a form of cultural

---

<sup>5</sup> The anti-reformists were also backed, academically, by NEZES - The Association of Independent Economists of Slovakia (actually constituted by old-structure economists and later joined by Huska) (*Hospodarske noviny* 19.3.1991). Their findings for Slovak economic sovereignty could, as reform progressed, be found echoed in the statements of the post-April 1991 Slovak opposition.

<sup>6</sup> Several prominent federal Slovaks were based in Prague as functionaries heading, for instance, the Federal Statistical Office and the Federal Reserve System.

determinism. By presupposing that the Slovak reaction to reform reflected a more ‘interventionist’ political culture *per se*, such papers more or less implicitly discount or trivialise Slovakia’s actual experience of reform, and the political adaptation to it. Most Czech economic papers also endorse the federal government assumption that “the situation of unitary federation [*sic*] is optimal from the viewpoint of chances of achieving the goals of economic reform... it creates preconditions for the formulation and realisation of a unified and efficacious economic policy... such a situation is transparent for the foreign financial and business sphere, which contributes to greater confidence in the Czechoslovak economy” (Capek 1992:10). As Capek has pointed out “the blueprint of economic reform was prepared for the situation of unitary federation” (*ibid.*:10), even though we know from the previous chapter that in the terms of the constitutional debate the idea of the unitary federation, effectively the recentralisation of the state, was professed by the Czech right only as a goal. It was, as the previous chapter made clear, moreover, a goal without a Slovak constituency. This certainly a-national and for the Slovaks, historically regressive definition of the state in fact proved to be politically dysfunctional for the federation.

What might the implications be of such widespread assumptions? (for its application see Svejnar and Dyba 1994, Capek and Sazama 1993, Capek 1992, Dedek (proof)) *i.e.* that Slovak national responses were more historically and culturally than economically determined. The prevailing idea seems to have been that Slovakia’s political culture had been irrevocably affected by its developmental history under communism, contrary to the ‘ancient’ and thus supposedly more resistant cultures of Moravia and Bohemia. For example, Capek, (who amongst academic papers tends to be cited as an authority on national specificity) refers to the Slovak experience under communism as an “economic miracle” to support his assertion that “Slovakia is more inclined to look for a social economic model for its future development”, whereas, in the Czech Republic “the radical move to the market economy has quite natural support” (Capek 1992:8). This is not to gainsay Slovakia’s substantial development under communism, nor even the effect this might have had on predisposing Slovak voters to a more favourable view of the left. It is nonetheless necessary to point out the intensely provocative nature, in party political terms, of equating failing economic conditions with relative cultural

maturity. As I hope to demonstrate, the grounds for Slovak disenchantment were immediate and increasing, resulting from conditions which Czech ministers, including Klaus, worked assiduously to avoid imposing on their own constituency<sup>7</sup>. The persistent federal rejection of adjusting strategy and the pressure it placed on liberal Slovak politicians (the 1990 shift in administrative competences notwithstanding), when evidence of divergence became blatant, is an outstanding aspect of the separation of Czechoslovakia. In Slovakia, the neo-liberals around Kucerak (Public Against Violence / Civic Democratic Union) and the pro-reformists in Carnogursky's Christian Democratic Movement, particularly after April 1991, reaped the results of an irretrievably focused public disappointment.

Slovakia suffered the four major negative consequences of economic transition (decline in living standards, inflation, unemployment and collapsing industrial output), to a greater extent than the Czech Republic. Perhaps more pertinent to the tolerance of such divergence was the fact that the prospects of improvement were also significantly worse in Slovakia. In this section I will concentrate on the years 1990-1991, since, despite some devolution of economic authority to the republics after the power-sharing agreement of December 1990, [see Budgets] the crucial differences in performance were already discernible by the beginning of 1991, before the advent of the Movement for a Democratic Slovakia in Slovakia. Crucially for later political developments, conditions deteriorated seriously in Slovakia when a relatively strong federal centre and the neo-liberals within the respective governments could be perceived as responsible for introducing the change. The privatisation process was moreover implemented after Meciar's ouster in April 1991. Henceforth Meciar would depict his de-throning as a coup by a club of jealous intellectual liberals against the 'man of the people'. By 1991, Czech GDP per capita was already 24 per cent higher than in Slovakia (Lukas 1992:1).

## **The impact of reform**

### **Swords to...**

---

<sup>7</sup> This chapter is written with the proviso that any attempt to demonstrate the divisive powers of federal reform policy requires looking through the frequently opaque window of formal jurisdictions, which, in themselves unclear, particularly in the chaotic days of 1991, were anyway frequently disregarded in practice (Klacek 8.2.1995).

The case of the federal government curb on arms production in Czechoslovakia is an example of a single government policy tailor-made to sour national relations. Arms production was a central pillar of the Slovak economy. In 1989, more than two thirds of approximately 70 state armaments factories were situated in Slovakia, employing (inclusive of upstream enterprises) close on 100,000 workers. Of the 29 billion crowns of arms production in 1987 (3 per cent of total industrial output), some 19 billion was produced in Slovakia. (Lukas 1992:8)

In 1990 the federal government, through various spokesmen (notably Vaclav Havel) and the Scenario for Economic Reform declared the implementation of a policy to curb arms production and export, of heavy armaments in particular: the main preserve of the Slovak industry. The selling point of the policy was that arms production was an indefensible legacy of antiquated Soviet militarism, morally indefensible, and, given the state of the technology, economically unsustainable. Perhaps a further selling point, though never alluded to explicitly, was that the Slovak's post-'68 dominance of the arms industry and the wealth it produced in the 1970s and '80s was an oft-heard Czech resentment. Political motivations aside, within two years the federal government action had cost more than 35,000 jobs in Slovakia and those conversion projects that existed lacked funding. Lukas points out that while the estimated cost of conversion in Slovakia were about 26.3 billion crowns, the federal government had made no more than 1.3 available by 1991. The federal government in fact reneged on the policy piecemeal but then first favoured continuing Czech production. Vladimir Dlouhy's u-turn on the principles of production was completed after two years, *i.e.* just prior to the June 1992 election, by which time the job-losses, the considerable publicity accruing to them, and the neglect of conversion had proved weighty arguments in Slovakia against the Czechocentrism of federal policy.

Though they concur that the 1992 output of arms would have been reduced to some 20 per cent of the 1987 figure, by which time some 50 000 jobs (or 2 per cent of the Slovak labour force) would have been effected, Ales Capek and Gerald Sazama argue that "rather than being a problem of the republics, the restructuring of the arms industry is a problem of the regions" (Capek 1992:19, Capek and Sazama 1993:225).

Such opinions were echoed frequently by federal ministers and Vladimir Dlouhy in particular. Their counter-argument was that Southern Moravia (20 per cent) and Prague (17 per cent) employed a significant proportion of the armaments labour force. Indeed the issue of unemployment as such was clearly not exclusive to Slovakia<sup>8</sup> but to argue for regional responsibility was clearly politically disingenuous in relation to national arguments<sup>9</sup>. Meciar's resonant objection was that the federal government had scored international points via a hasty decision at the expense of Slovakia, not simply by attacking the arms industry, but specifically those sections of the arms industry most concentrated in Slovakia. Moreover, alternative employment in Slovakia did not exist, particularly in single industry towns, whereas in tourist-rich Prague, unemployment was persistently among the lowest in the country. With its turnover unemployment Prague actually absorbed unemployment from neighbouring areas indicating, if anything, a labour shortage.

### **Industry policy**

One of the latter sections of the federal government Scenario for Economic Reform, industry policy, or rather policy aimed at restructuring industry, was sabotaged from the right by 1991. The resulting policy vacuum in this area until 1992 seemed particularly ill-attuned to Slovak anxiety over their relative ability to gain foreign investment and western markets. The process of restructuring was less an issue for Klaus, as already pointed out, than the rapid administration of a transfer of ownership - a neglect of micro-level problems which became an important platform for the rival Civic Movement. When financial crisis hit enterprises in early 1991 (bank credit became 'real' after January, carrying a 24 per cent interest rate (Myant 1993:216), industry began to pass on bad debt, and primary and secondary insolvency spiralled. Though a consolidation bank was established the federal ministry of finance publicly rejected selective help, deliberately leaving this issue to the nominally independent

---

<sup>8</sup> On 2.3.1991 some 50 000 demonstrated in Brno for the enhanced recognition of Moravia.

<sup>9</sup> Indeed, unemployment also fell disproportionately on women and the young in Czechoslovakia (Brada 1991:176), but such groups did not, as groups, carry the same expectations of or even aspirations to effective political representation as did Slovaks within the federation.

banks to resolve;<sup>10</sup> even a scheme from Jan Vrba (Czech Ministry for Industry) to encourage foreign partners was rejected as too interventionist<sup>11</sup>.

Though the contentious data on industrial performance provides some basis for assessing policy, a more telling account of the industrial sector can be gleaned from Bulir's survey of 'expected production'. This measurement is particularly appropriate to our analysis since it is interested in precisely the sort of 'adaptive expectations' that have been underestimated in accounts of the separation. Czech firms were more optimistic, apparently with good reason, about both stability and increases in both total demand and expected external demand. As far as production was concerned, over 55 per cent of all firms in the Czech Republic expected an increase in output, by comparison with less than one third in Slovakia. Over time moreover, Czech and Slovak expectations of stability reflected different conditions: 47 per cent of Slovak firms expected a 'stable output' - actually a continuing under-utilisation of capacity, where the 28 per cent of Czech firms expecting stability assumed a reasonably higher output (Bulir 1992:5).

### **Privatisation**

Small scale private activity had been expected to proliferate as legal restrictions were relaxed already in 1990. The federal law of October 25th provided for small privatisation by auction, with no preferential treatment for employees. By the end of 1991 of the 1,340,000 registered private enterprises a full 70 per cent remained at the preparatory stage or as a subsidiary activity. In 1991 the private sector did little to compensate for the decline in activity elsewhere, least of all in Slovakia, which accounted for only 23 per cent of all private businesses (Myant 1993:216). Though both the Czech and Slovak Ministers for Privatisation were committed to rapid and

---

<sup>10</sup> For an enlightening account of the manipulation of banking networks in Czechoslovakia see Stark and Bruszt 1996. As they point out "in this Czech finance capitalism, voucher privatisation did not sever ties between state and economic institutions, it reorganised them. The investment companies are not unambiguously private: the founders of six of the nine largest funds are predominantly state-owned financial institutions (banks and insurance companies)(1996:24).

<sup>11</sup> Klaus supporters answered western queries over the absence of export support with the claim that, of course there was an industry policy, it was implicit within the macroeconomic strategy (through devaluation of the crown). Not until February 1992 was an agreement reached to establish an export credit agency, whose financial support even now, remains negligible.



comprehensive privatisation for the Slovak, Ivan Miklos (PAV/CDU), installed after Meciar's ouster in April 1991, this spelled increasing political isolation. Indeed, by December 1991, Miklos was even opposed by the future Slovak Christian Democratic Movement deputies within the Christian Democratic Movement, causing Kucerak to threaten withdrawing the Public Against Violence - Civic Democratic Union from the Slovak coalition (*Hospodarske noviny* 3.12.1991:2).

Slovak objections to Klaus's voucher scheme for large privatisation led even the basically sympathetic Slovak government to work out a different strategy, which was only rejected after some changes to the federal scheme were secured by Czech moderate support. The enabling law of 26th February 1991 conceded that vouchers should be bought, at the nominal price of 1000 crowns. More importantly, vouchers could be used together with alternative forms of privatisation within schemes worked out by enterprises themselves and approved by the responsible ministry, *i.e.* the Czech or Slovak Ministry of industry, agriculture or internal trade - a cabinet victory for the Civic Movement. This flexibility implied some initiative in the hands of the privatisation ministries, which processed plans approved by the responsible ministries, except that this came within the context of an extraordinarily short time scale for processing voucher privatisation. The list for the first wave - 1,436 Czech and 573 Slovak enterprises - was to be completed by the end of October with transfer to private ownership ready within five months (Myant 1993:236). Myant comments (without reviewing his own rejection of Slovak peculiarities) "that the problem was less severe in Slovakia where there were fewer really desirable enterprises - average profitability of those on offer was half the Czech level - and on average only two (enterprise) proposals came forward for each" (*ibid.*: 239).

In 1991 the federal government had earmarked approximately 6000 large enterprises for privatisation, about 4,400 in the Czech Republic, and 1,600 in Slovakia. The privatisation process was divided into 2 waves, with each wave consisting of several rounds of bidding for the firms that entered voucher privatisation. By late 1992 it was evident that Slovak companies had been priced lower than the Czech, despite their relatively low indebtedness, and that they had attracted relatively little interest from

Czech investors, who assumed them poorer investments, in great contrast to Slovak interest in Czech firms (Marcincin 1994:32).

Certainly the Slovaks had reason to be concerned by the relatively poor progress of the privatisation process as a whole, especially as a method for reinvigorating the economy. Slovakia saw poorer participation of foreign capital (few firms were seen as internationally competitive), less impressive returns on vouchers and thus relatively greater difficulties in implementing the federal programme as a whole. Bulir's data show a significantly lower share of private firms in Slovakia (Bulir 1992:6-7), with the gap narrowing in retail, but widening in both construction and industry. By the summer of 1992, Czech private firms accounted for one half of all construction works and more than one quarter of industry output whilst the same figures for Slovakia were 20 per cent and 4 per cent respectively. When looking at firms of over 25 employees, medium and large private firms had an almost seven times bigger stake in output in Slovakia.

Another significant feature of the voucher privatisation process itself was that it tended to maximise the uncertainty of outcomes<sup>12</sup>. It was an intrinsic part of the working theory that officials (of the federal coupon privatisation centre) would be able to induce equilibrium between rounds by adjusting prices proportionately to excess demand. Final prices were thus unpredictable. Officials also increased uncertainty by leaving undetermined the number of rounds and according to themselves discretionary powers to alter share prices, and remove excess demand firms out of the privatisation process as a whole. In practice, officials relied heavily on their own intuition and discretion (Singer and Svejnar 1994:44). This could not but add to the Slovak perception that their relatively poor performance was not only turning into an inexorable decline, but one which, having been designed in Prague was at least partially administratively determined. The latter authors confirm in typically 'rational choice' language that "the behaviour of all agents was very strategic, and the authorities intentionally raised uncertainty about the rules of the game and their own future moves" (ibid.:47). In laymen's terms the federal emphasis on ownership change rather than restructuring as

---

<sup>12</sup> For this reason, it was avoided in Poland and Hungary, where more traditional methods nevertheless produced unacceptable trends in ownership, so-called 'nomenklatura capitalism'.

such appeared to leave Slovak industry relatively stranded - it proved from the beginning a less appealing prospect to investors. Nevertheless precious little help existed either for small business start-ups or for restructuring in the absence of new, modernising ownership.

Next to price liberalisation and currency convertibility, privatisation was probably the most visible pillar of the state reform programme. Its success in the Czech Republic thus served to bolster the package as a whole - within that republic. In Slovakia however the Public Against Violence's Ivan Miklos had sided with Klaus in his conflict with Thomas Jezek, who eventually tired of being scapegoated for all the difficulties on the Czech front and complained that Klaus sacrificed proper administration for electoral showmanship. In doing so Miklos had become increasingly identified with a programme failing to address Slovak difficulties: relative lack of domestic capital, uncompetitiveness, unattractiveness to foreign capital *etc.* - an impression deepened as he struggled to consolidate the existing reform before the by now, inevitable defeat of the PAV-CDU in the June 1992 election.

Orenstein points out that Vaclav Klaus's signature as Finance Minister appeared on every privatisation voucher, thus clearly associating him personally with the programme. In the Czech Republic, he suggests, "it did much to mark him as the father of an economic reform programme that was at once relatively fair, popular and effective" (Orenstein 1994:21). Stark and Bruszt also concluded that "the consequence of the voucher privatisation was not to make popular capitalism but to make Vaclav Klaus popular" - pointing out that the June 1992 election followed just weeks after millions had registered their investment points (Bruszt and Stark 1996:24). In Slovakia we may infer that the omnipresence of Klaus's signature had something of the opposite political effect.

### **Living conditions**

Already in early 1991, various factors in Slovakia were signalling a decline in living standards, and a sense of relatively greater caution and anxiety among the population. Slovakia's retail turnover was, and remained throughout 1991-92, below the federal

average, a consequence of lower average monthly wages and higher unemployment (Lukas 1992:21). Slovak consumers were clearly less optimistic and consumer demand was effectively flat. Meanwhile, in the Czech Republic, the rate of saving was increasing<sup>13</sup>, in contrast to Slovakia, where household bank deposits were diminishing even as more money was going into circulation. In 1990 dissaving occurred in Slovakia for the first time since 1970 (Horakova 1992:39). Bulir suggests (though admitting such behaviour is unobservable), that Slovak conditions might have resulted from Slovak households hoarding goods from the better supplied Czech Republic (Bulir 1992:1,2). Horakova suggests more broadly that the Slovak population remained sceptical of further economic developments and sought to rid itself of domestic currency, in contrast to a restored trust in the Czech currency. What was observable, was that consumers in the two republics began to behave as two different populations after 1990, with Czechs spending a higher proportion of their household budget on durable goods and less on food than Slovak households (Horakova 1992:39).

Inflation in 1991 stood at 61.2 per cent in Slovakia and 56.6 per cent in the Czech Republic, and Slovak purchasing power declined by some 27 per cent. However, according to Bulir (1992:15), the inflationary trend was reversed in 1992 due to the Slovak government unilaterally beginning to introduce more expansionary fiscal policies and lower aggregate demand accompanied by the preservation of some subsidies to specific goods and public services. The result was, according to Bulir, a deflationary depression of the Keynesian type. Where the Czech government liberalized 95 per cent of all prices in 1991, or at least relaxed price control and cut many subsidies, the Slovaks preserved some of the latter, namely on transport, paid medical services, rents *etc.* Though this served partially to offset other growing pressures to social peace in the republic, it was clearly a costly divergence from the federal reform line which drew accusations of irresponsibility from the Czech National Council.

### **Unemployment**

According to an appealing if rather general conclusion of Adam Przeworski's, 'people' are willing to sacrifice much for the sake of economic reform, but become restless at

---

<sup>13</sup> A mark of their innately more conservative nature according to Dedek: interview 14.2.1995.

the point at which their work and future are threatened by unemployment (Przeworski 1993). In March 1990 the old union structure was replaced by CSKOS - the Czech and Slovak Confederation of Trade Unions - a loose coordinating body (with 80 per cent of its staff completely new to the job), with no power to dictate policy to affiliated unions and a leadership that stressed the need for rapid reform. Chairman Igor Pleskot proposed to the sympathetic liberals of the federal cabinet a tripartite council of mutual agreements, which would settle yearly 'General Agreements' on the social wage. As it transpired the unions very gratefully retained rights to activity and strike whilst the federal government offered assistance with regional unemployment, in return for which the unions would accept cuts in real wages (Myant 1993:194). The first General Agreement was signed on 28th January 1991 yet despite an indexation agreement, real wages dropped further than expected, well beyond the negotiated level of 12 per cent per year, with few enterprises able to adhere to the agreement. As for the agreed minimum wage, the federal government unilaterally abolished it on July 1991, with only verbal protest from CSKOS. Not surprisingly, Klaus overcame his early scepticism<sup>14</sup> and joined in praising the process of General Agreements as a means to secure a constructive approach from unions (Myant 1993:195-7). Such conditional approval hardly made Klaus the closet social democrat that Orenstein implies (1992). Rather, it derived from Klaus's strategy for a more flexible social contract in the explicit form of employment for low wages, which as we shall see, was not sustained in Slovakia.

Disentangling the relative importance of structural factors as against government policies in countering unemployment is a difficult task, nevertheless it was clear that most new employment in the Czech Republic was in the private sector, particularly in small businesses, effectively replacing jobs lost in the state sector. Orenstein asserts moreover (on what basis it is hard to tell), that unemployment in the Czech Republic would have stood at least twice as high in the absence of government unemployment control policies, which he divides as follows: 1) policies designed to prevent the

---

<sup>14</sup> As early as March, at a speech in West Bohemia, Klaus described the sanctioning of the minimum wage as a gross error, which would lead to the dismissal of people earning less than the 2000 crown minimum. The measure, he added, "would never have been approved without the help of the Liberal Club representatives in the Government" (*Mlada Fronta dnes* 2.3.1991: 2).

bankruptcy of large state-owned enterprises during their privatisation; 2) wage control policies designed to keep the marginal labour force employed; 3) active labour market policies designed to retrain workers; and 4) employment guarantees elicited during privatisation (Orenstein 1994:6).

Should Przeworski's observation be correct then the Slovak unemployment problem alone could have well accounted for Slovak political disenchantment with federal policy. The modest growth in employment in the late 1980s became a decline in 1990. Unemployment had, of course been an unknown quantity under communism (when it took the form of over-employment and the proliferation of paid non-jobs -since the condition of unemployment was itself, illegal). Employment in Czechoslovakia as a whole decreased by 2.5 per cent in 1990, 12.5 per cent in 1991 and 10 per cent in the first half of 1992 (Dyba and Svejnar 1994:105). The dynamic of reduction went as follows: first retirement and the legislated termination of guest worker contracts - hiring freezes and finally layoffs, with market entrants (the young) being hardest hit at first. The response of the federal government's neo-liberals was to estimate that one third of reported unemployment in 1991 was fictitious, covering individuals who were gainfully employed but collecting benefit, or not actively seeking work. Though within the federal government Peter Miller's ministry for labour and social affairs acted as a bulwark against neo-liberal policy, publishing papers on social justice and (Castle-Kanerova 1992:92) acting as a strong advocate of active employment measures, these efforts earned Miller the most insidious condemnation from the political right.

The finance ministry's control of the budget moreover effectively overruled Miller's attempts at consensus building. In 1992, for the first time, the federal budget took on unemployment expenditure in order to give the pressured and bickering republics a better chance of balancing their budgets (expenditure on unemployment had previously fallen to the republics). Legally, republican employment laws adjusted the outline federal law on employment / unemployment. The Federal Budget Act for 1992 however reduced unemployment benefit by halving the eligibility period from 1 year to 6 months, contributing to a fall in the general (*i.e.* registered) rate from 6.6 per cent to 6.5 per cent in the first quarter and 5.5 per cent in the second quarter of 1992. This

measure alone effectively indicated that the federal state ignored and thus compounded the problem of long-term unemployment, building up disproportionately in Slovakia.

Factors frequently cited for the success in keeping state-wide unemployment low are a boom in the private sector, active labour market policies and an unwillingness of directors to lay off workers before privatisation. Unemployment in Slovakia however, rose disproportionately. By the end of 1991 it stood at 4.1 per cent in the Czech Republic but 11.8 per cent in Slovakia. In the first quarter of 1992, the Czech unemployment rate fell from 4.1 per cent to 3.7 per cent but increased from 11.8 per cent to 12.3 per cent in Slovakia, falling back to 11.8 per cent by the end of April (Dyba and Svejnar 1994:6). The upshot of this divergence was that whereas the share of total employed persons in the Czech and Slovak republics was 69.1 per cent and 30.9 per cent respectively, the share of Slovak jobless in the total number of unemployed in the CSFR rose to 57.7 per cent (Lukas 1992:12). Both the rate of unemployment and the total number of unemployed increased more quickly in Slovakia

The latter authors add to their list of explanations the oft-cited belief that there was a "more liberal application of unemployment compensation and severance pay in Slovakia". This actually refers to the fact that the concurrent payment of unemployment benefit and redundancy payment was permitted in Slovakia. The issue of active employment measures was, however, more complex still. In the Czech Republic, active employment measures (1.7 billion crowns worth in 1992 (Orenstein 1994:13) proved adequate, and according to Orenstein, crucially so. Without them, he believes, the unemployment rate in the Czech Republic would have been 80 per cent higher by May 1993. Such policies were, moreover, an important condition of the 1991 General Agreement in the Czechoslovak tripartite council (ibid.). However, according to a PHARE report commissioned and submitted to the federal government at the beginning of 1992, an imbalance of provision for active employment measures existed, with insufficient provision in the Slovak Republic and even an excess in some parts of the Czech lands. In particular, Slovak offices were significantly under-staffed compared to their Czech counterparts: when set against the level of unemployment, a single member of staff was responsible for 57 clients in the Czech Republic and 149 in Slovakia

(Cranston 1992:116). Significantly, the Federal Budget Act for 1992 and major adjustments to the benefit system would rather than rectify (as advised by Cranston), continue the scissor-like divergence of performance between the republics, specifically by *reducing* the proportion of money available to Slovakia for pursuing active employment measures. The federal reduction came despite Slovakia's demonstrated relative difficulty in creating jobs and its greater problems of long term unemployment, in contrast to the Czech Republic where the number of job vacancies rose steadily.

Noteworthy also in this respect, was Slovakia's receipt of significantly smaller flows of foreign direct investment - the proportion of direct investment being roughly 1:9 (Slovak:Czech) by 1992 (Bulir 1992:9), the massive investment of Volkswagen in Czech Skoda making the significant difference. The lack of investment in Slovakia was crucial in effecting the relatively sluggish development of the Slovak private sector. In the eyes of politicians such as Carnogursky it stood as evidence not only of their relative structural disadvantages but also their lack of international visibility. A practical justification thus clearly existed for Slovak concerns over visibility and efforts to improve it, a case certainly not accredited to the unilateral foreign visits of Vladimir Meciar typically viewed by the Czech media as deeply suspicious expressions of both personal and nationalist egotism.

### **Budget and finance**

It should be emphasised that the area of fiscal and other transfers between the two republics, as well as being politically charged, was between 1990 and 1992 fraught with a basic disagreement over estimates, even of purely budgetary transfers. The main source of difficulty in calculation was that there were in fact no explicit transfers between the Czech budget and the Slovak budget (though some from federal to republican budgets). Transfers rather occurred implicitly, and thus controversially, through four main channels: through the allocation of tax revenue to the different budgets; through spending programmes with heavier commitments to one republic than another; through non-market pricing of some commodities and services and finally, through the commercial bank refinancing operations of the State Bank of Czechoslovakia (OECD 1994:27). According to Kotulan, the latter, though not



included in formal budget data, represented significant sums (Kotulan:interview 9.2.1995). Calculation of the true level of subsidy thus remained an expression of the basic state-arrangement arguments stalemated elsewhere, with estimates raging from a transfer of 10 per cent of Net Material Product<sup>15</sup> from the Czech lands to Slovakia throughout the 1980s to Slovak arguments that among other transfers, taxes on wage bills from Slovak subsidiaries of Czech enterprises made the Czech lands the net gainers.

A major problem in analysing distribution also arises from the lack of systematic data on the allocation of expenditure, with the overall expenditure of the federal government the significant unknown (OECD *ibid.*). According to the OECD two politically sensitive areas, social security and administration, were relatively clear cases of directed allocation. Firstly, in the case of the disproportionate strain of higher unemployment expenditure (and other related social payments) on the Slovak budget, the switch of responsibility for unemployment payments to the federal level in 1992 supposedly represented a new transfer to Slovakia (OECD 1994:28). Arguably, because of the unfavourable adjustments in entitlement that followed, it also represented a loss of autonomy, placing Slovak liberals in a particularly difficult predicament when federal responsibility failed to resolve the continuing divergence in unemployment rates. In Slovak eyes moreover, the general location of the federal administration in Prague represented a transfer in the opposite direction.

Raphael Shen argues that the most “delicate sensitivity” was applied to the question of federal/republic jurisdiction and general fiscal reform (Shen 1993:103). Under communism the federal budget had overwhelmingly dominated the republican, despite a debate in 1968 over the assignment of revenues to their origin. The essential requirement of any budget revision was thus the introduction of the basic principle of self-sufficiency in the respective budgets, taking into account the transition to the market. The new law of December 1990 pursued the aims of containing inflation and reducing the government role *per se* in budget-related administered economic activities. Sources of revenue and jurisdiction were redefined, and given ground rules for the

---

<sup>15</sup> The centrally planned economy’s nearest equivalent of GDP.

three governments' revenues it was eventually agreed that each state budget, including the federal budget, would have its own revenues, defined exactly in the law on budgetary rules (Havel 1991:4) - the decision which marked Klaus's victory over the stronger republican proposals of Lnare, back in April 1990.

These ground rules comprised of three main principles which in the existing situation were largely impossible to administer with any precision, discrediting the arrangement as soon as it was established. Firstly, governments on different levels had to determine *ex ante* their respective incomes, with fiscal independence from other levels of government: an objective assuming a jurisdictional clarity which did not exist. Secondly, regulatory functions of the federal budget had to be assured on all levels, integrating fiscal practices into a market orientated structure for the state's economy as a whole. In essence this corresponded to the principle that federal government should be restricted to the level where functioning federalism could be maintained. Unfortunately the definition of minimum federal government as reflected in the legal division of competences remained uncertain and impossible to agree. Thirdly, for practical purposes, existing subsidies to state enterprises would for the meantime remain the responsibility of the federal government (Shen 1993:106).

Revenue shares, but also the revenue sources to be shared were supposedly renegotiated annually and formalised in the budgetary law - another major source of dispute. In practice, the process resembled more a rolling negotiation as often proposals agreed at the advisory Council were rejected by the republican governments or National Councils, and were returned for renegotiation (Mladek:interview 21.2.1995). Each year nevertheless saw a shifting proportion of the three budgets in the overall shared revenue on principles "inspired by a policy of aligning of the expenditure per capita level in both republics" (Kocarnik, former Deputy Federal Minister of Finance 1992:14). In effect the "minimal federation" was something thus practically redefined at each budget negotiation and each budget Act, but on each occasion toward the abandonment of the distributive functions of the state. Had it not been for the fact that the budget was negotiated by the three Finance Ministers (republican and federal), politically and intellectually behind Klaus, the loose legal definitions of their relative

competencies and the aforementioned difficulty in defining real transfers would have made budgetary agreement impossible. As it was, budget negotiation was not a clearly bounded process and was accompanied by far less consensual non-official positions. While Klaus managed to retain both the reins and the whip hand on an extremely technical debate, the conflict over allocation was played out vicariously in the continuing debate over the constitutional division of competences, that is, until the two debates converged dramatically in November 1991.

### **No taxation...**

At the same time as the budgetary law was changed, broad jurisdictions were similarly adjusted as a consequence of the power-sharing talks concluded in December 1990. The law declared the economy of the CSFR to be the integrated economy, of the Czech and Slovak republics<sup>16</sup>, based on a single internal market. The federal government retained exclusive powers over defense, monetary policy, federal reserves, foreign policy, some infrastructural policies (railways and telecommunications). The federal level also retained authority over economic legislation (the legal framework of taxes and capital, labour, goods and services markets). Macroeconomic stabilisation policies, monetary and fiscal policies were all to be organised at the federal level, though in the area of fiscal policy its role was proposed as coordinating and consultative. The republican governments had inherited all other competences, notably, the most politically fraught areas of agricultural policy, social policy, industrial (structural) policy, energy policy, and the bulk of infrastructure (Kocarnik 1992:15)<sup>17</sup>.

Beyond the ground rules of the law, those revenues raised and disbursed at the republican level no longer required approval from the federal authority. Thus according to Shen, citing Miroslav Havel from the federal ministry of finance, the “relative importance of the two republics significantly increased at the expense of the federal

---

<sup>16</sup> Act 556/1990, amending the law on the Czechoslovakia federation: Act 143/1968.

<sup>17</sup> A point of particular controversy was a suggestion during the power-sharing talks that Slovakia should have separate fiscal and monetary policy, with a separate Slovak National Bank -requests obviously beyond the pale for Klaus. In fact at the point of Meciar's removal in April 1991, successors to his ministers found no evidence for such a proposal, and the Movement for a Democratic Slovakia at the time denied any desire to retreat from radical reform as such (Myant 1993:221), suggesting that the talk of separate banks had been a bluff.

government (Havel 1991:3)” - neglecting to mention the practically unitary nature of the communist federation. Before 1989, the federal government had been the dominant tax collector, making sizeable transfers from the federal to the republican and local treasuries. This balance shifted significantly and early, already in 1990, with the federal proportion of total revenues declining by 15.1 per cent to 32.7 per cent in 1990. At the same time the total revenue share of the two republics rose by 17.5 per cent to 45.5 per cent (with several tax collecting functions of local government shifting to the republics), denoting a significant centralisation at the republican level (Kocarnik 1992:16).

A similar shift continued in 1991 when republican budgets became dominant, accounting for nearly two-thirds of the total state budget (Shen 1993:105). The shift was based partly on the federal level shedding responsibility for the management of production organisations to the republics, and partly on re-dividing corporate profit tax and turnover taxes from the federal to the republic level as follows: 35 per cent for the federal budget, 40 per cent for the budget of the Czech republic, and 25 per cent for the Slovak budget (Havel 1991:4). In 1992 the proportion was changed again to 35 per cent for the federal budget, 41.5 per cent for the Czech republic and 23.5 per cent for Slovakia. Eventually, it was intended that turnover and corporate profit taxes would flow directly to the republican governments where enterprises were located. Republican authorities would collect the federal government’s share and transmit it to the federal treasury.

The government adopted a tight fiscal policy for 1991, with the persistent aim of balancing the budget (Shen 1993:106). A preeminent source of expenditure reduction was to be phased subsidy withdrawal. The budget aimed at a fiscal surplus of close to 1 per cent of GDP (8 billion crowns), despite a fall in revenue of some 10 per cent of GDP. Backed by the International Monetary Fund, subsidies fell from 13 per cent to 7 per cent of GDP, however, real consumption, capital and transfer expenditures dropped by close on a third, and social security outlays did not keep pace with inflation and declining economic activity further depressed government revenues (Kocarnik 1992:4). By the end of 1991 the federal government had a 6 billion crown surplus, the Czech

Republic, a 14 billion crown deficit, Slovakia a 9 billion deficit. Kocarnik, over-optimistically in the case of Slovakia, suggests that had revenue from privatisation been included in the budgets, they would have been close to balanced. According to Shen much of the latter deficits resulted from unplanned subsidies to weakened enterprises, problems in securing tax payment and increased government expenditure on active employment measures (Shen 1993:107). He points out that, despite price rises in transport services, gasoline and heating fuel, real income for Czechoslovaks declined by only 1.3 per cent for the fiscal year 1990 (ibid.) - though as we have already seen, the real income decline was steeper in Slovakia. Tax collection thus proved a disappointment in 1991 and Klaus tried, unsuccessfully, to blame the high spending of the Czech and Slovak governments for the shortfall in the 1991 budget.

Though the latter governments could not adjust their commitments for 1991, the federal government reacted by substantial cuts in entitlement to state benefit for the 1992 budget, its solution to the stand-off between the Czech and Slovak National Councils over budgets through late November/early December. In a negotiated compromise between the three Finance Ministers in Bratislava on November 20th the Financial Council had agreed that the existing ratio of the division of turnover and profit tax would stand at 41.5:23.5 (1.77:1) - a concession from the Czech Republic which had originally demanded a division proportionate to the number of inhabitants (1.95:1). However, the Czech National Council reacted to the previous weeks of constitutional controversy by opposing Czech Finance Minister Karel Spacek's agreement as a climb-down, only acceptable if the maintenance of the common state could be guaranteed. "We must not", said Petr Pithart "buy the federation for a couple of weeks only" (*Mlada Fronta dnes* 22.11.1991:2). Klaus opposed what he saw as the Czechs breaking ranks and Anton Vavro, Slovak deputy premier, pointed out that the Czechs were playing into the hands of Slovak separatists by insisting on proportionately at a time of disproportionate economic difficulty (*Hospodarske noviny* 3.12.1991). Though agreement was finally reached on 5th December via a one-off subsidy to both republics from the Federal budget, this was secured by drastic inroads on social benefits, and as we have already seen, unemployment benefits in particular (see above).

In 1990 Klaus had had the foresight to sell proposed public expenditure cuts in the yearly state budgets as an effective way to reduce his own powers: “because the market understands the division of restricted resources far better than the most democratically elected parliament, though it had in its hands the [reform] foundations of the most genial finance minister in the world (Klaus 1990a:18)”, he explained, geniality itself. By 1992 the electoral issue was less the reduction of federal power as such, but the popular, budget-led impression that the Czech and federal governments (apparently incensed by Slovak gestures toward independence) were withdrawing responsibility for the decline in Slovak conditions emanating from federal reform. While the federal budget had a relatively stable surplus in the first three quarters of 1992 both republican budgets were often in the red. Slovak prospects appeared relatively worse at the end of the year owing to low profits and flat retail sales. After the June 1992 election both budgets were kept relatively balanced through prudential expenditure politics and cuts. In the case of Slovakia this behaviour was in clear contradiction to pre-election promises (Bulir 1992:13).

### **Conclusions - reform in the name of the ‘state’**

The post-communist aspiration to ‘roll back the state’ held serious implications for Czech Slovak relations. The Czech subsidy of Slovakia: the financial ‘engineering’ of national relations moreover presented an obvious target, all too easily labelled a communist strategy as it was. According to constitutionally enshrined rules (as distinct from communist practice), the task of the common state had been the balancing of economic and social differences between the two republics. Democratic Czechoslovakia duly inherited a constitutional injunction to create the same conditions and opportunities for the creation and utilisation of national revenues (article 4, paragraph 4 of Act 143/1968). While many accepted that such a clause had to be replaced as part of the dismantling of the central plan, for the professed market purists, amongst others, material subventions to Slovakia were unacceptable in principle. Starting from the view expressed discretely in the Civic Forum June draft election manifesto, that “both nations are at equal levels of economic development” and that the federal state should not, in future, redistribute any part of the national product originating in the Czech

lands to Slovakia (Radio Free Europe 6.4.1990), the position of the right marked out an essential stumbling block of the ensuing conflict.

Five months after the revolution Klaus wrote, apparently addressing the entire population, “we must sign together what is termed in the expert literature, a ‘social contract’, one which will differ a great deal from the last” (Klaus 1990a:16). Such a contract was nonetheless upheld only in the Czech Republic. Moreover, the frustration with existing conditions which lead Slovaks to reject their rightist government, and the subsequent parliamentary upheaval was viewed by federal neo-liberals as a constraint on ‘imperative’ economic policies rather than as a dispute of any transcendent importance: an indicator of what I believe to be a peculiarly dogmatic, ‘post-communist’ manifestation of neo-liberal politics.

Given the pervasive post-communist concern that stability had yet to be created, Klaus’s conservatism operated successfully within a siege mentality. When one looks at just a few statements from the midst of the dispute over competences in late 1990, their most striking feature is the belief that there existed an unassailable realm of the economic, and that politics, or what Klaus termed ‘classical political disagreement’, was subordinate to achieving economic success, or even inhabited a separate realm entirely. Though deeply pragmatic in his approach to attaining reform, ‘politics’ for Klaus remained the technocratic art of economic facility. The politics of the national dispute represented something else: compromise, inefficiency, a potentially fatal threat to market reform; the unattractive prospect of, at best, sub-optimal economic and political returns.

In November 1990 Klaus was asked if he had any ideas on how to formulate Czech policy in relation to the federation. Again his main aim seems to have been to distinguish the economic from the political debate, but also to set out the ostensibly reasonable condition that unity was only feasible within specific economic parameters. “The absence of Czech policy is an objective concern”, he replied. “That is to say that Czech parties never had the need to work out an actual policy. Whether it is a big mistake will only reveal itself...”, and he concludes that “it would be preferable first of

all to straighten out economic relations. I believe, that it is then in the political realm to clear anything up (Klaus 1990c:179)". Once economic relations had been 'straightened out' according to the reform plan it was implied, they should not be permitted to re-enter the political, or national debate. The experiences of other federations and the history of Czech and Slovak relations together however tell us plainly, that these realms cannot realistically be separated.

Orenstein concludes that three sets of attitudes were important in determining Czech acceptance of the economic reform programme: 1) optimism about the eventual success of reforms and future increases in living standards; 2) expectations about how long the period of sacrifices would last, how great the sacrifices would be, and how quickly the benefits would come; 3) perceptions of fairness (Orenstein 1994:21). However, what clearly passed for interventionist, even social democratic/corporatist forms of intervention in the Czech economy proved woefully inadequate in Slovakia, where intervention was at disproportionately lower levels and unsupported by a macro policy anticipating their relative lack of foreign investment and adaptable industrial structure.

Bulir concludes that one can identify divergent republican economic policy and macroeconomic results from the beginning of 1992 (Bulir 1992:1) implying that scissoring conditions created a mounting pressure to adjust policy only months before the June election mandated such a change. I would argue the reform outline and its impact had done its worst already by April 1991, and Meciar's departure from the Public Against Violence. Though the prudent policy of the Czech government was accompanied by positive macroeconomic response, even with the mild stimulative attempts of the Slovak government, aggregate demand in Slovakia continued to fall. Moreover, it had become clear by 1992, that the faltering process of privatisation in the Slovak republic could neither absorb unemployment, nor lead to a significant rise in output, as Bulir concludes. In their expectation of a victory for Meciar in the next month's election, from May 1992, Czech commercial banks were unwilling to buy new Slovak treasury bills and government bonds, moreover the holding of Slovak treasury bills in the portfolios of Czech banks declined steadily afterwards (Bulir 1992:12). The fact that, even after the June 1992 election, Klaus voiced support for a "strong and



functional federation” in this light, begins to ring distinctly hollow. Knowing as he did that what he was advocating was economically and thus politically impossible, not least because of the climate of Czech economic expectations fostered under his rule, he effectively levered the ensuing political separation while purporting to play the role of federal ‘realist’

It was little wonder that many Slovaks sought adjustments in the pace of reform and greater powers of decision when these conditions emerged. Slovakia’s relative deprivation was, by 1992, indisputable. Yet, at the federal level the logic of radical economic reform was relentless: a functioning free market economy was a given end-state of radical reform, to be reached via certain essential measures, but most importantly of all, by tight monetary policy and the avoidance of state intervention or ‘regional’ policy. According to this logic, Slovak failures, given the facile presumed starting point of parity, must have emerged from a mismanagement of the economy within the administrative parameters afforded the republican government prior to 1992. The implication was that Slovakia was not erring from the path as a reaction to an intolerable style of reform, but because of irrational Slovak nationalism, administrative incompetence and throughout the administrative and political structure a prior preference for a different end state, *i.e.* some form of etatist, interventionist economy.

By way of conclusion we are left with the difficult question of to what extent Klausite reform can really be held up as having precipitated a political backlash in Slovakia against the political right. Demonstrating absolutely that economic conditions motivated the voting behaviour of 1992 is not possible, and yet opinion polls consistently revealed living standards and declining economic conditions to be top on the Slovak electorates’ list of concerns. It is also impossible to separate absolutely latent Slovak attitudes to the federal centre from those produced or even consolidated by federal practice between 1989-1992. From what we know of federal relations prior to 1989 however it is clear that democratisation represented to many Slovaks the first real opportunity for a redress of national grievance. We also know that, remarkably, Slovak nationalist movements continued to represent only a minority.

What we may assess with relative ease is the degree of accommodation to Slovak national concerns forthcoming from the federal centre and the likely impact of federal behaviour on the reputation of pro-federalist Slovak political representatives. If lurking in such a question is the awkward counterfactual - was any other policy route possible: feasible, politically or economically? it is perhaps a question to be asked only after considering whether the exigencies of state-building as understood in neo-liberal terms *in themselves* created an intolerable strain on national relations.

Could a greater decentralisation of reform, even a rhetorically greater federal sensitivity to Slovak conditions have activated political constraints in quite the same way? The political economist Gerard Roland suggests that if one assumes the transition to the market economy represents a 'Pareto improvement' it should be possible to compensate losers with the efficiency gains of reform... thus if political constraints play a role in designing the programme, this should be related to the difficulty in compensating losers (Roland 1994:28). The problem with Roland's suggestion is that it presupposes national homogeneity, since arguably any degree of compensation will be viewed as inadequate if a central package of reform is seen to systematically damage one national economy more severely than another within a federation - as Slovaks reasonably perceived to be the case. In addition to this basic perception social compensation in Slovakia was, in many cases both less available and less effective than in the Czech Republic. Thus while Slovak voters may have possessed little interest in macro-economic indicators, Klaus's federal vision certainly had little economically, to recommend it.

Such diverging levels of 'aggregate uncertainty' could not but effect perceptions when everyday comparisons were made possible by the media and family ties. That the federal government managed to protect reform in the Czech lands against the damaging political effects of insecurity (and here Klaus was indebted to his more moderate colleagues) is testimony at least to the fact that these effects were not underestimated. Why then were they allowed to flourish in Slovakia, and, more importantly, not only not recognised and accommodated (if only rhetorically) at the federal level, but actually compounded by budgetary allocations and unmodified reform?

In his discussion of the characteristics of 'big bang' reformers Roland suggests they concern themselves more with *ex post* than *ex ante* (feasibility) political constraints, *i.e.* those that refer to the danger of backlash and the reversal of reform after outcomes have been observed. In effect this means such reformers have to create irreversibility, or the nearest approximation to it, which normally, though not described so explicitly as such, takes the form of a strategy of *fait accompli* to constrain a successor government by increasing the costs of reversal of policies adopted today (ibid.:29). If, for the sake of argument, we step into Klaus's self-confessed school of thought, and apply this to federal government reform in Slovakia, thus referring this theory to a partner, rather than a successor state, we can conclude that discontentment in Slovakia would have been maximised by two facts. Not only did reform disregard initial feasibility constraints (economic specificity) but aggravated the situation by attempting to create the irreversibility of programmes many of which had been greeted with disquiet in the first place. Moreover, the radical reform assumption that the loss of international credibility (in the case of policy reversal) is more costly than domestic credibility clearly counts for little at election time: something which Klaus - the consummate political operator - must have known.

Roland points out, if somewhat tautologically, that the best scenario for the acceptability of reforms is that they would be *ex ante* acceptable (ibid.:32) and should deliver an *ex post* favourable outcome. Such conditions were largely both sustained in the Czech Republic, and not at all in Slovakia, where a 'critical mass' of privatisation was not achieved. The coincidence of pressured public finance with continuing output and revenue falls looked set to destabilise Slovakia's macroeconomic situation further. While conditions improved in the Czech republic, in Slovakia, collapses in industry and output were not offset, aggregate demand did not rise and the costs of unemployment escalated.

As we have seen, Klausite reform as applied in the Czech Republic looks to have been conscientiously state-building. By fulfilling the social contract of low wages in return for low unemployment (aided by the tourist boom in Prague) the Czech reform gained

the characteristic of sensitivity - assisted in no short measure by the moderate Civic Forum ministers - allowing time to build support behind existing measures before moving on to others. The result was a peculiarly post-communist hybrid of radical neo-liberal philosophy, conservative rhetoric and practical *sozialmarktwirtschaft* strategy.

The sense in which institutional reforms and strategy appeared unequivocally radical was in Klaus's outright opposition to attempts at modification, even in the face of growing Slovak political hostility. In Slovakia the reform picture looked very different. Here, I would suggest, uncertainty over the appropriateness of the initial package was converted into rejection, and subsequently resentment by the Slovak electorate. As Roland suggests in relation to gradualist approaches: "the ex ante existence of th[e] reversal option increases the willingness of the population to engage in the reform process - in the case of a successful outcome it also allows for the creation of a constituency" (ibid.:30). The consistent and ostentatious rejection of policy modification by the federal government *maximised* the impression of Czech/Federal suzerainty over the Slovak economy. The curb on arms production succinctly illustrates this point. If one agrees that it is politically prudent under a new federal democratic framework to begin with reforms which are advantageous for both constituent units, then the prioritised decommissioning of one of Slovakia's major industries appeared as a deliberate provocation.

What was the rationale behind federal persistence? Clearly, in practice the federal government was not above reacting to maintain the social peace, as demonstrated by its continual postponement of the implementation of the Bankruptcy Law - a signal which prompted more generous bank credit in the Czech republic, thus sustaining enterprises with high inter-enterprise arrears. If the neo-liberals were thus adequately sensitive to Czech pressures, as we observe they were, the thesis that economic dogma as such prevented federal adjustments for Slovakia is rather weak. If ideological rigour does not account for it, then one is left facing a *realpolitik* approach. Slovak oppositionist objections to current economic policy, Movement for a Democratic Slovakia objections in particular, were *a priori* assumed to come from populist and etatist, rather than instrumentalist impulses, even though throughout the second half of 1991 and until their

defeat in June 1992, Slovakia's PAV/CDU persisted at the bottom of the opinion polls, averaging below 5 per cent support. Publicly, Slovak objections were dismissed as the musings of inept and nationalist economists. They were thus rejected.

Contemplating the problem of the credibility of reform in a 'forecasting' pre-revolution issue of *Politické Ekonomie*, back in 1989, Klaus cited rational choice theory to bolster his claim that the attainment and retention of social consensus "depends to the decisive degree on the integrity of the whole society, on the effectiveness of the social mechanisms which facilitate the achievement of an operable consensus forming the basis of any long-term positive social activity (Klaus 1989:42)". Such a belief in operation could only leave federal neo-liberals with the second best available option, in the event of a society split in two. That is, given the republic-centric political party structure, a strategy of deliberately (for credibility required visible commitment) opting to please only one constituency. Though reform might be presented in the name of the 'state', Slovak neo-liberal colleagues would have to fend for themselves.

As Klaus wrote with Jezek, again in 1989: "the only reasonable reform is a "negative reform", based on the elimination of different kinds of distortions and obstacles to the ever-present human action (in the sense of Ludwig von Mises), whereas an ambitious dirigistic reform blueprint based on rationalistic constructivism and on social engineering is bound to fail (Klaus & Jezek 1991:27)". In the June 1992 election the logic of neo-liberalism required that voters choose *between* short term economic interests (in terms of prospects of distribution) and a common state.

## **Chapter 8**

### **Partition... With Honour?**

#### **Introduction**

The literature covering ethnic/national conflict and its regulation is conventionally concerned with the possibilities open to elite action in mediating profound, mobilised and disruptive, societal crises<sup>1</sup>; such crises being the usual repercussions of state separatism in an otherwise peaceful international environment. It is the key observation of our case, however, that despite the absence of significant nationalist movements, indeed, in the absence of mobilised social movements of any kind, the last governing elite in Czechoslovakia acted as if wrestling down a crisis, adopting measures with a haste and rhetoric appropriate to a society on the brink of real civil turmoil. In the history of separatism, and its accompanying literature, therefore, the Czechoslovak case represents a departure.

This thesis has attempted to demonstrate that the choices of the June 1992 election in Czechoslovakia created, uniquely in the history of modern separatism, a crisis more of governance than of ethnicity. The choice between a unitary state and a confederation certainly represented a choice between the first preferences of the governing elites after June 1992, but the position of Czech Prime Minister Klaus derived from his understanding of reform needs in the transition, and his implacable opposition to compromise along confederal lines was motivated more by economic reform than ethnic factors. This governance crisis, moreover, provides us with a window through which to examine the peculiarities of the post-communist state: its weaknesses, its opportunity structures, and its ruling precepts. The main task of this concluding chapter is to assess the relative merits of the remaining four theories of state demise as set out in Chapter 3, (the Doomsday theory of mass nationalism and Nairn's theory of relative deprivation have already been excluded in Chapter 4), and to consider what if anything was the impact of the post-communist transition upon the state dissolution.

---

<sup>1</sup> As Nordlinger has argued, "nonmanipulable cultural, social and economic conditions may go a long way in accounting for the emergence of an intense conflict but, once it has become severe, its successful or unsuccessful regulation will be largely dependent upon the purposeful behaviour of political elites" (1972:4).

This thesis was guided by six potential accounts of the Czechoslovak separation. The most plausible accounts, suggesting a nationalist conflict, were abandoned in the first half of the thesis on the basis that no nationalist movements nor programmatically nationalistic parties appeared to flourish in either the Czech or Slovak republics between November 1989 and December 1992. In rejecting the relative deprivation thesis, that economic grievances in particular might have motivated nationalist allegiance and collective action in the transition period, the conclusion was not that the existing evidence of economic grievance and national prejudice should be discounted - they were employed by Meciár and Klaus, but rather that their salience could not be captured within a nationalist framework.

The evidence of the preceding suggests that each of the four remaining hypotheses: institutional/path dependency; the failure of party competition; too-autonomous leadership and, lastly, conflicting perceptions of democratisation needs, encompassed much that materially advanced the state toward its final dissolution. Moreover, the inherited institutional structure and party competition acted episodically upon the dispute - by structuring sudden shifts in the prevailing rules of the game - the issues of leadership, reform philosophy, and democratisation impacted more constantly and more pivotally. What follows is a composite account of Czechoslovakia's demise derived from these four explanations.

### **There were no foregone conclusions**

The neatest hypothesis - the 'path-dependency' explanation - which argues that the institutional structures inherited from the previous regime predetermined the separation, fails in one typical and important respect: it underestimates political will and political freedom<sup>2</sup>. Given the 'blank cheque' of the June 1990 election, which returned the still monolithic civic movements to power, the chosen forms of competition between the emerging factions of these civic movements were remarkably unencumbered by

---

<sup>2</sup> This seems almost too basic a failing to be credible - immediately following the revolutions in Central Europe, however, it was not unusual for western political scientists to ascribe extraordinary powers to institutions on the one hand and extraordinary weakness and helplessness to all political actors, on the other, a tendency which sometimes assumed the political de-skilling of elites under communism.

structural constraints. Social cleavages as yet remained electorally 'untested' and unreflected in party competition. More specifically, a full range of opinions for a variety of models of a common state existed in the expressed preferences of opinion polls. As explained in Chapter 5, the issues over which the civic movements disintegrated and on which future competition was based were notable precisely for their lack of pre-communist roots, excepting that is, the implicit conflict over the future federal structure. Party politics in both republics engaged decisively and with great purpose over issues of the transition to capitalist democracy, over approaches to regime transfer, state building and the immediate 'price' to be paid for a common state, economic transformation and the purging of the communist *nomenklatura*. Those who have conceived of events in Eastern Europe as "Modern Mystery" (Jowitt 1992:287), or who have emphasised transitional uncertainty and the difficulty of acting strategically given the uncertainties attached to procedures, interests and traditional political taxonomies (e.g. Tismaneanu 1993, Pridham 1995:5) can thus be challenged by this counter argument. The transition process from the beginning offered fertile ground for party political distinction in many areas and political elites were free to restructure the constitution. Consequently, the path-dependency argument alone cannot hold.

An institutionalist assessment of the opportunities lost through the exercise of the veto in the Federal Assembly only scratches at the surface of the conflict in its observable dynamic. An oft-cited opportunity lost was that of holding a referendum. However, when it was proposed a referendum would have revealed only a highly problematic array of preferred models of a state: an array of preferences at least in part moulded by the party political debate that had gone before (through 1990 and early 1991) and that had precipitated the 'conflict'. The blockage of Havel's legislation represented a significant revelation of failure in the process of constitutional reform, but as argued in Chapter 5, it did not produce any sea-change in the substantive conflict over alternative state forms as such, other than signalling the elevation of this conflict from the parliamentary to the electoral level. The electoral level, however, turned out to be the decisive level given Klaus's willingness to administer the separation once in power. Finally, even if Havel had succeeded in strengthening the presidency, he would not have been capable of realigning the governing elite with the preferences of the public.



Havel's reputation as a disinterested arbiter between Czech and Slovak interests was irreparably damaged by the time of his legislative intervention, a fact which had very little to do with institutional constraints (see below).

A better institutionalist argument, though the institutionalists discussed in Chapter 6 have not raised it, would be this: the damaging effects of the minority veto went far deeper than those resulting from its employment. To many on the Czech right after 1989 the perception of a perpetual 'national' constraint on government was evidently at least as problematic as its impact. The Czech Civic Democratic Party under Klaus had pressed for the veto's modification, the Civic Democratic Alliance for its abolition. Both objected that the veto was an instrument solely of (Slovak) leftist and nationalist recidivists, who wished to hold the state to ransom, using the veto to 'suspend' parliament. That Meciar was aware of the strategic value of his blocking power in the Federal Assembly is certain. That the Czechs were given confirmation for their position is nevertheless an argument from hindsight. Even after two years of persistent deadlock and disagreement over the very basis of the state the federal state had legislated for comprehensive economic reform, the privatisation of small and large scale enterprises, an adjustment in power-sharing (blocked initially by the Czechs) and a new constitutional law establishing a civil code of liberal human rights.

The Czech federal right's concern was the prospect of a persistently successful Slovak intervention against legislation perceived to run against the Slovak national interest, however defined. The right of veto was of course instituted (and recommended during the Prague Spring of 1968) for this very purpose. The Czech federal right perceived the Slovak veto to be unacceptable and provocative from as early as August 1990. The Czech Civic Democratic Alliance actually admitted to objecting *in principle* to a consociational right of minority veto in the federal parliament. To Slovaks, this public objection naturally called into question the Czech's goodwill regarding a common state of equal nations, and yet despite this the Slovak nationalist parties failed to thrive. The rejection of the veto demonstrated the federal right's antipathy not only to one of the basic tenets of consociational governance but to the underlying principles of consociation - power-sharing and the protection of the interests of the minority nation

against majority tyranny. The Czech right's objections to consociationalism, however, fall beyond the explanatory scope of a purely institutional analysis and so must await exploration later in this chapter.

The institutionalist argument may also be applied to the separateness of the republican party systems, though whether this is an issue of institutional inheritance can fairly be questioned. It may be remembered from Chapter 2 that when a branch of Civic Forum was established in Kosice in Slovakia in the early days of the revolution Prague activists advised it to join the Public Against Violence in Bratislava, thus ensuring the separateness of the civic movement structures. When only months later the Communist Party itself federated, the party system as a whole was thoroughly and quite manifestly split. At first glance the segregated party system looks to have been deeply destabilising: likely to discourage consociational bargaining at the elite level and to encourage competitive inter-ethnic relations. Despite the predominance of a republic-centric competition, however, it is evident from opinion poll data that lasting electoral incentives did exist for forging a consensus between the two separate constituencies. The deeper problem of the party system was not therefore the lack of persistent federalist electoral incentives - but the failure of political parties generally to compete coherently on the issue of alternative state arrangements.

The underdevelopment of the party system, moreover, suggests a flaw in any simple theory of institutional path dependency. The centrifugal tendencies of separate party competition can only make sense in conditions where party competition actually exists. The preemptive strategies successfully employed by both Klaus and Meciar in their election campaigns suggest that applying a path-dependency argument to the Czechoslovak case is not warranted, because party competition did not yet exist. What Klaus and Meciar did was to establish the rules of competition. Nor should this occasion surprise. As various sociologists of culture have argued, it is during the "unsettled times" that agency or leadership has the greatest impact on social behaviour, while institutional structures exercise their greatest constraint in "settled times" (Swidler 1986, Sewell 1992). Klaus and Meciar's skill in forestalling democratic party competition is an issue better suited to the leadership thesis (see below), but the critical

point here is that open competition was indeed undermined, and existing public preferences overridden. This being the case, the institutional emphasis upon the divided party structure is a red herring. The party segregation argument is inadequate for several reasons, but most problematic is that the centrifugal dynamic ascribed to Czech and Slovak party competition in the segregated system had not yet developed! In addition, of course, the separateness of the two party systems can not account for the consequences of the 1992 election, namely that the two victorious parties turned against the known majority preference in their respective republics, indeed against the supposedly pro-common state 'spirit' of their own electoral campaigns, and proceeded to organise the dissolution of the state.

An alternative formulation better addresses the failure of the party system to engage with public preferences regarding the state. It suggests that the failure of the party system may be better understood as a direct consequence of regime collapse rather than as an institutional inheritance from the previous regime. In the absence of clearly defined social cleavages following the demise of the civic movements, successful parties sought catch-all or constituency-maximising strategies (within their own republics), concentrating on reform promises whilst avoiding over-identification with existing problem-areas, particularly the problematic state question. Parties avoided being closely identified with a concrete programme toward the common state, resorting to more simple claims to 'complete allegiance' to the federal idea, thereby preserving an ambiguity that later gave politicians decisive autonomy.

As we have seen, the party political response to the self-evident public desire to see *some* answer to the state question was to avoid the issue entirely, the option of choice for the Czech left and the Christian Democratic Union and People's Party coalition, or to compete on the basis of who was most 'genuinely' for the common state: a position which at least saw some nuanced claims as to what form that optimal common state should take. These were nonetheless vague in their institutional outline but also unengaged with the debate of the 'other republic' - with 'real' as opposed to 'optimal' possibilities. The danger of the Czech Civic Democratic Party's position in these circumstances derived not simply from the fact that they had no need to please the

Slovak constituency - a product of the segregated party system - but additionally from the problem that the Czech constituency remained unaware and uninformed by any process of party competition of the true distance between the Civic Democratic Party's proposals and those acceptable to any mainstream party on the Slovak side. To argue that it was exclusively the separateness of the party system that allowed the Slovak position to be so misrepresented would be to ignore the other, very apparent flaws in the existing party system within each republic. In addition to the basic problem of segregation one must add the oligarchic structure of parties themselves and their deliberate obfuscation of constitutional and reform issues.

In both states it may be remembered, party programmes originated from the top down and the party system in general was both highly unstable and ill-formed. The oligarchic structure of the parties emerging from the civic movements, in particular the tremendous freedom of their leading elites in defining electoral issues, was symptomatic. These parties had emerged by way of revolutionary events in little over a year. As discussed in Chapter 5, however, a consequence of their autonomy combined with the absence of firm public preferences expressed in a competitive election before June 1992, was the pervasive absence of pressure to respond to existing public preferences on the troublesome constitutional issue.

In the light of polls which demonstrated that public opinion in both republics was strongly split between several state-type preferences, mainstream political actors clearly felt that other grounds for contestation would prove less risky and more tractable. As far as electoral choices went, it was to these other issues that the fate of the state was more or less implicitly tied. While the effective gagging of clear electoral debate thus holds firm as a theory for the separation in general, it too, along with path-dependency institutional arguments, cannot explain to what end the victorious politicians adopted, indeed, instigated, these gagging practices, other than for the sake of short-term election. Neither theory can answer why Klaus and Meciar proceeded to the dissolution of the state. To answer the question of why these leading politicians saw the common state to be worth sacrificing, and of how they hoped to perpetrate such an affront to the public will and still hold onto power, we must turn to the two remaining theories: the

'brutal realist' argument of too autonomous leadership and a 'transition as cause' argument.

### **Leadership - the uses and abuses of public fatalism.**

As the preceding argument suggests, one possible answer to apparent elite autonomy may lie not in how conflicts are resolved, but in how they are in fact omitted from the political agenda as presented for competitive election. Such an account does not however explain how, let alone why, the actors involved intended to get away with the ultimate decision for separation - a decision they could hardly disguise. An important aspect of a leadership argument focussing on Klaus and Meciar is that the issue-gagging tactic was not only manifest in the party system generally but was used to particular effect by these two protagonists - two leaders bent upon a self-serving dissolution of the common state. The latter, it was suggested in Chapter 3, might have colluded on the separation of the state, having displayed uniquely entrepreneurial leadership in the existing conditions of open political opportunity. Their positive, active leadership toward dissolution was, so this argument suggests, an essential part of the state separation.

Klaus and Meciar's personal superiority as political strategists has been demonstrated. Their avoidance of the narrow identity and historically-rooted ideological politics practiced by their rivals liberated them to act strategically where their rivals sought to demonstrate their own integrity by acting on principle. Both populist leaders could draw on the support of those Communist Party cadres most able, because of their professional skills, to 'launder' themselves in the light of the switch from communist rule. Both headed powerful post-revolutionary networks, rooted not in the dissident movements but in previously integrated sectors of the old regime. In Slovakia Meciar was tied into the 'Revival' group and evidently forged deeper connections with Slovakia's residual security structures when Interior Minister before June 1990. Klaus emerged from the regime's indispensable, and so always potentially disruptive professional 'grey-zone' or technocratic elite, and after 1989, headed the school of once-thoroughly closeted reform economists in the Czech lands. By his ceaseless self-marketing he became identified absolutely with the very impulse toward reform. Their

catch-all identification - what Shari Cohen has called their 'mass-elite identity', characterised by a lack of connection to a group understanding of the past<sup>3</sup> allowed Klaus and Meciar alike to freely interpret the past for their own ends.

The ostensible unlikelihood of their early rise to power is testimony to their skills. Though before 1989 Klaus was careful never to cross the line into dissent (he was allegedly mis-introduced as 'Dr. Wolf' by Havel at an early meeting with the still incumbent communist government), he forged a position of leadership within the dissident-defined Civic Forum. Meciar similarly rose from a position of near-total obscurity to the Mayorship of Bratislava and the shadow-premiership, as a representative of the Public Against Violence, within six-months of the revolution, despite letters to President Havel warning that he would abuse those powers. Both men displayed great tactical skill when the respective civic movements were breaking up. Klaus's decision to portray his dissident opponents in the Forum as driven not by reasonable idealism but anti-democratic elitism and utopianism; and Meciar's manipulation of his dissident critics' social isolation, underpinned their progress to the leadership of new political groupings. It also revealed their willingness to break important social taboos and to manipulate sentiments as morally dubious (but electorally efficacious) as public guilt about the respective dissident elites. This conflict ultimately deprived the long-suffering, long isolated dissidents of the 1970s and 1980s of any credit as the guardians of Czechoslovakia's democratic traditions. Most cruelly, and ironically in the Czech instance, the dissidents were successfully slandered as utopians of the same cloth as the communist hard-liners who had long acted as their persecutors.

Both the Movement for a Democratic Slovakia and the Czech Civic Democratic Party succeeded in forestalling a consolidated party political competition before the June 1992 election. As explained in Chapter 5, the general failure of the party system was due in no small part to the hegemonic strategies of these two particular parties. Klaus demolished the Czech dissident competition with the allegation that they were recidivist social engineers, and claimed in 1992 that his was the party now fulfilling the

---

<sup>3</sup> For a thoughtful and detailed analysis of the roots and competitive advantages of the *absence* of historic consciousness among the victorious Slovak elite behind Meciar, compared to the relative historical groundedness of his religious nationalist and liberal rivals, (Cohen 1997).

democratising mission of the Civic Forum. Meciar over-promised from the opposition sidelines. Together these two parties succeeded in blocking assertive (as opposed to defensive) campaigning from their respective electoral rivals. To come out against Klaus's position meant publicly subordinating 'reform' to the common state, apparently at the price of the former, something which only the former dissident Civic Movement (CM) dared suggest. Klaus's was an electoral formulation of 'if you are not with us you are against us' which successfully warded away any attempt at competition from but all but the already doomed, if most manifestly high-principled dissident Civic Movement.

In addition to holding the constitutional issue hostage to the issue of transitional reform, both Klaus and Meciar fully exploited the separateness of the party systems in leading their own constituencies away from alternatives acceptable to the 'other republic'. Klaus's Civic Democratic Party's position in particular, that of a sovereign centralised pseudo-'federation', clearly lacked *any* Slovak political partner bar the soon to be electorally extinguished Public Against Violence-Civic Democratic Union. The Public Against Violence's electoral death had been predictable since Meciar's ouster in April 1991, after which it had struggled to muster 5 per cent of public support from one month to another. And yet as part of the right's campaign in the Czech republic, Slovak objections to the unitary state model were presented as premeditated and deliberately provocative: as emanating from an ingrained, *secessionist* and economically irrational Slovak nationalism. Voters for the Movement for a Democratic Slovakia meanwhile were completely misled as to the risks they undertook in following Meciar's most indeterminate but confederal-sounding line. As pointed out in Chapter 5, only 19 per cent of would be voters for Meciar's Movement for a Democratic Slovakia were adherents of an independent Slovakia (April 1992, the Bratislava Center for Social Analysis, in Vodicka 1993:99). To make matters worse, the essentially separate press in each republic tended to pick their own electoral winners, and to mirror the policy arguments of the parties in their own coverage, thus removing the one major alternative source of critical information regarding national relations.

That Klaus and Meciar did not collude on the ultimate dissolution, however, is apparent from the events of the last six months outlined in Chapter 2. Facing the alternative of

outright personal political failure, Meciar accepted being coerced by Klaus's strategy when it became clear that the odds on maintaining the state without a full Slovak capitulation had collapsed. Meciar's capitulation points to the perspicacity of Havel's comment that he sometimes had the impression the state 'belonged' to the political parties, a point made during the dispute over presidential powers for the future independent Czech republic (*Zemedelske noviny* 22.10.1992:3). Following the June 1992 election, Czech and Slovak voters looked on with frustration but also a palpable lack of surprise as their new leaders assumed an electoral mandate to sever the state<sup>4</sup>. Public euphoria over the meaningfulness of democratic representation clearly did not survive the first election, in June 1990. Whatever the true state of opposition to the split, 'society' as a protesting, voting or even legislating force was kept largely at bay. Whether this was because of the obscurity of the source of the separation, of the 'it' against which the public could gainfully protest, or because of low public expectations of government accountability, can hardly be distinguished. Klaus for his part was relatively safe in the knowledge that 74 per cent of his own supporters considered that the Slovak left and the insufficient will of Slovaks as a whole to maintain the state might lead to its division. As we also know from Chapter 2, however, Meciar's path to a decent excuse was somewhat stonier. His subsequent zigzagging in search of political justification cost him the support of several of his most able ministers, but also, once and for all, his claims to be a democrat.

When considering Klaus's and Meciar's evaluations of political risk it is instructive to consider the second-order preferences expressed in public opinion poll data. Widespread resignation to the split or something akin to it in fact drove support for separation as 'necessary' steadily upward after June 1992 - if not to a majority then at least to a few percentage points short of a majority by the time of separation. This remained in contrast to stated heartfelt (or first order) 'preferences' (*i.e.* most preferred

---

<sup>4</sup> Zdenek Zboril ascertained in opinion polls as early as January 1991 that more than 80 per cent of Czechs and Slovaks believed that political parties interest in the electorate was limited to winning their support in elections, and they felt that attitude was unlikely to change (Zboril 1995:207). Even before June 1992 there was thus a strong perception that the system had not yet moved significantly from being 'delegative' to being 'representative'.



options) over the state arrangement, which we might reasonably assume to have stayed either stable or to have shifted more gradually toward positive support<sup>5</sup>.

By November 1992, politicians could observe that 90 per cent of both populations considered separation 'inevitable' even though in July, only 16 per cent of respondents in either republic had 'preferred' two independent states (Wolchik 1994:180). In addition by November, 50 per cent of Czechs as compared to some 40 per cent of Slovaks considered the dissolution of the Federation as 'necessary'. A more ambiguous term than 'prefer', 'necessary' nevertheless captured the all-important sentiment expressing resignation to the split: conditional support. Crucially, this conditional support among Czechs looked set to overtake the level of their disapproval - 43 per cent of Czechs and 49 per cent of Slovaks saw separation as 'unnecessary' (IVVM poll 2/22 quoted in *Mlada Fronta dnes* 1,2 *Svobodne slovo* 27.11.1992:1). Given the choice of voting simply for or against the division of the federation in a referendum, 42 per cent of Czechs would have voted for division as against 32 per cent of Slovaks (36 per cent of Slovaks chose the option 'don't know' (IVVM 2/22:4-9.11.1992). According to these polls, both the Civic Democratic Party and to a lesser extent the Movement for a Democratic Slovakia had reasons to believe that a majority of their electorates could be convinced after the event of the sad but pragmatic 'necessity' of splitting the state and that they could adjust their strategies accordingly. Such an upsurge of public fatalism provided Klaus and to some extent even Meciar with positive grounds for believing they might escape future electoral censure for their unmandated actions. As the various press conferences between June and December 1992 reveal, it had been in these terms that both parties, but the Movement for a Democratic Slovakia in particular, had justified their actions to their respective constituencies - sad but objective necessity, they maintained, drove them to their undesired conclusions. As the process continued, polls showed they might profitably seek to legitimise their actions in the same way in the future.

---

<sup>5</sup> Precision on this point is thwarted by the lack of systematic opinion taking during the last six months. While IVVM took monthly samples they nevertheless changed the phrasing of the questions in such a way as to make comparison over time dubious. It appears that following the June election pollsters themselves shifted with the available policy options towards comparing simple support for separation with (an unprogrammatically) 'opposition' to it; ideal preferences and pragmatic endorsements thus became blurred.

### **State myths**

Klaus's peculiar genius lay in making a Czech partition look like Slovak secession, despite Slovak protestations to the contrary. During the last six months of negotiations, concessions were made to Meciar's Movement for a Democratic Slovakia only when the process looked in danger of succumbing to domestic pressure for broader political inclusion - inclusion which would only have slowed, if not sabotaged, the march toward separation. Throughout the negotiations Klaus projected the looming split as the realisation of an historical Slovak craving for emancipation. These Czech claims notwithstanding, the evidence suggests that many Slovaks eventually blamed not only the Czechs, but also Meciar for having made them pay such an unlooked-for price in the battle over equality. It was and remains therefore the riskiest of achievements for Meciar to have called this situation - after the fact of separation - the realisation of Slovakia's national destiny.

The fact of Klaus's more favourable prospects for turning separation to electoral advantage was a message played up to the domestic audience and played down abroad. The Civic Democratic Party projected national optimism at home with oblique but deft signals, such as its prediction of a balanced Czech budget for 1993. The Movement for a Democratic Slovakia had more clearly broken its election promises and had this to overcome, quite apart from the immediate economic impact on the Slovak economy in massive loss of subsidy, and the loss of international confidence so crucial to foreign investment. In Slovakia in March 1993, 50 per cent of Slovaks, when asked "Would you have voted for the dissolution of the CSFR?" maintained that they would have answered 'no', (only 29 per cent 'yes') (Butorova 1993:3). Had elections been held in March, the Movement for a Democratic Slovakia would have secured only 18.6 per cent of the vote, almost half its June figure (ibid. 1993:25). Only 13 per cent of Slovaks said they trusted the Slovak government completely, and 66 per cent judged that the current set of politicians had not been ready to face complete independence (ibid. 1993:30-31). When asked to name their 'most trusted politician', Meciar's support had dwindled steadily from just under 80 per cent in February 1991 to just over 20 per cent in March 1993 (ibid.:37). If this was a victory for the Movement for a Democratic Slovakia it was entirely conditional on Meciar's ability to produce a state-

founding myth strong enough to overcome Slovak disappointment. As we can see from his current political style, Meciar's solution has been to turn to an authoritarian and nationalistic style of government.

Though Slovak federal irredentism was clearly not on the cards after 1992 (and prohibited within MDS/CDP agreements which carefully barred renegotiation of the issue for a minimum of five years), Meciar's capitulation to separation required that he become the deliberate all-out nationalist the Czechs had long supposed him to be, but that he had not been before June 1992. By the same token, the more nationalistic Meciar's strategy in Slovakia, the more credibility looked set to accrue to Klaus's post-independence strategy of explaining the separation as the inevitable result of irreconcilable politics: liberal democratic politics versus nationalist and demagogic rule. As Connor has noted; "while myths of unity have a capacity for engendering harmony they also have a capacity for accentuating division. And the myths are invoked more often for the latter" (Connor 1994:140). The Slovak public, however, was not fooled. In February 1992, 45 per cent of Czechs saw a short term worsening of the general situation arising from separation, against 18 per cent of Slovaks. In contrast, 54 per cent of Slovaks foresaw a long term degeneration as against only 18 per cent of Czechs, implying that a majority of the latter remained essentially unperturbed by events. As for the dawn of independence 29 per cent of Czechs anticipated rapid general advancement, compared to 1 per cent of those supposedly deluded secessionists, the Slovaks (IVVM 2/24 8.2.1993).

The argument that, in the absence of democratic institutions, the fullest rein was given to elite decision-making, and that the separation was duly concocted by leaders with demonstrably rational private power interests in republican independence clearly has a core role to play in any explanation of the separation. It must also be noted, however, that given the autocratic nature of the decision to split the state, separation was sold at a high price. Democratic continuity was supposedly being guaranteed by the transfer of power to the republican level, but at the republican level government was dominated by these two leaders, who had just amply demonstrated their authoritarian tendencies.

The nature of their respective visions for their future states: visions which had clearly acted as the driving force certainly personally for Klaus, and electorally for both leaders, form the subject of the next account of the state's demise. This argument contends that diverging perceptions of democratising, and of the concomitant state-building needs among Czech, Slovak and Federal governing elites led to the growing conflict, the breakdown of common institutions and finally separation. As the only argument really to encompass the 'politics' of the separation it is clear that this part of the story is an essential addition to each of the above arguments. Without the logic contained in the dominant political visions of the time the machinery of government as outlined above, however unbalanced, might have worked to secure a different outcome.

#### **The 'new' politics: omniscient administration, the economic plan and the bogus threat**

To what extent were the observable tensions between the federal centre and the republics and between the two republics themselves derived from conflicting visions of democratisation, or more simply, of transformation? On whose terms were these democratic state-building arguments forged, and by whose definition were these interests deemed incompatible with a common state? These were the questions attached to the theory of centrifugal state-building outlined in Chapter 3.

By examining the main facets of democratic reform in Czechoslovakia this thesis has shown that the political activity of the Czech Civic Democratic Party, the dominant force of the separation, had from its inception driven toward establishing its leader, Vaclav Klaus, as the unilateral arbiter, not just of the Czech but of the federal state's democratisation process *as a whole*, with all that that entailed by way of state-form and economy-form. As discussed in Chapter 6, the Civic Democratic Party's political ideology was essentially about the transition - the revitalised market as both the 'natural' means and end to all that Czechs and Slovaks might wish to achieve.

While Meciar's skill lay in positioning the Movement for a Democratic Slovakia most profitably between the early-established fault-lines of the Slovak political scene, Klaus's Civic Democratic Party in many respects acted as the issue-defining motive force of the

entire Czechoslovak post-communist transition. The Civic Democratic Party's assumption after June 1992 of the status of a sovereign administrator in whom the public interest was somehow innately invested, as opposed to that of a government in whom the public had momentarily placed its trust, is one of the most remarkable aspects of the story I have told. Klaus's conception of his party's role brought about two further developments, both of them perverse in the light of a transition from communism to democracy. Firstly, communist-style 'Leading Role of the Party' claims were now marketed in liberal capitalist terms. Secondly, Czechs were once again demanding that Slovaks subordinate their particular (national) claims to the 'higher interests of the state' *i.e.* state-reform.

The preeminence of economic reform underpinned Klaus's preferred model of the state. Its neo-liberal principles carried a distinct constitutional corollary. 'Politics' for Klaus remained the art of economic facility: the economy in turn, was the engine from which all social transformation, including democratisation, would follow (see Chapter 7). Technocrats typically believe that there exists and should remain an unassailable realm of expertise to which politics (or what Klaus called 'classical political disagreement') is necessarily subordinate. What is extraordinary in the Czechoslovak case was the presumed scope of the technocratic realm and Klaus's willingness to subsume all other values accredited to the common state, including its popularity and its ability to unite two nations in a strategically prudent common union, within a technocratic vision which also happened to be nationally insensible and politically self-serving. While this may imply a tacit, perhaps unconscious Czech nation-statism on Klaus's part, all the available evidence points to both his reasoning and his aspirations lying predominantly in the economic, technocratic realm. The constitutional corollary of this technocratic model was that the 'functioning federation' would have to be designed first and foremost as an *instrument* of reform. It would be established on a principled rejection of nationalist and other rent-seeking claims upon the state. Slovak oppositionist claims about 'reform', its Czech national bias and its social impact were rejected on the basis that they were 'politically' motivated, and not 'reform' motivated.

In practice if not in intention, Klaus's reform agenda 'captured' the entire state-debate in the discourse of reform and of reform imperatives. The strength of the centre was, he had written before the revolution, pivotal to achieving the social consensus necessary for reform. Social consensus, he concluded, "depends to the decisive degree on the integrity of the whole society, on the effectiveness of the social mechanisms which facilitate the achievement of an operable consensus forming the basis of any long-term positive social activity". As it turned out, this was not simply the cautious genuflection of a state-employed economist to the altar of democratic centralism. The practical interpretation of this 'rule' after 1989 was that all things confederal must necessarily detract from the essential 'operable consensus', from the homogeneity of society. Confederation required the acknowledgement that there existed not one social consensus but two potentially conflicting consensi which would forever have to be reconciled at the expense of Klausite principles.

As the substantive chapters of this thesis have demonstrated, Klaus's vision was really of a unitary state. Though frequently referred to as a 'unitary federation', the repetitive coupling of these two contradictory terms alone could never suffice to give the phrase meaning. Klaus's campaigning call may have been for a functioning federation, one which alluded loosely to the American model of individualist liberty enshrined in the power of the states of the union and checked by a unifying centre. But his insistence that the existing Czechoslovak federal state, the 'centre', had already had its unique sovereignty bestowed upon it by 'the people' was a bizarre supposition given the Soviet-led crackdown and amendment of the constitution, not to mention Klaus's otherwise blanket condemnation of the events of 1968. Nevertheless, this claim underpinned the Civic Democratic Party's position that state sovereignty could henceforth be delegated to the republics only by act of central 'grace'; from the 'top down'. It was a far cry from the founding American federalist vision.

When Slovak claims for higher national recognition formed the backbone of the entire Slovak party political scene, Klaus's persistent call for a 'unitary federation' or 'bust' was a fabulously disingenuous message. The projected constitutional status and role of the republics was entirely divorced from history, constitutional precedent, and the

nationally distinct self-identification of the two populations. A 'unitary federation' absolutely begged the question of why a 'federal' state had been formed in 1968 in the first place, and, of course, entirely ignored Slovakia's seventy-odd years of national claims.

Once the full implications of Klaus's basically nation-state model are recognised an interesting question arises. Would Klaus have moved to break up the inherited federation even if Meciar had failed in the June 1992 election, beaten perhaps by Carnogursky's Christian Democratic Movement, or Peter Weiss's Party of the Democratic Left? In the first case, that of a Christian Democratic victory, the answer is almost certainly 'yes'. Carnogursky's calls for Slovak independence at the propitious moment 'sometime in the future' supported Klaus's depiction of Slovak desires more convincingly than Meciar's constant hedging and pure populism. Carnogursky's nationalism was personally heartfelt and articulate, and his party's dependence upon the votes of aging Slovak L'udaks provided ample basis for dire warnings of a creeping return of 'black' Slovak clerico-nationalism. Whether the threat was real or imagined, a victory for Carnogursky in Slovakia would not have fitted Klaus's projection of the future liberal democratic state.

A victory for the Party of the Democratic Left, the reformist Slovak wing of the former Czechoslovak Communist Party, was for Klaus potentially the most problematic of all the realistic electoral possibilities. For though the Democratic Left were plagued by their past, Weiss had succeeded in dragging the party towards a recognisable Western European social democratic position by 1992. Though Weiss was determined that Slovakia should achieve some improvements in its status (see Chapter 2) he was absolutely unwilling to see the common state forfeited, and would have claimed Slovakia's federal allegiance both loudly and coherently not only in Slovakia but also in the Czech lands, where he may have persuaded the still influential former Party paper *Rude pravo* to come to his aid. The dissident opposition would again have entered the fray on his side. Would Klaus have dared a necessarily more explicit partition of the state in these circumstances?

One can but speculate. The bottom line, however, is that the conflict between an implacable Slovak 'threat' to Czech national reform interests was hardly going to be avoided by Klaus. A complete Klausite victory in both republics would have required a self-imposed abnegation of Slovak national identity, national interest and of *existing i.e. inherited* confederal constitutional rights - a *kamikaze* position for a Slovak politician. In these circumstances Meciar's unrelenting personal ambition and egoism made him Klaus's ideal candidate for the June 1992 victory. That the rhetorically outrageous Meciar was the only Slovak politician spared the Civic Democratic Party's withering campaign assaults in 1992 was always a curious omission. In this light Klaus's frequently expressed and highly publicised expectation of Meciar's election victory in Slovakia makes perfect sense.

The claim that Klaus desired to maintain the common state is hardly sustainable. The principle of two equally valid national perspectives upon the democratic future ran counter to his vision. His claims to be a federalist may be seen as electorally facile. He had declared a constitutional ultimatum, a vision which carried only one Slovak partner - the Public Against Violence/Civic Democratic Union - the former dissident party which was going the way of all flesh. Klaus's Civic Democratic Party campaigned in Slovakia, but by doing so it must have known that it would split the already patently minuscule liberal vote to below the threshold necessary for a party's entry into parliament.

### **The decolonising power**

A categorisation of the Czechoslovak separation may finally be suggested here. The speed with which the final dissolution of Czechoslovakia was settled, within six months following the June 1992 election, and the entirely behind-closed-doors nature of the decision-making process suggest not so much a separatist struggle, as a de-colonisation, with the Czech part acting as the colonial power, Slovakia, the reluctantly unhooked colony. The end of the communist system has also been described not only as the end of the Soviet empire in Eastern Europe, but as the end of the 'internal empires' of the Soviet Union, Yugoslavia and Czechoslovakia (Bunce 1996:3). Relative to conflicts in the past, and in comparison with conflicts elsewhere in Europe that have not led to



separation, we might also suggest that Czechoslovakia between 1990 and 1992 hardly experienced a period of 'exceptional' conflict. Similarly, "[i]nside Africa" it has been noted,... "it was hard to find turbulence enough to explain why, having earlier seemed so resolved to keep the continent, the colonial powers... now, after the war [World War II], seemed so preoccupied with how to get out" (First 1983:210).

Clearly such a comparison may be questioned. The essential institutional continuity and the sheer size of the average de-colonised polity on the one hand, and the physical distance between the colonised and the colonial power on the other, were at least at first glance, worlds away from Czechoslovakia's experience. Slovakia's economic development under communism and the suzerainty of the Soviet Union over both Czech and Slovak republics blurs the claim that Slovakia remained the only colonially subordinated polity. And yet, as the history outlined in Chapter 1 suggests, the First Republic under Masaryk carried the distinct overtones of colonial rule. Czech administrative structures and personnel were imported into Slovakia, the Slovak economy was exploited for its raw materials and labour, and the underdeveloped Slovak elite was thoroughly divided by pro- and anti-colonial feeling. By the end of the Second World War moreover, Slovakia had shown itself a highly rebellious territory, and the original Czech strategic interest in a Slovak bulwark against German power had been entirely eradicated by the latter's expulsion following the Nazi defeat. Was a Czech 'withdrawal' from Slovakia something only delayed and denied by the territorial interests of Soviet-enforced Communism, was democratisation in 1989 its cue?

The analogy is interesting beyond its capacity to make a glib historical point. The peculiar outlook of elite actors in the colonising and de-colonising condition is instructive to our case. Ian Lustick has pointed out that "decolonisation is almost always viewed as resulting from metropolitan calculations, usually belated, that because of unrest in the colony, changing international circumstances, or shifting interests or economic conditions, the military, political, and /or economic costs of controlling the possession outweigh the perceived benefits"<sup>6</sup> (1993:29). As has also been noted of

---

<sup>6</sup> Our case is an apt illustration for Lustick's discussion of why traditional distinctions between 'secession' and 'decolonisation' are problematic. Noting that "separation of an outlying territory from an established state is usually considered "secession" if the link between the state and the outlying territory is or was

Africa, imported institutions notwithstanding, “the colonial system functioned in the conviction that the administrator was sovereign; that his subjects neither understood nor wanted self-government or independence; that the only article of faith on which administrators could confidently depend was that all problems of ‘good government’ were administrative, and that disaster would follow from attempts to conceive of them as political... (First 1983:208)”. This description might equally be applied to the Czechoslovak communist system in its last years. Highly constrained administrative tinkering was all that was all that remained to Czechoslovak communism, ideologically bankrupted by the Warsaw Pact occupation of 1968. The description may also be recognised in certain of the presumptions of the Civic Democratic Party: “Decolonisation was a move to shore up ‘stabilizing’ forces in restless regions, rather than a recognition of the right of peoples to the independence and the freedom that the phrases of the UN so eloquently embodied...” (First 1983:213).

The de-colonising analogy is helpful for a deeper reason. It captures Klaus’s geopolitical interest in effecting the uncoupling of the Czech lands from the more slowly reforming Slovakia and the ‘Asiatic’ and Balkan world beyond and below. The geopolitical risks of such a strategy were not negligible, but they fell disproportionately upon the Slovak side. Czechoslovakia in 1989 found itself in a period of unique strategic vulnerability. The collapse of the Warsaw Pact meant that the state belonged to no alliance other than the institutionally weak and unwieldy Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe. The CSCE (now the OSCE) was nothing more than a timetable of meetings backed by a skeletal administration - an alliance possessed of no military capability whatsoever, and in which *every* member state had the right of veto. With the collapse of Czechoslovakia’s satellite status, diplomatic relations had to be built from scratch via bilateral agreements. Both the European Community and NATO offered the most fraternal congratulations in 1989 to the liberated ‘other Europe’ but insisted then, as the European Union continues to insist, that until the moving goals of ‘democracy and market’ can be achieved, Western Europe will in no way presume to

---

presumed permanent and “decolonization” if the link is or was considered temporary” Lustick points out that this leaves little terminology to describe problematic relationships, for instance, to describe departures in states which have always suffered from ambiguous permanence and identity (1993:23).

be its brother's keeper<sup>7</sup>. It was in these precarious conditions that the state was partitioned, leaving Slovak Hungarians particularly vulnerable to the now hegemonic Slovak majority, and Slovakia in turn, an island of instability bordering on a still more chaotic Ukraine. Under Klaus's guidance the Czech republic effectively unhooked itself from 'the east' to become a German peninsula, leaving Slovakia to find its putative 'natural home' in what the West perceives to be the pre-democratic backwater of Eastern, no longer Central Europe. This uncoupling did a terrible disservice not only to the unprotected Hungarians in Slovakia's midst but also to the majority of Slovaks who identified themselves more consensually and democratically than Meciar, after 1993, would allow.

### **Technocratic authoritarianism**

My initial argument - that the separation was not marginally affected but quite observably caused by the distinctive politics of the transition - rested upon two basic pillars. The first, was that the main barrier to consensus in the constitutional debate derived from the Civic Democratic Party position of supporting a functioning, so-called 'unitary' federation. The second was that the structure of political opportunities, in particular for public and party political opposition to the separation, was shaped by the absence of legitimate and well-functioning political institutions of any stripe - a defining trait of the post-communist condition.

My research has indicated, however, that these two pillars are in fact deeply connected. The story of the separation is one of a distinct form of technocratic authoritarianism, dependent upon the conditions of transition. The point is best illustrated by outlining instances where the Civic Democratic Party deliberately and directly suppressed opposition to the separation.

Following the 1992 election there were only a handful of demonstrations for the federation in either republic, promoted in the main by opposition parties and attended more often by hundreds rather than thousands of protesters. In contrast, up to fourteen thousand demonstrated on June 11th in support of the Civic Democratic Party rally in

---

<sup>7</sup> The phrase has been used by Ken Jowitt, who has written with his usual passion of the dangers of the Western European neglect of this region (1992).

the Czech Republic (*Lidove noviny* 13.6.1992.) The increases in the pragmatic acceptance of separation as reported by opinion polling, and the lack of public protest against separation need to be placed in the light of public expectations and the lack of institutionally recognised conduits for the meaningful expression of 'public' feeling. Obviously the public's decision to protest would have been bound up with complex assessments of the likelihood of change - the 'agency' component in Gamson's theory of collective action. Two of the most important assessments made by the frustrated citizenry would have concerned firstly, the extent of the public protest required to adjust CDP/MDS behaviour, and secondly, the extent of protest necessary to adjust the supposedly dichotomous relationship between economic prosperity and continuing coexistence as framed by the party system as a whole. As explored in previous chapters, the prospects for adjusting the latter - a basic pillar of party political contestation - looked poor. Klaus's policies were perceived by Czechs as both successful and desirable, and yet by Slovaks as incompatible with harmonious national relations. The depth of this conflicting view only increased over time; while 61 per cent of Slovaks in March 1993 attributed the split to the uncompromising attitude of Czechs, an entire 84 per cent identified the cause of separation as the 'aggravated economic and social situation of the Slovak population' (Butorova 1993:25).

What were the barriers that really countered the public expectation of successful collective action insofar as collective action was institutionally possible (broadly defined, from street protest to petition, to the lobbying of parliamentary deputies)? Robust answers to this question are difficult. Certain objective factors may however be identified in our case, namely, the difficulties attached to the possibility of effective agency, and also the difficulties attached to what Gamson has called the 'identity' component of collective action, namely the requirement of a "consciousness of human agents whose policies or practices must be changed and a "we" who will help to bring that change about" (Gamson 1992:7-8). The early failure to call a referendum sent a public message to those 2.5 million citizens active enough to have signed the referendum-supporting petition back in 1990/1991. The message was that concerted bids for accountability would not be heeded by government - a sense that would have been compounded the more adversarial the parliamentary atmosphere became. In

addition, though a majority of citizens opposed separation, no obvious majority shared a common view of an alternative feasible state; opinion was divided between the options of a unitary, confederal, land-based republic or federal state. It was thus possible for governments to insist that separation was the (popular) second best solution, made necessary by the reprehensible actions of the 'other' republic. It was correspondingly electorally unappealing for parties, but also basically problematic for would-be pro-federalist protesters in general, to unite and mobilise public opinion on a clearly agreed alternative strategy. Thirdly, fear of the loss of state order, whipped up by the CDP, and consequent fears of losing the achievements of the post-November 1989 years, may have acted as strong disincentives against meaningful protest. This thesis has outlined important barriers to representation presented at the state level. That over 2 million signed a petition moreover argues for the basic fact that while civil society was alive and kicking, little connected it to the political elite. The dissident Civic Movement had always been acutely concerned by this distance. Klaus's Civic Democratic Party on the other hand, exploited it to the full.

### **Passive political culture?**

Arguments that there remained a strong continuity in Czechoslovak political culture from the communist to the democratic period might invoke several important (and, it should be noted, hotly disputed) legacies: society's lack of vital representative structures *e.g.* articulated common interests and identities, organised interest groups, critical press *etc.*; the habituated tolerance of authority (as compared to Poland) *etc.* An argument about the continuity of low public expectations could certainly point to the short-lived trust in democratic political institutions after 1989. The flaw in these last, culture and psychology based accounts of 'passivity' unfortunately remains the lack of compelling evidence. The fact that 90 per cent viewed the split as 'inevitable' does not tell us that the electorate was 'fatalistic' any more than it tells us that they were realistic observers of the events unfolding before them. Similarly, the apparent failure of public opinion to translate into persistent protest may tell us that the electorate struggled to overcome some inner, psychological passivity, but it may equally tell us that they took any number of reasonable decisions that persuaded them against protesting as either pointless, too time-consuming given other pressures, or impractical in the light of the

failure of previous attempts and the location of the adversarial opponent in the 'other', politically untouchable republic.

Few other issues in 'democratic' Czechoslovakia exposed unconstrained executive power over the state-arrangement as much as the abstract issue of sovereignty. The Czechoslovak state was both perceived and treated as the property of the dominant parties and their policies; an indisputable continuity from the communist period. The state's current form proved incapable of delivering the preferred policy of the two governing parties. As a result, the leadership of these governing parties acted to change it, irrespective of any other (historical, metaphysical, international or strategic) saving grace that the state might have had. In assuming absolute authority over the course of negotiations, the CDP in particular made every effort to exploit the exposed, 'transitional' weaknesses of the prevailing institutional environment and to close off those institutional entry points that might have allowed other elite actors to have exacted at least some compromise, an attitude that in itself lent tremendous momentum to the dissolution process. It is worth reviewing the systematic closure of these important institutional opportunities.

### **Parliamentary opposition?**

In his discussion of the 16th century dispute between the English crown and parliament, Breuilly points out that "the new and internally diverse opposition looked to Parliament as a means of organising and expressing itself. Parliament came to provide both an ideological and an organisational function", and one which came to inform in a reflexive way, the English national consciousness (Breuilly 1993:85). If we stretch this not entirely strange analogy to the Czechoslovak federal parliament's continued struggle to influence constitutional developments, we may note that in contrast to 16th century England, Czechoslovak federal parliamentarians had little by way of recent historical encouragement to believe in parliament as either a unifying or intrinsically authoritative force, capable of countering an assertion of authoritarian power. The newly animated rights and powers of the federal legislature after 1989 had been almost immediately called into question. One of the few concrete achievements of the constitutional wranglings of 1990-2 had been to cast doubt upon and bring into

disrepute the most basic principles of the existing parliamentary structure, in particular its strong minority right of veto which had surfaced as a shock, when the communists' paper tiger legislature had come lumbering to life. The result was again to open the opportunities for leadership and for the manipulation of institutional authority<sup>8</sup>.

Excluded from the last six months of negotiation over the separation of the state, the Federal Assembly suffered fatally from the lack of precedent that might have dictated to Klaus the need to put negotiated settlements to a meaningful parliamentary test, *i.e.* one without the threat of a total loss of authority to the National Councils. On the contrary, it followed from the Civic Democratic Party's assumed electoral mandate to create two new sovereign republics that the Federal Assembly's one remaining role was to legislate itself and other federal institutions out of the way. For the Civic Democratic Party to have entered into a dialogue with the federal parliament over the future of the state would have been to admit to the existence of alternative feasible agendas, something the CDP had never officially done. This exclusion of the Federal Assembly from entertaining more than an administrative (as opposed to a representative) role in the dissolution was of course essential to the separation, as well as being a throwback to the communist era. In its single most explicitly nationalistic move, the Civic Democratic Party argued that the imminent cessation of the federation removed from the Assembly any profound parliamentary responsibility to uphold the federal state, the oath of loyalty for the swearing-in of federal deputies notwithstanding. Within the CDP logic it followed that the reformist Czech and not the faint-hearted federal government had both a unique grasp on but also (and before the fact) parliamentary responsibility for, the interests of the Czech people as a whole - a stereotypically 'nationalist' assertion.

In late August 1992, the CDP/MDS agreements on deputy behaviour in the Federal Assembly insisted that the two parties table only those questions pertaining to the constitution. The two parties had agreed in addition that the principle be applied to all

---

<sup>8</sup> The broad claim of historical institutionalists is that institutions structure political battles and in so doing, influence their outcomes (Steinmo 1992:3). In our case the failure of political institutions was critical in giving autonomy to political leaders. It seems to me that it would be stretching a point to claim this as an institutionalist argument; the *absence* of constraint cannot positively structure a political outcome, but can only open up political opportunity.

other political clubs. This last extension of the agreement represented an explicit attempt to limit the legislature as well as the temporarily mandated federal government. The CDP clearly saw that it was now possible to manipulate the deepening insecurity now felt by federal deputies as to their legitimate legal/political powers and duties. In the same vein, opposition initiatives to prevent separation were portrayed as practically *ultra vires* by the CDP, as ever by virtue of its assumed mandate to separate the state. In a throwback to the election tactic of imputing anti-democratic credentials to parties critical of the CDP programme, the parliamentary opposition were accused not merely of a political opposition to the CDP stance, but of a 'legal' misdemeanour. The need to rescue Czechs from Slovak economic (or by now, synonymously, 'socialist') sabotage was invoked in a manner implying that obstruction to divorce amounted to a treasonable negligence of the interests of the future Czech state. This assumption was expressed most concretely by the CDP's unequivocal and unselfconscious intention to exclude the Federal Assembly from the entire separation process, should it fail to ratify legislation dissolving Czechoslovakia into two.

The language of crisis was all-important to the weakening of parliament, invoking as it did the dangers of a helpless government in the face of threat and the terrible internecine conflicts of twentieth century Central Europe, though we know that the threat was fundamentally bogus. As Offe has observed "severe turbulences (including conditions that are skillfully dramatized as severe turbulences) tend to bring political competition to a temporary standstill" (1995:18). An atmosphere of a only-just-avoidable-crisis characterised much of the CDP rhetoric throughout the final process; a strategy for eliciting shows of cross-party consensus where none, in more routine times, would have existed.

The fact that the Federal Assembly was confronted by the 'bottom line' of its own fragile existence immediately after the election only deepened its already questioned efficiency as a legislature. It was given little time to ponder major legislation and was disrupted by unreliable and disillusioned attendance, and an unsteady, intimidatory flow of information about government intentions. Klaus had contended that a Slovak Declaration of Sovereignty could hardly worsen "the absurdities of the 1968



constitution” but if parliament was beleaguered by ambiguously grounded constitutional authority, we can see by now that the executive also disregarded it with a contempt strongly reminiscent of the previous, communist regime. Klaus acted under the vanguardist assumption that his ‘mandate’ permitted the hollowing-out of the Federal Assembly as a representative institution if this ensured the smooth creation of the new ideal state. As even Havel had asked himself, what was to be conceded to the representatives of a soon to be non-existent state? Nothing more, it seemed, than what was required to secure their legal - formally legitimating - rubber stamp. Those who insisted that by ratifying dissolution the Assembly had chosen to uphold ‘political culture’ expressed a great historical irony - ratification was a practical admission that real power had followed the CDP to the Czech state long before the Czech state had been legally or legitimately created.

It is worth noting, though with much hindsight, that the inglorious demise of the Federal Assembly did not amount to a pragmatic blip in the Czech right’s respect for constitutional law. The punch-line to the story of the dissolution, a study in political co-option, has been that in the independent Czech Republic the promised second chamber, the Senate - the combined carrot and stick that had persuaded Federal deputies to abolish the state<sup>9</sup> - remained unestablished until 1996, when the electoral mandate of the federal deputies finally expired. In effect, Klaus never paid the bribe, though these homeless federal deputies, according to agreement by the Federal Assembly Presidium, retained their parliamentary immunity from prosecution and a mandate (to serve the federation).

### **The President**

Finally, the co-option of Havel - the charismatic leader of the revolution and the tie that bound a significant network of emotionally pro-federal groups - can be seen as having greatly weakened the prospects for opposition. President Havel’s early decision to place

---

<sup>9</sup> At the very end of December 1992, the Czech National Council had refused to shorten its discussion of the transfer of deputies bill (Provisional Senate bill) from 60 to 25 days (*Mlada Fronta dnes* 31.12.1992:1,2) - thus leaving the issue unresolved until after independence. With a secure coalition in the National Council there was little incentive for the Civic Democratic Party to hasten the enactment of that section of the new Czech constitution establishing a second chamber. To the bemusement of his opponents thereafter, Klaus ignored the Constitution for almost four years.

his fate in Klaus's hands can be seen as having greatly bolstered that party's ability to pressurise Czech federal deputies into believing hitherto unsuspected versions of parliamentary responsibility. President Havel had represented to many Czechs a defender not only of the federation, but also of the right of citizens to be consulted on the specific issue of the state's future through a referendum. Slovaks on the other hand had long had cause to be irritated by Havel's patrician attitude to Slovakia, and by the uncensored musings of his advisor Michael Zantovsky, seen by many close to Havel as responsible for his leaning ever nearer to Klaus's more pragmatic views. According to Zak "the last nail in the coffin for the idea of possibly transforming the federation" was hammered in by Meciar when the MDS blocked Havel's re-election as President in July 1992 (Zak 1995:263). More fateful than the end of his Presidency though, was Havel's earlier removal of his own tremendous moral authority from behind the authentic federal cause. His acceptance of the separation left the opposition marooned without a popular champion. Without Havel, Klaus could point more easily to a conspiracy of Czech leftists delaying separation only in order to hang on to Slovak gradualism as a bulwark against federal reform. "[N]one of those proposing a referendum mean it seriously" he had said, after the Dissolution Bill was defeated on the 18th November. The implications were that, by then, a pro-federalist deputy was a deputy with a dubious ulterior motive.

Despite his claims that he had no desire to be a 'paper' President and that he felt the collapse of the federation as a personal failure, Havel had acted to maintain office rather than stand up (or rather stand down) for his belief in a federal Czech and Slovak state, and the relationship, as he put it, "bound together by thousands of historical, cultural, and personal ties" (Havel 1992:34). In line with the arguments he employed against continuing parliamentary dissent we may view Havel's adherence to a common Czech front as following perceptions of his own historic destiny, in particular, from his belief that an (inevitably) independent Czech republic would fare better with his blessing than without it. His switch, however, came within weeks of losing the Presidency, and for Czechs who still believed in the federation it represented a surprising capitulation from the principle. It was a signal of the public's disappointment that long after independence it was commonplace to hear Czechs single out Havel as

the individual most responsible for the separation. With Havel lost to the CDP line, the role of a state-protecting, state-nurturing Federal President disappeared. Following Havel's departure, the highly symbolic post was discredited utterly by the failure of parties to put forward respectable candidates, let alone elect them: a lack of strong established political personalities which not only demolished the Presidency months before its official abolition but which also typifies the transition even today.

### **Conclusions**

My evidence challenges the complacent assumption common to transition studies, that Central European post-communist states are embarked upon a somehow predetermined path from revolution to democracy. 'Transition' politics in post-communist Czechoslovakia was both highly distinct, and significantly, and not momentarily, estranged from democratic norms and practice. What I would finally like to emphasise by way of a conclusion is the truly remarkable kinship between the structure of the Czech Civic Democratic Party's arguments for state reform - as it were their sociology of state-reform - and that of the former ruling Communist Party.

Klaus, it may be noted, is still essentially in power in Czechoslovakia at the time of writing (1997). Though without a majority following the improved electoral performance by Zeman's Social Democrats, Klaus's Civic Democratic Party nevertheless remains the single strongest party in the Czech lands and Klaus himself remains the single most successful politician in Central Europe. According to the following criteria, however, the structure of his political sociology mirrors in remarkable ways that of the Communist Party he so publicly despised after 1989.

Thus, as has been demonstrated, Klaus considered the CDP to be a vanguardist party, uniquely suited to the task of defining the democratic future by virtue of its scientifically superior vision of state development. The construction of the future state was projected as a priority: an imperative which might be secured at the cost of the state's immediate democratic functioning. No value was to be ascribed to inherited constitutional norms as the knowledgeable charismatic qualities of the party's vision were considered adequate guarantees of the state's proper administration. The

administering state's definition of public goods was deemed superior to those prevailing among the public themselves - and again this was axiomatic in that it was backed by scientifically defined 'facts of transitional necessity'. Klaus's understanding of nationalist conflict was blankly materialistic insofar as he apparently presumed that prosperity - market prosperity - would suffice for the neutralisation, if not the withering away, of national sentiment. The prevailing ideology was legitimated as historically determined (determined that is by the developmental path and economic culture of the First Republic - only momentarily sidetracked by communism) and was also defined 'negatively', *i.e.* as a 'defence' against an exaggerated external threat - not western imperialism in this case - but Slovak nationalism. When we look at Klaus in the mirror of history, we see a Lenin of the bourgeoisie.

## **Bibliography**

### **Opinion poll data**

Boguszak, M., Rak, V. and Gabal, I. (1990) *Vyzkum "Ceskoslovensko" (May)* Prague: Association for Independent Social Analysis .

Butorova, Zora. (March 1993) *Current Problems of Slovakia after the Split of the CSFR - Report on the Sociological Survey*, Bratislava: Centre for Social Analysis.

Butorova, Zora. (1993) 'A Deliberate "Yes" to the Dissolution of the CSFR? The Image of the Parties and the Split of Czecho-Slovakia in the Eyes of the Slovak Population' (58-73) in *Czech Sociological Review* Volume 1, Spring 1, Prague: Academy of Sciences of the Czech Republic.

'Czechs and Slovaks Compared: A Survey of Economic and Political Behaviour' (1992) Survey conducted by the Association for Independent Social Analysis (AISA), Prague, in *Studies in Public Policy* 198, Centre for the Study of Public Policy, University of Strathclyde.

Institute for Public Opinion Research, (IVVM) selected data covering electoral preferences and views on nationality between 1990 and 1994, Prague.

Jungmann, Bohumil. (1993) (ed) *Volby '92*, Prague: Institute for Public Opinion Research (IVVM).

Kudernatsch, Michal. (1993) 'What type of capitalism is expected in the Czech Republic?' *Czech Sociological Review* Volume 1, Spring 1, Prague: Academy of Sciences of the Czech Republic.

Piekalkiewicz, Jaroslav. (1972) *Public Opinion Polling in Czechoslovakia, 1968-1969: Results and Analysis of Surveys Conducted During the Dubcek Era*, New York: Praeger Publishers.

Timoracky, Marian. (1992) 'Verejna mienka o cesko-slovenskych vzťahoch' in Gal, Fedor. (ed) *Dnesni krize cesko-slovenskych vzťahu*, Prague: Sociologicke Nakladatelstvi (SLON).

Tucek, M. Manek, P. (September 1993) *Statistical and Survey Data*, Prague: Academy of Sciences of the Czech Republic.

### **Economic reports**

*Aspekty a dosledky rozdelenia ekonomiky CSFR na oddelene ekonomiky SR a CR*, (1991) Bratislava: Vydavateľstvo slovenskej akademie vied.

Bulir, Ales (1992) 'The Czech and Slovak Republic in 1992: The Process of Divergence' *CERGE: Working Paper* Number 18, November: Prague.

Capek, Ales. *et al.* (1991) *Varianty vyvoje cesko-slovenskych vztahu, jejich ekonomické implikace* Prague: Ekonomický Ústav, Československé Akademie Ved.

Cranston, Alan. (January 1992) *Study of Active Employment Policy in Czechoslovakia*, PHARE / Know How Fund sponsored report commissioned by the Czechoslovak Office of the Federal Government.

*Czechoslovakia in the International Economy* (October 1992), Volume 2, Number 2, Prague: Institute for Foreign Economic Relations.

*Ekonomické Prohledy*, (1994) CR a SR, Paris: OECD.

Havel, M. (1991) 'New Laws on Budgetary Rules in Czechoslovakia' *Czechoslovak Economic Digest*, Number 1, Prague: Orbis.

Kocarnik, I. (1992) 'The Problems of Fiscal Management in the CSFR in a Time of Transition' *CERGE Working Paper* Number 13, August, Prague.

Prusa, L. (1993) 'Zivotni minimum - zakladni prvek zachranne socialni site' *Narodni hospodarstvi*, (33 - 38) Number 4, Prague.

### **Federal Legal documents/reports**

Constitutional Law on the Dissolution of the Czech and Slovak Federal Republic of November 25, 1992, in Pechota (ed) *Transnational Juris* Vol 2.

*Constitution of the Czechoslovak Socialist Republic* (1960) Prague: Orbis.

Hendrych, D. (1972) 'Central organs of state administration in the Czechoslovak Socialist Republic' *Bulletin of Czechoslovak Law* 1-2, 5-17.

*Slovenske Listy*: 'polocas rozpadu' (1994) [a stenographic record of the constitutional talks between President Havel and 'highest institutional functionaries' on 3rd November 1991].

Ustavni zakon (constitutional law) c. 143/1968 (constitutional amendment).

Ustavni zakon (constitutional law) c. 125/1970 (constitutiional amendment).

## Newspaper articles

'Gen' (television programme) (1994) Interview with Vaclav Klaus: interviewed by Juraje Jakubiska. Collected interviews Volume 1 (ed) Komarek, Martin. Prague: Hajek A.S Prague.

Hubl, M. (1968) 'Community of Czechs and Slovaks' in *Prace* 28.1.1968 in Czechoslovak Press Survey Number 2005, (24:27).

Klaus, Václav. (1994) 'Strasny i krasny srpen 1968' (first published 15.8.1993) appearing in *Ceska cesta* Prague: Profile S.R.O.

Klaus, Vaclav. (1993) *Rok malo ci mnoho v dejinach zeme* (collected essays and speeches from 1992) Prague: Repro-Media.

Klaus, Vaclav. (1991) 'Proc jsem optimista' first appeared in *Literarní noviny* 26 November 1990a, latterly in *O Tvar Zitrka* (The Face of Tomorrow: collected articles, essays and speeches) (15 - 16) Prague: Prazske Imaginace.

Klaus, Vaclav. (1991) 'Finance a Zivotni prostredi' first appeared in *Veda a technika mladezi* 16/1990b, latterly in *O Tvar Zitrka* (The Face of Tomorrow - collected articles, essays and speeches) (135 -138) Prague: Prazske Imaginace.

Klaus, Vaclav. (1991) 'Jsem clovek konzervativni' first appeared in *Lidove noviny* 2 November 1990c, latterly in *O Tvar Zitrka* (The Face of Tomorrow - collected articles, essays and speeches) (176 - 181) Prague: Prazske Imaginace.

Klaus, Vaclav. (1991) 'The Transition From a Centrally Planned Economy: the Czechoslovak Approach' (February 1990) in *Cesta k trzni ekonomice*, selected articles and speeches in both Czech and English, Prague: Top Agency.

Klaus, Vaclav. (1989) 'The imperatives of long-term prognoses and the dominant characteristics of the economy at present' in *Czechoslovakia Economic Digest* 7/1989 (also appeared in Czech in the summer edition of *Politicke Ekonomie* in the same year).

Klaus, Vaclav. & Jezek, Thomas. (1991) 'Social Criticism, False Liberalism, and Recent Changes in Czechoslovakia' in *East European Politics and Societies* Volume 5. Number 1, Sage Publications.

Mezinarodni Forum (1992) *Dusledky Rozdeleni Ceskoslovenska*, Prague: Ustav socialne politicky ved Univerzita Karlova.

Zajac, P. 'Pat Rokov Po', a series appearing in the newspaper *Domino* (on disk).

Znoj, M. (1994) 'Anatomie Klausova Conservatismu', in *Listy*, (69 -79) Number 2, volume XXIV.

### Memoirs and testaments

Ciganka, Frantiska, (1992) *Kronika demokratickeho parlamentu 1989-1992*, Prague.

Churchill, Winston S. (1948) *The Second World War: The Gathering Storm*, Volume 1  
Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company.

Djilas, Milovan. (1962) *Conversations With Stalin*, Harvest Books, New York:  
Harcourt, Brace and World Inc.

Dubcek, Alexander. (1993) *Hope Dies Last: The Autobiography of Alexander Dubcek*,  
Hochman, J. (ed. and trans.) Kodansha International.

Havel, Vaclav. (1992) *Summer Meditations*, (translated by Paul Wilson) London and  
Boston: Faber and Faber.

Kucera, Rudolf. (1992) 'Proc potrebujeme debolsevizaci', in *Komentare, Politicke  
analyzy z let 1990 - 1992* Prague: I.S.E.

Kundera, Milan. (1987) *The Book of Laughter and Forgetting*, London: Penguin.

Michnik, Adam. (1993) 'An Embarrassing Anniversary' *New York Review of Books*, 10  
June.

Remington, Robin. (ed) (1969) *Winter in Prague: Documents on Czechoslovak  
Communism in Crisis*, Cambridge, Massachusetts and London: MIT Press.

Simecka, Milan. (1984) *The Restoration of Order: The Normalisation of  
Czechoslovakia 1969-1976*, London: Verso.

### Czech newspapers and periodicals consulted for years 1990-1992

CTK, (Czech Press Agency)

*Ekonom*, Prague, economic weekly

*Hospodarske noviny*, economic and political daily

*Lidova demokracie*, People's Party daily

*Lidove noviny*, independent daily supportive of Havel

*Mlada Fronta dnes*, independent daily (formerly the Union of Youth daily)

*Obcansky denik*, Civic Forum daily

*Prace*, labour/union movement daily

*Respekt*, weekly independent, eventually supportive of Czech separatism

*Rude pravo*, leftwing daily, formerly the Czechoslovak Communist Party paper

*Svedictivi*, paper of Czech emigration, published in Paris by Pavel Tigrid

*Svobodne slovo*, Socialist Party daily

*Telegraf*, rightwing/conservative daily supporting Vaclav Klaus

*Zemedelske noviny*, daily traditionally connected to farming community



### **Slovak newspapers and periodicals consulted for years 1990-1992**

*Kulturny Zivot*, weekly cultural paper, formerly Slovak Writers Union paper

*Narodna Obroda*, weekly independent

*Novy Slovak*, nationalist paper with uncritical attitude to the wartime Slovak state

*Pravda*, leftwing daily, formerly the Slovak daily of the Czechoslovak Communist Party

*Praca*, labour/union movement daily

*Slovensky dennik*, Christian democrat daily

*Slovenske narodne noviny*, moderate nationalist weekly of *Matica slovenska*

*Slovensky narod*, nationalist paper, (pro wartime state/Tiso and prone to 'World Jewish conspiracy theorising')

*Smena*, daily of the Union of Youth

*Verejnost*, Public Against Violence daily (*Verejnosti proti nasiliu*)

*Zmena*, Slovak nationalist daily with highest circulation of the nationalist press, (openly anti-Semitic and tending toward the extreme right - writing includes frequent labelling of 'enemies' as 'Jew', 'Free Mason', 'cosmopolitan', 'communist', etc. and pro-Tiso/wartime Slovak state)

### **English Language Periodicals**

#### **Radio Free Europe Research Reports and Report on Eastern Europe**

11 March 1970 "Which Way Federation in Czechoslovakia" Hajek and Niznansky.

10 January 1979 "Czechoslovakia After a Decade of Federation", Ladislav Niznansky and William F. Robinson.

7 September 1990 "Relations Between Czechs and Slovaks" Peter Martin.

7 December "Difficult Power-Sharing Talks" Jan Obrman and Jiri Pehe.

22 March 1991 "Growing Slovak Demands Seen as Threat to Federation" Jiri Pehe.

7 June 1991 "The State Treaty Between the Czech and Slovak Republics" Jiri Pehe.

30 August 1991 "Controversy Over the Referendum On the Future of Czechoslovakia" Jiri Pehe.

20 September 1991 "Further Discussion on the Future of the Federation" Jan Obrman.

11 October 1991 "Bid for Slovak Sovereignty Causes Political Upheaval" Jiri Pehe.

28 November 1991 "Czech and Slovak Leaders Deadlocked Over Country's Future" Jiri Pehe.

20 March 1992 "Slovakia, Calculating the Cost of Independence" Peter Martin.

March 1977 "Are the Czech lands or Slovakia Favored by the Federal Government?" Audience and Public Opinion Research Department.

## Secondary sources

Arato, Andrew. 'Revolution, Civil Society and Democracy: Paradoxes in the Recent Transition in Eastern Europe', *Working Papers on Transitions from State Socialism* #90.5, Cornell Project on Comparative Institutional Analysis, Ithaca, New York: Cornell University.

Arato, Andrew. (1993) 'Constitution and Continuity in the East European Transitions' (155-171) in Grudzinska Gross, I. (ed) *Constitutionalism and Politics - Bratislava Symposium 1993*, Slovak Committee of the European Cultural Foundation.

Banac, Ivo. (ed) (1992) *Eastern Europe in Revolution*, Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press.

Barbiari, R. (1992) 'Czechoslovakia's Move Towards a New Constitution: the Challenge of Establishing a Democratic Multinational State' *The New York Law School Journal of International and Comparative Law*, 13:1.

Bartlova, Alena. (1995) 'Political Power-Sharing in the Interwar Period' (159-1800) in Musil, Jiri. (ed) *The End of Czechoslovakia*, Budapest : Central European University Press.

Batt, Judy. (1993) 'Czechoslovakia', in Stephen Whitefield (ed) *The New Institutional Architecture of Eastern Europe*, (proof copy for review) Macmillan.

Benes, V. (1973) 'Czechoslovak Democracy and Its Problems, 1918-1920' (39-99) in Mamatey, Victor S. and Luza, Radomir. (ed) *A History of the Czechoslovak Republic 1918-1948*, Princeton: Princeton University Press.

Bennett, C. (1995) *Yugoslavia's Bloody Collapse*, New York University Press.

Beyme, K von. (1993) 'Regime Transition and Recruitment of Elites in Eastern Europe' *Governance*, Volume 6, Number 3, (409 - 426) Cambridge, Massachusetts and Oxford: Blackwell Publishers.

Binns, C. (1989) 'Federalism, nationalism and socialism in Yugoslavia' (115-147) in Forsyth, M. (ed) *Federalism and Nationalism*, New York: St. Martins Press.

Blanchard, O. J. and Froot, K. and Sachs, J. (1993) 'Introduction' in *The Transition in Eastern Europe*, Volume 2 University of Chicago Press.

Bosak, Edita. (1983) 'Czech-Slovak Relations and the Student Organisation Detvan, 1882-1914' (6-42) in Kirschbaum, Stanislav. (ed) *Slovak Politics*, Canada: Bryant Press Limited.

Brada, J. (1991) 'The Economic Transition From Plan to Market' (171 - 177) *Journal of Economic Perspectives* Volume 5, Number 4, Fall.

Bradley, J. (1981) *Politics in Czechoslovakia*, University Press of America.

- Breuilly, J. (1993) *Nationalism and the State*, Second Edition, Manchester: Manchester University Press.
- Brubaker, Rogers. (1996) 'Nationalizing States in the Old 'New Europe' - and the New' in *Ethnic and Racial Studies* Volume 19, Number 2, April.
- Bruszt, Laszlo. and Stark, David. (1996) 'Restructuring Networks: Network Properties of Assets and Liabilities in the Postsocialist Transformations' paper presented at the conference on *Democracy, Markets and Civil Societies in Post-1989 East Central Europe*, Harvard University, Centre for European Studies, 17-19 May, 1996.
- Bunce, Valerie. *From State Socialism to State Disintegration: A Comparison of the Soviet Union, Yugoslavia and Czechoslovakia*, Paper presented at the conference on "Democracy, Markets and Civil Societies in Post-1989 East Central Europe" Harvard University May 17-19, 1996.
- Bunce, Valerie. and Csanadi, M. (1993) 'Uncertainty in the Transition: Post Communism in Hungary', in *East European Politics and Societies*, 7 (2): 240-75.
- Butora, Martin. (1994) 'Constitutionalism in Values and Stories', in Grudzinska Gross, I. (ed) *Constitutionalism and Politics - Bratislava Symposium 1993*, Slovak Committee of the European Cultural Foundation.
- Butorova, Zora. and Butora, Martin. (1995) 'Political Parties, Value Orientations and Slovakia's Road to Independence', in Wightman, Gordon, (ed) *Party Formation in East-Central Europe: Post-Communist Politics in Czechoslovakia, Hungary, Poland and Bulgaria*, Aldershot: Edward Elgar.
- Capek, Ales. (1992) 'The Past and Future of Czecho-Slovak Economic Relations' *Program on Central and Eastern Europe Working Series #22* Harvard University.
- Capek, Ales. and Sazama, Gerald. (1993) 'Czech and Slovak Economic Relations' *Europe-Asia Studies* (211 - 235) Volume 45, Number 21.
- Castle-Kanerova, Mita. (1992) 'Social Policy in Czechoslovakia', in Deacon, Bob. *The New Eastern Europe*, (ed) London: Sage Publications.
- Cisar, J. and Benda, S. (1992) *Rozvod po Ceskoslovensku* Prague: Orbis.
- Cohen, Shari. (1997) *Politics Without a Past: The Absence of History in Post-Communist Nationalism*, Ph.D. dissertation, May, University of California, Berkeley.
- Connor, Walker. (1994) 'Illusions of Homogeneity' in *Ethnonationalism: The Quest for Understanding*, Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press.
- Connor, Walker. (1994) 'The Seductive Lure of Economic Explanations ("Eco- or Ethno-Nationalism?")' in *Ethnonationalism*, Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press.

Connor, Walker. (1984) *The National Question in Marxist-Leninist Theory and Strategy*, Princeton: Princeton University Press.

Dedek, O. (unpublished) *Ekonomicka Historie Zaniku Ceskoslovenska: Priklad kulturniho rozchodu narodu*. (Economic History of the Separation of Czechoslovakia: an example of culturally different nations).

Deutsch, Karl. (1966) *Nationalism and Social Communication: An Inquiry into the Foundations of Nationalism*, Second Edition, MIT Press.

Draper, Theodore. (1993) 'The End of Czechoslovakia' *The New York Review of Books* XL:3 January 28, (20 - 26).

Dunleavy, Patrick. and O'Leary, Brendan. (1987) *Theories of the State: The Politics of Liberal Democracy*, London: Macmillan

Dyba, Karel. and Svejnar, Jan. (1994) 'Stabilisation and Transition in Czechoslovakia' in Blanchard, O. Froot, K. and Sachs, J. *The Transition in Eastern Europe*, Volume 1 (ed) National Bureau of Economic Research, University of Chicago Press.

Eckstein (1979) 'On the Science of the States' Grauberd, S.R. (ed) *The State* New York: N.W. Norton.

Elazar, D. J. (1987) *Exploring Federalism*, The University of Alabama Press.

Elster, J. (1995) 'Consenting Adults or the Sorcerer's Apprentice' *East European Constitutional Review* Volume 4, Number 1, Winter, Chicago: University of Chicago Law School.

Evans, Geoffrey. and Whitfield, Stephen. (1993) 'Identifying the Bases of Party Competition in Eastern Europe' *British Journal of Political Science*, 23, (521-548) Cambridge University Press.

First, Ruth. (1983) 'Colonialism and the Formation of African States' in Held, David. et al (ed) *States and Societies*, New York and London: New York University Press.

Gagnon, A. (1989) 'Canadian federalism: a working balance' in Forsyth, M. (ed) *Federalism and Nationalism*, New York: St. Martins Press.

Gamson, W. A. (1992) *Talking Politics*, Cambridge University Press.

Garton-Ash, Timothy. (1995) Prague: Intellectuals and Politicians *New York Review of Books*, January 15th.

Geddes, Barbara. (1995) 'A Comparative Perspective on the Leninist Legacy in Eastern Europe' *Comparative Political Studies* Volume 28, Number 2, Sage Publications.

Gellner, Ernest. (1964) *Thought and Change*, London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson.

Golan, Galia. (1971) *The Czechoslovak Reform Movement: Communism in Crisis 1962-1968*, Oxford: Cambridge University Press.

Goldman, P. *et al* (1992) 'Introduction: Soviet federalism - its origins, evolution and demise', in Lapidus, G. W., Zaslavsky, V. and Goldman, P. (eds) *From Union to Commonwealth: Nationalism and Separatism in the Soviet Republics* Cambridge University Press.

Grudzinska Gross, I. (ed) (1994) *Constitutionalism and Politics - (IV) Bratislava Symposium 1993*, Slovak Committee of the European Cultural Foundation.

Hendrych, D. (1993) 'Czechoslovakian Public Administration' in Hesse, J. (ed) *Administrative Transformation in Central and Eastern Europe*, Basil Blackwell.

Hirzowicz, Maria. (1980) *The Bureaucratic Leviathan: A Study in the Sociology of Communism*, Oxford: Martin Robertson.

Hobsbawm, E.J. (1990) *Nations and Nationalism Since 1780: Programme, Myth, Reality*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Holmes, Stephen. (1988) 'Gag rules or the politics of omission' in Elster, J. and Slagstad (ed) *Constitutionalism and Democracy*, Cambridge University Press.

Horakova, I. (July 1992) *Personal Consumption in Czechoslovakia and its Changes After the Economic Reform*, Central European University Thesis, Prague.

Horowitz, D. (1985) *Ethnic Groups in Conflict*, Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press.

Huntington, Samuel P. (1991) *The Third Wave: Democratization in the Late Twentieth Century*, Norman and London: University of Oklahoma Press.

Jelinek, Yeshayahu. (1976) *The Parish Republic: Hlinka's Slovak People's Party 1939-1945*, Boulder, Colorado: East European Monographs, Columbia University Press.

Jelinek, Yeshayahu. (1983) *The Lust for Power: Nationalism, Slovakia, and the Communists 1918-1848*, Boulder Colorado: East European Monographs, Columbia University Press.

Jicinsky, Zdenek. (1993) 'Ke ztroskotani ceskoslovenskeho federalismu' in Kipke, Rudiger. and Vodicka, Karel (eds) *Rozloucení s Československem - principy a důsledky česko-slovenskeho rozchodu*, Prague: Patriae.

Johnson, P. (1985) *Slovakia 1918-1938*, Boulder, Colorado: East European Monographs, Columbia University Press.

Jowitt, Ken. (1992) *New World Disorder: The Leninist Extinction*, Berkeley, Los Angeles and London: University of California Press.

- Judt, Tony R. (1992) 'Metamorphosis: The Democratic Revolution in Czechoslovakia' (96-117) in Banac, Ivo. (ed) *East Europe in Revolution* Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press.
- Kaplan, Karel. (1983) *Political Persecution in Czechoslovakia 1948-1972* Research Project: Crises in Soviet-Type Systems (Directed By Mlynar, Z.) Study Number 3.
- King, P. (1982) *Federalism and Federation*, John Hopkins University Press.
- Kipke, Rudiger. and Vodicka, Karel. (eds) (1993) *Rozloučení s Československem*, Prague: Patriae.
- Kirchheimer, Otto. (1990) 'The Catch-all Party' (origin. 1966) in Mair, Peter. (ed) *The West European Party System* Oxford University Press.
- Kirschbaum, Stanislav. (1995) *A History of Slovakia: The Struggle for Survival*, New York: St. Martin's Press, Macmillan.
- Kirschbaum, Stanislav. (1983) 'The Slovak People's Party: The Politics of Opposition, 1918 - 1938', in Kirschbaum, Stanislav. (ed) *Slovak Politics*, Canada: Bryant Press.
- Kirschbaum, Stanislav. (1983) 'The Revolt of 1944' (286-314) in Kirschbaum, Stanislav. *Slovak Politics*, Canada: Bryant Press.
- Kitschelt, Herbert. (1992) The Formation of Party Systems in *East European Politics and Society* (7 - 50) Volume 20, Number 1, Sage Publications.
- Kohn, Hans. (1955) *Nationalism: Its Meaning and History*, Princeton, New Jersey: D. Van Nostrand Company Inc.
- Kohn, Hans. (1994) *The Idea of Nationalism*, New York: Macmillan.
- Kostecky, Thomas. (1995) 'Changing Party Allegiances in a Changing Party System: the 1990 and 1992 Parliamentary Elections in the Czech Republic' in Wightman, Gordon. (ed) *Party Formation in East-Central Europe: Post-Communist Politics in Czechoslovakia, Hungary, Poland and Bulgaria*, Aldershot: Edward Elgar.
- Kostunica, V. (1988) 'The Constitution and the Federal States', in Rusinow, D. (ed) *Yugoslavia: A Fractured Federalism*, Washington DC: The Wilson Center Press.
- Krejci, O. (1995) *History of Elections in Bohemia and Moravia*, Boulder, Colorado: East European Monographs (Number CDXXXIII) Columbia University Press.
- Kusin, V. (1971) *The Intellectual Origins of the Prague Spring*, Cambridge University Press.
- Kusy, Miroslav. (1995) 'Slovak Exceptionalism' in Musil, Jiri. (ed) *The End of Czechoslovakia* Budapest: Central European University Press.

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

Leff, Carol S. (1997) *The Czech and Slovak Republics: Nation Versus State*, Boulder, Colorado and London: Westview Press.

Lijphart, Arend. (1992) 'Democratization and Constitutional Choices in Czechoslovakia, Hungary and Poland 1989-1991' in *Journal of Theoretical Politics* 4(2): 207-223 Sage Publications.

Lipset, Seymour Martin. and Rokkan, Stein. (1990) 'Cleavage Structures, Party Systems and Voter Alignments' (origin. 1967) in Mair, Peter. (ed) *The West European Party System*, New York: Oxford University Press.

Lomax, Bill. (1995) 'Impediments to Democratisation in Post-Communist East-Central Europe', in Wightman, Gordon. (ed) *Party Formation in East-Central Europe* Aldershot: Edward Elgar.

Lukas, Zdenek. (1992) 'Standing of Both Republics and Effects of Separation' *Current Analysis*, Number 3, Vienna: WIIW.

Lustick, Ian. (1993) *Unsettled States, Disputed Lands: Britain and Ireland, France and Algeria, Israel and the West Bank-Gaza*, Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press.

Mair, Peter. (1990) (ed). *The West European Party System*, Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Malova, Darina. (1994) 'The Relationship Between the State, Political parties and Civil Society in Postcommunist Czech-Slovakia' (111-159) in Szomolanyi, Sonya. and Meseznikov, Grigorij. (eds) *The Slovak Path of Transition - To Democracy?*, Bratislava: Slovak Political Science Association.

Mamatey, Victor.S. (1973) 'The Establishment of the Republic' (3-39) in Mamatey, Victor S. and Luza, Radomir. (ed) *A History of the Czechoslovak Republic 1918-1948*, Princeton: Princeton University Press.

Mamatey, Victor S. (1973) 'The Development of Czechoslovak Democracy, 1920-1938' (99-167), in Mamatey, Victor S. and Luza, Radomir. (ed) *A History of the Czechoslovak Republic 1918-1948*, Princeton: Princeton University Press.

Maravall, Jose Maria. (1994) 'The Myth of the Authoritarian Advantage', *Journal of Democracy*, October, Volume 5, Number 4, Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press.

Marcincin, Anton. (1994) *The Political Framework of Slovak Privatisation*, Draft mimeo 10.11.1994: Prague.

Mathernova, K. (1993) 'Czecho? Slovakia in Constitutional Disappointments' in Dick Howard, A.E. (ed) *Constitution Making in Eastern Europe*, Woodrow Wilson Center Press.

McGarry, John. and O'Leary, Brendan. (eds) (1993) *The Politics of Ethnic Conflict Regulation*, London and New York: Routledge.

Mesznikov, Grigorij (1994) 'The Programs of Political Parties in Slovakia: in Practice and Declaration' (83-111) in Szomolanyi, Sonya. and Meseznikov, Grigorij. (eds) *The Slovak Path of Transition - To Democracy?*, Bratislava: Slovak Political Science Association.

Mihalikova, Silvia. (1994) The End of Illusions: Democracy in Post-Communist Slovakia (51 - 63) in Szomolanyi, Sonya. and Meseznikov, Grigorij. (ed). *The Slovak Path of Transition to Democracy*, Bratislava: Slovak Political Science Association and Interlingua.

Miller, Robert F. (1992) 'The dilemmas of civil society in Yugoslavia: The burdens of nationalism' in Miller, Robert F. (ed) *The Developments of Civil Society in Communist Systems*, Sydney: Allen and Unwin Ltd.

Mishler, W. and Rose, R. (1994) 'Representation and Effective Leadership in Post-Communist Political Systems' *Studies in Public Policy*, 232 University of Strathclyde.

Murrell, P. (1992) 'Conservative Political Philosophy and the Strategy of Economic Transition' in *East European Politics and Societies*, Volume 6, Number 1, Sage Publications.

Musil, Jiri. (1995) 'Czech and Slovak Society' (77-97) in Musil, Jiri. (ed) *The End of Czechoslovakia*, Budapest: Central European University Press.

Musil, Jiri. (ed) (1995) *The End of Czechoslovakia* Budapest: Central European University Press.

Myant, Martin. (1993) *Transforming Socialist Economies: The Case of Poland and Czechoslovakia*, London: Edward Elgar.

Myant, Martin. (1981) *Socialism and democracy in Czechoslovakia, 1945-1948*, Cambridge University Press.

Nairn, Tom. (1983) 'Nationalism and the Uneven Geography of Development' in Held, David. et al (ed) *States and Societies*, New York and London: New York University Press.

Noel, S.J.R. (1993) 'Canadian responses to ethnic conflict: consociationalism, federalism and control' (41-62), in McGarry, John. and O'Leary, Brendan. (eds.) *The Politics of Ethnic Conflict Regulation*, New York and London: Routledge.



- Nordlinger, E. (1981) *The Autonomy of the Democratic State*, Harvard University Press.
- Nordlinger, E. (1972) *Conflict Regulation in Divided Societies*, Occasional Papers in International Affairs Number 29, Cambridge: Centre For International Affairs, Harvard.
- O'Donnell, G. (1993) 'On the State, Democratisation and Some Conceptual Problems: A Latin American View with Glances at Some Post-Communist Countries' in *World Development* 21, 8 (1355-69).
- Offe, Claus. (1995) 'The Future of Democracy' in Hausner, Jerzy et al (ed) *Evolution of Interest Representation and Development of the Labour Market in Post-Socialist Countries*, Cracow: Cracow Academy of Sciences.
- Olson, David M.. (1994) 'The Sundered State: Federalism and Parliament in Czechoslovakia', in Remington, Thomas F.. (ed) *Parliaments in Transition: The New Legislative Politics in the Former USSR and Eastern Europe*, Boulder, San Francisco, Oxford: Westview Press.
- Orenstein, Mitchell. (1992) 'The Political Success of Neo-Liberalism in the Czech Republic' *CERGE Working Paper Series* Number 68, Prague.
- Pechota, V. (1992) 'Czechoslovak Constitutionalism' *Czechoslovak and Central European Journal* Volume 10, Number 2, Winter.
- Pithart, Petr. (1995) 'Towards a Shared Freedom, 1968-1989', (180-201) in Musil, Jiri. (ed) *The End of Czechoslovakia*, Budapest: Central European University Press.
- Precan, V. (ed) (1983) *Human Rights in Czechoslovakia: A Documentation*, Paris.
- Pridham, Geoffrey. (1995) 'Political Parties and Their Strategies in the Transition from Authoritarian Rule: the Comparative Perspective', in Wightman, Gordon. (ed) *Party Formation in East-Central Europe: Post Communist Politics in Czechoslovakia, Hungary, Poland and Bulgaria*, Aldershot: Edward Elgar.
- Prucha, Vaclav. (1995) 'Economic Developments and Relations, 1918-89' (40-77) in Musil, Jiri. (ed) *The End of Czechoslovakia*, Budapest: Central European Press.
- Przeworski, Adam. (1993) Economic reforms, public opinion, and political institutions: Poland in the Eastern European perspective, in (ed) Luiz Carlos Bresser Pereira, Jose Maria Maravall and Adam Przeworski, *Economic Reforms in New Democracies: A Social Democratic Approach*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Przeworski, Adam. (1991) *Democracy and the Market: Political and economic reforms in Eastern Europe and Latin America*, Cambridge University Press.
- Remington, T. (1990) 'Regime Transition in Communist States' in *Soviet Economy* 6 (160-190).

- Reshova, Jana (1992) 'Nova politika s novymi l'ud'mi', *Sociologicky casopis*, XXVIII, (2), Prague.
- Roland, Gerard. (1994) 'The Role of Political Constraints in Transition Strategies' in *Economics of Transition*, Volume 2 (1), (27 - 41).
- Rosenberger, Chandler. (1994) *Nations of influence: the role of German nationalism in Czechoslovakia's "Velvet Revolution"*, Fall, (seminar paper: Workshop on Eastern European Politics, Harvard University).
- Rychlik, Jan. (1995) 'From Autonomy to Federation , 1938-1968' in Musil, Jiri. (ed) *The End of Czechoslovakia*, Budapest: Central European University Press.
- Sartori, Giovanni. (1990) 'Structuring the Party System' (origin. 1968) in Mair, Peter. (ed) *The West European Party System* Oxford University Press.
- Sartori, Giovanni. (1990) 'A Typology of Party Systems' (origin. 1976) in Mair, Peter. (ed) *The West European Party System*, Oxford University Press.
- Schopflin, George. (1993) 'The Road from Post-Communism' in Whitefield. Stephen. (ed) *The New Institutional Architecture of Eastern Europe*, (183-200) London: Macmillan.
- Schopflin, George. (1993) 'The Rise and Fall of Yugoslavia' in O'Leary, Brendan. and McGarry, John. (eds) *The Politics of Ethnic Conflict Regulation*, London and New York: Routledge.
- Schopflin, George. (1991) 'National Identity in the Soviet Union and East Central Europe' in *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, Volume, 14 Number 1.
- Schumpeter, J. (1944) *Capitalism, Socialism and Democracy*, London: Allen and Unwin.
- Seton-Watson, Robert W. (1965) *A History of the Czechs and Slovaks*, Connecticut: Archon Books.
- Sewell, W. Jr. (1992) 'A Theory of Structure: Duality, Agency and Transformation' *American Journal of Sociology* 98 (1) 1-29.
- Shen, R. (1993) *Economic Reform in Poland and Czechoslovakia: Lessons in Systematic Transformation*, London and Westport: Praeger.
- Simecka, M. (1991) 'Good Democrats All', in Whipple, T, (ed) *After the Velvet Revolution*, Focus on Issues Number 14, Freedom House.
- Sivakova, Danica. (1992) 'Slovenska narodna rada', *Sociologicky casopis* XXVII (2) Prague.

- Skilling, H.Gordon. (1994) *T.G. Masaryk* Macmillan.
- Skilling, H. Gordon. (1976) *Czechoslovakia's Interrupted Revolution*, Princeton University Press.
- Smith, Anthony. (1988) 'The Myth of the 'Modern Nation' in *Ethnic and Racial Studies* Volume 11, Number 1, January.
- Smith, Anthony D. (1983) *Theories of Nationalism*, Second Edition New York: Holmes and Meier Publishers.
- Smith, Anthony D. (1979) *Nationalism in the Twentieth Century*, New York University Press.
- Stark, David. (1996) 'Recombinant Property in East European Capitalism' in *American Journal of Sociology*, Volume 101, Number 4, (993-1027) January.
- Stein, Jonathan. and Scarrow, Susan (1994) 'The Politics of Retrospective Justice in Germany and the Czech Republic' *Program on Central and Eastern Europe Working Paper #35* Series Harvard University.
- Steinmo, Sven., and Thelen, Kathleen. (1992) 'Historical institutionalism in comparative politics', in Steinmo, Sven., and Thelen, Kathleen and Lonstreth, Frank. (eds) *Structuring Politics: Historical Institutionalism in Comparative Analysis*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Stepanek, P. (1993) *Jan Strasky - prezident na pul uvazku* Prague: Nakladatelstvi irma.
- Suda, Zdenek. (1995) 'Slovakia in Czech National Consciousness' (106-128) in Musil, Jiri. (ed) *The End of Czechoslovakia*, Budapest: Central European University Press.
- Suda, Zdenek. (1981) *Zealots and Rebels: A History of the Ruling Communist party of Czechoslovakia*, Stanford, California: Hoover Press.
- Suny, R. (1992) 'State, civil society, and ethnic cultural consolidation in the USSR - roots of the national question' (22-45) in Lapidus, G. W., Zaslavsky, V. and Goldman, P. (eds) *From Union to Commonwealth: Nationalism and Separatism in the Soviet Republics*, Cambridge University Press.
- Svejnar, J. and Singer, M. (1994) 'Using Vouchers to Privatise an Economy: The Czech and Slovak Case' *Economics of Transition*, Volume 2 (1), (43 - 69).
- Swidler, A. (1986) 'Culture in Action: Symbols and Strategies' *American Sociological Review* 51: 271-86.
- Syllova, Jindriska. (1992) 'Ceska narodni rada v roce 1990', *Sociologicky casopis*, XXCIII (2) Prague.

Szomolanyi, Sonya. (1994) 'Old Elites in the New Slovak State and Their Current Transformations' (63-83) in Szomolanyi, Sonya. and Meseznikov, Grigorij. (ed). *The Slovak Path of Transition to Democracy*, Bratislava: Slovak Political Science Association and Interlingua.

Szomolanyi, Sonya. and Meseznikov, Grigorij. (1994) (ed). *The Slovak Path of Transition to Democracy*, Bratislava; Slovak Political Science Association and Interlingua.

Sztompka, Piotr. 'Dilemmas of the Great Transition: A Tentative Catalogue' *Harvard Program on Central and Eastern Europe Working Paper Series #19*, Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University.

Taborsky, Edward. (1981) *President Edvard Benes: Between East and West 1938-1948*, Stanford, California: Hoover Press.

Tismaneanu, V' (1993) 'Discomforts of Victory: Threats to Fledgling Democracies in Postcommunist Societies' (146-154) in Grudzinska Gross, I. (ed) *Bratislava Symposium*, Slovak Committee of the European Cultural Foundation.

Urban, J. (1991) 'The Politics and Power of Humiliation', in Whipple, T.(ed) *After the Velvet Revolution*, Focus on Issues Number 14. Freedom House.

Vile, Maurice. (1982) 'Federation and Confederation: The Experience of the United States and the British Commonwealth', in Rea, Desmond. (ed.) *Political Co-operation in Divided Societies: A series of papers relevant to the conflict in Northern Ireland*. Dublin: Gill and Macmillan.

Vnuk, Frantisek. (1983) 'Slovak-Czech Relations in Post-War Czechoslovakia, 1945-1948' (314-373) in Kirschbaum, Stanislav. (ed.) *Slovak Politics*, Canada: Bryant Press.

Vodicka, Karel. (1993) 'Koalicni Ujednani: Rozdelime stat! Volby '92 a jejich dusledky pro ceskoslovenskou statnost', in (ed.) Kipke, Rudiger. and Vodicka, Karel. *Rozloucení s Československem* Prague: Patriae.

Wehrle, Frederic, (1994) *Le Divorce Tcheco-slovaque*, Paris: L'Harmattan.

Weschler, Lawrence. (1992) 'The Trials of Jan Kavan' in *The New York Review of Books* 19.10.1992.

Whipple, T.(ed) (1991) *After the Velvet Revolution*, Focus on Issues Number 14, Freedom House.

Wightman, Gordon. (1991) 'Czechoslovakia,' in (ed) Szajkowski, B. *New Political Parties of Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union*, Longman Current Affairs.

Wightman, Gordon. (1993) 'Notes on Recent Elections: The Czechoslovak Parliamentary Elections of 1992', *Electoral Studies* 12: 1 (83 - 86).

Wightman, Gordon. (1995) 'The Development of the Party System and the Break-up of Czechoslovakia', in Wightman, Gordon. (ed) *Party Formation in East-Central Europe*, Aldershot: Edward Elgar.

Wightman, Gordon. (1995) (ed) *Party Formation in East-Central Europe: Post-Communist Politics in Czechoslovakia, Hungary, Poland and Bulgaria*, Aldershot: Edward Elgar.

Wolchik, Sharon. (1995) 'The Politics of Transition and the Break-Up of Czechoslovakia' in Musil, Jiri. (ed) *The End of Czechoslovakia*, Budapest: Central European University Press.

Wolchik, S. (1994) 'The Politics of Ethnicity in Post-Communist Czechoslovakia' *East European Politics and Societies* Volume 8, Number1, Winter. Sage Publications.

Zak, Vaclav. (1995) 'The Velvet Divorce - Institutional Foundations' (245-271) in Musil, Jiri. (ed) *The End of Czechoslovakia*, Budapest: Central European University Press.

Zboril, Zdenek. (1995) 'Impediments to the Development of Democratic Politics: a Czech Perspective' (202-217) in Wightman, G. (ed) *Party Formation in East-Central Europe* Aldershot, UK and Vermont, USA: Edward Elgar.

## Appendix I

### Federalism in comparative perspective

#### Democratic federalism<sup>1</sup> - Canada

Canada is a prime example of where evolving processes of government have reflected formally federal principles in a highly dynamic way, for the most part successfully managing, though not resolving a basically bi-national conflict. Even though Canada's modern settler nationalities, the French and English, were both peculiarly centralising in their own political habits, by the mid-nineteenth century it was accepted by both sides that federation was the only route to a Canadian *modus vivendi* (Elazar 1987:195). Canada, like Czechoslovakia, had to invent a sense of common nationality. Yet in Canada the option of assimilation, of the smaller nation by the larger, was closed from an early date. From its inception, Canadian federalism was informed by an elite consensus as to the need for compromise and hard bargaining: indeed, Canadian federalism has been and remains directly linked to an explicit struggle to maintain a *sufficient* unity<sup>2</sup> (Elazar 1987:66). In other words "Canadians developed the notion of a 'federal bargain', stressing and accepting as a *fait accompli* the conflictual relationships prevalent at the origin of the federal system (Gagnon 1989:157). The contrast with Czech assimilationism is marked. As discussed in Chapter 1, the First Republic in particular was founded upon the notion that Czechoslovaks formed a single nation. Single nationhood was the identity presented to the outside world and which informed many Czech policies within Slovakia itself. Though following the Second World War it appeared that Slovak visibility within the state must be enhanced, the Communist takeover signalled a move to impulses not simply of assimilation but of the eradication of national identities as such.

---

<sup>1</sup> "Federations are communities of both polities and individuals and emphasise the liberties of both"... "Confederations on the other hand, are primarily communities of polities, which place greater emphasis on the liberties of the constituent polities (Elazar 1987:93).

<sup>2</sup> It is worth noting that this realism came not from particular far-sightedness on either side but from the situation following the conquest of Quebec in 1759. Until well into the nineteenth century the French constituted the dominant majority of the population, and the British conquerors had little alternative but to forget all hopes of anglicising such a resentful majority. Under the provisions of the conciliatory Quebec Act of 1774 the French were thus guaranteed official recognition and protection of their societal peculiarities: their Roman Catholicism, language, customs, seigneurial system of land tenure and civil law (Noel 1993:43). As Elazar notes, the resulting mixture of laws has kept the administration of justice substantially non-centralised - even in federal courts (Elazar 1987:172).

Canadian federalism is founded in fact upon two main cleavages: a political/territorial division, between ten constituent provinces, and a sociological cleavage, between the two dominant nationalities<sup>3</sup>. Of the strategies adopted to bridge the latter division, made complex but undoubtedly more stable by the uneven geographical distribution of the two dominant nations, the most successful if not the most popular have been consociational in character (Noel 1993:42). ‘Consociationalism’ or ‘power-sharing’ as a distinctive system characteristically involves grand coalitions - elite compromise - and segmental autonomy, and thirdly, proportionality in political representation and appointments *etc.*, and by the guaranteed opportunity for minority veto (Elazar 1987:27). Thus in the Canadian case “the two provinces that made up the Union were functionally separate political subsystems, joined only at the top through a form of overarching accommodation between the members of the respective governing elites; proportionality was practiced in the distribution of offices and the allocation of government benefits; and at least an informal mutual veto existed through the convention of requiring concurrent majorities in both sections of the legislature to sustain a government in power” (Noel 1993:45).

The Union of the Canadas, created in 1841, represented a significant step in entrenching consociational practices. Though intended at the time to eradicate national elite bargaining altogether, by redesigning the constitution such that the French would be reduced to a permanent minority in parliament, the British-imposed constitutional change had not reckoned with another cleavage in Upper Canada, one which ran not along ethnic-linguistic lines but along conservative-reform lines (Noel 1993:45). The astute reform elite had realised that a coalition of reformers and French moderates might secure a majority in the legislature, and upon this realisation, consociationalism again thrived. Rather than risk civil strife the English and French elites negotiated the consociational principle of coalition ministries in which the power and patronage of office would be shared on a roughly proportional basis<sup>4</sup>. Though rarely invoked as a

---

<sup>3</sup> Visualised by Gagnon as eleven elephants in a maze and two scorpions in a bottle (Gagnon 1989:160).

<sup>4</sup> Thus, each ministry was headed by co-premiers, one English and one French, who were the leaders of their respective parties in the governing coalition of the day (Noel 1993:45).

doctrine, the principle of duality informed political practice henceforth as a guiding rule<sup>5</sup>.

Once English-speaking Canadians had clearly become the majority nation however, emerging aspirations to unqualified majority rule took on a new lease of life. Their reasons combined anti-Catholic, anti-French prejudice on the one hand, and hankerings after the example of the United States on the other. When the Canadian federation was formed in 1867, establishing a parliament based on the principle of representation by population, it realised one of the main aims of this increasingly influential group of anglophone federalists. Despite attempts to again bypass this constitutional injunction the French were reduced to about a third of the seats in the parliament and duality in its previous form was rendered unsustainable, leaving the French to settle for autonomy in Quebec over a more limited range of powers: civil law, religion, local institutions and culture. The French thus lost the institutional support structures for elite bargaining and this development encouraged enclave building among the Quebecois. As Noel concludes "federalism represented a significant shift away from dualism and consociationalism as responses to ethnic conflict and towards territorial segregation and hegemonic inter-ethnic relations" (Noel 1993:47).

However, despite new institutional practices - co-premiers were replaced by single premiers, the Westminster-model dominated parliament - Canadian consociationalism proved a hardy plant. Henceforth it was within the party system that the competing elites made the compromises and bargains that a significant section of both elites still understood to be necessary to maintain order in the state. In practice this meant a persistently distributive system of party competition, oriented to the proportional sharing of material benefits (Noel 1993:48). Its product was the "composite bi-racial, bi-cultural party, uniting both French and English voters" (ibid. 49): the party victorious in national elections was and is often the only one able to expand its provincial electoral bases to national proportions (Elazar 1987:180). The lack of

---

<sup>5</sup> Indeed it may be noted, the capital city, Ottawa, has national significance only in that it represents the compromise of 1866 between Quebec City and Toronto - the centres of French-speaking and English-speaking Canada.



institutional support for this arrangement however has clearly left the principle and practice of consociationalism more vulnerable than ever before.

To conclude, Noel argues that today the main unresolved tension of Canadian national relations is not between consociationalism and coercive majority-rule, but between two equally rooted conceptions of democracy: one which rests essentially on notions of power-sharing, another which has at its core the idea of majority-rule (Noel 1993:55). The first, essentially conservative idea, accepts the primacy of ethno-linguistic identities and believes significant local autonomy is the best guarantor of individual freedoms: it understands federalism in confederal terms - a community of communities, in which the state best serves its citizens not in a visionary but in incrementalist, distributive terms: *i.e.* in consociational terms. An adherence to majority rule on the other hand is based on the principle of liberal individualism and views citizenship as the only legitimate basis of political identity. It is in practice, as Noel points out, populist and majoritarian, supporting the primacy of 'national' goals over 'local' particularisms: it sees the federal government (or now in the case of Quebec nationalists, the Quebec government) as the main bearer of the national vision (Noel 1993:56). The tremendous national friction that has arisen from the recent ascendancy of this second democratic model, particularly as practiced by the separatist Parti-Quebecois, has since the 1980s thrown the continuation of the Canadian state uniquely into doubt. Whether this majoritarian-inspired crisis leads only to yet another rebirth of consociational politics remains to be seen.

### **Communist federalism**

Though Czechoslovakia, Yugoslavia and the Soviet Union had the distinction of being the only socialist federations of the eastern bloc, the reasons for the implementation of federalism in the first place, its function and management in practice, and finally the process of the demise of socialism and federalism were, in each case, very different. Their differences do however shed some light upon the nature and significance of Soviet hegemony in the region, and the role of the constitution generally under communism. The central feature of the constitution in each case, as in the unitary states, was the confirmation of power in the hands of the 'revolutionary' cadres - the

Party<sup>6</sup>. To understand why these systems developed as they did, and to comprehend the peculiar nature of the instability that afflicted these states in the late 1980s it is necessary to consider the peculiar source and location of power in each of the three cases.

Following the Bolshevik Revolution and the ensuing civil war, Soviet leaders were evidently mistrustful of Marxism-Leninism's doctrinal assumption that nationalism would wither away. Consequently they managed the ethnic diversity within the Union by creating an unprecedented system wherein the state would be federalised and the political-administrative sub-units defined in ethno-territorial terms (Suny 1992:28). To what extent Lenin intended that national self-determination was to be tolerated or gradually extinguished remains a matter of debate (Bunce 1996:11). The evidence is however, that the effectively imperialistic and hierarchical power relations established under Lenin were thoroughly consolidated by Stalin. Under Stalin, the Union most completely became an instrument of Russian chauvinism. The Soviet Union embarked upon wholesale cultural Russianisation and became a highly centralised unitary state, with the vestiges of power at the periphery extinguished with the forces of police terror (Suny 1992:28).

Valerie Bunce has argued that the "system" was "copied by Yugoslavia after the wartime revolution and Czechoslovakia after the Prague Spring revolution in 1968". She also asserts that, though the federalists everywhere intended that the system would eventually obliterate ethnic identity, an entirely unintended consequence of the new constitutional structure was in fact "to institutionalise ethnic distinctions and thereby make ethnicity a key marker of individual and group identity" (Bunce 1996:11). She goes so far with the irony of the institutionalist case as to conclude that in the three communist federations, "primordial factors seemed to have played a minor role in the development of nationalism and nationalist movements. Instead, ethnicity and its

---

<sup>6</sup> Elazar it may be noted has argued that "the maintenance of federalism requires that the common polity and its constituent polities each have a substantially complete set of governing institutions of their own with the right - within limits set by compact - to modify these institutions unilaterally" (Elazar 1987:182). Clearly the Communist Party dictat, particularly that effecting Czechoslovak politics under occupation, meant that the cooperation between federal and republican bodies was severely constrained, and vulnerable to coercion.

politicization seem to have been constructed... by the institutions of federalised state socialism” (Bunce 1996:31). By this reasoning not only the Soviet Union but communist federal states as such sowed the seeds of their own destruction<sup>7</sup>. Such an argument is however derived overwhelmingly from the Soviet case, and is in fact completely misleading as to the real history of federalism not only in Yugoslavia but also in Czechoslovakia. Far from politicising ethnicity, as we may accept was the case in several of the new national political units of the Soviet Union (Goldman *et al* 1992), federation in Czechoslovakia and Yugoslavia was introduced entirely as an instrument for the integration and co-option of an already patently active national politics. National claims had already resulted in bitter civil war in the Yugoslav case - and as we have already seen in the Slovak case, in anti-state rebellion.

Czechoslovakia’s federalisation after 1968 was the Soviet Union’s one immediate, if highly imperfect opportunity to legitimate the ‘return to order’ following the Warsaw Pact invasion. As an instrument of divide and rule it was a concession entirely for Slovak consumption. It differed in this important respect from Soviet federation, which was first formed as a *preemptive* strategy: to weaken and re-structure any initial resistance to the new Soviet domination. The Soviet federation after Stalin’s death actually functioned as the superstructure upon which to build some ethnic autonomy. In contrast, the advantages to be gained from Czechoslovakia’s degraded federalism could not be perceived by Czechs and Slovaks but as an explicit zero-sum game: *under the conditions of Soviet domination*, Czechs would win at Slovakia’s expense, and *vice versa*. The positive benefits of a federal state could hardly be advertised under such a system. Many in the Czech elite, moreover, perceived Soviet sponsorship to be all on the Slovak side, and this ‘proved’ to them yet again the perversity of the Soviet system. For Czechs not only was the Czechoslovak economy being de-developed when compared to its interwar sophistication, but the ‘proper’ (*i.e.* paternal) order of national relations in the state had finally been overturned. For Slovaks, the weakening of the federal contract after 1969 and particularly after the constitutional amendment of 1970

---

<sup>7</sup> “Without federalism, there was no organised alternative to the state, and the state, as a result, survived, albeit weakened by the loss of the senior partner in its coalition; that is, the party. With federalism, such a counterweight existed in the republics, and the state responded by decomposing into its republican sub-units (Bunce 1996:16).

indicated that their position of autonomy was a facade which masked a continued lack of political leverage.

In Yugoslavia the federal model was indeed copied voluntarily from that of the Soviets, but with an ideological rigour that carried the Yugoslav variant into a category of its own. Following as it did a four year, mutually genocidal Serb-Croat civil war, the victorious partisan's nominally federalising constitution of 1946 was built on the conviction that re-socialising the population at large was a *sine qua non* of the state's future stability. The Yugoslav communists thus desired to do far more than generate a superstructure for the imposition of the authority of one particular nation, and as still-devout Marxist Leninists (see Djilas 1962) they believed more strongly than Stalin's cadres that ethnic identity might indeed be overcome with the equalisation of economic conditions. To hasten such a development the 1946 constitution provided but minimally for cultural rights, provisions mirrored moreover, by the re-drawing of the republics' internal frontiers. The cohesiveness of this new arrangement was guaranteed by the political monopoly of the Party, but more particularly, by the internal authority of its leader, Josip Broz Tito. Though both Croats and the largest minority, Serbs, sustained losses (through cultural repression in Croatia's case and through Serbia's re-division into three units), there were otherwise important and stabilising gains for other groups. Macedonia in particular, gained recognition as an autonomous republic (Schopflin 1993:180-1).

A compromise on nationality policy was soon required. When Stalin reprimanded the Yugoslavs for their independent behaviour in 1948, the Yugoslav Party was at a loss to see the doctrinal justification and disagreement led to a breach with Moscow. The mobilisation of pan-state solidarity was necessary at the time for the potential physical defence of the state. When the danger of Soviet military intervention passed however, the idea of a national communism presented further advantages: a pan-Yugoslav civic identity might both legitimate the traumatic split from Moscow whilst offering a unifying and less culturally Spartan<sup>8</sup> vision at home. Indeed the complete repression of

---

<sup>8</sup> "While the attempt to construct a 'Yugoslav' identity through the rewriting of history and the merging of the Serbian and Croatian languages were largely a failure, it did work in one respect - the creation of a category of Yugoslav identity within the country allowed individuals to opt out of rooted ethno-national

republican national expression and national political claims received some popular support (Schopflin 1993:183), quite understandably in light of the escaped brutality of the war.

By the 1960s however, the economy was beginning to falter and with these developments, and the implicit threat to the prevailing elite, came an end to the passivity of the republican 'machinery', which had hitherto clearly found more to be gained from cooperation and obedience. The republic/centre tensions generated by Czechoslovakia's failing economy existed in even greater complexity in Yugoslavia, a federation consisting of six republics: Serbia, Croatia, Macedonia, Slovenia, Montenegro and Bosnia-Hercogovina, as well as the autonomous provinces of Vojvodina and the autonomous region of Kosovo, within Serbia. In the 1960s the reformers were concentrated largely in Croatia and Slovenia and to a lesser extent in Serbia, and it was this coalition which now challenged the still pro-centralising elite of the Partisan generation (Schopflin 1993:184). What was particularly striking in this process was how quickly former alliances among the critical left were fractured along national lines, and following this, how rapidly extreme nationalists stepped up to challenge the original protesters (Miller 1992:86)

Though for several years this elite competition resulted in deadlock, by the late 1960s the Croat leadership resorted to an explicit invocation of the national interest, with a confidence that deeply confounded the strategy of the preceding twenty years. As Schopflin points out, the threat to restore not only the symbolism of the national world but the discourse of nationality and nationalism in its entirety amounted to the most profound attack on the communist state, and Tito responded in kind. Observing the total outbreak of Croat nationalism in 1971, Tito intervened with a massive purge of the Croatian leadership and a threat of military intervention. He then turned the purges upon Slovenia, Macedonia and the Vojvodina, and finally upon Serbia in October 1972, where nationalist sentiment had risen in reaction to that in Croatia (Miller 1992:86).

---

identities" (Schopflin 1993:186). The Party itself was also renamed the League of Communists of Yugoslavia in 1952, as a largely symbolic move from democratic centralism.

Just as Czechoslovakia's communists used constitutional reform as an instrument of both normative assertion and as a sop to otherwise irrepressible interests<sup>9</sup> so too did the centralist elite in Yugoslavia. Already in 1969 the League of Communists of Yugoslavia (LCY) in forward-thinking mode, had formed a collective presidency with balanced republican/provincial representation, and a rotational chairmanship (Tito being the exception - as 'president for life'). In 1971 a collective state presidency mirrored that of the LCY and the system was followed in the major institutions of state - though again with Tito the exception (Binns 1989:133). The new constitution of 1974 sought both to consolidate LCY hegemony and to integrate the forces to have emerged in the 1960s. To this end greater powers were given to enterprises and communes in the hope that Yugoslavia's structure of worker self-management might still transcend ethnicity as a power structure within the state, and act as the locus of identity and all potential political mobilisation; the army was henceforth to be regarded explicitly as the defender of 'brotherhood and unity' *i.e.* state integrity and finally, secret police pressure, toughened criteria for particular forms of employment, and pro-'Yugoslav' propaganda were all re-asserted (Schopflin 1993:190).

The result however, was only deeper republicanisation: its instrument, the republican right of veto, introduced in practice in 1968, but unrealised in its full potential to divide until Tito's death in 1980. Central authority was henceforth steadily eroded as republican attempts at deflecting central initiatives proved successful. Increasingly, republican elites "had to legitimate themselves through a mixture of self-managing ideology and the republican interest" and despite the attempts to shore up the authority of Titoism after the fact, the disintegration of the state accelerated with economic deterioration and mounting indebtedness (Schopflin *ibid.*). By the 1980s not only had the legitimating myths of the 1950s and 60s all but worn through - the partisan struggle scarcely remembered by a new generation - but authority had moved - or rather - returned - decisively to the periphery. By this time the state resembled a decentralised

---

<sup>9</sup> A strategy which under communism produced highly contradictory constitutional principles. Though masked by the hierarchical and coercive authority of the Party machine for the duration of communism, the inheritance of constitutional paradoxes would prove a major difficulty to the post-communist successor states.

federation or confederation<sup>10</sup> (Kostunica 1988:79), and within it, Serb nationalism re-emerged, embittered by the perceived sacrifices made by Serbs on Yugoslavia's behalf.

Though Czechoslovakia, the Soviet Union and Yugoslavia represented the full range of developmental patterns in the really-existing-socialist experience (Bunce 1996:4) all equally failed to create the conditions necessary for intensive, rather than extensive economic growth. The technological revolution in the west exposed the stagnation in the east, and the development undermined the intrinsically materialist nationality policies of each state. In Yugoslavia the Tito-less centre could no longer hold against unanswerable republican claims; in the Soviet Union the response to economic crisis, Perestroika, unleashed a chain of unforeseen national demands, which in their pressure for political opening undid the Party centre entirely. With that, the barriers to Czechoslovakia's democratisation and long-harboured rejection of the imposed constitution were finally lifted.

The national/relational 'norms' to which Czechs and Slovaks might appeal after 1989 could hardly have been more complex however. In Canada, the price of compromise has been long debated and is exactly known; in the Soviet Union, Russia's dominant status was hardly to be doubted. In Yugoslavia the forced equalisation of national status allowed Serbs in particular to protest, if in nationalist chauvinist terms, the communists' disregard and resentment of their historically dominant and dominating role. In Czechoslovakia however, each side profoundly believed the other to have had the advantage: both had been subordinated to the Soviet Union, and yet Czechs perceived Slovaks to have gained from the relationship both politically and materially. Slovaks meanwhile remained acutely aware that the Communist Party - the domestic author of power in the communist state - had remained Czechoslovak - unfederalised. In the light of Slovak history therefore, even Soviet-domination and state federalisation had failed to dislodge the persistent connection of real power with the power of the

---

<sup>10</sup> Binns argues that this was the case as far back as 1971, when the idea of a republican veto was effectively legitimised by the institutional innovations introducing leadership rotations and proportional representation in the Federal Assembly (1989:n15). The main evidence for this is that the centre had eventually to work through the republics in order to make and implement policy - and to procure resources. Ultimately the ever-strengthening set of republics had accumulated the resources to act as nearly independent economic and political units (Bunce 1996:21-2).

dominant republic - the Czech lands. Just as the Party had never admitted of Slovak separateness so too Slovaks believed, the federal parliament most probably remained for Czechs, by assumption if not in fact, the Czech parliament.



## **Appendix II**

### **Mainstream political parties**

#### **Czech Political Parties**

**Association for the Republic - Republican Party of Czechoslovakia**  
**Association of Social Democrats** (formerly within the Civic Forum)  
**Christian and Democratic Union**  
**Christian Democratic Party** (formerly part of the Christian and Democratic Union)  
**Christian Democratic Union - Czechoslovak People's Party** (formerly part of the Christian and Democratic Union)  
**Civic Democratic Party** (formerly within the Civic Forum)  
**Civic Democratic Alliance** (formerly within the Civic Forum)  
**Civic Forum**  
**Civic Movement** (formerly within the Civic Forum)  
**Communist Party of Czechoslovakia**  
**Czechoslovak Social Democracy** (formerly within the Civic Forum)  
**Movement for a Self-Governing Democracy for Moravia and Silesia**  
**Left Bloc** (a coalition of the **Communist Party of Bohemia and Moravia**, following the split with the Slovak wing of the Party) and the minuscule (Czech) **Democratic Left**  
**Liberal Social Union** (a coalition of the **Agricultural Party**, the **Czechoslovak Socialist Party** and the **Green Party**)

#### **Slovak Political Parties**

**Christian Democratic Movement**  
**Civic Democratic Union** (formerly the liberal wing of the Public Against Violence)  
**Democratic Party** (former communist "satellite" party - the Party of Slovak Renewal)  
**Egyutteles (Coexistence)**  
**Hungarian Civic Party**, (formerly **Hungarian Independent Initiative**)  
**Hungarian Christian Democratic Movement**  
**Green Party**  
**Movement for a Democratic Slovakia** (formerly part of the Public Against Violence)  
**Party of the Democratic Left**, (formely the **Communist Party of Slovakia**)  
**Public Against Violence**  
**Slovak Christian Democratic Movement** (formerly part of the Christian Democratic Movement)  
**Social Democratic Party of Slovakia**  
**Slovak National Party**

## **Appendix III**

### **Interviews**

Dr. Ales Capek, February 14, 1995. Economist, Czech National Bank.

Ivan Gabal, June 15, 1995. Sociologist, former advisor to President Havel, Head of the President's social research unit and 1992 electoral campaign manager for the Civic Movement.

Fedor Gal, April 4, 1995. Sociologist and former Chairman of the Slovak Public Against Violence.

Dr. Jan Klacek, February 8, 1995. Director of the Economics Institute of the Czech National Bank, former advisor to the Federal Minister of the Economy, Vladimir Dlouhy.

Dr. Kotulan, February 9, 1995. Economist, Czech National Bank.

Dr. Jan Mladek, February 21, 1995. Former Federal Deputy Minister for the Economy and advisor to Federal Minister of the Economy, Vladimir Dlouhy.

Vaclav Zak, June 14, 1995. Former Member of Parliament for Civic Forum and Chairman of the Czech National Council (June 1990 - June 1992).