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## THE “VELVET SPLIT” OF CZECHOSLOVAKIA (1989-1992)

**ABSTRACT** The elections in June 1992 brought to power Vladimír Mečiar's Movement for Democratic Slovakia (HZDS) in Bratislava and Václav Klaus' Civic Democratic Party (ODS) in Prague. In the concept of HZDS the idea of a parity (which is impossible to achieve between two units of differing size) gradually came to be associated with the concept of “Slovak sovereignty” and Slovakia's “international legal subjectivity”, both incompatible with Czechoslovakia's further existence. Such confederative model brought Czechs nothing but troubles. Subsequently, Prague now lost interest in keeping Slovakia within the Czechoslovak state. The result was “the velvet divorce” of Czechoslovakia on 31 December 1992.

**Keywords:** Czechoslovakia, Velvet Split

The main reason why Czechoslovakia disintegrated in 1992 can be explained quite simply: there was no strong Czechoslovak identity. Starting with its creation in 1918, the Czechs considered Czechoslovakia their nation state, or in fact their Czech nation state. The Slovaks never saw Czechoslovakia this way, but rather as a loose union of two nation states. The linguistic similarity between Czech and Slovak was not enough to join two fully conscious nations with a different history. By 1992, the Czechs and the Slovaks did not need each other anymore.<sup>1</sup> However, the split took place in a concrete political situation and in the specific constitutional system of Czechoslovakia, which did not offer many alternatives.

The Constitutional Law number 143/1968 of 27 October 1968<sup>2</sup> established two new states in the territory of the former unitary Czechoslovak Socialist Republic (ČSSR): the Czech Socialist Republic (ČSR) and the Slovak Socialist Republic (SSR), each with its own parliament (the Czech and the Slovak National Councils) and its own government, effective on January 1, 1969. According to the Preamble of the Constitution, the ČSR and the SSR were, in theory, two completely sovereign states which voluntarily delegated part of their sovereignty to federal organs, the Federal Assembly and the federal government in the new Czechoslovak Socialist Federation. The federal government could make decisions only in a narrowly delimited realm.

To understand properly the background to the split of Czechoslovakia, it is necessary to understand first the mechanisms behind the Czecho-Slovak federation. The Czecho-Slovak federation was based on the principle of consensus between the representatives of the Czech Republic and the representatives of the Slovak Republic. The Federal Assembly had two chambers, the Chamber of the People (in Czech: *Sněmovna lidu*/in Slovak: *Snemovňa ľudu*) and the Chamber of the Nations (*Sněmovna národů*/*Snemovňa národov*). The Chamber of the People had 200 deputies (from 1990 on only 150 deputies) elected on the basis of proportional representation throughout the country. Because there were ten million Czechs and five million Slovaks in Czechoslovakia, the number of Czech deputies elected to the Chamber of the People was about twice as large as those elected in Slovakia. The Chamber of the Nations had equal representation, whereby each Republic had seventy-five deputies. There were two types of laws: simple laws (*obyčejné/obyčajné zákony*) were adopted if they were approved by both houses by a majority of deputies present. The House of the People could act if more than half of all deputies were present while the House of the Nations could act if more than half of the deputies elected in the Czech Republic

<sup>1</sup> The most important references on the split of Czechoslovakia in English include: M. Kraus, A. Stanger (eds.), *Irreconcilable Differences? Explaining Czechoslovakia's Dissolution*, Lanham 2000; J. Musil et. al., *The End of Czechoslovakia*, Budapest 1995; E. Stein, *Czecho/Slovakia: Ethnic Conflict, Constitutional Fissure, Negotiated Breakup*, Ann Arbor 1997. For a discussion in Czech, see J. Rychlík, *Rozdělení Československa 1989-1992*, Praha 2013, pp. 402-408.

<sup>2</sup> *Sbírka zákonů Československé socialistické republiky* (Sb.) 1968, č. 143/1968 Sb. Explanatory note: *Sbírka zákonů/Zbierka zákonov* (Collection of Laws) was printed simultaneously in Czech and Slovak versions; both versions have the same legal validity. The laws are available on the internet at <<http://aplikace.mvcr.cz/sbirka-zakonu/>>, 10 September 2018.

and half of the deputies elected in the Slovak Republic were present. The peculiarity of the constitutional system was the so-called minority veto (*zákaz majorizace/zákaz majorizácie*), which made it impossible for the (Czech) majority to override the votes of their Slovak counterparts: legislation concerning issues of economic significance required the votes of a majority of the deputies in the Chamber of the People and a majority of deputies elected (and not being just present) to the Chamber of Nations in the Czech Republic and deputies elected to the Chamber of Nations elected in the Slovak Republic (voting separately). Further, constitutional amendments and the election of the President required a three-fifths majority of deputies in the Chamber of the People and a three-fifths majority of both Czech and Slovak deputies (again voting separately) in the Chamber of the Nations. This consensus principle in fact embodied a strong confederative element and signalled the potential for a constitutional crisis. If a consensus was not reached between Czech and Slovak representatives, the state was paralyzed. The Constitution did not offer any solution for a political deadlock.

For the majority of Slovaks, the establishment of the federation in 1968 seemed to be a sufficient guarantee for their further national development. Most Slovaks truly believed that the federation would make possible both Slovak statehood and a common Czech-Slovak state. Therefore, the Slovaks did not raise the question of an independent Slovak state in 1968. The Czechs would have preferred the unitary Czechoslovak state as it was established in 1918; however, being aware that such a solution was unacceptable to the Slovaks, they accepted the federation and regarded it as a necessary concession to the Slovaks, hoping that it would secure long-term, if not permanent, stability for Czechoslovakia.<sup>3</sup>

In fact, the 1969-1989 federal Constitution and its "minority veto" had a minimal effect because the real political power was vested in the Presidium of the Central Committee of Communist Party of Czechoslovakia (KSČ). The parliaments – federal, Czech, and Slovak – had no significance. Nor did the elections in which voters were always presented with only a single list of candidates chosen and approved by the leadership of the Communist Party. Subsequently, the deputies voted according to the directives of the government, which were in fact the directives of the KSČ. The possibility of a deadlock due to different votes of the Czech and Slovak deputies was unthinkable. Just like the parliaments, the governments – federal and republican – were mere transmission belts for the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia.

For all these reasons, the federation had, in its own way, a strange impact on Czech-Slovak relations. The Czechs saw the federation only as an endless influx of Slovak officials into the federal ministries and as a transfer of resources from the federal budget to Slovakia. From 1969 to 1987, the First Secretary of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia was a Slovak, Gustáv Husák (1913-1991), who was also President of the Republic from 1975 to 1989. The *éminence grise* of the communist leadership was another Slovak, Vasil Biľak (a Slovakized Rusin). Consequently, a widespread feeling arose in

<sup>3</sup> See J. Rychlík, *Češi a Slováci ve 20. století. Spolupráce a konflikty*, Praha 2012, pp. 533-564.

the Czech lands that the state was run by Slovak communist “normalizers,”<sup>4</sup> who were shifting resources from the federal budget to benefit Slovakia. In effect, they believed that the Czech lands were subsidizing Slovakia.

The Slovaks, no less than the Czechs, were also dissatisfied with the federation, because it did not fulfil their expectations. The Slovaks wanted local matters to be decided in Bratislava and not in Prague. They also expected that the federation would give Slovakia increased visibility on the world stage. Neither of these aims was realized. The outside world continued to view Czechoslovakia as a Czech state, so that the adjectives Czechoslovak and Czech were frequently interchangeable in foreign languages. Husák and Biľak were just as unpopular in Slovakia as they were in the Czech lands. In general, the Slovaks regarded the federal ministers, deputies, and bureaucrats in Prague as turncoats and traitors who were not defending Slovak interests. A significant segment of the Slovak population continued to feel that they lived in Czech bondage and that Slovakia was being economically exploited by the Czechs.

Arguably for Slovakia, the normalized federation had some positive effects. A strong Slovak managerial class arose from a previously small one. The federation meant the creation of a Slovak government and Slovak ministries in Bratislava, which, even though for the time being functioned only as branches of Prague federal offices, could begin to work quite independently at any time.

The fall of the communist regime in November of 1989 reopened the question of Czech-Slovak relations, a problem with which Czechoslovakia had wrestled since its very inception in 1918. In November of 1989, two different organizations were founded: Public Against Violence (*Verejnost proti násiliu*, VPN) in Slovakia and the Civic Forum (*Občanské fórum*, OF) in the Czech lands. Attempts to create branches of the Civic Forum in Slovakia, where the citizenry traditionally felt strongly pro-Czechoslovak (especially in Eastern Slovakia), were quickly blocked by Public Against Violence (VPN). The Civic Forum, bowing to the will of Public Against Violence, abolished those chapters of the Civic Forum in Slovakia that had already formed. At the outset of 1990, it became evident that no political force in Slovakia could ignore the question of Czech-Slovak relations. Czech political parties, especially those that had been active before the communist takeover in 1948, attempted to make inroads in Slovakia, but they encountered a total lack of voter interest because they were unable to offer any new ideas on Czech-Slovak relations. Conversely, the Slovak Democratic Party (*Demokratická strana*, DS), the largest anti-communist Slovak political party in 1945–1948, could not gain any influence in the Czech lands, since its emphasis on Slovak issues did not interest Czech voters.

After November of 1989, Slovakia's status within Czechoslovakia was a central plank of policy of every political party in Slovakia; the differences among them amounted only to the degree of Slovak autonomy they required. In this regard, Public Against Violence and the Democratic Party were moderate parties, which supported

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<sup>4</sup> The period after the Soviet occupation (August 21, 1968) is called the “period of normalization.” The Communist politicians of that period are called “normalizers.”

the modification of the existing Czechoslovak federation, while the Christian Democratic Movement (*Kresťanskodemokratické hnutie*, KDH) was more radical. At the extreme end, the Slovak National Party (*Slovenská národná strana*, SNS) of Vítazoslav Moric and Jozef Prokeš demanded only a very loose Czech-Slovak Union. In both the KDH and the SNS there were many proponents of an independent Slovak Republic, but in the first half of 1990, even the SNS had not yet formally introduced this demand. While Czech and Slovak Communists gradually parted ways, and an independent Slovak Communist Party was born (KSS, later the Party of the Democratic Left, *Strana demokratickej ľavice*, SDL), the latter's embrace of the Slovak national program positioned the Slovak Communists nicely into the new political scene.

The first open Czech-Slovak conflict took place in connection with the Federal Assembly's deliberations on the country's new name. Given the political and socioeconomic changes that had occurred since November 1989, in early 1990, President Václav Havel proposed that the officially used title – the Czechoslovak Socialist Republic – be amended to the Czechoslovak Republic, which had been in use before 1960. A similar proposal had been made at the end of December 1989. It had been rejected because the Communists still held a majority in the Federal Assembly and in both national parliaments at the time. Constitutional law 14/1990, passed on January 23, 1990, however, removed this obstacle. All the legislative assemblies underwent reconstruction: a portion of the deputies lost their mandates and were replaced by new representatives, mostly from the ranks of the Civic Forum and Public Against Violence. That is why Havel assumed that his proposal would be accepted without any problems. That was not the case.

The Slovak National Council fundamentally opposed the proposed name change (to the Czechoslovak Republic), demanding instead that the new state be called the Federation of Czecho-Slovakia. In this fashion, the world would be given notice that Czechoslovakia was not simply the Czech state, as was seen from abroad, but instead consisted of two nation states – the Czech and the Slovak ones.<sup>5</sup> This proposal was supported by a clear majority of the Slovak people, but it was rejected in the Czech lands. For the Czechs, the name Czecho-Slovakia evoked bitter memories of the post-Munich (or the Second) Republic, when it was officially used until March 15, 1939. On March 29, 1990, after long discussions,<sup>6</sup> the Federal Assembly approved Constitutional Law 81/1990 which established the official name as the Czechoslovak Federal Republic. Demonstrations against the new name immediately erupted in Slovakia, and for the first time, slogans demanding an independent Slovakia appeared. The VPN had accepted the

<sup>5</sup> In this aspect it must be noticed that the demand for more "visibility" from abroad was understandable. However, the world community always thinks in the category "one nation=one state." Czechoslovakia, even if written with a hyphen, would be still seen from abroad as a Czech state, as was the case after its new name, the Czech and Slovak Federative Republic, came into being.

<sup>6</sup> The shorthand reports of all lawmaking bodies on the territory of the former Czechoslovakia (including the former Federal Assembly, the Czech National Council and the Slovak National Council) are available at <[www.psp.cz/eknih/index.cz](http://www.psp.cz/eknih/index.cz)>, 9 September 2018. We do not refer to this source again in the following text.

new name during deliberations of the Federal Assembly, so Slovak critics now charged that party with betrayal of Slovak national interests. Czech deputies in the Federal Assembly backed down and on April 20, 1990, another Constitutional Law (101/1990) proclaimed the official name to be the Czech and Slovak Federative Republic (ČSFR). The unofficial name, Czechoslovakia, and the adjective, Czechoslovak, could thereafter be written in Czech as one word but in Slovak with a hyphen (e. g., Czecho-Slovakia).<sup>7</sup>

The so-called hyphen war indicated that subsequent discussions were not going to be easy and that the Slovak side would propose a maximum loosening of the federation. While the VPN participated in the negotiations that produced the interim federal government (December, 1989-June, 1990) and the first federal prime minister, Marián Čalfa, was a Slovak, Slovaks did not trust the federal organs of government. Even the pro-Czechoslovak VPN insisted that the issues concerning the new framework of Czech-Slovak relations were beyond the purview of the federal government and that they should be negotiated on a bilateral, republic-level basis. The first such unofficial talks took place on April 11, 1990 between the Czech prime minister, Petr Pithart, and the Slovak prime minister, Milan Čič. The Slovak prime minister outlined for Pithart the principles of the future Czech-Slovak relationship. These, in turn, were based on key principles that had been developed by the VPN. The program was also based on the principles of 1968, anticipating two essentially independent republics, which would delegate some of their competencies to common federal organs. Formal negotiations were to begin after the June 1990 elections.

The Czechoslovak Federative Republic's first free elections took place on 8 and 9 June 1990. The elections were based on the principle of proportional representation, but parties that did not receive at least five per cent of the vote, and in the elections to the Slovak parliament, three per cent, received no seats. In Slovakia, the VPN received the largest percentage of the votes, 29.3%, followed by the KDH's 19.2%, the SNS's 13.9%, the KSS-SDU's 13.3%, and the Hungarian coalition with 8.7%. The Democratic Party and the Green Party also made it into the Slovak National Council. In the Czech Republic, the Civic Forum came first, followed by the Czechoslovak People's Party (ČSL), the Communist Party, and the Movement for Self-Governing Democracy – the Society for Moravia and Silesia (HSD-SMS), which proposed a three-way federation of Bohemia, Moravia, and Slovakia, also won seats in the parliament.<sup>8</sup> The new federal government consisted of a coalition between the VPN and the Civic Forum, with the support of the Czech and Slovak centre-right parties (the coalition of the ČSL-KDS, i.e. the Christian Democratic Party and the KDH), and it was headed again by Marián Čalfa. The Czech government was again headed by Petr Pithart, but the leadership of the Slovak government changed: Milan Čič was replaced by the former Slovak Minister of the Interior, Vladimír Mečiar. Negotiations between the Czech

<sup>7</sup> For the "hyphen-war" see M. Šútovec, *Semióza jako politikum alebo „pomlčková vojna"*, Bratislava 1999.

<sup>8</sup> The results differed slightly in the Chamber of the People, the Chamber of the Nations and both National Councils. For the results see J. Rychlík, *Rozdělení Československa...*, p. 149. See also at <[http://cs.wikipedia.org/wiki/Volby\\_1990](http://cs.wikipedia.org/wiki/Volby_1990)>, 9 September 2018.

and Slovak governments continued. In addition, there were also negotiations between the Chairman (Speaker) of the Slovak National Council, František Mikloško (VPN), and his counterpart in the Czech lands, Dagmar Burešová (OF), and their colleagues.

Official negotiations between the Czech and Slovak governments took place on August 8 and 9, 1990 in Trenčianské Teplice. They continued on September 10-11 in Piešťany, on September 27 in Kroměříž, and on October 28 in Slavkov, where President Václav Havel also participated. On November 5, 1990, the Czech-Slovak relationship was the subject of negotiations between the Prime Ministers of all three governments. Four days later, in Luhačovice, Prime Ministers Pithart and Mečiar met again.

The negotiations showed that an agreement was impossible, because both sides approached them from very different points of view. The Czechs wanted to preserve Czechoslovakia, and took its continued existence for granted. They understood the federation as a shift in competencies. Their criterion for any shift was the functionality of the federal state. This meant that certain prerogatives – the foreign policy, the army, finances – had to be retained by the federation without interference from the republics.

By contrast, the Slovak side's approach assumed the existence of two states, which then were to delegate powers to common organs. The question of functionality was secondary and subordinated to the principle that Czech and Slovak governing elites had the prerogative either to maintain the state or to divide it. Because a fundamental agreement proved impossible, the representatives of the governing parties, along with President Havel and representatives of all three governments, issued a declaration on October 28, 1990, which emphasized their will to maintain the ČSFR. The Czech and Slovak sides also agreed that the division of powers would be rearranged and a definitive solution would subsequently be arrived at. The final shaping of the division of powers took place in the presence of President Havel and all three prime ministers in the Prague Castle on November 12, 1990. The proposal was then evaluated by the National Councils and passed on to the Federal Assembly.

In the version of the power-sharing law presented to the Federal Assembly, the Czech National Council and the Czech government proposed several changes (to the November 12, 1990 proposal). In this context, an expanded Presidium of the Slovak Government, headed by Mečiar, suddenly came to Prague on December 6, 1990. Mečiar presented Pithart with an ultimatum: if the power-sharing law was not adopted in its original form, i. e., if the Czech National Council or the Federal Assembly amended the draft version of the law, the Slovak National Council would declare the supremacy of Slovak laws over the laws of the federation. This would mean *de facto* paralysis and dissolution of the Czecho-Slovak federation. The Slovak side further emphasized that the Federal Assembly had no right to interfere in the Czech-Slovak negotiations. The Czech government and the Czech National Council acceded to this demand. The government parties, especially the Civic Forum, instructed their deputies to vote for their original version of the power-sharing law, which was adopted on December 12, 1990 as constitutional amendment 556/1990.<sup>9</sup>

<sup>9</sup> *Sbírka zákonů ČSFR, ústavní zákon č. 556/1990 Sb.*

The new power-sharing law significantly reduced the power of the central (federal) organs. In contrast to the 1968 constitutional amendment that created the federation, this law eliminated the exclusive prerogative of the federation in foreign policy and defence, which opened up the future possibility of separate international treaties and even the creation of republic-level armed forces. The power-sharing law, however, did not remove the crux of the problem and, therefore, represented only a temporary compromise. While the Czechs viewed the amendment as their maximum concession, for the Slovaks it was only the first step towards their final goal – the attainment of a loose Czech-Slovak Union (commonwealth), in which Slovakia could reap the benefits of its own statehood while retaining all the advantages of a common state.

In 1991, the changing political landscape in the Czech and Slovak Republics transformed the atmosphere of the negotiations. On February 24, 1991, the Civic Forum splintered into Václav Klaus's right-of-centre Civic Democratic Party (*Občanská demokratická strana*, ODS) and Jiří Dienstbier's Center-Left Civic Movement (*Občanské hnutí*, OH). Immediately after the elections of June 1990, the Slovak National Party declared full Slovak independence as its ultimate goal. Simultaneously, several smaller parties and movements emerged, which openly evoked the traditions of the authoritarian Slovak State (1939–1945). On March 3, 1991, the conflict between Vladimír Mečiar and the VPN's leadership – above all with Fedor Gál, the representative of its liberal wing – caused an acute crisis within the VPN. Under the auspices of the VPN, Mečiar founded his own platform, "For a Democratic Slovakia," and after some time, he separated completely from the VPN, creating the independent Movement for a Democratic Slovakia (*Hnutie za demokratické Slovensko* – HZDS).

On April 23, 1991, the Presidium of the Slovak National Council recalled Mečiar from his position as Prime Minister of the Slovak government, as well as all his supporters, who refused to respect the decisions of the VPN leadership. As a result, the government was reconstructed, with Ján Čarnogurský, the chairman of the KDH, becoming the new prime minister. Čarnogurský was a proponent of Slovak independence, but for the time being, he did not regard it as the republic's most pressing issue. In his view, Slovakia would become independent only after Czechoslovakia had joined the then European Community. In contrast to the representatives of the VPN, who preferred an enduring bond with the Czechs, Čarnogurský viewed Czechoslovakia as a temporary formation, and he made no secret of it. When negotiating with Petr Pithart, a former fellow dissident, Čarnogurský demanded that the foundation of Czech and Slovak cohabitation should rest on a legally binding treaty between the two republics, whose acceptance should precede the adoption of any new constitution.

Czech-Slovak negotiations continued throughout 1991. At first, Dagmar Burešová, Chairman of the Czech National Council, rejected Čarnogurský's notion of a treaty between the two republics. Eventually, the Czech side accepted it as a political initiative. By contrast, the Slovak side demanded that the treaty should have a binding nature, which meant, in effect, that it should assume the form of an international treaty, creating an association of two states. Such a solution was unacceptable to the Czech side, because it presupposed the transitory nature of the Czecho-Slovak state or

commonwealth. The Czech side rightly feared that Slovakia would take advantage of the existence of any common state so defined so as to fortify its own position and then declare its independence anyway. In May and June of 1991, negotiations continued in a series of meetings: on May 12, in Lány, at the end of May in Budmerice, and on June 19 in Kroměříž, all without results.

A turning point in the balance of political power came when Mečiar's HZDS adopted a confederation stance, i. e., its support for Slovak sovereignty (*zvrchovanosť*).<sup>10</sup> The notion of Slovak sovereignty, propounded in the spring of 1991 by the Slovak National Party and other nationalists, demanded the immediate transfer of all competencies to Slovak organs, and only thereafter would an agreement with the Czech Republic be possible. Mečiar, who until then had been a federalist, engaged in demagoguery by announcing that *zvrchovanosť* meant neither state independence nor the destruction of Czechoslovakia. The HZDS explicitly demanded international recognition of Slovakia as a separate subject of international law, with full diplomatic representation, while claiming (and the Slovak public had largely come to believe this claim) that even this demand was compatible with the continued existence of a common state.

Another contributing factor to the changing balance of political power was the gradual fragmentation of the KDH. A nationalistically-oriented KDH splinter group, headed by Ján Klepáč, demanded a confederation, even though the Czech side repeatedly declared that such a formation would be unacceptable. On November 4, 1991, the HZDS, the SNS, and the Ján Klepáč nationalist faction submitted a proposal for the declaration of Slovak sovereignty to the Slovak National Council which they had already made public on September 12, 1991. To be sure, Slovak public support for this project was by no means clear. In reaction to the proclamation for a sovereign Slovakia, another petition was immediately born: for a common state, which received roughly equal support. Such conflicting responses demonstrated the deep divisions that existed in Slovak society.<sup>11</sup>

In this situation, Čarnogurský was forced to seek a compromise with the Czechs. In the fall of 1991 it seemed that a compromise between Pithart and Čarnogurský, i. e., between the Civic Movement on the one hand, and the KDH and the VPN on the other, would be possible. The Pithart government was willing to accept a treaty between the Czech and the Slovak Republics, even though the matter was complicated by the formal legal conflict (in reality, groundless) over whether the republics could even enter into such a treaty while the federation still existed. The treaty was supposed to precede the federal constitution, which would then be bound by it. In October of 1991, the Pithart cabinet was willing to agree that the federal ministries would be reduced to a minimum number in the areas of foreign policy, defence, and finance (or a ministry with broader

<sup>10</sup> In Slovak (and also in Czech) two words are used: *zvrchovanosť* (in Czech: *svrchovanost*) and *suverenita* (also in Czech). These words are synonyms and both are equivalent to the English term sovereignty. Vladimír Mečiar claimed, however, that *zvrchovanosť* meant something different from *suverenita*.

<sup>11</sup> The text of the declaration "For a Sovereign Slovakia" was published in the periodical *Literárny týždenník* (Literary Weekly) on March 1, 1991. The declaration "For the Common State" was first published in the rival weekly *Kultúrny život* (Cultural life) on September 23, 1991.

responsibilities for the economy). On November 3, 1991, the top representatives of all three governments and parliaments gathered informally at the private villa of President Václav Havel in Hrádeček near Trutnov. With the exception of the Deputy Chairman of the Czech National Council, Jan Kalvoda (*Občanská demokratická aliance*, Civic Democratic Alliance, ODA), an agreement was reached on a binding Czech-Slovak treaty. The treaty was to be ratified by the National Councils, as well as the Federal Assembly (federal parliament). In the future, neither the treaty nor the federal constitution could be amended or changed without the consent of both National Councils. The treaty, the constitutions of both republics and the constitutions of the federation (or rather union) were to be prepared and approved separately, but they were to become binding simultaneously (e.g. from the same date).<sup>12</sup>

There was another problem: who would be the legal subjects of the Czech-Slovak treaty? The Slovak delegation insisted that the subjects would be the republics themselves, while the Czech delegation proposed as signatories both National Councils. In fact, the Slovak demand meant that the Czech-Slovak treaty would have the standard form of an international agreement between two states which the Czech delegation did not wish to accept. A compromise, however, was eventually reached. On January 10, 1992, representatives of the Czech and Slovak National Councils agreed in Prague that the treaty would be signed by the Czech and Slovak Republics, represented by their respective National Councils. On January 23, 1992, a commission representing both National Councils was created in Bratislava and charged with the responsibility of preparing the final text. On February 3-8, 1992, in Milovy near Žďár nad Sázavou, there was a final round of negotiations between expert commissions of the Czech and Slovak National Councils and the governments of both republics, as well as the federation. The result was a draft treaty between the Czech and Slovak political representatives. The agreement was to be ratified by both National Councils.<sup>13</sup>

On February 12, 1992, the Presidium of the Slovak National Council considered the draft. Ten members voted for the proposal, and ten voted against it. Therefore, the proposal was defeated and could not be submitted to the Slovak National Council as a whole. On March 5, 1992, the Presidium of the Czech National Council declared that further negotiation with the Slovak side would be pointless. Furthermore, on March 7, the draft treaty from Milovy caused the definitive fragmentation of the KDH. The Klepáč wing formally separated and created the Slovak Christian Democratic Movement (*Slovenské kresťanskodemokratické hnutie*, SKDH). As a result, the government coalition, comprised of the KDH, the VPN and the DS,<sup>14</sup> became a minority government. On March 11, the Chairmen of the Czech and Slovak National Councils, Dag-

<sup>12</sup> The transcript of the negotiations at Hrádeček was published as "Poločas rozpadu" (Half-time of the Split) as the supplement to *Slovenské listy* (Prague) 2, no. 2 (1994).

<sup>13</sup> For the text of the Milovy treaty see *Národná obroda* (Bratislava), February 12, 1992, p. 7. The text is reproduced in J. Rychlík, *Češi a Slováci ve 20. století. Česko-slovenské vztahy 1945-1992*, Bratislava 1998, doc. 32, pp. 505-513.

<sup>14</sup> Part of the coalition included the Hungarian Civic Party (*Maďarská občanská strana*, MOS), which was originally part of the VPN but later broke off.

mar Burešová and František Mikloško, agreed that further negotiations should be left to the victors of the next elections.

New elections to the Federal Assembly and both National Councils took place on June 5-6, 1992. In the Czech Republic, Václav Klaus's ODS, in coalition with the tiny Christian Democratic Party (*Křesťansko-demokratická strana*, KDS), won the largest number of seats. The ODS-KDS coalition had entered the election campaign with a program of completing the economic reforms and completing the transition to a democratic and capitalist society. On the matter of a constitutional framework, it had adopted the slogan, "Either a functioning federation or the division of Czechoslovakia into two states," while clearly preferring the former to the latter. In Slovakia, Vladimír Mečiar's HZDS won the largest number of seats with a program of social compromises that endorsed various populist demands. As far as the constitutional framework was concerned, it was a vague platform, which combined (in reality) mutually exclusive demands for sovereignty, international recognition for Slovakia, and the maintenance of a common state with the Czechs. Mečiar succeeded in persuading a substantial portion of the Slovak public that the demand for international recognition was fully compatible with the continued existence of Czechoslovakia. As the same time, he claimed that he had five variants of constitutional arrangements (including confederation, which in reality is not a common state) for Czech-Slovak relations, whose ultimate fate was to be decided by a referendum. The HZDS leadership chose to ignore objections that any of these variants would require the agreement of the Czech side, which had made it clear that it would insist on dividing the state if Slovaks rejected the federation. In this fashion, the HZDS won a substantial number of votes from supporters of the common state, especially voters who were less educated. The supporters of an independent Slovakia largely voted for the Slovak National Party.

The results of the elections to the Federal Assembly were the key to the fate of Czechoslovakia. The Civic Movement, which had been the mainstay of Czech politics until then, was defeated in the elections, failing to win seats in either the Federal Assembly or the Czech National Council. The results in Slovakia were even more catastrophic for the pro-Czechoslovakia, right-of-centre forces. The VPN, renamed as the Civic Democratic Union (ODÚ), campaigned independently, while the Democratic Party (DS) joined Klaus's ODS, in a campaign coalition. Other pro-Czechoslovak forces forged a last minute electoral group called Democrats 1992 (D-92), while the Hungarian Civic Party joined the opposition Hungarian parties to create an electoral bloc. In addition, the ODÚ-VPN and the KDH, expecting an election victory, raised the threshold for entering the Slovak National Council from the existing three per cent to five per cent. The result was that neither the ODÚ nor the DS-ODS or D-92 gained any seats in either the Federal Assembly or the Slovak National Council. The KDH, after the departure of the Klepáč wing (which also failed to make it into the parliament), was weakened. The ODS-KDS obtained 33.9% of the vote and forty-eight seats in the Chamber of the People, and 33.4% and thirty-seven seats in the Chamber of the Nations. The required majority in the Chamber of the People was seventy-six deputies; in the Czech part of the Chamber of the Nations, thirty-eight deputies. This meant that

ODS-KDS was just one vote short of a majority in the Czech part of the Chamber of the Nations.<sup>15</sup>

As a result, the ODS-KDS was forced to look for allies, not only on the Czech but also on the Slovak political scene. Since another potential ally, the rightist Civic Democratic Alliance, had entered the Czech National Council, but not the Federal Assembly, only the centrist Catholic Christian Democratic Union-Czechoslovak People's Party (KDU-ČSL) was a candidate for this role on the Czech political scene. It won seven seats in the Chamber of the People and six in the Chamber of the Nations, and the ODS-KDS was preparing to create a coalition with it in the Czech government. In Slovakia, Čarnogurský's KDH was another potential ally, but it won only six seats in the Chamber of the People and eight seats in the Chamber of the Nations. Therefore, the ODS-KDS-KDU-ČSL-KDH combination could not garner a majority in the Chamber of the People.

The situation in the Chamber of the Nations was even more critical, because the ODS-KDS needed allies in the Slovak part of the chamber to pass any law where the minority veto applied, such as the government program, votes of confidence, and the election of the president. Apart from the HZDS, however, there were no parties on the Slovak side that could become effective legislative partners. A conglomeration of smaller Slovak parties, which had emerged in the Federal Assembly after the elections, could not be relied upon, for they spanned incompatible ideologies and could never have agreed on a common program.

As early as Sunday, June 7, 1992, Václav Havel asked Václav Klaus to begin negotiations to form a new federal government and designated him as the next federal Prime Minister. Even though Klaus represented the largest party in the parliament, Havel's move was most unfortunate. It violated an unwritten tradition that when the president of the country was a Czech, the federal Prime Minister had to be a Slovak. Yet even in the event that Vladimír Mečiar had become the new federal Prime Minister, the underlying political situation could not have been altered. The minority veto meant that the HZDS could not have created a new cabinet without the support of the ODS-KDS. As it soon turned out, however, Mečiar had not even considered entering the federal cabinet and instead intended to become the Prime Minister of the Slovak Republic. In the Slovak National Council, the HZDS had a majority, and for the passage of constitutional amendments, it could rely on the support of the Slovak National Party and, if needed, the Party of the Democratic Left (SDL).

The first post-election negotiations between the ODS and the HZDS took place in Brno on June 8, 1992. Both parties assumed that these negotiations would be difficult but not impossible. The ODS presumed that Mečiar's absurd demand for Slovak international recognition, which was fundamentally incompatible with Czechoslovakia's continued existence (if only because Slovakia and Czechoslovakia could not simultaneously be subjects of international law), was only a campaign trick by the HZDS,

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<sup>15</sup> For the results see J. Rychlík, *Rozdělení Československa...*, p. 299. Also see at <[http://cs.wikipedia.org/wiki/Volby\\_1992](http://cs.wikipedia.org/wiki/Volby_1992)>, 12 September 2018.

seeking to win SNS voters. The ODS was willing to accept a substantial devolution of the federal government's powers, as long as it did not endanger the economic reforms. The HZDS was to be offered several key ministries, but had to make some concessions. The latter included, for example, recycling the demand of the Klepáč wing that Slovak soldiers wear separate insignias on their uniforms, that they might serve in separate units, as well as the request that only the Slovak part of the national anthem be played in Slovakia.

Along parallel lines, the HZDS approached the negotiations convinced that the ODS claim that the only alternative to federation was a complete division of the state, was only a campaign slogan. The HZDS leadership believed that the ODS in the end would accept a union or a confederation. The Czech and Slovak Republic would then each be independent subjects of international law, each having its own representatives on international bodies. For the purposes of defence, coordination of foreign policy, and economic affairs, they would create joint organs with equal representation of both sides. Each republic would have its own treasury, but both states would share a common currency. The HZDS leadership was incapable of grasping that not only would such an arrangement be dysfunctional but also that for the Czech side it would only create problems. For, where the weaker and smaller party has the same powers as the stronger and larger one, what is involved is not equality but rather a minority veto over the decisions of the majority.

According to the testimony of one of the participants in the meetings, Miroslav Macek, the negotiations began with a private meeting between Klaus and Mečiar. According to Macek, Mečiar was attempting, as usual, to use vague formulations to blur the irreconcilable conflict over international recognition. While the Klaus-Mečiar conversations were taking place, Macek spoke with Michal Kováč, who described a Slovak proposal for an economic and defence union, apparently without previous consultation with Mečiar.<sup>16</sup> Macek, who subsequently dubbed this proposal a "Slovak state with Czech insurance," immediately realized that this project could not and must not be accepted by the Czech side, because it signified an evolutionary approach to Slovak state building, funded by Czech taxpayers. That is why after Klaus and Mečiar had joined the larger meeting, Macek declared that the matter had become quite clear; the only solution according to him was the dissolution of Czechoslovakia. Macek's testimony is generally confirmed also by the testimony of Michal Kováč (HZDS).<sup>17</sup>

Even after the Brno talks Klaus apparently had not given up all hope that Mečiar would back away from some of his demands and that the dissolution of the state could be averted. That is why that subject was on the agenda at subsequent meetings in Prague on June 11 and 17, 1992. At these negotiations, the ODS put pressure on the HZDS to give a clear response: either a functioning federation or two separate states. After six

<sup>16</sup> There were several versions of this project – see J. Rychlík, *Češi a Slováci ve 20. Století*, doc. 31, pp. 494–513. For the testimony of Michal Kováč, see *Česko-slovenská historická ročenka* 2003, Brno, p. 101.

<sup>17</sup> For Macek's testimony see Kraus & Stanger, *Irreconcilable Differences?*, 244–246, see also M. Kováč, *Pamäti. Můj příběh občana a prezidenta*, Dunajská Lužná 2010, 57–58.

hours of futile negotiations, during which the HZDS again blurred the distinction between the two alternatives, relying on such contradictory formulations as “a common state in the form of a confederation” or “defence and economic union,” Klaus’s patience ran out. He asked the HZDS leaders whether they wanted to build a Slovak state with Czech money and whether or not the Slovaks were a proud nation. Mečiar replied that each republic would be responsible for its own finances. With this response, Mečiar sought to return to the question of confederation, but the Czech side interpreted his declaration as yet another step towards Slovak independence. In the end, they agreed on the composition of a reduced federal cabinet, which, in addition to the Prime Minister, would have only ten ministers. Apart from the premiership, which went to the ODS, there was equal representation in the cabinet for each party, but the HZDS demanded the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Ministry of Defense.

Václav Klaus apparently had changed his mind by June 17, 1992, but the ODS made its position clear only after the fourth round of negotiations with the HZDS, which took place in Bratislava on June 19, 1992. The negotiations lasted a full twelve hours and confirmed that the only thing on which the parties could agree was the division of the country. Following the negotiations, both parties issued a declaration, which stated in part: “The ODS does not regard a confederation, in which both republics are subjects of international law (which was the HZDS proposal) as a common state, but instead as a union of two separate states. Rather than confederation, the ODS prefers two completely independent states, i. e., a constitutional dissolution of the federation.”<sup>18</sup> On June 24, 1992, a new Slovak government, headed by Vladimír Mečiar, was formed. On July 2, Václav Havel appointed the last federal cabinet of Jan Stráský. On the same day, a Czech government comprised of the coalition ODS-KDS-KDU-ČSL-ODA was formed under the leadership of Václav Klaus.

Both the Czech and the Slovak opposition protested the agreement to divide Czechoslovakia. The SDĽ rejected the notion of a confederation and instead proposed a “co-operating federation.” The KDH regarded independence as premature. On the Czech side, the Social Democrats (*Československá sociální demokracie*, ČSSD), the HSD-SMS and Liberal-Social Union (*Liberálně-sociální unie*, LSU), the Czech Communists, and the extreme right Republicans (the Association for the Republic – Republican Party of Czechoslovakia, or *Sdružení pro republiku – Republikánská strana Československa*, SPR-RSČ) also opposed the agreement. The opposition demanded that the dissolution of the state be decided by a referendum. The opposition parties met with the Chairman of the Federal Assembly, Michal Kováč (HZDS), and welcomed the notion of a Czecho-Slovak union. Jiří Horák, the chairman of ČSSD, created a special commission of experts, which was expected to develop this project, in agreement with the other opposition parties and the HZDS. The proposal was inspired by the notion of dualism along the lines of the 1867 Austro-Hungarian Compromise. While the HZDS was sympathetic to this idea, not even the ČSSD was able to solve

<sup>18</sup> *Mladá fronta Dnes* (Prague), 22 June 1992. The document is also reproduced in J. Rychlík, *Rozdělení Československa...*, p. 398.

the problem of international recognition for Slovakia. Lawyers considered the possibility that Slovakia could eventually receive special representation in the United Nations, much like Belarus and Ukraine had in the former USSR. There was also talk of Slovakia creating its own representation abroad, short of full diplomatic status. But when it turned out that the HZDS demanded full diplomatic representation, the commission resigned and the project remained unfinished.

Both the opposition and the government repeatedly considered the question of a referendum. Surveys of public opinion showed that when asked, "Are you for a common state?" most voters in both the Czech and the Slovak Republics responded positively. To rule out erroneous conclusions stemming from conceptual confusion promoted by the HZDS, the opposition (ČSSD) maintained that the question should be worded to make it clear that in a common state, Slovakia would *not* have international recognition. But the problem of the referendum had several layers: even if it had affirmed popular support for the maintenance of the common state, the opposing political forces would have remained in power, making a compromise impossible. At the same time, surveys of voters' preferences indicated that new elections would not have brought about any change. Irrespective of the outcome of the referendum and thanks to a political system with a powerful minority veto, the stage was clearly set for government paralysis and the gradual dissolution of the state. *Legal* means could not overcome the *political* stalemate. Only the use of force could do that, i.e., the dissolution of the parliaments and the establishment of a Prague-based military dictatorship. Such a move would have created precisely the situation that the Slovak nationalists needed to sustain their claim that Slovakia was ruled by the Czechs. No one on the Czech side, however, actually considered this option. From 1990 on, there was consensus among Czech elites that if Slovakia wished to become independent, no one was going to stand in its way.

With the end of Havel's presidential term and new presidential elections in the Federal Assembly, the unfolding dissolution became apparent. Havel's term ended on July 5, 1992. The HZDS not only refused to support the candidacy of Václav Havel for another term, but it also declined to propose its own candidate. Given the minority veto and without the votes of the HZDS and the SNS, Havel could not be re-elected. Such an attempt failed on July 3, 1992. On July 17, 1992, the Slovak National Council, with the support of the HZDS, the SNS, and surprisingly, the SDL, passed a "Declaration of Slovak Sovereignty" (*zvrchovanost*), which declared Slovakia to be the state of the Slovak people.<sup>19</sup> The declaration passed over the dissenting votes of the KDH and the Hungarian parties. On the same day, Václav Havel resigned; no new president was chosen for the remainder of Czechoslovakia's existence.

Following the promulgation of the Declaration of Sovereignty, and during negotiations in Bratislava on July 22-23, 1992, the HZDS attempted to stop further disintegration of the state, because it wanted to take advantage of the existing federation to prepare for an independent Slovakia. The Czech side, however, had lost interest in Slovakia. It was afraid that slowing the dissolution would only create economic chaos and

<sup>19</sup> *Sbírka zákonů ČSFR, ČR, SR, částka 84/1992, 28. 8. 1992, p. 2394.*

financial losses, which the Czech taxpayers would have to bear. Therefore, the Czech side insisted on a speedy and complete division. Klaus presented Mečiar with a draft law on the end of federation, which the Federal Assembly was to approve by September 20. The draft assumed four possibilities: (1) a declaration by the Federal Assembly; (2) the agreement of the National Councils; (3) a referendum; and (4) a unilateral departure from the federation by one of the republics. Instead of a union, Klaus proposed a series of bilateral agreements. The final agreement was reached in Brno on August 26, where a timetable was established, and the date was set for Czechoslovakia's expiration on December 31, 1992, the end of the budget year. On the same day, the dissolution of Czechoslovakia was officially announced. On September 1, 1992, the Slovak Republic adopted a new Constitution, which had been conceived for an independent state. It did not reckon with the existence of Czechoslovakia, except that the validity of some articles was to come into effect on January 1, 1993.<sup>20</sup>

As it turned out, the division of Czechoslovakia was not an easy matter. On September 11, the opposition forced a special meeting of the Federal Assembly, which again demanded that a referendum be held. The federal government refused this demand, arguing that if the referendum were to endorse the continued maintenance of the common state – which surveys of public opinion indicated was virtually certain – it would be in no position to act on such a result, for the disintegration of the state had already gone too far. On October 1, 1992, the Federal Assembly voted on the constitutional amendment concerning the end of the federation. The opposition defeated the proposal. Miloš Zeman, then deputy chair of the ČSSD, took advantage of the situation and proposed a constitutional commission that would be charged with the transformation of the federation into a Czecho-Slovak union. The proposal, which enjoyed the support of the opposition as well as many of the HZDS deputies, was actually approved. The ČSSD's proposal presupposed the existence of two states with common organs for foreign policy, defence, and finance. Decisions were to be made on the basis of parity, but the question of international recognition was left open.<sup>21</sup>

The vote in favor of such a commission was a great victory for the opposition and the HZDS. Nevertheless, the ODS had already decided to divide the state at any price, and if no other way was open, it would proceed without the help of the HZDS. The Czech governing coalition refused to send any representatives to the new commission. Instead, on October 6, 1992, the ODS and the HZDS delegations met in Jihlava. Klaus insisted that the HZDS must explicitly reject union and confederation and commit itself to the division of Czechoslovakia into fully independent states. In the end, Mečiar agreed. As a result, the union project was shelved.

The next stage of the Czecho-Slovak development took place under the banner of deconstruction. On November 13, 1992 a constitutional amendment divided federal

<sup>20</sup> *Sbírka zákonů ČSFR, ČR, SR, Constitutional law 460/1992 Sb.*

<sup>21</sup> See the text in V. Hlavová, J. Žakuliak (eds.), *Novembrová revolúcia a česko-slovenský rozchod. Výber dokumentov a prejavov november 1989-december 1992* Bratislava 2002, doc. 66, pp. 266-268. The text of Zeman's proposal was approved as the Resolution of Federal Assembly no 58/1992.

real estate property in a ratio of 2:1.<sup>22</sup> A new law on the devolution of powers of October 8 transferred further competences from the federation to the republics. On November 18, 1992, the Federal Assembly met to vote on a new version of the constitutional amendment concerning the end of the federation. The various modes of how the federation might end were no longer at issue. The new amendment was merely a modification of the existing law on the federation, which simply added a paragraph stipulating that the federation would end on December 31, 1992.

By the time the assembly voted on this law, Czechoslovakia had already been de facto partitioned. The law, however, was passed only in the Chamber of the People, and another vote had to be held a week later on November 25. By lobbying the opposition deputies, the government coalition in the end persuaded some right-wing Republicans and some Czech and Slovak Social Democrats and succeeded in obtaining the needed votes. By a narrow majority and only on the second attempt, the constitutional law ending the existence of Czechoslovakia was finally passed.<sup>23</sup> On December 31, 1992 the Czech and Slovak Federative Republic officially expired.

The question that now arises was whether the split was inevitable or whether a CzechSlovak compromise was possible. First of all, it should be acknowledged that in general terms the end of one state and the birth of another state or states is something quite normal. States come and go and no state on Earth is eternal. Secondly, all multinational states are unstable.<sup>24</sup> To keep a multinational state together requires permanent negotiations between its constitutional parts and nationality problems in multinational states are never definitively solved. In Europe all multinational states failed (Austria-Hungary, the Ottoman Empire, the Soviet Union, Yugoslavia) or are in the process of disintegration (Belgium, Spain, the United Kingdom). Czechoslovakia was hardly an exception.

However, let us go back to the question whether a Czech-Slovak compromise was possible. As the foregoing narrative makes clear, until the June 1992 elections, such a compromise was possible, for the Slovak side had not placed the issue of full international recognition on the agenda. A compromise, however, would have required that the Czech side accept the Slovak demand for a treaty arrangement. The Czech side made a critical error in clinging excessively to legalistic formulas. In actuality, the issue as to whether the republics could or could not enter into treaties was subsidiary. It was an academic discussion without any practical significance. Entering into agreements, inasmuch as they would have assisted in the creation of functioning common organs, could have preserved Czechoslovakia, at least for a time. After the 1992 elections, however, there was no possibility of maintaining the common state. In the new situation, a peaceful separation was the only solution.

<sup>22</sup> *Sbírka zákonů ČSFR, ČR, SR*, Constitutional law 541/1992 Sb.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>24</sup> In Europe Switzerland is sometimes given as an example of a successful solution. This is, however, a mistake. Switzerland is not a multinational state; it is a nation-state of the Swiss nation, because all citizens have a common Swiss identity, not separate German, Italian and French identities. The fact that they speak different languages is not crucial.

We should also explain why the Czechs, who considered Czechoslovakia their nation-state and identified with it, gave up so easily. There were two reasons: Václav Klaus was not prepared and not willing to change his concept of economic transformation, which did not and could not take into consideration the specific situation in Slovakia. Mečiar's concept of confederation would leave central authorities in Prague without any powers in economic matters. This meant that the economic transformation, according to Klaus's concept, would be impossible. Because it was impossible to have two different economic transformations on a single customs and monetary territory, the only possible solution for Klaus was total separation. The main reason why the Czechs gave up on Czechoslovakia, however, was political, or rather geopolitical: in 1918, when Czechoslovakia came to existence, the main problem for the Czechs was Germany and the large German minority in the Czech lands. The Czechs needed Slovakia in order for Czechoslovakia to be stronger *vis-à-vis* 3.2 million ethnic Germans in the country and the Czechs also needed Slovakia as a corridor to prevent German encirclement to the East – to Poland and Russia. We should keep in mind that in 1918 the Czech lands were really encircled because Upper and Lower Silesia belonged to Germany and the inhabitants of Austria considered themselves to be Germans, not Austrians. But after 1945 the situation changed: the German minority was expelled from Czechoslovakia, Silesia was given to Poland and the Austrians obtained a new, separate Austrian identity. In addition, the Soviet occupation of 1968 showed that the enemy was neither in Berlin nor Bonn, but in Moscow. The Soviet Union, not Germany, was now the main problem. Subsequently, in 1992 the corridors to the East were not only unnecessary; they were unwelcome. After the breakup of the Soviet Union at the end of 1991 the situation in the East was very uncertain and nobody knew what would happen. On the other hand, close relations with a unified Germany could bring the Czech Republic sooner and faster both into NATO and the European Union. Thus, the Czechs lost interest in maintaining Czechoslovakia. In Czech policy Slovakia was now to play another role: the role of a buffer against the East.

We should add that Slovak geopolitical situation in 1992 did not differ substantially from that of 1918. The problem for the Slovaks and Slovakia was Hungary and the Hungarian minority. Unlike the Germans in Bohemia and Moravia, the Hungarians in Slovakia were not expelled after the Second World War. In 1992 Mečiar was uncertain about their intentions and also about the intentions of Hungary. That is one of the reasons why Mečiar did not want a total separation in 1992 but insisted on some sort of defence and economic union. But this was unacceptable for Václav Klaus who did not wish to involve the Czech Republic in a possible future Slovak-Hungarian conflict.

The process of disintegration of multinational states in general and of Czechoslovakia in particular should not be seen as something negative *per se*. More important than maintaining existing states are the relations between the new successor states. Both the Czechs and the Slovak Republic are now allies in NATO and both are members of the European Union. Czech-Slovak relations are excellent. Nobody could want more.

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