Spring 5-1995

Czechoslovakia's "Velvet Divorce" Ethnicity in the Post-Cold War World

Jonathan Robert Wert
Old Dominion University

CZECHOSLOVAKIA'S "VELVET DIVORCE"

ETHNICITY IN THE POST-COLD WAR WORLD

by

Jonathan Robert Wert
B.A. May 1992, Albright College

A Thesis submitted to the Faculty of
Old Dominion University in Partial Fulfillment of the
Requirement for the Degree of

MASTER OF ARTS

INTERNATIONAL STUDIES

OLD DOMINION UNIVERSITY

May, 1995

Approved by:

David M. Keithly (Director)

Phillip A. Taylor

Pia Christina Wood

ABSTRACT

CZECHOSLOVAKIA'S "VELVET DIVORCE":
ETHNICITY IN THE POST-COLD WAR WORLD

Jonathan Robert Wert
Old Dominion University, 1995
Director: Dr. David M. Keithly

The problem addressed in this study is the issue of ethnicity in post-communist Czechoslovakia. Specifically, the roots of the Czechoslovaks' "Velvet Divorce," or dissolution into two independent states, are explored and an explanation is offered as to the cause of this ethnic separatism. The methods used include archival, sociological, and statistical research so as to provide a firm multidisciplinary basis for the conclusions reached. The results of this research suggest that the nation of Czechoslovakia was never integrated in a meaningful manner. Though unified legally for over seventy years, the Czechs and Slovaks did not develop a common identity as Czechoslovaks. The conclusion reached is that while political, economic, and social forces contributed to the legal division of the Czechoslovak nation, unified Czechoslovakia was merely a transitional phase for these two peoples who had previously existed only under the rule of foreign powers.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF TABLES

LIST OF CHARTS

CHAPTER 1
INTRODUCTION

The end of communist rule in East--Central Europe brought with it many sweeping changes for the people of this region. One of the most important was the reinvigoration of these peoples' ethnic identities. Long suppressed by the unbending conformity of the Soviet Union, the distinct ethnic groups of this region emerged from the end of the cold war with a renewed sense of identity.

After decades of Soviet domination, the people of East--Central Europe were once again free to participate openly in the political systems of their respective countries--political systems which answered to the voters, rather than to the communist party and the Soviet leadership. Consequently, the citizens of these countries were confronted with a myriad of options in determining the future course of their respective nations. In addition to the various common election issues which presented themselves in the initial free elections in these countries (education, employment, trade, budget, taxation), another issue also rose to the forefront of East-Central European politics: ethnicity.

Under the Soviet system of communism, ethnic issues were inconsequential, since the communist ideology was the unifying bond between the peoples of the Soviet bloc. This ideology had little tolerance for any divisive groupings, past those assigned by the party and government. Such divisions could potentially fragment the multiethnic Soviet Union, as well as the Soviet bloc. Thus, the numerous ethnic groups existing

throughout East--Central Europe were not permitted to assert their identities in a meaningful manner under the communist system. However, once the communists were ousted from power in 1989-90, these ethnic groups proclaimed their individual ethnic identities--as compared to their legal national identities and bloc allegiances. Nations typically consist of an amalgamation of ethnic groups whose coexistence is not necessarily harmonious--consequently, the mixture of ethnic groups in the newly freed nations of East-Central Europe became unstable once democracies were established in the region following 1989.

Perhaps nowhere else was this more evident than in the case of Czechoslovakia. Following the popular rejection of communist rule in 1989 and the ensuing end of the Cold War, the very nature of the Czechoslovak state's existence was drawn into question. The leaders of this fledgling democracy examined the issue of whether or not the Czech and Slovak peoples should continue to coexist as a unified political entity. After extended political negotiations, the nation split into two parts, creating independent Czech and Slovak states for the first time ever.

Before continuing with this study, it is necessary to distinguish between the meanings of the terms state, nation, and nation-state. According to Frederic S. Pearson's and J. Martin Rochester's widely used text, International Relations: The Global Condition in the Late Twentieth Century,

> "state" refers to a legal--political entity . . . that has a sovereign government exercising supreme authority over a relatively fixed population within well--defined territorial boundaries and acknowledging no higher authority outside those boundaries.[1]

---

[1] Frederic S. Pearson and J. Martin Rochester, International Relations: The Global Condition in the Late Twentieth Century 2d ed. (New York: Random House, 1988), 35.

Thus, the state is the most commonly used categorization in international relations, and as such is the organizational building block of the international political system. In contrast,

> "nation" refers to a cultural or social entity . . . (found in) a group of people having some sense of shared historical experience--generally rooted in a common language or other cultural characteristics--as well as shared destiny. . . . A nation may comprise part of a state, may be coterminous with the state, or may spill over several different states.[2]

Finally, a "nation--state" is actually a state, but reflects the omnipresent desire to make national and the state boundaries one and the same.[3] Although these three terms are commonly interchanged when describing the international condition, distinctions are made at this point in order to accurately reflect the changing international order.

The state is the principal factor in categorizing the different peoples of the world. Rather than conduct international affairs between groups delineated by religion or language, we tend to interact along the lines of nationality. Regardless of whether this ordering of the international system is based on legal or political grounds, it exists as the prevailing reality in the international system today. Based on this structuring, it is important to examine the reasons why this grouping becomes invalidated after seven decades of acceptance in the former Czechoslovakia.

Surely there were underlying, perhaps hidden, reasons for this anomaly. Domestic and international political/economic conditions may have propelled this event to its resolution, or existing societal conditions could have led to such an end. Whatever the fundamental forces behind this occurrence may have been, it is likely that a number of factors

---

[2] Ibid.

[3] Ibid., 37.

combined to produce the end result.

Furthermore, the Czechoslovak case was unusual in the context of present--day ethnic tensions, in that the bifurcation of this nation occurred peacefully. Despite four decades of authoritarian repression and disregard for human rights, Czechoslovakia's fledgling democratic institutions provided a means by which ethnic differences could be resolved in a peaceful manner. This scenario is worthy of further examination, given the importance of ethnic conflict prevention and resolution in the former communist states of East--Central Europe, as well as Eurasia.

However, beyond raising questions regarding the forces behind the division of Czechoslovakia, there is a more fundamental topic which needs to be addressed: was Czechoslovakia ever truly a unified nation? Beyond legal union and a common government, was meaningful integration ever achieved so as to create a Czechoslovak nation, rather than a state comprised of Czechs *and* Slovaks?

Walker Connor theorizes in his article "From Tribe to Nation" that a nation is not simply created and then immediately accepted by its new populace. Rather, it must develop over time, until a national identity has formed in the minds of the citizenry.

> The delay--in some cases stretching into centuries--between the appearance of national consciousness among sectors of the elite and its extension into the masses reminds us of the obvious but all--too--often ignored fact that nation--formation is a process, not an occurrence or an event. . . . (T)he point at which a quantitative addition in the number sharing a sense of common nationhood has triggered the qualitative transformation into a nation resists arithmetic definition.[4]

There is no measurable point at which a people magically transform into

---

[4]Walker Connor, "When Is a Nation," Ethnic and Racial Studies 13, no. 1 (January 1990): 99.

an identifiable national entity--national consciousness is an abstraction which is realized with growing intensity over many generations.

In another article, Connor mentions the case of the Slovaks in Czechoslovakia, making the point that the Slovaks offered little resistance to the idea of a merger with the Czechs in 1918. However, there was enough Slovak discontent with the merger by the beginning of the Second World War that Hitler was able to divide and pacify Czechoslovakia at the expense of the Czechoslovak union.[5] However, this separatism on the part of the Slovaks was not caused by Hitler's political manipulation; it was an existing condition that was merely utilized by Hitler to Nazi Germany's advantage.

The concept of a nation is of paramount importance to this study. This writer will--based on the works of Walker Connor and, to a lesser degree, Eugen Weber--develop the idea that a nation is not created by the simple delineation of physical boundaries and the administration of government authority. Rather, *the formation of a nation is a process.* This process takes place over a long period of time--perhaps centuries--and is not completed until the citizenry develops a national consciousness which views the nation as a single, identifiable unit.[6]

The process of nation-formation "can terminate at any time, . . . (and) until the process is fulfilled, it is capable of reversing itself. . . . "[7] Connor views the recent revival of nationalism in East--Central Europe and the former Soviet republics as signs of the incomplete integration of the

---

[5] Walker Connor, "From Tribe to Nation," History of European Ideas 13, no. 1/2 (1991): 7.

[6] Ibid., 12.

[7] Ibid.

peoples of this region into their respective nations. Following the logical progression of Connor's arguments in the context of this situation, the proposition may be introduced that these regions in turmoil are in the process of reversing (and possibly, ending) their respective nations' integration efforts.

The roots of this proposition of the nation as the result of a process can be traced to the writings of Eugen Weber. Weber conducted an exhaustive case study of the formation of the nation of France. He disputes other theorists who proposed that France became a nation in the fullest sense of the term (i. e. developed a unified, national identity) at any of the various watershed points in its history (Napoleonic era, 1848, among others). Instead, Weber believes that France became a nation sometime around the beginning of the twentieth century. Thus, Weber believes that the nation should be viewed "not as a given reality but as a work-in-progress, a model of something at once to be built and to be treated for political reasons as already in existence."[8]

Central to the works of both Weber and Connor is the idea that it is not enough for merely the elite of a nation (in the process of being formed) to espouse the existence of an integrated, "complete" nation. The real test of the viability of a nation lies in the minds of the citizenry. Unless the masses develop a national consciousness, the nation will be fragile and incomplete, and its survival remains unseen.

In his recent book, *Pandaemonium*, Daniel Patrick Moynihan theorizes that an ethnic identity satisfies an individual's need for a sense of belongingness and self--esteem. By identifying with a particular ethnic

---

[8] Eugen Weber, Peasants Into Frenchmen: The Modernization of Rural France, 1870-1914 (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1976), 493.

group, one establishes a requisite group identity.[9] This need for a group identity may understandably increase during times of great turmoil and uncertainty. Putting this in the context of post--cold war East--Central Europe, it is not difficult to imagine how these people would cling to the security of their ethnic identity, in light of the vacillations which emerged in that region following the dissolution of the Soviet empire.

Investigating the issue of ethnicity in international relations, it is first necessary to clarify the meaning of the term. Perhaps the most accurate statement that can be made in this regard is that ethnicity and nationhood are defined not by "what is a nation, but (rather) when."[10] Nations are comprised of "a group of people who *believe* they are ancestrally related. It is the largest grouping that shares that belief."[11] Based on these premises, it is evident that the history of a nation and its peoples becomes important in determining the cohesiveness and durability of that nation.

In the case of Czechoslovakia, the recurring instances of Slovak separatism signify a tenuous union with the Czechs, possibly held together only by incidental circumstances. Examples of this include Hitler's expansionism in 1938 and the communist takeover in 1948 (amid broken promises of greater Slovak autonomy).[12] Arguably, conditions existed on several occasions prior to January 1, 1993 which could have permitted the

---

[9] Daniel P. Moynihan, Pandaemonium: Ethnicity in International Politics (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993), 64–65.

[10] Ibid., 1.

[11] Connor, "From Tribe to Nation," 6.

[12] Although the Slovaks were considered autonomous of the Czechs during World War II, for all intents and purposes, Czechoslovakia as a whole was an occupied nation void of sovereign rights--and thus was one nation.

Slovaks near or total autonomy, including 1938, 1948, and possibly following 1968. However, Czechoslovakia never became fully integrated and neither Czechs or Slovaks fully accepted or assimilated the other's culture.[13]

These hypotheses of nation--formation will be applied to the case of Czechoslovakia and its ultimate dissolution as a unified entity. By developing a case study of the Czechoslovak union within the context of the Weber's and Connor's nation--building postulates, the question of whether or not Czechoslovakia had ever actually achieved "nationhood" will be addressed and, hopefully, answered. By examining the Czechoslovak case within the context of these theoretical premises, greater insight will result in regard to this case of ethnic division, as well as to ethnicity in general.

This study seeks to explain why Czechoslovakia could not overcome divisive forces within its borders at a time when unity could have eased the pain of economic, political, and social transition for both Czechs and Slovaks. However, by dividing at this juncture, the Czechs and Slovaks heightened the turmoil swelling throughout their lands. Not only did these people have to learn to live their lives independent of the oppressive communist authorities, but they also had to learn to live apart from each other.

Given these ethnic tensions, it would be useful for similar situations in the future to determine what factors facilitated the democratic nature of this political upheaval. Czechoslovakia's immature democratic institutions functioned properly, as they allowed for the peaceful resolution of a very delicate issue. By examining the Czechoslovak case, further insight may be gained regarding the nature of ethnic conflict and the means by which to control such potentially devastating forces. Indeed, it is

---

[13] See Chapter 4, "Economic Factors" and "Slovak Separatism" sections.

the rising specter of ethnic conflict which looms as the new threat to international security in the post--Cold War era.

By analyzing the methods employed in Czechoslovakia to defuse their ethnic tensions, comparable measures could be used in other nations in similar circumstances to resolve their problems by peaceful, democratic means. While every nation is unique in its particular problems and circumstances involved, the Czechoslovakia example could very well serve as a model for emulation in subsequent cases of intra--national ethnic tensions. These means to be replicated might include approaches to governing over an ethnically--mixed populace, the structuring of democratic institutions so as to provide an effective venting for public discontent, ways of adhering to democratic principles while asserting authority in times of crisis, and many other vehicles of great import to other emerging democracies experiencing ethnic friction.[14]

---

[14] In his study on ethnicity and nation--formation, Walker Connor proposes and evidences the notion that the formation of a nation is a process, and can take generations to be fully realized. His primary works cited for this study are "From Tribe to Nation" and "When Is a Nation." Connor builds this theory from the works of Eugen Weber, who in his work, Peasants Into Frenchmen: The Modernization of Rural France, 1870-1914, proposes that the formation of the French national identity took centuries to develop into a unifying force. These theorists strongly support the thesis of this paper--Czechoslovakia was never meaningfully integrated, and thus, was not truly unified prior to the legal separation of these peoples in 1991--1992. These theoretical bases are supported by an amalgamation of theories of ethnicity and ethnic conflict found in Daniel Patrick Moynihan's Pandaemonium. Moynihan offers valuable insight into the workings of the post--Cold War world and its host of ethnic quandaries, offering explanations for the roots of ethnic conflict and the conflagrations which result from these problems. Furthermore, Moynihan does a superb job of citing other authors/theorists who have developed relevant theories of ethnic separatism in the past.

CHAPTER 2

HISTORY--1918 UP TO THE FALL OF COMMUNISM

The former nation of Czechoslovakia was created at the end of the First World War in an effort to redefine the political realities of the transformed European order. Historically, the Czech lands had been a part of the Austrian Empire, while the Slovak region had long been a part of Hungary. Although the Austrians and the Hungarians had distinctly disparate influences on the development of the Czech and Slovak land and people, there was also a certain degree of compatibility between the two ethnic groups that made assimilation an attractive option.

To the Allied powers (mainly Britain, France, the United States), the solution to the power vacuum at the end of World War I and the question of Czech and Slovak autonomy was one and the same--weaken the Austrians and the Hungarians by allowing the Czechs and Slovaks to secede from their respective empires and then merge the two newly independent peoples into one larger country. The Allies saw the union of the Czech and Slovak lands as a logical, well--matched marriage. In their view, both Czechs and Slovaks were accustomed to existing under the rule of outside powers. Although parts of two different empires, the Czechs and Slovaks shared a sense of subordinated ethnic identity. Their languages, though different, were very similar--better described as dialects of the same language rather than different languages. Therefore, the Allies felt that the geographic proximity of the two regions coupled with the linguistic similarities of their two peoples indicated that the two peoples had similar or possibly common

ancestral roots. Regardless of the likelihood of common lineage, the reality of the situation was that the existing Czech and Slovak people would have to develop a shared identity in their own right.

The idea of creating a unified Czech and Slovak nation in the early twentieth century was not a new idea. Throughout the nineteenth century, there were various movements supporting the creation of a unified, autonomous Czech and Slovak nation. However, the Austrian and Hungarian domination of these lands, as well as internal disagreement over the merits of this idea, precluded an integrated polity. With the outbreak of the First World War, this idea surfaced once again, given the political realignment which was likely to occur after the end of the war, regardless of which side prevailed. To the Czechs, who foresaw an opportune moment to gain autonomy once the war in Europe was over, an integrative scheme involving the Slovaks was a wise political move. Learning from the bitter experience with the Germans just before the outbreak of the First World War, the Czechs decided to dilute the political power of the German minority in the Czech lands. In an independent Czech state, the ethnic Czechs would measure up 3:2 against the German population in the country.[15] However,

> (b)y joining Slovakia to the Czech lands and regarding Slovaks as Czechoslovaks, Czechoslovakia would have a two-thirds majority of Czechoslovaks, with minorities . . . making up the remaining one-third of the state's population. . . . From the Slovak nationalist point of view, political union with the Czechs offered an escape from a Hungarian regime that was intent on magyarising its Slovak population.[16]

---

[15] James Felak, "The Slovak Question," in The Czech and Slovak Experience: Selected Papers from the Fourth World Congress for Soviet and East European Studies, Harrogate, 1990 ed. John Morison (New York: St. Martin's Press, Inc., 1992), 138.

[16] Ibid.

Based primarily upon these reasons, the political union of these two ethnicities was very logical and desirable to the two peoples at this time.[17]

At the end of the First World War, the Allied powers saw the creation of a Czechoslovak nation as a prudent move geopolitically. By carving these states out of the defeated Axis powers of Austria and Hungary, the defeated powers would be punished, as well as weakened in the event of future hostility (following balance of power theory). Furthermore, the argument could be made that the Allied powers saw that the secession of the Czech and Slovak peoples from their controlling empires could create a greater sense of stability in the region, reducing ethnic tension by granting autonomy to two large ethnic minorities. On a broader level, the Czech and Slovak peoples shared linguistic similarities and a common ancestry, making the prospect of merging the Czech and Slovak lands to form one nation a very attractive option.

As a result of these considerations, the Allied powers agreed to create a Czechoslovak state, and signed an agreement on this accord with emigrant representatives of the Czech and Slovak peoples in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania in May 1918. Thus, with the end of World War I, the Czechoslovak state was created--accompanied by high hopes and aspirations for peace and prosperity in this new nation. As history tells us, neither peace nor prosperity was realized, due in large part to international events.

Soon after the creation of the Czechoslovak state, problems of assimilation emerged. The development of the Czech and Slovak lands was very disparate--the Czech region was more advanced in educational, social,

---

[17] As cited, James Felak's essay, "The Slovak Question," found in John Morison's book, The Czech and Slovak Experience offers a superb account of the political maneuvering between the Czechs and Slovaks on the issue of Slovak autonomy throughout their shared history.

political, and economic terms compared to the Slovak region. As a result, the Czechs had to focus on developing the Slovak regions before the nation could hope to develop a true sense of national consciousness, and thus, nationhood. This meant that a disproportionate amount of Czechoslovakian resources were channeled to the Slovak regions in order to improve conditions in that part of the country. These resources ranged from financial assets to school teachers to political administrators, as the Slovaks were grossly unprepared to administer their region independent of Hungarian control.

This redistribution of resources caused tensions in both halves of the Czechoslovak nation. Czechs were indignant over the aforementioned hemorrhage of resources which flowed eastward to the Slovak lands, while Slovaks resented extensive Czech involvement in their region's political and economic affairs and perceived this dominance as obtrusive. Furthermore, the Czech administrators assigned to the Slovak region had little tolerance for Roman Catholic practices ingrained in the culture of the region--the Slovaks were predominantly Catholic while the Czechs were largely Protestant or non-affiliated in their religious faith. Consequently, "many Slovaks were upset by anticlerical measures taken by the new regime and an impiety and irreverence toward religion"[18] displayed by some of these transplanted Czechs. The Czechs and Slovaks were unable to assimilate or tolerate each others' religious preferences, and therefore had difficulty integrating their two societies on yet another level.

In short, both sides had reasons for disapproving of the merger. Both Czech and Slovak had fundamental problems with the relationship, despite the apparent need for the union. European politics and domestic political

---

[18] Felak, "The Slovak Question," in Morison, 139.

realities supporting the union were challenged by the powerful emotions of the citizenry in both halves of the new nation which disapproved of the arrangement. Thus, although integration was achieved in a legal sense, the Czech and Slovak peoples failed to be integrated on a more meaningful sociological level.[19]

It is on this sociological level that nations are formed. Walker Connor and Eugen Weber identify this component as the formation of national consciousness. This is developed over time through a gradual integration of the different cultures, whether equal in exchange or not. The citizenry of the nation--in--progress must learn to accept the others' culture as one in the same with their own culture. That is, there must be no distinction between cultures and peoples, only acceptance on the grounds of a common lineage. "National consciousness is predicated upon a myth of common ancestry. The myth need not, and usually will not, accord with fact."[20] The issue of common ancestry that Connor refers to points to another issue which Connor and Weber note as significant to the study of ethnicity, that of the extensive migrations which occurred across Europe over hundreds of years of history. Because of these population shifts and the ethnic intermixing which ensued, pure and unique races or cultures are rare, if not nonexistent in Europe.

In the case of Czechoslovakia, the two cultures were well aware of their dissimilarities. The unification of the Czechs and Slovaks came only in recent history, and was answered by several nationalist movements, especially in the Slovak region. Moreover, the Czechs and Slovaks, though

---

[19] Jiri Musil, "The Breakup of Czechoslovakia: An Historical Perspective," Lecture given at The Woodrow Wilson Center in Washington, D.C. 25 March 1993.

[20] Connor, "From Tribe to Nation," 15.

possessing linguistic similarities, did, nonetheless have two distinct languages. Despite the World War I Allies' hopes to the contrary, this accentuated their differences, whether real or perceived. Language is important in establishing a sense of national consciousness in that it "give(s) rise to a conviction of familial or ancestral sameness."[21] As a result, the Czechs and the Slovaks clung to their separate identities. The important catalyst in this situation was the Czechs' dominance numerically and in positions of power (such as government officials and teachers), thus allowing them to assert their single identity as reflective of the greater Czechoslovak identity.

Subsequently, voices were raised across the country--primarily in the Slovak region--which called for decentralization of the (centralized) national government and/or an end to Czech--Slovak integration. This bred various nationalist movements across the nation, but the only movements of consequence politically were in the Slovak region, most notably the Slovak People's Party (SPP) and the Agrarian Party. The various Slovak parties differed over the degree of decentralization necessary in order to best meet the needs of the Slovak people--the SPP advocating more autonomy for the Slovaks than the more moderate Agrarian Party.

Through all of this, the Czechoslovak nation proceeded through the interwar period under the leadership of Tomas Garrigue Masaryk--a committed Czech politician who strongly believed in the ability of a "well–developed pluralist parliamentary democracy"[22] to achieve a just, stabile government for the Czechoslovak nation. Masaryk fought off numerous attempts to weaken the democratic foundations of the

---

[21] Ibid.

[22] Vera Olivova, "The Czechoslovak Government, 1918-1938," in Morison, 93.

Czechoslovak government by the communist and nationalist parties in the Czech and Slovak regions. These problems were further compounded by the various demands of the ethnic German minority present in Czechoslovakia. Tomas Masaryk found his authority over the nation challenged repeatedly as social, political, and economic crises in the early 1930's gave rise to increased nationalist and communist activity.[23]

Economically, Czechoslovakia was hard--hit by the worldwide depression. This economic catastrophe ravaged Europe, especially Germany, and helped contribute to the social and political crises of the decade. In Czechoslovakia, these crises were induced by the Czechoslovak communists and the German national socialists. Both groups sought to capitalize politically from the despair of the depression, calling upon their followers to overthrow Masaryk's government. The national socialists were kept at bay by Masaryk and the judicial system, who exposed the Germans' plot to overthrow the Czechoslovak government as part of Adolf Hitler's Nazi movement. The German national socialists faced increasingly stiff resistance following this event, and rose to become the became the primary threat to the Czechoslovak government. Socially, Czechoslovakia was torn apart by the prevailing economic and political flux of the day. Nationalist groups pitted Czechoslovakia's ethnic groups against each other and fears of an aggressive Germany threatened the security of the Czechoslovak people. Society became polarized along political lines, dividing Czechs and Slovaks, as well as the parties within each region.

In 1935, Masaryk declined another term as President of the nation, and his party, the Republican Party, chose Edvard Benes as its Presidential candidate. Benes won the 1935 election, with some support from nationalist

---

[23] Ibid., 97.

and communist parties across the nation. The factor which united these diverse interests in this election was the rising threat from Nazism--centered both within Czechoslovakia in the German minority and externally in an increasingly antagonistic Nazi Germany. Although the Benes government successfully limited the Nazi threat from within their nation, Europe's acquiescence to Adolf Hitler at Munich in October of 1938 negated Czechoslovakia's defenses and resulted in the Nazi occupation of the nation soon thereafter.

It is worthwhile to note at this point that the Slovaks declared autonomy shortly after the Munich Accord was announced, and maintained an independent state for less than a year, when their independence became subject to Nazi control. Thus, the Slovaks established an "independent" fascist puppet state during the war, but were united with the Czechs after the war, and remained united as a result of the communist takeover.[24]

As the Second World War neared an end, the occupied nations in Europe were liberated by the Allied powers. The troops which liberated Western Europe were mostly British and American, while the troops liberating most of East-Central Europe were Soviet. Because of these spheres of influence, and also the post-war international designs of Joseph Stalin, the Soviet Union maintained its presence in East-Central Europe beyond the envisioned denazification period--much to the chagrin of the Western powers.

Czechoslovakia was liberated almost entirely by Soviet Red Army troops; consequently, the Soviet Union played a very influential role in the

---

[24] Tim D. Whipple, ed., After the Velvet Revolution: Vaclav Havel and the New Leaders of Czechoslovakia Speak Out (New York: Freedom House, 1991), 51.

post-war revitalization of the nation. The Soviets directly interfered in the creation of Czechoslovakia's local and national government bodies and political system. Red Army troops implemented plans to organize and install local government bodies which gave significant political power to the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia (CPC).[25] At the national level, President Edvard Benes returned from wartime exile and was optimistic about cooperation with the Soviet Union, especially in light of the ease with which Britain and France abandoned their nation to Hitler at Munich.[26] Out of deference to an increasingly obtrusive Stalin and a corresponding Soviet troop presence in the region, Benes soon found himself yielding substantial power to the Soviet Union and the CPC. Thus, Stalin was able to manipulate the creation of the new Czechoslovak government in order to ensure a prominent role for the CPC (and implicitly, the USSR) in the governing of the Czechoslovak nation.

The communists emerged from the elections of May 1946 as the dominant party in both the Czech and the Slovak lands. The other parties found that they had grossly underestimated the electoral strength of the CPC. Despite the electoral success of the communists, President Benes was re--elected by very large margins. From this point onward, the struggle between the communists and the non--communists intensified as both sides revamped their efforts to defeat each other.

This struggle intensified over the following months as both sides anticipated the next elections, scheduled for May of 1948. However, in February of 1948, communist resistance to increasing non--communist

---

[25] John F. N. Bradley, Politics in Czechoslovakia, 1945-1990 (New York: Columbia University Press, 1991), 6-8.

[26] Hans Renner, A History of Czechoslovakia Since 1945 (New York: Routledge, 1989), 2.

strength in the legislature prompted the non--communist ministers in the cabinet to resign--precipitating a constitutional crisis. The ministers had hoped that this crisis would compel Benes and their supporters to rally to their support and force the communists to acquiesce on several key issues in the legislature. However, the communists took advantage of this situation and rallied their own supporters, inducing Benes to accept the ministers' resignations and appoint new ministers--selected by the communists. Benes remained in office until resigning for reasons of poor health in June of that year, and died three months later.

Following Benes' resignation, CPC leader Klement Gottwald took over as President of Czechoslovakia. Gottwald spent much of World War II in the Soviet Union, learning how to kindle and organize the communists' crusade in Czechoslovakia after the end of the war. From this point onward, the communists dismantled the democratic bulwarks of the Czechoslovak government and embraced the Soviet Union and totalitarianism. Thus, Stalin effectively attained control of Czechoslovakia in 1948 without the use of the Red Army, and avoided the condemnation of the United Nations and the world community in general.

The Czechoslovak nation watched as Gottwald and the communists went about destroying the democracy which Masaryk and Benes had painstakingly constructed and nurtured. Unlike some of the other nations in East--Central Europe, Czechoslovakia's transition to authoritarianism took place peacefully, its military troops altogether uninvolved in the government transition that took place. The Czechoslovak people confronted their situation with the same languid resistance which Hitler met--the "Good Soldier Schweik" persona emerged once again. The people "adapt(ed) themselves from pure self-preservation to the enforced reality

while awaiting better times or the right occasion to take fate into their own hands."[27] The communists had successfully seized power from the post-war democratic forces. Instead of a free democracy, the Czechs and Slovaks were governed by a totalitarian regime which replaced individual freedom with mass oppression.

Gottwald's initial Sovietization efforts in Czechoslovakia were similar to those of the other Soviet-controlled nations in the region. However, Gottwald's policies changed, and Czechoslovakia became of the harshest of the hard--line regimes in the region. Totalitarian repression in Czechoslovakia was severe compared to other nations in the region--Gottwald's control of the government and the people of his nation paralleled Stalin's in its brutality. Nonetheless, when Stalin and Gottwald both died in 1953, the two nations took divergent paths. The USSR under Nikita Khrushchev eased its repressive policies, while Czechoslovakia under First Secretary Antonin Novotny maintained its iron--fisted approach to ruling. However, when Novotny was ousted from office in January of 1968 and replaced by Alexander Dubcek, Czechoslovakia saw many changes.

Under Dubcek, the dissent that had been building up in the Czechoslovak people came to its apex. The citizenry saw Dubcek's openness to change as their opportunity to determine their own fate. Therefore, when Dubcek initiated a number of reforms during the "Prague Spring" of 1968, the peoples' hopes flared. Aimed at giving socialism "a human face," these reforms stirred much reaction and support from the Czechoslovak people, only to be brutally suppressed by Soviet military forces in August of 1968. The peoples hopes were quickly crushed by this swift and decisive action by the Soviet Union. This caused widespread fear and resentment on

---

[27] Ibid., 18.

the part of the dissidents--resentment which was hidden temporarily, only to resurface with renewed intensity a decade later.

As a result of the Prague Spring uprising, Leonid Brezhnev initiated a period of "normalization" in Czechoslovakia.[28] This period lasted through the early 1970's, and saw Dubcek and his supporters ousted from office, their reforms overturned, and hard-line communists ascended to the leadership positions vacated by the reformers. During this transition period, Gustav Husak took the reins of the government from Dubcek, and Czechoslovakia once again entered into a period of strict authoritarian control and repression.

By the latter half of the 1970's, a significant dissident movement had organized within Czechoslovakia, led primarily by writers and other artists who expressed the vexation which festered during this period. Rising to prominence within this dissident movement was the writer Vaclav Havel. Havel and his fellow writers fueled the underground *samizdat* publications, or underground press, with their essays exposing the faults of the Husak regime. This underground movement instigated the *Charter 77* movement, which called for adherence to the basic principles of civil and human rights which had been officially accepted by the Czechoslovak government in signing the Helsinki Accord in 1976.

Despite the harsh suppression of dissenters which took place in Poland in 1981, pressure from the *samizdat* writers and the *Charter 77* movement, which had become international in scope, continued.[29] This

---

[28] Henceforth, Brezhnev's "normalization" efforts will be referred to simply as normalization.

[29] "*Samizdat*" is the unofficial literature which circulated throughout the underground or dissident networks in Czechoslovakia during the communist era.

pressure took the form of exposures of socialist economic failures, human rights abuses, and other embarrassments to the communist leadership. The ultimate goal of this pressure was to force the communists to loosen their stranglehold on the Czechoslovak citizenry and allow democratic reforms. Despite this, Husak continued in his repression of the Czechoslovak people, backed by the Soviet Union. This continued throughout the 1980s, up until Mikhail Gorbachev's rise to the post of General Secretary (and later, President) of the USSR. With this transition of power within the Soviet Union, and the subsequent advent of *glasnost,* Husak lost his base of support and his legitimacy. Gorbachev made it increasingly clear that he would not support the repressive policies of the East-Central European totalitarian regimes. By the late 1980s, Husak's support waned, and then disappeared altogether.

CHAPTER 3
PRELUDE TO DIVORCE

Noticeable changes began to take place in Czechoslovakia as early as 1987, when Milos Jakes took over the reins of the communist party. Although Husak remained as head of the government, Jakes attained effective control of the party, and thus, the government. Further changes took place throughout the Czechoslovak government and communist party, reflecting the deteriorating support from the Soviet Union and from the populace. The Soviet Union was undertaking significant reforms at the behest of Gorbachev, and was disinclined to support the Czechoslovak leadership in its continued despotic policies. Although not explicitly ordering the Czechoslovak communist leadership to initiate reforms, it was clear that Gorbachev would not sanction their continued oppressive policies. Simultaneously, reform movements were sweeping Eastern Europe, East Germany was in the process of rejecting the communist leadership, and the Cold War was waning. The Czechoslovak people sensed these changes in their government and across the communist bloc, and intensified their dissident movement.

November of 1989 saw a rising revolutionary tide in Czechoslovakia force the Czechoslovak politburo and Central Committee secretariat to resign.[30] This dramatic decrease of support for Husak and the hard--line communists precipitated Husak's resignation from the presidency on

[30] Timothy Garton Ash, The Magic Lantern: The Revolution of '89 Witnessed in Warsaw, Budapest, Berlin, and Prague (New York: Vintage Books, 1993), 96.

December 10, 1989, thus necessitating a presidential election and a general political crisis. This election was initially thought to be an opportunity for reform communists to take power from the Stalinists. However, popular discontent soon intensified until radical reform was the only option available for the government short of violent confrontation.

Such reforms began to materialize following Husak's resignation. Under pressure from a swelling popular movement which was encouraged by the dramatic changes taking place throughout the other Warsaw Pact states, the citizenry of Czechoslovakia demanded substantive reforms. This wave of discontent was embodied in the form of mass demonstrations and symbolic strikes throughout the country. At the heart of this reform movement were two organizations: the Civic Forum (in the Czech lands) and the Public Against Violence (in the Slovak lands). The Civic Forum was headed by the widely recognized dissident Vaclav Havel, while the Public Against Violence was led by Jan Carnogursky.[31]

It is interesting to note at this point that the Slovaks chose to create their own reform movement, associated with, yet officially independent of the Czech movement. While there are valid arguments for organizing in such a manner (decentralized), there are also some very compelling reasons for maintaining a unified front against the organized and powerful communist party/government. The benefits of centralizing the dissident movement include unifying and strengthening the scattered local movements into a larger body with more power and influence, and synchronizing actions so as to have the maximum possible impact on the citizenry and the government. However, the Slovaks chose to navigate through the revolution of 1989 not necessarily as Czechoslovaks, but rather,

---

[31] Ibid., 123.

as Slovaks. In many ways, Slovakia was already "a different nation."[32]

By separating themselves from the Czechs at this critical juncture, the Slovaks displayed their separatism at a time when there existed a common enemy in their struggle for freedom--the government. Instead of gaining strength from numbers and unity to defeat this mutual adversary, the Slovaks proclaimed their identity as Slovaks, rather than Czechoslovaks. Although the leaders of the Public Against Violence cooperated closely with the Civic Forum, the fact that it was necessary to form a Slovak organization to gain the support of the Slovak citizenry illuminated a darker reality--*the need to facilitate cooperative efforts between these two ethnic groups revealed that there was a division between Czechs and Slovaks, citizens of one nation.*

The sense of national consciousness which the people in the Slovak lands drew upon for strength was that of Slovakia. They did not acknowledge their shared identity with the Czechs, but rather, effectively drew into question the bonds connecting the two halves of Czechoslovakia. This falls short of Walker Connor's qualification for nation--formation, because there were not "a sufficient number [of people] internaliz[ing] the national identity in order to cause nationalism to become an effective force for mobilizing the masses. . . ."[33] More specifically, the Slovaks (and Czechs) mobilized on the basis of their national identity, but this identity was not as Czechoslovaks, it was as Czechs and Slovaks. The Slovaks mobilized their citizenry not by outright nationalism, but by creating their own dissident movement, one which did not include the Czechs--one which was unequivocally Slovak.

---

[32] Ibid., 91.

[33] Connor, "When Is a Nation," 92.

With the capitulation of the communist leadership, the Civic Forum and the Public Against Violence negotiated an arrangement to share control of the government with the remaining members of the communist regime until free elections could be held. The exception to this interim settlement was the agreement for Parliament to elect a president as soon as possible (within forty days).[34] From this compromise, elections were scheduled for June of 1990, and Havel was elected President of Czechoslovakia on December 29, 1989.

Post- Communist Czechoslovakia

The end result of the "Velvet Revolution" of November-December 1989 was the removal of the CPC from the leading role in the government, the creation of an interim government--with Havel as President and the CPC with limited power--and finally, free elections in June of 1990. Upon re-election in 1990, Havel presided over the new Czechoslovakia--a federation employing a parliamentary system of government. In his book Summer Meditations, Vaclav Havel explains the Czechoslovak Federal Assembly and its bicameral composition:

> The Assembly of the People is a 150--seat chamber, with 101 seats for the Czechs and 49 seats for the Slovaks; the Assembly of Nations has 150 seats, 75 for representatives from the Czech lands of Bohemia and Moravia and 75 for those from Slovakia. Voting in the Assembly of Nations is carried out by nationality; legislation has to be passed by a majority in each half of the house.[35]

The central government has relatively strong powers compared to those of

---

[34] The term "Parliament" will hereafter refer to the collective legislature, that is, the Federal Assembly and the two national assemblies.

[35] Vaclav Havel, Summer Meditations (New York: Vintage Books, 1993), 136.

the two national assemblies, with most of the structure having been adopted from the communist regime.[36]

This organization reflected the need to balance the interests of the Czechs and the Slovaks, giving the Slovaks equal representation in one body while reflecting the Czechs' larger population in the other body. This defused arguments regarding fair representation for both Czechs and Slovaks, while subordinating both bodies to the authority of the central government. At the same time, the President had to be confirmed by votes in both houses. The adoption of this political structure reflected the broader issue of a Czech--Slovak division, while also accommodating divisiveness so as to maintain an effective, functioning government system.

The Czechoslovak Parliament passed new election laws in March of 1990. Ending the "leading role" of the of the CPC, the Parliament created a parliamentary electoral system based on proportional representation. This system was designed so as to encourage a wide variety of political parties, yet favor the dominant ones. All parties which met the minimum requirement for placement on the ballot (10,000 signatures) would be granted equal airtime on television and radio stations during the election campaign. Furthermore, political parties gaining less than 5% of the total vote would not gain representation in Parliament.[37] Thus, smaller political movements would be able to participate in the political system, but fringe parties would not have any substantive power (representation in Parliament). This arrangement was "designed to lead to the creation of a

---

[36] Ibid., 135-136.

[37] Bernard Wheaton and Zdenek Kavan, The Velvet Revolution: Czechoslovakia, 1988-1991 (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, Inc., 1992), 130-131.

relatively stable government based on large and popular political parties."[38]

While the political parties and government initially developed according to these expectations, the post-revolution legislators had failed to predict the fragmentation of the political parties which soon developed. The large political parties with general goals gave way to smaller parties with more definitive agendas.

> After the 1990 elections 6 parties were represented in the assembly, and Civic Forum and Public Against Violence together held 168 of the 300 seats. Before the elections this June (1992), there were 15 parties in the assembly--the change having taken place without any public participation whatsoever. Largest among these groups in the national legislature were the Civic Democratic party with 43 seats and Civic Movement with 41 seats.[39]

The consensus of the citizenry waned following the initial honeymoon period for this newly democratized country. This culminated in the rapid splintering of the Czechoslovakian political system. The result of this splintering was exactly what the post-revolutionary legislators had hoped to avoid--smaller political parties became more powerful relative to each other. Passing legislation became increasingly difficult, and future political and economic reforms were uncertain. At the same time, difficult economic conditions in Slovakia helped to ignite nationalist sentiments in the Slovak region. This rising nationalism, coupled with political fragmentation throughout the legislature, allowed Vladimir Meciar and his nationalistic Movement for a Democratic Slovakia to capture 37.3% of the vote in the June 1992 elections in the Slovak region.[40] The June 1992

---

[38] Ibid., 131.

[39] Milan Svec, "Czechoslovakia's Velvet Divorce," Current History 91, no. 568 (November 1992): 379.

[40] Ibid.

elections produced a very high turnover throughout the federal and state legislatures, unseating many of the leading political figures.

With this triumph, Meciar and his nationalist movement renewed the call for Slovak autonomy from federal authority. However, public opinion polls in the Slovak (as well as Czech) lands revealed that the populace did not favor breaking up the Czechoslovak nation. In July of 1992, the Federal Assembly was unable to muster enough votes to re--elect Havel as President. Havel resigned his post, creating a power vacuum. Slovak prime minister Meciar and Czech prime minister Vaclav Klaus eventually agreed to end their nation's union, officially separating into two independent states effective 1 January 1993.

CHAPTER 4

FACTORS AFFECTING THE UNION OF THE CZECH AND SLOVAK REGIONS

The budding democracies of the East-Central European region were celebrating their liberation from communism by strengthening their ties with the West and uncovering the freedoms which were denied under the communist regimes. Czechoslovakia was no different--the Czech and Slovak peoples re--examined their respective cultures and themselves. However, as the fireworks and surging crowds disappeared from sight, the unity which emboldened the masses of people during the revolution gave way to political separatism and strife.

The Czech and Slovak regions, though integrated for over 70 years, found that they maintained a significant amount of social and economic disparity. It was this disparity which fueled resentment and mistrust between the Czechs and Slovaks, especially with regard to their representatives in parliament. Consequently, the economic and social conditions prevailing in Czechoslovakia are described in the following sections, as they relate to the eventual dissolution of the Czechoslovak state.

Economic Factors

Economically, Czechoslovakia developed very unevenly. This was largely due to the different rate and time of economic development in the Czech and Slovak regions. The most important factor in the development of these regions was the industrial revolution and the time periods during

which it took place in the Czech and Slovak lands. The industrialization of the Czech and Slovak regions was very dissimilar, and as such, worthy of examination and comparison.

> In the Czech Republic the proportion of rural (to urban) population had already dropped to under fifty percent in the years just after 1900 . . . while in Slovakia this happened around 1950. The transition, the whole what is called economic transition, the change from a rural, agricultural society into an industrial (society) lasted in the Czech parts about 91 years . . . Slovakia needed for this transition only 41 years.[41]

The Czech lands were much more developed economically than were the Slovaks' when the Czechs and Slovaks united in 1918. During the period between the two wars, efforts were made to level this disparity. However, while limited progress was made in nurturing the Slovaks' economic base, this was halted by the Second World War. Once the CPC took over the Czechoslovak government in 1948, earnest industrialization efforts were undertaken in the Slovak lands.

Following the Stalinist economic model, an emphasis was placed on developing heavy industries in the Slovak region, as well as weapons manufacturing plants.[42] While this massive industrialization effort proved somewhat successful through the course of the Cold War, once the communists fell from power in 1989 and the Cold War ended, the demand for such goods dwindled. As a result, there was no demand for the primary products of the Slovaks' economy. Intensifying this problem were these industries' gross inefficiency and the fact that many of the Slovaks' industries produced raw materials which had to be finished in the Czech

---

[41] Musil, "The Breakup of Czechoslovakia," 3-4.

[42] Svec, "Czechoslovakia's Velvet Divorce," 379.

region.[43]

The Czechs were also suffering significant economic losses as a result of decentralizing their economy and widespread inefficiency. In addition to struggling with these new economic realities the Czechs also felt the drain of the limping Slovak economy, as approximately one--half of the federal budget was allocated to the Slovak lands, although the Slovaks comprised only one--third of the nation's total population.[44]

As a result of these conditions, the Slovak lands were affected much more severely by the economic reforms initiated by the President Havel and the Federal Assembly.[45] Charts 1 and 2 depict the unequal economic conditions in the Czech and the Slovak regions. This disparity placed a strain on Czech-Slovak relations during a period when unity and cooperation were critical in order to guide Czechoslovakia through a labyrinth of political, economic, and social challenges. Chart 3 illustrates the difference in opinion between the Czechs and the Slovaks in April of 1992--though the majority of people in both regions perceived a decline in their economic situation, the Slovaks were far more dissatisfied with these conditions than were the Czechs. This polarization drove a wedge between Czech and Slovak politicians in the legislature. Consequently, two different paths to economic reform were advocated--one radical and one gradual. The Czechs largely supported radical reforms while the Slovaks were in favor of a gradual transformation of their economy.

Based on the data which is partially represented in Chart 3, Table 1

---

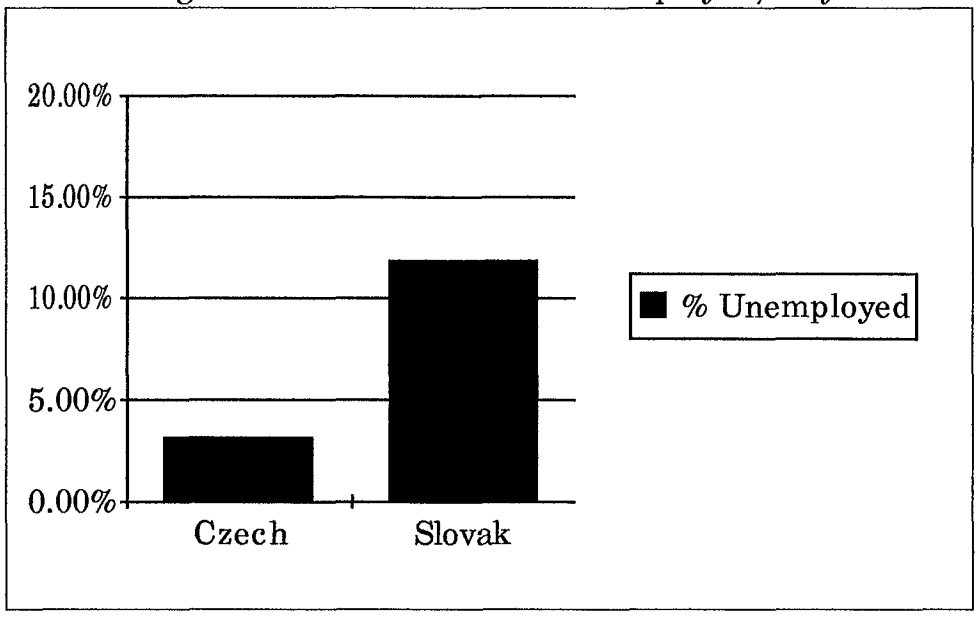
[43] Musil, "The Breakup of Czechoslovakia," 12-14.

[44] "Check, O Slovakia," The Economist 323, no. 7765 (27 June 1992): 55.

[45] Svec, "Czechoslovakia's Velvet Divorce," 379.

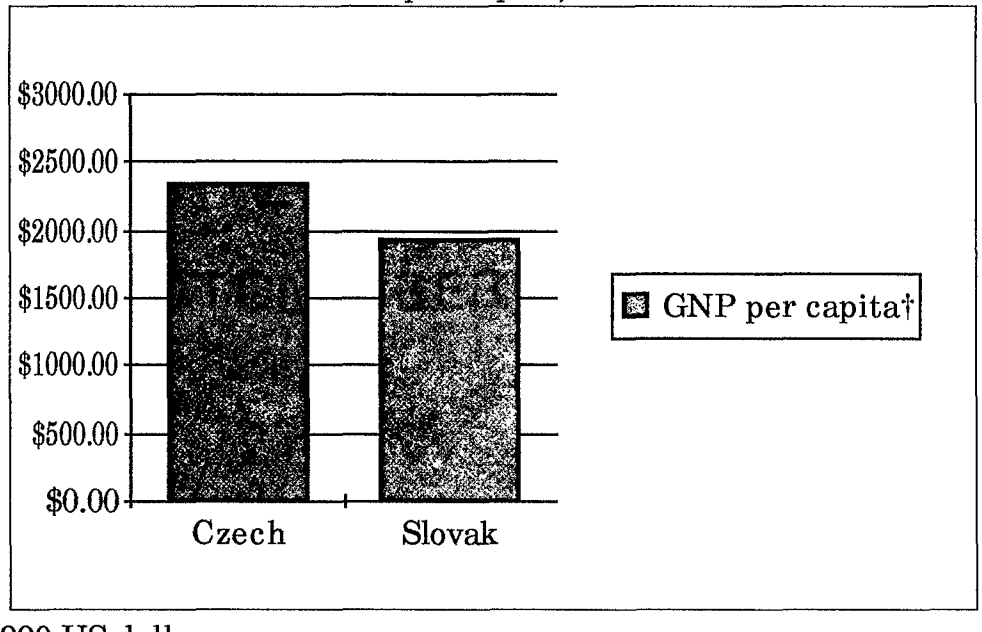
displays the data compiled from surveys in April of 1992 and December of 1992. Table 1 is shown in order to give quantitative credibility to the assertion that the Czechs and Slovaks were not truly integrated, and therefore did not develop a Czechoslovak national consciousness. Beyond reporting raw statistical data, it is necessary to confirm the significance of this data to the study at hand. Consequently, a simple statistical test was performed for the purpose of testing whether the differences in opinion between the Czech and Slovak people are statistically significant, or merely due to chance sampling deviances. After comparing the opinions of Czechs and Slovaks at two different points during Czechoslovakia's reform period and testing the statistical significance of this data, the relevance of this data will be analyzed in the context of the ethnic division in this country.

Chart 1. Percentage of Czechs and Slovaks Unemployed, May 1992



Source: "Check, O Slovakia," The Economist 323, no. 7765 (27 June 1992): 55. (The Economist quotes these figures from Business International, Business Strategies)

Chart 2. Czech and Slovak GNP per capita, 1990



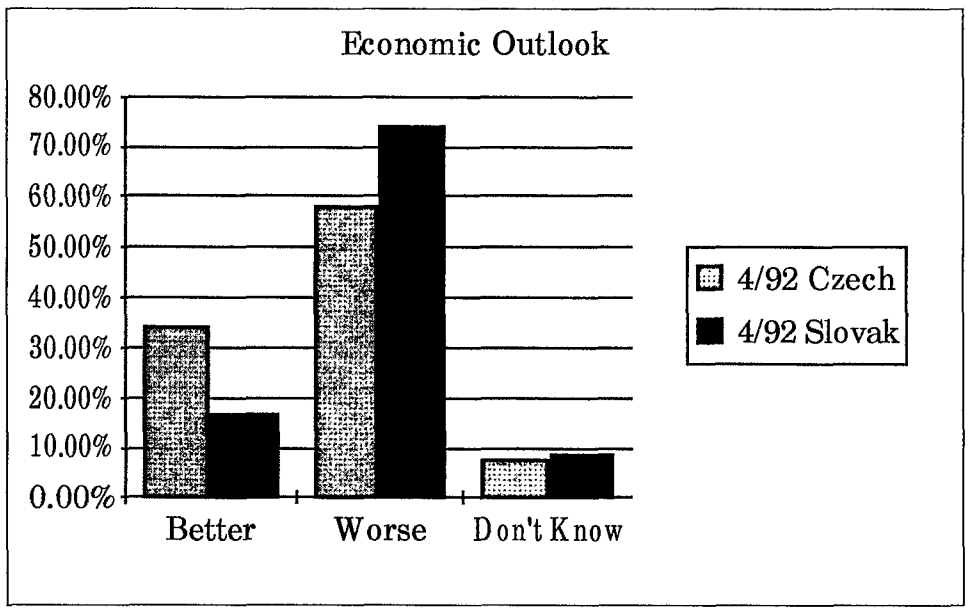
† In 1990 US dollars

Source: "Check, O Slovakia," The Economist 323, no. 7765 (27 June 1992): 55. (The Economist quotes these figures from Business International, Business Strategies)

Chart 3. Czechs' and Slovaks' Views on Economic Situation in 4/92 Versus Communist Period

The Czechs and Slovaks were asked the following question:

> Thinking about our country's economic situation under communism compared to our economic situation today--would you say that our country's economic situation is better or worse than it was under communism?



Sources: USIA, "Opinion Research Survey of Czechoslovakia," Table 2, (16 February 1993): 9.
USIA, "Opinion Research Survey of Czechoslovakia," Table 6, (19 March 1993): 9.

Table 1. Czechs' and Slovaks' Views on Economic Situation in 4/92 and 12/92 Versus Communist Period†

	4/92 Czech (1178)††	4/92 Slovak (601)	12/92 Czech (1033)	12/92 Slovak (1075)
Better	34%	17%	43%	22%
Worse	58%	74%	52%	71%
Don't Know/no answer	8%	9%	5%	6%

† The Czechs and Slovaks were asked the identical question as is noted in Chart 3
†† Figures in parentheses indicate number of respondents polled

Sources: USIA, "Opinion Research Survey of Czechoslovakia," Table 2, (16 February 1993): 9.
USIA, "Opinion Research Survey of Czechoslovakia," Table 6, (19 March 1993): 9.

The data from April of 1992 and December of 1992 will be analyzed separately, and the results compared for similarity or dissimilarity. In regard to the data from April of 1992, the difference (D) between the Czechs' and Slovaks' opinions was 16 (74%--58%).[46] At the .05 level of significance, considering the sample sizes, this disparity would be statistically significant if D had a value of at least 6.[47] Given the substantial margin by which the D value of 16 exceeds this requirement, it is justifiable to assume that the difference between the Czechs' and Slovaks' opinions was indeed influenced by their status as either Czechs or Slovaks.

Similarly, the data from the December survey has a D value of 19

[46] The difference between their opinions was 16% and 17% in the April figures. In order to prove an unambiguous difference between the attitudes of the Czechs and the Slovaks, the more conservative figure is used in this case, as well as the December case which follows.

[47] Data was analyzed on the basis of the "Table of Significant Differences Between Percentages," found in William Buchanan, Understanding Political Variables 4th ed. (New York: Macmillan Publishing Company, 1988), 103.

(71%--52%). Based on the sample sizes, D would have to have a value of at least 5 to be statistically significant at the .05 level of significance. Again exceeding the required D value by a considerable margin, it is reasonable to assume that Czechoslovaks' attitudes about reform were influenced by their identity as Czechs or Slovaks.

The data compiled from these studies indicate a distinct division between the attitudes of the Czechs and Slovaks towards reform, further attesting to the schism within Czechoslovakia. By polling the masses, the rhetoric of the political leadership is bypassed, providing a reasonably accurate barometer of the citizens' feelings. More importantly, the results of these opinion surveys strengthen the argument that Walker Connor's criteria for nation--formation were not met in Czechoslovakia. That is, the citizens of the Czech and Slovak regions had very different feelings about critical issues affecting both Czechs and Slovaks. On the basis of these dissimilar convictions, the conclusion can be drawn that the Czechs and Slovaks had very different *perceptions* of which direction their country should be heading, and therefore were not meaningfully integrated--whether for reasons of economics, culture, or otherwise.

Vaclav Havel

During the period between the overthrow of communism and the breakup of the Czechoslovak nation, Czechoslovak President Vaclav Havel played an integral role in the events which took place in his nation. Havel was closely involved in the political and economic decisions which guided the nation away from totalitarianism. However, President Havel affected much more than just legislative matters during his tenure. By example, he sought to instill an entirely new set of societal and governmental values

in his fellow citizens.

Vaclav Havel was one of the most prominent dissident writers during the communist era in Czechoslovakia. One of the most prominent of the Czechoslovak *samizdat* writers and an outspoken supporter of the *Charter 77* movement, Havel had helped fuel a dissident movement which kept hope alive during the oppressive years of the Husak regime. Because of this defiance, he was imprisoned on a number of occasions and was one of the people placed on the government's "black list."

During the revolution in 1989, Havel became the key member of the opposition movement and was propelled overnight to international prominence. Though recognized previously by the international community, Havel became one of the symbols of freedom and democracy for the international media, and consequently, for the peoples of the world. As the most prominent of the dissidents who forced the government from power and an internationally recognized figure, Havel enjoyed considerable popularity following the revolution and his accession to the Czechoslovak presidency.

This popularity was instrumental in gaining domestic and international support for reforms and revitalization programs during the difficult transition which faced the Czechoslovak government. Havel had written for years about his ideals for government, life and society. Following his election to the presidency, he went about creating a new nation, based on "intellectual and spiritual values."[48] His goal was to create a nation which respected *truth, responsibility, and individual and human rights*--taking into account the rich heritage of the Czech and Slovak peoples and allowing them that which they were denied for so long--

[48] Havel, Summer Meditations, 125.

freedom.

The early debate over the pace of economic reforms (rapid versus cautious) forced Havel to make the final decision on the issues. Siding with the proponents of rapid reform, Havel fell from the graces of the more cautious reformers--primarily Slovaks. These problems were compounded by the worsening economic conditions throughout the nation, which were in turn made more severe by a growing global recession.[49] As a result, a rift began to develop between the Czech and Slovak members of Parliament, based on the Slovaks' dissatisfaction with reforms and the economy. Havel, for his part, worked to gain a consensus through increasingly difficult political impasses.

Despite a legislative environment which grew increasingly politically fragmented, Havel transcended the political party system by declining requests by his party to make public appearances supporting other party candidates and generally distancing himself from the party system as much as possible. Similarly, Havel did not categorize his nation as Czech and Slovak, but rather as one united nation. Even when forced to decide upon the future course of economic reforms in Czechoslovakia, Havel did not immediately side with his supporters in the legislature. He was advised on the pros and cons of both cautious and radical reforms by representatives from both camps (divided primarily by Czech--for radical reform, and Slovak--for slower reform). After weeks of consideration, Havel finally decided upon the more rapid pace for economic reforms.

By 1992, the primary issues of debate in Parliament were the pace of economic reforms and the degree of autonomy to be granted to the Slovaks.

---

[49] The western powers which had the resources to assist Czechoslovakia and the other emerging democracies in the region were reluctant to assist because of the recession which was affecting their domestic economies.

Meciar's nationalistic party succeeded in the elections of June 1992 on the platform of slower economic reforms and greater autonomy for Slovakia. Faced with a growing Czech--Slovak schism within the Parliament, Havel sought to use his presidential powers to dissolve parliament and call for elections, but was blocked by Slovak members of parliament aided by a handful of their Czech counterparts. Unable to gain reelection from the Parliament, and faced with an increasingly demanding and uncooperative Slovak delegation, Havel resigned from his post on July 20, 1992--the agreement to dissolve the unified government followed soon after Havel's resignation.

In light of this separation by peaceful means, the question arises as to the role that Havel played in the nature of this "Velvet Divorce." Could the separation have been prevented? If so, for how long? Did the possibility exist that this dispute could have escalated over time to a violent confrontation?

Vaclav Havel recently released a book entitled Summer Meditations, written shortly before the dissolution of the Czechoslovak nation, conveying his personal political philosophy to his citizenry and the international community. In this work, Havel professes his distaste for professional politicians. As President of Czechoslovakia, he prefers instead to be an amateur politician, serving his fellow citizens and promoting culture and the concepts of responsibility and truth in his words as well as deeds. By committing himself to non-political politics, Havel proclaims his distaste for traditional power-politics and the immorality which this breeds. By approaching his duties in this manner, Havel hopes to be able to reverse the moral bankruptcy of the communist era by instilling a new set of values in the population. For it is not only the communist leaders that were

responsible for decades of misery in Czechoslovakia, it is also the citizenry.

The citizenry was partially responsible for the survival of the communist regime for some very simple reasons. During the communist years, the majority of the citizenry of Czechoslovakia did not belong to the communist party, or did not inform the police of the activities of their family and friends. These actions required voluntary action, or individual choice.[50] Rather, many of the Czechoslovak people conformed to the wishes of the communists, by performing the tasks required of them by the government--going to work, attending rallies, applauding officials' speeches which are filled with rhetoric and lies, but little truth. Out of fear of reprisal, the citizens

> must *live within a lie.* (However,) (t)hey need not accept the lie. It is enough for them to have accepted their life with it and in it. For by this very fact, individuals confirm the system, fulfill the system, make the system, *are* the system.[51]

In this context, the citizenry confirmed the legitimacy of the communist regime and prolonged its survival. As a result, these people--though undoubtedly repressed by this system--were responsible for its continued existence.

In this new environment of individual responsibility and morality, Havel hoped to reinvigorate the Czechoslovak people and nation and shed the burden of guilt and submission. As such, he was reluctant to take any action that would impede the democratic process or sacrifice any of his

---

[50] "President Havel Discusses Domestic Issues," RUDE PRAVO Prague, Czech Republic, 16 September 1993. In Daily Report: Eastern Europe, FBIS-EEU-93-178, 7.

[51] Vaclav Havel et al., The Power of the Powerless: Citizens against the state in central--eastern Europe (Armonk, NY: M. E. Sharpe, Inc., 1985), 31.

personal values. This new "anti--political politician" challenged his fellow citizens not to revert to violence to punish any suspected or known communist collaborators, but rather to trust the judiciary system and the democratic process to serve justice on those who had betrayed their people. After four decades of communist *faux* justice and democracy, this sense of trust would not be easily forged.

Based on this brief character sketch, the earlier questions concerning Havel's wisdom in decision-making must now be addressed. In regard to the role that Havel played in the "Velvet Divorce," some may suggest that he did not do enough to repair the growing schism within his nation. However, the Slovak politicians who induced this split were elected in free, democratic elections. After making his opposition known and exhausting his legal options by attempting a referendum and a dissolution of Parliament, Havel stepped down to allow the separation to take place unimpeded. By permitting the democratic process to function as it was designed, Havel rejected the communist tradition of manipulating the legislative process to satisfy the wishes of the leadership.

Slovak Separatism

As noted earlier in documenting the history of Czech and Slovak peoples, former President Tomas Masaryk dealt extensively with the issue of ethnic minorities and the problems raised by these groups, especially the Germans. However, once the issue of the German minority was dealt with after the Second World War, ethnic issues in Czechoslovakia focused upon Czech-Slovak relations. This ethnic relationship was only then allowed to come to the forefront of Czechoslovak politics after the fall of communism. The Soviets did not wish to allow ethnic divisiveness to occur, due to the

potentially disharmonizing effect this could have on the multiethnic Soviet bloc. However, despite the mandated passivity on behalf of the Slovak separatists, the Slovak autonomy debate was by no means silent during the communist era.

Following the end of the war, tensions existed between the Czechs and Slovaks because of the manner in which their respective regions reacted to Hitler's aggression and subsequent occupation of their lands. As noted previously, the Slovaks declared autonomy shortly before Hitler sent his troops into the Czech lands. Once Hitler's troops arrived, the Slovaks agreed to German annexation of their territory, subject to a Slovak puppet government installed by Hitler. Formally, Slovakia was an autonomous state allied with Nazi Germany. In contrast, while the Czech troops did not offer resistance to the Germans (The Munich Accord allowed Hitler to seize much of their territory), the Czech leaders refused to cooperate with the Nazis, and their region was subsequently occupied by Nazi troops.

The Slovaks' separatist actions had little effect on either the Czech people or the Czechoslovak government. The Slovaks' secession likely had little impact on Hitler's decision to occupy the Czech lands, and their cooperation with the Germans had little to do with Hitler's treatment of the Czech citizenry during the war (such as the treatment of the Czech Jews). Nevertheless, these actions were of consequence after Hitler's troops withdrew. Many Czechs felt that the Slovaks' cooperation with the Germans had "contribute(ed) to the disappearance of the Czechoslovak state."[52] Although Czechoslovakia was once again unified, the Slovaks had made their desire for autonomy known. Based on the actions of the Slovaks prior to and during the war (secession and declaration of autonomy

[52] Wheaton and Kavan, The Velvet Revolution, 91.

in alliance with the Nazis), the Czechs and Slovaks had clearly not developed a national consciousness as defined by Walker Connor and Eugen Weber. Czechoslovakia had not yet become a unified nation, and had actually ceased to exist as a united entity during the period described previously. However, this discord became inconsequential in 1948, when the communists took control of the government of unified Czechoslovakia.

Under the communist regime, the Slovaks witnessed an unambiguous denial of their ethnic identity in the name of Stalinist centralism and communist unity. In addition to the reluctance of the Slovaks to accept a unified Czechoslovakia once more, the predominantly Catholic Slovak lands were reluctant to embrace communism, because of the conflict which arose between practicing Catholicism and communism's godless ideology. Not only were the Czechs and Slovaks forbidden to address the terms of their union, but the very reason for this division--the different ethnic backgrounds of these two peoples--was no longer an issue of importance.

The distinction between Czech and Slovak was suppressed under communist rule, because of the contradictory nature of ethnic identity (history, religion, etc.) and totalitarianism. Under totalitarianism, the party and the state are supreme, leaving no room for domestic divisions such as culture and other forms of ethnic separatism. As a result, the Czechs and Slovaks were once again unified as a nation, albeit forcefully.

Initially, the communists agreed to address the issue of Slovak autonomy at a later juncture, but this did not materialize. In this regard, Slovak writers and intellectuals increasingly made their dissatisfaction known, culminating with the Prague Spring in 1968. In 1968, Alexander Dubcek--a Slovak--incorporated increased autonomy for the Slovaks into his

reforms initiated that spring. Nevertheless, the reforms were later scrapped when the Soviets negated Dubcek's actions, ending the Slovak autonomy movement once more.[53]

The failed reform movement in 1968 affected the division between Czech and Slovak in several ways. Apart from Dubcek, many of the reformers involved in the Prague Spring were Czech. The Soviets were wary of giving too much power to the Czechs, since they regarded the Czech region as the most virulent center of right wing opportunism.[54] Consequently, when the Soviets installed a new regime to "normalize" the situation in Czechoslovakia, a disproportionate number of the new officials appointed were Slovak. This was due, in part, to the fact that the communist party in the Czech region was purged much more extensively than were the Slovak party members (approximately 42% versus 17%).[55] In addition, economic development in the Slovak region was stepped up after the Soviet invasion in 1968--approximately two--thirds of the GNP of the nation was invested in the Slovak lands every year from 1970 to 1987, although they represented only one--third of the total population of the country.[56] Subsequently, many Czechs believed the normalization measures favored the Slovaks. Although the Soviet normalization effort pacified the reform movement which had risen in Czechoslovakia, it also

---

[53] Sharon L. Wolchik, Czechoslovakia in Transition: Politics, Economics and Society (New York: Pinter Publishers, 1991), 30-32.

[54] Carol Skalnik Leff, National Conflict in Czechoslovakia: The Making and Remaking of a State, 1918-1987 (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1988), 245.

[55] Ibid., 261.

[56] Wheaton and Kavan, The Velvet Revolution, 91; Wolchik, Czechoslovakia in Transition, 186.

had the effect of widening the schism which had stood between the Czechs and Slovaks for decades.[57]

In 1970, the Czechoslovak communists reversed the few gains which the Slovak separatists had made in 1968, nullifying the federation which Dubcek and his reformers had created (on paper) and placing the government under even greater centralized control. In light of the reality of totalitarian regimes, however, the procedural norms of the government were a moot point, since the communist party and its leadership controlled all consequential functions of the government. Defiance was not tolerated by the government, and separatist efforts were futile since the communists would never accede meaningful power to Czechs or Slovaks. Thus, the Slovak autonomy movement was insignificant following the Prague Spring, due to the normalization measures of the Husak regime and the Soviet Union.

During the revolution in 1989, the Slovaks chose to orchestrate their own revolt against the government, rather than unite with the Czech movement (Civic Forum) against the government. As a result, the Slovaks formed the Public Against Violence revolutionary movement, with nearly identical objectives as those of the Civic Forum--except the Public Against Violence did not necessarily represent Czechoslovak or Czech interests, but rather Slovak interests. At this point in time, the Slovaks had already demonstrated that they did not possess a Czechoslovak national consciousness. Chart 4 depicts the dramatic degree of ethnic segregation existing in Czechoslovakia after more than 70 years of Czech and Slovak union.

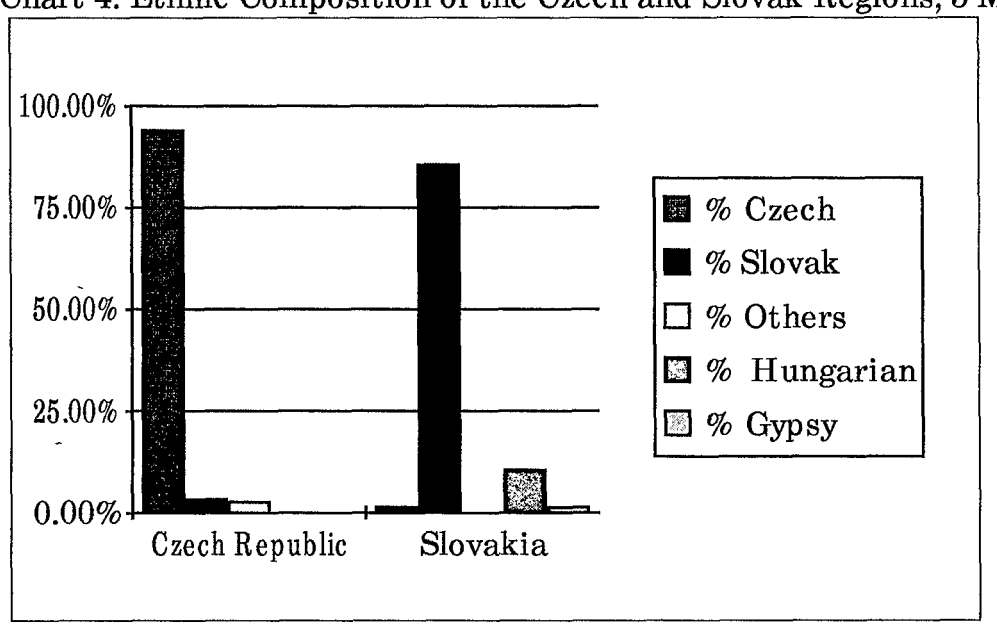
When the communist government was ousted in 1989--1990, the

[57] The economic figures cited represent the most widely cited data, due to conflicting data in some of the sources.

Slovak autonomy movement was still alive, although its mission of Slovak independence was secondary to that of independence from the existing communist government. Consequently, the Slovak autonomy movement did not reemerge in a significant form until after the communists were overthrown.

Naturally, this rediscovered sense of identity brings a certain degree of instability. Ethnic/interest groups will not always agree on issues of mutual concern. This carries over to the political domain, as democratic elections become methods of deciding the course which a nation will take in its future. After decades of Soviet domination, the people of East--Central Europe were once again free to examine their ethnic and political identities. However, even in this context, the Slovak autonomy movement--in the form of Meciar's nationalist movement--was not successful until painful economic reforms precipitated widespread discontent in the Slovak region.

Chart 4. Ethnic Composition of the Czech and Slovak Regions, 3 March 1991



Source: The Europa World Year Book 1993, vol.1 and 2, London: Europa Publications Limited, 1993: 910, 2528.

Industrialization

Particularly relevant to the case of Czechoslovakia, Daniel P. Moynihan raises the issue of industrialization, pointing to the work of Harold R. Isaacs. Isaacs compared the world to a centrifuge:

> We spin out as from a centrifuge, flying apart socially and politically, at the same time as enormous centripetal forces press us all into more and more of a single mass every year. World power is more concentrated and more diffused than ever before... We have entered the post-industrial age before two thirds of the world has barely begun to emerge from the preindustrial era...[58]

Applying this assessment to Czechoslovakia's development, or rather, to the incongruous industrialization of the Czech and Slovak lands noted in Chapter 4, it is easy to see how much stress materialized within the Czechoslovak region as a result of uneven development and disproportionate levels of resources. Referring once again to the public opinion survey figures in Chart 3 and Table 1, it is evident that the people in the Czech and Slovak regions had very different visions of the future course for their nation or nations. Using this example as an indicator of a larger reality, the disparity between the Czech and Slovak lands seems insurmountable in light of the economic and political conditions of the post-communist era in that country.

At the time of the creation of Czechoslovakia in 1918, as noted previously, the Czech lands were significantly farther ahead in their industrialization efforts than were those of the Slovaks. Aside from some efforts to develop the Slovak industrial base during the inter-war period,

---

[58] Harold R. Isaacs, Idols of the Tribe: Group Identity and Political Change (New York: Harper and Row Publishers, 1975), 215, quoted in Moynihan, Pandaemonium, 25.

industrialization did not seriously advance until after World War II, and at that, saw dramatic progress only after normalization took hold in the 1970s. When this industrialization did take place, it occurred according to the Soviet model. As a result, immense industries were constructed in small towns in this relatively small country (especially the Slovak region). The result was "a lot of tension and disequilibrium. . . . This created on one hand a lot of new jobs, on the other disruption of the local communities."[59]

Although the Slovaks benefited economically by the rapid industrialization of their country under the communists, there were some very severe sociological effects on the population as a result of this effort.[60] The Slovaks advanced very quickly, disrupting much of their culture and indigenous economic base--most notably, farming (both based around small towns). As a result, when economic reversal struck the Slovaks in the early 1990s, they were ill--prepared to rely on anything outside heavy industry, and were not as self--sufficient because of the decline in their farming sector over the years.

The Czechs, by contrast, had developed much of their industrial sector prior to the communist era, and therefore "were lucky to retain smaller industrial location, (and) a mix of industry."[61] Consequently, the Czechs were better able to adapt to a free market economic system following 1989, and were not as severely affected by economic reform measures. Thus, Czechoslovakia exhibits Isaacs' centrifuge effect--not only compared to the rest of the world, but also within the former Czechoslovak union.

---

[59] Musil, "The Breakup of Czechoslovakia," 4.

[60] Ibid.

[61] Ibid., 5.

Nationalism and Empowerment

Lastly, the issue of Slovak nationalism had an impact on the events that transpired in Czechoslovakia following the end of the communist era. Daniel Moynihan raises one more point of particular interest to the Czech--Slovak situation. This final point relates to the motives of the Slovaks in striving for autonomy. Given the Slovaks' conviction that proper respect has not been shown to their people and their culture through their history, the Slovaks feel that they will be able to express their ethnic identity now that they have achieved independence for their people. The question now arises--what is the consequence of this newfound freedom in an environment of nationalist fervor? The answer may lie in Moynihan's observation that "minorities not infrequently seek self-determination for themselves in order to deny it to others."[62] Putting this statement in the context of the ethnic composition of Slovakia, it is not difficult to imagine that Slovak nationalism is related to the violence against the Gypsies and other minorities in the country. While such attacks also occur in the Czech Republic, they are less widespread and are not indicative of a political movement, as in Slovakia.

Consequently, Slovak autonomy coupled with nationalism may have given the Slovaks confidence in themselves, thus cultivating a feeling of empowerment. Moynihan again turns to the work of Harold Isaacs, who in turn builds from the theories of Erik Erikson and Sigmund Freud. Isaacs believed that group identity (ethnic identity in this case) was based upon two

---

[62] Moynihan, Pandaemonium, 70.

key forces, belongingness and self--esteem.[63] By identifying with a particular group, an individual, and in turn, the group as a whole are empowered by their identification with others like themselves. As a result, their egos and their confidence swell. This is especially gratifying in times of economic downturn and social upheaval, such as the Slovaks are experiencing today.

These hypothetical circumstances apply exceptionally well to the conditions which prevail in post-communist Slovakia. The economic and societal flux discussed earlier have shattered the confidence of the Slovak citizenry. This low morale has been lifted by the Meciar's nationalist movement, boosting the confidence of a citizenry which strongly favors the communists' centralist economic policies to free--market reforms.[64] Nationalism has lifted the Slovaks' self--confidence in difficult times, much as Adolf Hitler's Nationalist Socialist party boosted the morale of the German nation when it was experiencing severe economic distress. Nevertheless, the Slovaks do not possess the resources necessary to mount a nationalist campaign of the magnitude of Nazi Germany. This nationalism could, however, serve as a powerful motivating force in rebuilding the crippled Slovak economy--providing that a totalitarian regime does not take control of the Slovak government. For now, the possibility of this scenario remains unseen.

---

[63] Ibid., 64.

[64] See chart 3 in Chapter 4.

CHAPTER 5
CONCLUSION

In exploring the issue of whether the dissolution of Czechoslovakia was inevitable, it is vital to first look back at the history of the Czech and Slovak peoples. While sharing a border and possessing a similar language, the Czechs and Slovaks had two independent histories up until the time of their union in 1918. The historical and cultural experience the Czechs had under the Austrians and others was very different from the existence led by the Slovaks under the Hungarians and others. Furthermore, the religious foundations gleaned from their occupying powers were incongruous, and remain so to this day.

After 1918, the Czechs and Slovaks had considerable success in integrating their regions, given the very disparate levels of development between the two lands. The Slovak region lagged behind the Czech region considerably in social, economic, and political terms. While the Czechs and Slovaks drew much closer together during Tomas Masaryk's First Republic, fundamental differences remained between the two regions on the eve of World War II. This disparity remained after the end of the war, and endured the communist era to appear once again in Vaclav Havel's post-communist government. Over the seventy years of their unified existence, Czechoslovakia's citizenry could not overcome this division and develop a sense of national consciousness--and thus, never truly constituted one nation. It was this ethnic division which ultimately forced the Czechoslovak government to disband.

This separation occurred without bloodshed, defying the disturbing trend of violent ethnic disputes which blanket the former Soviet bloc. At this juncture, social scientists must examine the factors which contributed to the division of this nation and assess the import of this analysis to current developments in the international system. For purposes of brevity and clarity, the factors which hindered the formation of a national consciousness and drove the two halves of Czechoslovakia apart may be summarized in three points.

First, because of the differences between the Czech and Slovak regions, as well as the Slovaks' demonstrated desire for autonomy throughout the history of Czechoslovakia, it is possible to trace the development of an independent Slovak state--well before the creation of an entirely autonomous Slovak state on January 1, 1993. Following this line of reasoning, Czechoslovakia was never truly a unified nation, but rather, a state consisting of two distinct ethnic groups thrust together for reasons of political convenience and regional stability. Although Czechoslovakia fulfilled the legal requirements of nationhood, the Czech and Slovak peoples never integrated in a meaningful manner--whether social, cultural, or economic. By this reasoning, unified Czechoslovakia was an artificial nation--merely a transitional phase for the eventual creation of fully autonomous Czech and Slovak states.

Second, the economic disparity which has existed between the Czech and Slovak regions throughout their shared history remains to this day, and affected the ability and willingness of the Slovaks to implement and persevere through difficult economic reform measures in the post-communist era. Though the severe disparity between the two regions was narrowed considerably during the communist era, the Slovaks are ill--

equipped to compete in the global free--market economy of today. The Czechs, while not wholly competitive in the global economy, are better--suited to cope with the demands of the international marketplace. As a result, unemployment and other economic perils became much more pronounced in the Slovak region than the Czechs' when free--market reforms took hold following the Velvet Revolution. Severe economic dislocation in the Slovak lands fueled growing political and social turmoil in the region, producing a nationalist movement which ultimately broke the unity of post--communist Czechoslovakia.

Last, Vaclav Havel played a crucial role in the peaceful separation of the Czech and Slovak peoples. Long committed to the principles of democracy and human rights, Havel used his presidency of the Czechoslovak nation to instill these principles into the government and consciousness of his people. He did this by setting an example for his people to follow, true to his principles of truth and responsibility. By adhering to the principles of democracy and the law, Havel did not exert an unwarranted amount of influence on the Czech and Slovak legislatures when a schism became apparent and Slovak legislators grew increasingly demanding in their requests for greater autonomy. The actions Havel did take to prevent the split fell within the bounds of his constitutional powers. When these options were exhausted, he gracefully stepped down from his post, so as not to polarize the federal government over this ethnic dispute. By allowing the Slovaks' elected representatives to perform their duties as specified by the constitution, democracy had substantive meaning and authority for the peoples of this former communist state. The word "democracy" was no longer just a word whose meaning could be manipulated to suit the wishes of the government leaders. Furthermore, by

avoiding a power struggle within the government over the issue of Slovak autonomy, Havel steered clear of the possibility of a violent resolution of the dispute.

The Czechs and Slovaks never achieved a true union of their two peoples. The citizenry did not perceive their two cultures to be derived from "an ancestrally related people, which is central to the sense of nationhood."[65] Aside from the differences which permeated Czechoslovakia as a result of being contrived from two distinct cultures, the uneven economic development of Czechoslovakia also contributed to their inability to create a common national identity. Regardless of the assertations of the political leadership over the decades of Czechoslovakia's existence, the masses never wholly accepted the idea of a single Czechoslovak nation.

The central question in determining why Czechoslovakia's "Velvet Divorce" transpired is not "how did it happen," but rather "was Czechoslovakia ever truly one nation?" On the basis of this study, the answer to that question would necessarily be "no." The Czechoslovak people did not display the qualities indicative of a unified nation, as determined by Walker Connor and Eugen Weber.

Six or seven decades of union is not significant in the context of the numerous generations of federation required to build a perception of national identity. This national consciousness must be instilled in the citizenry of a country, something which was not achieved in Czechoslovakia--based on the instances noted previously when the Slovaks made purposeful efforts to gain autonomy for their people. Despite successfully achieving autonomy in 1938, the Slovaks once again found

---

[65] Connor, "When Is A Nation," 92.

themselves in union with the Czechs following the Second World War, a condition which was sanctioned and enforced by the Czechoslovak and Soviet communist leadership. Thus, the fall of communism was seized by the Slovaks as an opportunity to attain their autonomy once again.

While other factors likely affected the Czechoslovak "Velvet Divorce," the factors described above are by far the most consequential of the forces which affected this situation. It is also important to place this situation in the context of the international and regional conditions prevailing in the early 1990s. The divisive forces confronting Czechoslovakia at this final stage in its history are viewed against the backdrop of rising nationalism across Europe in the wake of the Cold War's end. Furthermore, Czechoslovakia's case is unusual in light of the Slovaks' historical desire for autonomy and the conditions under which the Czechs and Slovaks were unified -- the power vacuum of Europe at the end of the First World War.

Since the end of the Cold War and the collapse of communism in Europe and the Soviet Union, there are numerous examples of ethnic conflict destroying nations and its citizenry. In addition to the well--known case of Bosnia--Herzogovina, the former Soviet republic of Georgia is still facing an uncertain future due to ethnic conflict within its borders and the regional instability which resulted. Difficult economic transitions, rising nationalism and authoritarian rulers have further complicated the ethnic patchwork which covers the face of the former Soviet bloc. The challenge today lies in preserving the relative peace which prevails in Europe and the rest of the world, and solving the growing number of ethnic disputes which threaten to tear the fabric of the ethnic patchwork of Europe, Eurasia, and the rest of the international community.

WORKS CITED

Abercrombie, Thomas J. "Czechoslovakia: the Velvet Divorce." National Geographic 184, no. 3 (September 1993): 2–37.

Anderson, Raymond H. "Czechoslovakia Invaded By Russians And Four Other Warsaw Pact Forces; They Open Fire On Crowd In Prague." The New York Times, 21 August 1968.

Babbie, Earl. The Practice of Social Research. 6th ed. Belmont, CA: Wadsworth Publishing Company, 1992.

Batt, Judy. East Central Europe from Reform to Transformation. New York: Council on Foreign Relations Press, 1991.

Bradley, John F. N. Czechoslovakia's Velvet Revolution: A Political Analysis. New York: Columbia University Press, 1992.

____. Politics in Czechoslovakia, 1945-1990. New York: Columbia University Press, 1991.

Brinton, Crane. The Anatomy of Revolution. New York: Vintage Books, 1965.

Brzezinski, Zbigniew. The Grand Failure: The Birth And Death Of Communism In The Twentieth Century. New York: Macmillan Publishing Company, 1990.

Buchanan, William. Understanding Political Variables. 4th ed. New York: Macmillan Publishing Company, 1988.

"Check, O Slovakia." The Economist 323, no. 7765 (27 June 1992): 55.

Connor, Walker. "From Tribe to Nation." History of European Ideas 13, no. 1/2 (1991): 5-18.

____. "The Nation and its Myth." International Journal of Comparative Sociology 33 (January/April 1992): 48-57.

____. "When is a Nation?" Ethnic and Racial Studies 13, no. 1 (January 1990): 92-103.

El Mallakh, Dorothea H. The Slovak Autonomy Movement, 1935–1939: A Study in Unrelenting Nationalism. New York: Columbia University Press, 1979.

Engelberg, Stephen. "Vaclav Havel: Still Puckish, Still a Politician, No Longer President." The New York Times, 21 July 1992, A8.

Garton Ash, Timothy. The Magic Lantern: The Revolution of '89 Witnessed in Warsaw, Budapest, Berlin, and Prague. New York: Vintage Books, 1993.

____. The Uses Of Adversity: Essays on the Fate of Central Europe. New York: Vintage Books, 1990.

Glazer, Nathan and Daniel P. Moynihan, ed. Ethnicity: Theory And Experience. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1975.

Goldfarb, Jeffrey C. After The Fall: The Pursuit Of Democracy In Central Europe. New York: BasicBooks, 1992.

Havel, Vaclav. Open Letters: Selected Writings 1965-1990. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, Inc., 1991.

____. "The Paradoxes of Help." The New York Times, 14 July 1991, E19.

____, et al. The Power of the Powerless: Citizens against the state in central-eastern Europe. Armonk, NY: M. E. Sharpe, Inc., 1985.

____. Summer Meditations. New York: Vintage Books, 1993.

____. Vaclav Havel: Politics and Conscience. Voices from Czechoslovakia, no. 2, Stockholm: The Charta 77 Foundation, 1986.

Ionescu, Ghita. Leadership in an Interdependent World: The Statemanship of Adenaur, De Gaulle, Thatcher, Reagan and Gorbachev. Boulder, CO: Westview Press, Inc., 1991.

Isaacs, Harold R. Idols of the Tribe: Group Identity and Political Change. New York: Harper & Row Publishers, 1975.

Janics, Kalman. War and Society in East Central Europe: The Effects of World War II. Vol. 9, Czechoslovak Policy and the Hungarian Minority, 1945-1948. New York: Columbia University Press, 1982.

Klineberg, Otto. Tensions Affecting International Understanding. New York: Social Science Research Council, 1950.

Leff, Carol Skalnik. National Conflict in Czechoslovakia: The Making and Remaking of a State, 1918-1987. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1988.

Littell, Robert, ed. The Czech Black Book. New York: Frederick A. Praeger, Publishers, 1969.

Mason, David S. Revolution In East-Central Europe: The Rise and Fall of Communism and the Cold War. Boulder, CO: Westview Press, Inc., 1992.

Maynes, Charles William. "Containing Ethnic Conflict." Foreign Policy 90 (Spring 1993): 3-21.

McCartney, C. A. & A. W. Palmer, Independent Eastern Europe: A History. New York: St Martin's Press, 1962.

Morison, John, ed. The Czech and Slovak Experience: Selected Papers from the Fourth World Congress for Soviet and East European Studies, Harrogate, 1990. New York: St. Martin's Press, Inc., 1992.

Moynihan, Daniel P. Pandaemonium: Ethnicity in International Politics. New York: Oxford University Press, 1993.

Musil, Jiri. "The Breakup of Czechoslovakia: An Historical Perspective." Lecture given at The Woodrow Wilson Center in Washington, D.C. 25 March 1993.

Nelson, Daniel N., ed. Soviet Allies: The Warsaw Pact and the Issue of Reliability. Boulder, CO: Westview Press, Inc., 1984.

Neustupny, Evzen and Jiri Neustupny. Czechoslovakia Before The Slavs. New York: Frederick A. Praeger, Inc., 1961.

Nicholson, Michael. Rationality and the Analysis of International Conflict. New York: Cambridge University Press, 1992.

Pearson, Frederic S. and J. Martin Rochester. International Relations: The Global Condition in the Late Twentieth Century. 2d ed. New York: Random House, 1988.

"Pistols at a new dawn: Czech and Slovak arms companies." The Economist 327, no. 7806 (10 April 1993): 68 and 71.

Pond, Elizabeth. Beyond the Wall: Germany's Road to Unification. Publication of The Brookings Institution. New York: The Twentieth Century Fund, Inc., 1993.

Posen, Barry R. "The Security Dilemma and Ethnic Conflict." Survival 35, no. 1 (Spring 1993): 27-47.

"President Havel Discusses Domestic Issues." RUDE PRAVO Prague, Czech Republic, 16 September 1993. In Daily Report: Eastern Europe, FBIS-EEU-93-178, 7-10.

Renner, Hans. A History of Czechoslovakia Since 1945. New York: Routledge, 1989.

Rothschild, Joseph. Return To Diversity: A Political History Of East Central Europe Since World War II. New York: Oxford University Press, Inc., 1989.

Safire, Willliam. "Czech plunge to capitalism shows Yeltsin needs a Klaus." The Allentown Morning Call, 16 March 1993.

Simecka, Milan. The Restoration of Order: The Normalization of Czechoslovakia 1969-1976. London: Verso Editions, 1984.

Skilling, H. Gordon and Paul Wilson, ed. Civic Freedom in Central Europe: Voices from Czechoslovakia. New York: St Martin's Press, 1991.

Svec, Milan. "Czechoslovakia's Velvet Divorce," Current History 91, no. 568 (November 1992): 376-80.

Tomes, Igor. "Social Reform: A cornerstone in Czechoslovakia's new economic structure." International Labour Review 130, no. 1: 191-210.

Tsurutani, Taketsugu. The Politics of National Development: Political Leadership in Transitional Societies. New York: Chandler Publishing Company, 1973.

United States Information Agency. "Czechs and Slovaks Disagree on Economic Reform." Washington, D.C.: United States Information Agency, 3 February 1993.

____. "As Czechoslovakia Divides, Slovaks Remain Positive on U.S. and Americans." Washington, D.C.: United States Information Agency, 8 February 1993.

____. "New Eastern Border Leaves Czechs Looking Westward." Washington, D.C.: United States Information Agency, 8 February 1993.

____. "Slovaks Anticipate Negative Economic Impact From Split of CSFR, But Express Optimism for the Long Term." Washington, D.C.: United States Information Agency, 16 February 1993.

____. "Slovak Opinion on Security Resembles Czech Views." Washington, D.C.: United States Information Agency, 17 February 1993.

____. "Czech Opinion of the U.S. Remains High." Washington, D.C.: United States Information Agency, 24 February 1993.

____. "Czechs Appear Hopeful About their Economic Future." Washington, D.C.: United States Information Agency, 19 March 1993.

Valenta, Jiri. Soviet Intervention in Czechoslovakia, 1968: Anatomy of a Decision. Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1991.

Vladislav, Jan, ed. Vaclav Havel: Living In Truth. Boston: Faber and Faber Limited, 1990.

Weber, Eugen. Peasants Into Frenchmen: The Modernization of Rural France, 1870-1914. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1976.

Wheaton, Bernard & Zdenek Kavan. The Velvet Revolution: Czechoslovakia, 1988–1991. Boulder, CO: Westview Press, Inc., 1992.

Whipple, Tim D., ed. After the Velvet Revolution: Vaclav Havel & the New Leaders of Czechoslovakia Speak Out. New York: Freedom House, 1991.

Wolchik, Sharon. Czechoslovakia in Transition: Politics, Economics and Society. New York: Pinter Publishers, 1991.

Yurchak, Peter P. The Slovaks: Their History And Traditions. Whiting, Indiana: Obrana Press, Inc., 1946.