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CZECHS-SLOVAK RELATIONS BETWEEN 1918 AND 1989 AS A PREREQUISITE TO THE DISSOLUTION OF THE CZECH AND SLOVAK FEDERAL REPUBLIC

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ABSTRACT

20 years have passed since the breakup of the Czech and Slovak Federal Republic. In spite of that it is still the subject of many polemics. The proof of this statement is a huge amount of literature dedicated to this subject. The reasons of the division of the common state of Czechs and Slovaks in 1992 can be viewed from various perspectives. This paper focuses on the period of 1918-1989. Its aim is to point out the political, economic and psychological factors that significantly affected the quality of Czech-Slovak relations in a given period and thus played a specific role in the dissolution of Czechoslovakia in 1992.

Key words: the Czech-Slovak relations, the disintegration of CSFR, the formation of I. Czechoslovakia, czechoslovakism

Introduction

This paper elaborates on the relations between Slovak and Czech nations in the period of common statehood as well as during the existence of the Slovak State. It focuses on the period of 1918-1989. The paper refers to the historical events that affected relationship between these two nations and thus play a specific role in the disintegration of Czechoslovakia in 1992. These include the foundation of common state in 1918, creation of an independent Slovak State in 1939, restoration of Czechoslovakia after 1945, elections of 1946 and constitutional arrangement of the federation in 1968.

For better understanding of problematic issues between these two nations and reasons of dissolution of CSFR, we have to try to understand events in the period from 1918 to 1989. Because of the limited scope of this paper it does not try to provide a deep analysis of Czech-Slovak relations in this period. The main

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aim of is to provide the reader an overview of key events of the period in question and how these events affected the relations between the two nations, Czechs and Slovaks and, ultimately, led to events in the years 1989-1992

1 Towards the common statehood

The history of the Czechs and Slovaks has developed differently. The both nations were many years a part of different state units. The Czechs were a part of the Habsburg monarchy, in which they possessed certain form of autonomy. It meant for them the possibility of developing political and cultural awareness. Unlike the Slovaks in Hungary, Czechs possessed the cultural autonomy so they constituted as a modern nation at the beginning of 20th Century (Kárník, 2008).

The situation in Hungary was diametrically different. Slovaks were one of the most oppressed nations in Europe. Hungarians' aim was to create Hungarian national state from multinational Hungary, resulting in the massive Magyarisation of Slovaks as well as other non-Magyar nations in Hungary.

In the early 20th Century Czech lands had better conditions for the development of political activity than Slovakia. The situation changed after the outbreak of World War I. Poor position of Slovak and Czech nations was not only the result of dualism, but also the consequence of the treaty which created the Dual Alliance, through which the influence of Germany on domestic politics of Austria-Hungary was growing. The consequence of it was the increasing Magyarisation in Hungary and growing German nationalism in Cisleithania (Skaloš, 2008).

As the later events proved, founding of common state of Czechs and Slovaks after the World War One was the most practical solution for several reasons. Czech and Slovak nations represented two closest Slavic nations from geographical, economic and cultural perspective. They were Slavic nations with unusually close affinity of speech. On the basis of Slavic origin there were similarities in the way of behaviour, mentality, character etc. In spite of some differences, which manifested themselves throughout the history to a various extent, Czechs and Slovaks felt like fraternal societies or nations (Mlynárik, 2003).

Both nations were little-known on the international scene. Independent Czech State would have been the weakest country in Central Europe. The common state with Slovaks, however, would guarantee that the Czech state

would rank among the middle states, as far as size is concerned (Lipták, 1998). For the Czechs, unification with Slovaks represented also a political necessity. Only through this connection they could obtain overwhelming numerical superiority over the German-speaking minority.

If Hungary did not disintegrate it would be a strong neighbour for the Czech state and a barrier to penetration of Czech industry to the East. Moreover, Czechs were under German influence and, therefore, they perceived Slovaks as a sort of protection from Germanic encirclement. The main goal was to break out of German siege by establishing a strategic connection with Russia by means of a Slovak corridor.

On the other side, Slovaks perceived common state as a protection from the Hungarians and their assimilation policies. The common state of Slovaks and Czechs was the most advantageous solution for the Slovaks. During the disintegration of the Habsburg Monarchy they did not possess the material means to achieve an independent national existence. It was assumed that both states would have gained more weight by creating a common state. It was profitable for Czechs to be in one state with Slovaks, as they would have been in a dominant position. Even despite this fact we may conclude that both nations needed each other.

Already at the beginning of the World War One groups of Czechs and Slovaks expatriates were forming abroad. They participated in the anti-Hungarian national liberation movement. The most important of these was the umbrella organisation of Slovaks in America, the Slovak League. American Slovaks were the most consolidated and politically active Slovak ethnic group in the world. One of the most important documents that the organisation has adopted was the Memorandum (on September 10, 1914), which demanded of the right to self-determination for Slovaks. There was no particular proposal for the administrative arrangement of the future Slovak state outlined in this document; however, there were considerations in respect of a constitutional orientation such as self-governed Slovakia as a member of a federative Slavic state; orientation on the creation of the Hungary-Slovak, Slovak-Polish, Slovak-Russian union, but also the establishment of a common state of Czechs and Slovaks. Slovaks should have had autonomy in this union. (Chovanec, Mozolík, 1994)

At the end of 1914 the President of the Slovak League Albert Mamatey stated that it would have been the best for Slovak to cooperate with Czechs and create something like the Czech-Slovak United States. It should have been a

federal state in which Slovaks would have had their own self-government and the Czechs would not interfere with.

The situation on the Czech political scene was different. Slovak issue as a part of the political agenda simply did not exist there. Situation changed after the World War One. First proposals requesting the solution of the Czech and Slovak question were formulated in this period. Main representatives of these attempts were especially K. Kramář and T. G. Masaryk. These projects provoked sharp debates among the Slovak associations in the United States, which refused to connect Slovaks just as a sort of an appendage to the Czech state.

Finally, on October 22, 1915, members of the Slovak League and Czech organisations in the United States signed the Cleveland Agreement, in which they demanded the liberation of Czech and Slovak nations and their union in a federation with complete autonomy for Slovakia, including its own parliament, political and financial administration, having Slovak as the state language. It was the very first document in which Czechs and Slovaks living in the United States subscribed to a common approach to constitutional issues.

In November 1915 the proclamation of the Czech Foreign Committee was published by Masaryk. Both Slovak League and Bohemian National Alliance signed it. The Slovak League, however, was not satisfied with this Committee's declaration because it expressed only the Czechs' intention to create a Czechoslovak state and did not mention the Slovaks.

Russian February Revolution in 1917 significantly affected the projects of the future Czechoslovak state. Overthrowing of the Czarism intensified the joint activity of Slovak and Czech American organisations and influenced Masaryk's projects of the common state, originally leaning towards the monarchy.

His influence was also reflected in the formulation of the Pittsburgh Agreement (May 31, 1918) which represented a significant concession of American Slovaks to Masaryk's Czechoslovakism. According to the Agreement, instead of previously contemplated establishment of a federative union the founding of a common state with the elements of autonomy for Slovakia, including Slovak as an official language, has been proposed.

Idea of Czechoslovakism started to influence all aspects of the resistance in the form of the fictional unified Czechoslovak nation representing a single entity in a unitary state. This attitude was explained as a need to get support of the Allied powers and prove that the new state would be a strong nation state, not depleted by any national discrepancies. On the other hand, the idea of

Czechoslovakism and unified Czechoslovak nation was the source of many disputes among the two nations. These disputes were soft-pedalled during the war but they were not overcome. (Chovanec, Mozolík, 1994)

The Washington Declaration was signed on October 16, 1918. As well as the proclamation of independence of the Czechoslovak nation, it outlined the constitutional principles of emerging state. Law on the Establishment of an Independent Czechoslovak state was passed by the National Committee on October 28, 1918. Subsequently, on October 30, there was a meeting of the Slovak political representation in Turčiansky Svätý Martin, which established the Slovak National Council and adopted the Declaration of the Slovak nation. The aim of the Declaration of Martin was to declare that Slovaks are a younger branch of the united Czechoslovak nation and, accordingly, a part of Czechoslovak state. (Kárník, 2008) The declaration expressed the opinion which essentially corresponded to the ideas of T. G. Masaryk.

Emergence of the common state of Czechs and Slovaks was undeniably progressive and significant milestone in the Czechoslovak state-building. Due to the fictional idea of the existence of the united Czechoslovak nation the existence of Slovaks as an independent nation was not recognised during the First Czechoslovak Republic. There were many problems which escalated tensions on both sides due to inadequate solution or lack of thereof.

2 Relations between Czechs and Slovaks during the I. Czechoslovak republic

The origins of the First Czechoslovak Republic were marked by not respecting the agreements signed in the United State by representatives of both nations. This was especially true when it comes to the Pittsburgh Agreement, under which both ethnic groups should have had equal status and autonomy. The Constitution adopted on March 6, 1920 put the idea of unified Czechoslovak nation into practice; the National Council has been dissolved and promised federation replaced by Prague centralism.

Since its inception the existence of Czechoslovakia has been negatively influenced by several factors. First of them was the fact that Austria-Hungary was formally one state, but economic as well as administrative system of two parts was significantly different. This problem manifested itself within the first weeks of existence of the common Czechoslovak state. The central government was not able to provide for an administration of the Slovak territory. The problem

was that on all leading positions in offices or in schools were Hungarians and Magyarised Slovaks. Most of them preferred leaving to Budapest instead of adapting to the new circumstances. Due to the low educational level of the Slovak population, the Czech intelligentsia substituted them. The problem was, however, that the Czech intelligentsia worked according to the Austrian system, thus causing further problems resulting from different “education” of both nations.

Another factor was the shape of the new state. Distance between easternmost point and westernmost point of Czechoslovakia was about 1000km while at its widest point from north to south it was just 200km. It is really difficult to defend such boundaries. Furthermore, most of the neighbouring countries have become sooner or later unfriendly. This was mainly due to their territorial claims. Romania was the only exception.

Joining of Czech lands and Slovakia was the connection of two totally different economies. During the First Czechoslovak Republic differences deepened, and this had negative impact on the Czech-Slovak relations. It is well known that the Czech territory was the most economically developed part of Austria-Hungary. Bohemia had a very high-quality infrastructure in that period. Slovak infrastructure has been built according to the needs of Hungary and all railway lines were connected in Budapest. After the collapse of Austria-Hungary all the factories found themselves on the edge of the newly created state. The situation worsened during the economic crisis, when the Slovak industry was unable to compete with the Czech one. Central government was not able to subsidize the industry of both parts of the country, and as a result most of the Slovak industry was closed. (Lipták, 1998)

The problem was the economic policy of state which fostered liberalistic principle of free competition. This showed that the Czechoslovak state was not ready for the emergence of a common state as far as economic side is concerned. Slovak industry could have not competed with highly developed Czech industry.

One of the main reasons for conflict was religion. The differing perceptions were due to the fact that both nations have evolved in different political environment. The Czechs did not hide their negative attitude to the Catholic faith, which led to the discomfort in religious matters. On the Czech side there were many errors made that have met with great reluctance of Slovaks, such as removing of crucifixes from schools, deposing some statues from schools, etc. (Pithart et al., 1991)

Czech-Slovak relations were significantly affected even by Hungary, which has never given up hope for the secession of Slovakia. The aim of the Hungarian propaganda was to influence Slovaks' opinions about Czechs. Part of those efforts was to point out the fact that Slovaks did not succeed in achieving the autonomy in Czechoslovakia. Hungary has also been repeatedly pointing out to the Prague centralisation and unified Czechoslovak nation that did not exist in reality. Consequence of that was the escalation of anti-Czech opinions in Slovakia.

During the first phase of consolidation of the First Czechoslovak Republic certain degree of centralisation was inevitable because Prague feared potential destabilisation of the country. On the one hand the Czechs were concerned that the German minority could have gained greater self-governing powers. On the other hand, there was still a danger of inclusion of Slovak territory back under the Hungarian rule. Supporting of Slovak national demands by Hungarian representatives had the effect that Slovaks were considered to be separatists. The consequence was decision of the Prague centre to continue in centralisation even after disappearance of the Hungarian threat. (Svatuška, 2007)

Another problem was the division of the state into administrative units. Originally, Czech lands were divided into provinces, Slovakia and Transcarpathia consisted of counties. They were replaced by division into four lands, Bohemia, Moravia-Silesia, Slovakia and Subscarpian Ruthenia. Although Transcarpathia should have had full autonomy, also this part has been fully subordinated to the centre in Prague.

Further fundamental problem was the "Czechoslovak" language. The creators of draft constitution were trying to establish a "Czechoslovak" language as an official language, which caused commotion between some members of Parliamentarian Club of Slovak Representatives. These members had several amendments to the Constitution; none of them, however, passed. Ivan Dérer submitted a proposal in which he demanded to replace the term "Czechoslovak language" with term "Czech and Slovak language". The second proposal was submitted by Karol Medvedecký. He demanded to put a dash in the word "Czechoslovak language" bracket, thus giving it the meaning of "Czech and Slovak language" (Rychlík, 1997). Majority of representatives, however, believed that the language should correspond to the state entity and, therefore, the so-called "Czechoslovak" language was established.

Despite the fact that the emergence of Czechoslovakia caused many

difficulties to Slovakia, it also had positive influence for the development of Slovak nation. On the one hand, school system has developed; on the other hand various cultural organisations were founded. Matica slovenská, Slovak scientific and cultural institution, was re-established in 1919. The emergence of a common state also contributed to the Slovakisation of Slovakia. It is interesting to mention that crucial role in Slovakisation has been played by our Czech brothers who came to Slovakia to replace unreliable Hungarian clerks. The affinity of Czechs and Slovaks allowed for the elimination of the Hungarian language from public life. (Lipták, 1998)

Motivation of the nations to join the common state is closely linked to a degree of national awareness. Czechs saw the First Republic of Czechoslovakia as a final phase of national emancipation efforts. They perceived it as a final stage in obtaining their own statehood. (Rychlík, 1997) They considered Slovaks as a sort of Czechs and Slovak language as a sort of Czech language. Slovaks considered themselves to be equal partners of Czechs in a new state. That can be also seen in a way of spelling the name of state. While Czechs apprehended the new state as a Czechoslovakia, the Slovaks had spelled the name of state as a Czecho-Slovakia. They saw it as a space within which they will continue in national emancipation process with the help of the Czech nation. Its result should have been autonomy, not only in terms of culture, but also in administrative and political terms.

As it turned out, a common state of Czechs and Slovaks did not become an environment conducive to the convergence of positions. There were substantial differences among the nations resulting from different historical development. Relevant historical events were viewed and evaluated by both nations differently. While Czechs perceive the First Czechoslovak Republic as the “old good days” and T. G. Masaryk as the greatest figure of modern Czech history, the attitudes of Slovaks were largely critical. The emergence of Czech-Slovak statehood was after the initial euphoria replaced by disappointment, which was expressed by Slovak side more bluntly. On the Slovak side it is widely believed that the Czechs in the First Czechoslovak Republic did not live up to the agreements which were concluded between the representatives of American Czech and Slovak ethnic organisations in the United States.

3 Autonomist movement in Slovakia and establishment of the Slovak State

Centralism, as well as the idea of Czechoslovakism, played an important role in functioning of common state especially in the first years. However, later on it led to many disputes between Czechs and Slovaks. It manifested itself in several forms, ranging from Czech chauvinism to partial recognition of some particularities of Slovakia, but with the superior position of the Czech lands. The idea of Czechoslovakism was enforced in all Czech political parties. Development of views of the Communist Party on the position of Slovakia proved to be important for the future of Czechoslovak Republic. Thesis about "Czechoslovak nation" was criticised not only by Slovak, but even by Hungarian and German communists.

At its meeting in 1924, the Internationalist Communist Organisation adopted the view that Slovaks are a nation and have the right to self-determination up to secession. The consequence of this was that Czech representatives in the party had to formally give up the idea of Czechoslovakism, including such prominent figures as Klement Gottwald, Antonín Novotný etc. Their true attitudes manifested after 1948, when the Communist Party came to power. At the same time the generation of young communist moulded in Slovakia. They were trying to achieve the equality of Slovakia in Czechoslovakia.

As a consequence of centralism and Czechoslovakism, autonomist efforts which demanded autonomy of Slovakia appeared. The main representative of Slovak struggle against Czechoslovakism was the Slovak People's Party led by Andrej Hlinka, who collaborated with Vojtech Tuka. Vojtech Tuka was one first who present the proposal for autonomy of Slovakia in Czechoslovak parliament (Kárník, 2008). In the course of the upcoming years, the official representatives of SPP presented several proposals to amend the constitutional law – but that was just a beginning. They started to use propagandist slogans, criticise Prague centralism, because according to them it was denying Slovaks' right to self-determination. All this was reflected in the so-called Žilina Manifesto, adopted in 1922.

Slovak discontent was increasing; problems deepened and were not adequately addressed. Prague had failed to notice that while the existence of a viable Slovak nation in 1918 could be subject to debate, there was no questioning that it existed twenty years later. They did not attach an importance to it and when situation escalated the representatives of the centre refused to

make even a symbolic step to ease the situation. It was widely believed in Slovakia that the Czechs in the first Czechoslovak Republic did not keep the promises and agreements that were concluded in the United States between the Czechoslovak National

Council and representatives of American Czechs and Slovak national organisations. That clearly demonstrated the unwillingness to admit mistakes they have made in managing the relations with Slovaks.

The Czechs also refused to admit that the Czechoslovak nation is not a cultural nation but a nation built out of political necessity. The big mistake of the government in this respect was that it denied the fact that Slovaks could have succumbed to the Hungarians' propaganda and could really have broken away from the Czechs. To their dismay pursuit of autonomy persisted – new proposals suggesting autonomy were made, but none of them was accepted, until the crisis of 1938 broke out (Skaloš, 2008).

The achievement of Slovak autonomy occurred against the backdrop of historical events which led to the outbreak of the World War Two. Years 1938 and 1939 were critical and during such a short period a lot of things happened. The autonomy of Slovakia was declared; Munich Conference was held and the second Czechoslovak Republic emerged. It was dissolved after 169 days of its existence when Germany invaded it on March 15, 1939. By early 1939, Slovak leaders were confronted with the possibility that Adolf Hitler would destroy the rest of Czechoslovakia. On March 14, 1939, just a day before the Nazis marched into Czech lands and declared the Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia, Slovakia declared its independence. These are important milestones in history of Czechoslovakia. However, in this part of work I would like to discuss mainly the fact how these occasions affected the relationship between the two nations.

Dissolution of the Second Czechoslovak Republic made relations between the two nations significantly worse. Almost all Czechs were driven out of the Slovakia and those which stayed faced persecution. Displacement carried out on the ethnic principle represented a clear violation of fundamental human rights, and it was perceived as a personal injustice and demonstration of ingratitude by the Czechs. Autonomist efforts, as well as the historical events that led to creation of the Slovak State were perceived very negatively in the Czech parts of the republic. The Czech propaganda used these events even in the period before the dissolution of Czechoslovak Federative Republic in 1992 as a demonstration of fact that by disintegration Slovaks gained what they were

trying to achieve already fifty years ago. I suppose that the period of existence of the Slovak State had an indirect effect on the disputes that have arisen during the years 1989-1992.

Split of Czechoslovakia in 1939 was primarily consequence of the interest of the German ruling elites. The possibility to exploit the Slovak issue, however, could present itself only due to the fact that some conflict lines already existed between Czechs and Slovaks. It can be concluded that the Czech-Slovak relations tended to worsen. The main problem was that Slovak and Czech political leaders have not paid enough attention to the solution of national and ethnic issues. (Svatuška, 2003)

Although there were some plans how to solve relations between both nations their perception of the issue was clearly different. Pro-Czechoslovak political representatives promoted the idea of nation building on the unitary principle. Slovaks promoted the common state because of the Hungarian revisionist efforts, the Czechs because they feared the growing influence of the German minority in their territory.

While the Czech side was promoting the existence of a unified Czechoslovak nation, Slovak representatives considered a common state as a means to finish national emancipation process. Czechs considered Slovaks to be a part of the Czech nation; they perceived the Czechoslovak Republic as a national state and Slovak language as a variety of Czech language. In contrast, Slovaks perceived the Czechoslovak Republic as a state composed of two equal nations and two languages. Positions of both nations were thus significantly different, leading to the disputes and misunderstandings during the following years (Pithart et al., 1991).

4 Slovak State (1939-1945)

The Slovak State came into existence as an explicitly Fascist entity under the protection of Hitler's Third Reich. It is a tragedy that Slovak nationalists achieved the establishment of the so long coveted Slovak state "thanks" to Adolf Hitler. Despite the events of the World War Two, there was still some room left for the development of national life. Slovak statehood was characterised by the removal of previous political, linguistic, social, labour, economic and cultural discriminations and it represented the fulfilment of national emancipation efforts of the Slovak nation in many ways.

Until 1989 Slovakia was perceived as the "so-called" Slovak State. We

would like to emphasize that Slovakia gained not only the international recognition, but it also had all attributes of statehood. Nowadays the designation “wartime Slovak State” is used. This denomination is sometimes criticised but we believe that it is more accurate. Although there is no doubt about the then-Slovak statehood, it should be recognised that it arose in compromising circumstances, as part of Hitler’s ambitions in unleashing the war. Just the fact that it was created “thanks” to Hitler is the reason for questioning of its existence.

From the perspective of long-term plans of Germany there was no difference between the position of one or another nation. The population of both of them should have been gradually assimilated, partly displaced and Germanized. From the perspective of then observers there was, however, a huge difference. For further development of Czech-Slovak relations it was important that each of the two nations tended to judge the situation of the other according to its own position. This means that the Czechs perceived Slovakia as a protectorate as well and, on the other hand, Slovaks considered Czech protectorate to be some sort of a vassal state. It should be noted, however, that their position was quite different. The protectorate was not a vassal state, but an integral part of the Empire. It was not an independent state formation and it was not even a subject of international law. Czechs did not enjoy the same status as German citizens living in the protectorate. Czech population believed that the situation would change and that sooner or later Czechoslovakia would be restored (Rychlík, 1997).

The position of Slovak population was different. Internationally, Slovakia had all the characteristics and attributes of a sovereign state. Consequently, unlike the Czechs, whose relationship to the protectorate was significantly negative, attitude of Slovak population was not so unambiguous. For a majority of Slovaks, the Slovak State meant a realisation of their long-term efforts and even in spite of its imperfections they identified with it. The rest of the population, similarly to the Czechs, identified with Czechoslovak Republic, considered its break-up as a loss of their state. Later on, it was precisely this part of population from which the civil resistance groups were formed. (Pithart et al., 1991)

During this period different views on the constitutional position of Slovakia in post-war Czechoslovakia formed. Some of them were demanding its restoration, but they were aware of the necessity to overcome the idea of Czechoslovakism. While the Communist Party was requiring equality of nations in a restored Czechoslovakia, Beneš’s concept was requiring the integration

Slovakia and Slovaks as a unequal element. There were also extreme views which called for “completely free and independent Slovakia”. Even in Czech movement some “anti-Slovak” attitudes existed. Despite these differences of opinion the concept of restoration of Czechoslovakia prevailed.

In this regard, we should mention the relationship between Czechs and Slovaks in this period. Czechs living in Slovakia were rejecting the Slovak State. Most of them identified with the Czechoslovak Republic as their nation state and did not see any reason to identify with a new situation, the less that their new state was trying to drive them out of their own territory. As far as Slovaks’ relationship to Czechs is concerned, there were strong anti-Czech feelings. However, this cannot be generalised, as evidenced by the fact that Slovak population was actively involved in organising the secret passages of Czechs through Slovakia to the Balkans and into foreign armies. The period of anti-Czech sentiments gradually receded and Czech-Slovak relations improved. Relationship of Czechs in the Protectorate to the Slovak State divided the Czech public in two groups. First one saw the emergence of the Slovak State as a dirty thing, as “a knife stab in the back”. Second group saw the Slovak State as a kind of protectorate under which people live in similar conditions like in Bohemia and Moravia (Rychlík, 1997).

5 The restoration of Czechoslovak Republic and the Communist takeover

During the World War Two several political events took place which influenced the post-war development of the Republic. One of the most important was negotiations of E. Beneš in Moscow in December, 1943, which resulted in the signing of the Agreement on Mutual Cooperation and Assistance between the USSR and Czechoslovakia (the so-called Christmas Agreement) Regarding the question of post-war order, the idea of restoring Czechoslovakia based on equal relations between Czechs and Slovak gradually has become the most popular. This part of national liberation movement won against the Czechoslovakism concept, which was championed by E. Beneš and London émigré community.

It was the second time in the history of common state of Czechs and Slovaks when there was an opportunity to solve the relations between both nations in a manner that would reflect the growth of the Slovak nation and satisfy both nations.

Meanwhile, in Slovakia, Slovak National Uprising broke out. Its national and political implications and practical steps emphasized the necessity to solve the national issues, not only the form of the new Czechoslovak Republic. One of the goals of uprising was the restoration of Czechoslovak Republic. In this context, it is important to mention the establishment of illegal Slovak National Council in 1943, the only representative of the political will of Slovak nation and the only centre of the anti-fascist uprising in Slovakia. The establishment of this body was the reflection of changes in Slovak society. It was obvious that national self-confidence was enhanced in this period (Chovanec, Mozolík, 1994). Although the Slovak National Uprising failed in implementing its military goals, it had a crucial significance for the history of the Slovak nation. The Slovak National Uprising incorporated Slovakia unquestionably among the nations of anti-facist coalition.

The first important document that the Slovak National Council has adopted was the Christmas Agreement in December 1943. According to this agreement the Slovak National Council called for the restoration of Czech-Slovak Republic on the principle of equality. The territory of Slovakia was considered to be the part of the Czech-Slovak Republic and the Slovak National Council declared itself as its representative in Slovakia.

Slovak National Uprising put through the idea of coexistence of Czechs and Slovaks in one state, which should have been built on a federative basis. The program of the new Czech-Slovak government was endorsed during the negotiations in Moscow and adapted to the final version at the session of the Czech-Slovak government in Košice on April 5, 1945. This program was a compromise between the idea of Czechoslovakism and idea of federative form of the state, which the Slovak National Council required. It recognised the right to self-determination of Slovak nation and the Slovak National Council as a representative of sovereignty of Slovak nation. It was a manifestation of efforts to deal with the relations between the two nations (Skaloš, 2008).

The Prague Agreements adopted shortly after, however, established the political asymmetry again. They broke agreements enacted by the Košice Government Program, which resulted in the submission of the Slovak national organs and their activities to the Czechoslovak central authorities. The Prague Agreements were the result of the fact that Czechoslovakia gradually shifted to a system of planned economy and therefore it was necessary to strengthen the powers of the central government. It should be noted that the asymmetric model has contributed to the deterioration of the Czech-Slovak relations, because it

was not considered to be advantageous for either side.

6 Czechoslovakian parliamentary election in 1946

Outcomes of the Slovak National Uprising expressed in the requirement of “peer to peer” relations between the Czechs and the Slovaks lasted only for a short time after 1945. Development of the political situation was strongly influenced by the elections to the Constituent Assembly in 1946. These elections once again demonstrated historically conditioned differences of both nations. The results of these elections are surprising, not because the Communists gained nearly 40% of the vote in Bohemia and Morava, but because the Democratic Party gained 60% of the vote in Slovakia (Svatuška, 2003).

Elections in the Czech Republic were noticeably influenced by the events of the period of the Protectorate, which was perceived by the Czechs as a humiliation of the nation. That is why the Czechs wanted to have a fair state and had so uncritical attitude towards the Soviet Union. In the post-war period was common that leftist views dominated in states. Another important factor that influenced the results was Catholicism which has not been firmly anchored in the Czech Republic (Pithart et al., 1991). The Communist Party maintained strong anti-Church positions and that also could have been the reason why it won.

In Slovakia, the situation was different. The Democratic Party (DS) became the winner and the Communist Party of Slovakia (KSS) took a second place. This was due to the fact that Slovaks always has been strong believers and therefore they did not sympathise with communist ideology like the Czechs did. The Communist Party, however, won on the countrywide scale because of the electoral system in Czechoslovakia. The communist political orientation was in fact imposed on Slovakia. Results of the election and post-election situation resulted in accusing the Czech nation from supporting the establishment of a totalitarian regime in the Czechoslovak Republic.

Elections in 1946 confirmed the differences in a political orientation and views of Slovaks and Czechs. The gaining of power by the Communists marked the further development in the country and influenced the Czech-Slovak relations. The failure of the Communist Party of Slovakia in election signified the gradual abridgement of Slovak rights. Efforts of Slovak Communists to achieve equal position of Slovakia in Czechoslovakia were designated as “bourgeois

nationalism” and later on these efforts were even criminalised. It is interesting to mention that trials with “bourgeois nationalists” were not initiated by Moscow, but Prague. The largest share on it had Klement Gottwald, Antonín Novotný and Viliam Široký.

7 Adoption of the Constitution of 9th May and the Socialist Constitution

The national question and, consequently, the question of Czechoslovak relations have been during the Communist dictatorship subordinated to the question of maintaining the Communist regime. The requirement of the federalisation of Czechoslovakia was irrelevant, because there was only power centre, Prague. (Mlynárik, 2003) The situation worsened after the outbreak of the governmental crisis, which culminated in February 1948. Since that time we can talk about Communist Czechoslovakia. After the February coup centralisation intensified both within the Communist Party and the entire state.

A new constitution was adopted on May 9, 1948 and proclaimed that „Czechoslovak Republic is a united state of two equal Slavic nations, Czechs and Slovaks” (the Constitution of May 9, 1948, p. 127). New constitution dealt with the issue of relations of Czechs and Slovaks based on the principles declared by Košice government program. It enacted Slovak national organs and national committees, which should have had legislative and executive power in Slovakia together with the central government. The constitution declared the basic postulates about the sovereignty of the Slovak nation; however, it did not adjust the position of the two nations in the same way. This maintained the asymmetric model of state system, which recognised the individuality of the Slovak nation and its equality compared with the Czech nation though, simultaneously, only Slovak national organs were defined. The independent legislative and executive power of the Slovak organs was considerably limited by that of the Czechoslovak organs. First time in a history of Czechoslovakia was the principle of equality of the two nations adopted in the constitution, i.e. by declaring the constitutional status of Slovak national organs. The new constitution strengthened the position of Slovak national organs and extended their powers. This adjustment was not brought to a conclusion, because their primary subordination to Czechoslovak organs in asymmetric model has not changed. (Chovanec, Mozolík, 1994) It is important to note that fundamental effort of Communist has not been to grant the full independence of Slovak

nation. The "Slovak issue" was just a tool in power struggle.

8 Pursuit of Federalisation of the Country and the Collapse of the Communist Regime

In 1960, the proposal for an amendment of a new constitution was made. This constitution asserted the completion of the foundation of Socialism and proclaimed the transition phase towards Communism through building an advanced socialist society. On the basis of this constitution the name of Czechoslovakia was changed to Czechoslovak Socialist Republic. As far as relations between both nations are concerned, it can be concluded that neither this constitution has not solve them; quite to the contrary. Based on this constitution the competencies of Slovak national organs' were further restricted. (Bystrický, 2008) The asymmetric model proved to be unsuitable for the application of the "peer to peer" principle in the coexistence of Czechs and Slovaks and left no scope for exercise of the national sovereignty of both nations. This insensitive approach to solving national issues of both nations and constant reduction of the competencies of Slovak national organs contributed to growing crisis in the second half of the 1960s.

Relations between the two nations had come to the crisis which was partly solved by pro-reformist Alexander Dubček, who replaced Antonín Novotný in the position of the first Secretary of the Central Committee of the Czechoslovak Communist Party. (Mlynárik, 2003) Year 1968 meant a "flash of the freedom" for society. The internal as well as international political situation was creating the space for reforms and partial easing of strict Communist regime. Therefore, ambitions for the democratisation and reopening of the "Slovak issue" reappeared in this period. While Czechs wanted the democratisation of public life, for Slovaks the federalisation was paramount, and democratisation was only on the second place. Many people in Slovakia, however, were aware that federation system without democratisation would not have solved anything.

Solving the status of Slovakia was crucial for state building on the principle of democracy. Slovaks as a nation were at that time able to withstand the real autonomy; they had after all these years right to it. The Slovak priority was the establishment of the federation on a "peer to peer" principle which it demanded already during the Slovak National Uprising. The federalisation of the country should not have worried the Soviet Union. Czechs considered this question as secondary, because they believed that implementation of the reforms was more

important. (Svatuška, 2003)

In May 1968 a governmental commission has been created tasked with the preparation of the proposal of the federal organisation of the state. The Czechs beat the drum for strong powers of federal organs. In contrast, Slovaks elites advocated the weaker federation, strengthening the powers of national authorities and equal status in the common state. In this regard was significant the adoption of the proposal which provided that national organs have a sovereignty but they are giving up part of it in favour of the federation. The ruling Communist Party should have been federalised as well. **(Bystrický, 2008)**

On June 24, 1968 the constitutional act on the preparation of the federative organisation of the Czechoslovak Socialist Republic was passed. It declared the right of both nations to self-determination and principle of their equality. The Czechoslovakia was transformed into a federative state consisting of the Slovak Socialist Republic and the Czech Socialist Republic. With this arrangement the Slovak issue was considered to be resolved.

The invasion of Warsaw Pact troops prevented the democratic solution of relations between both nations. Only the implementation of federative principles was allowed, but it lost its democratic value. The above-mentioned constitutional act was amended by three revisions during the period of Velvet Revolution.

During the so-called normalisation inability of central organs of state to solve the growing problems manifested itself. Soviet model of federation has proved unsuitable for dealing with relations between Czechs and Slovaks.

As a consequence, the quasi-federation existed, in which the powers of national organs were significantly reduced. Gradually, the federative elements more and more weakened and until they changed to such an extent that it can be concluded that it was more or less a unitary state. (Chovanec, Mozolík, 1994)

The period of the existence of federation has been both in Slovakia and the Czech Republic associated with „normalisation“. The fact that the head of the central government was Slovak, Gustav Husák, who became the president of the republic, and Vasil' Biľak, considered a pro-soviet collaborator, who became the Secretary of the Central Committee of the Communist party of Czechoslovakia, resulted in the escalation of Czech mistrust to Slovak representation.

The collapse of the Communist regime in 1989 confirmed the above-mentioned finding that these two nations perceived individual historical events,

important for both nations, differently. Czech and Slovak reasons for rejecting Communism overlapped only partially and ideas about its overcoming were quite different.

It turned out that the Slovak public attitude to the socialist past was less differential and more conciliatory than the attitude of Czechs. Czechs started to loath the Communism, while in Slovakia was this period associated with the growth. Unlike the Czechs, Slovaks did not consider the forty years of socialism as a step back. The reason was mainly an ongoing urbanisation, industrialisation and financial subsidies from the Czech Republic to Slovakia (Rychlík, 1997). Slovaks got accustomed to Communism, although, unlike the Czechs, they refused it in 1946. Political repression in 1968 affected Czechs to a greater extent than Slovaks. Relations between the nations were greatly influenced by the fact that Slovakia was affected by the normalisation less than Czech lands. It can be noted that the political, economic and socio-psychological situation in Slovak before 1989 was different than the situation in the Czech Republic.

Conclusion

The quality of Czech-Slovak relations was influenced by several factors. The first and most important was the unwillingness of both nations to accept and comprehend the issues essential for the other side. This is related to unwillingness of Czechs to make a compromise and rejection of Slovaks as an equal partner. The practical recognition of the equality of the Slovak nation by Czech public hardly blazed a trail during the common statehood. In consequence of it, these and other Slovak requirements were often formulated with a fair amount of pique, intolerance and aggression. This resulted in chilling of relations and increasing of mistrust between two nations.

Another important factor that influenced the Czech-Slovak relations and thus contributed to the breakup of Czechoslovakia in 1992 was insufficient and superficial problem solving, which often showed to be advantageous for the Czech side. An example of this is the filling of Slovak posts by Czech officials, organising of local government during the First Czechoslovak Republic. Another example is an asymmetric federation model or Prague centralism.

The third factor was the fact that Czechoslovak state was built on the fiction of the existence of the "Czechoslovak nation". Despite the linguistic proximity there were significant differences between the two nations, not only cultural but

also political, economic and religious. These differences were not overcome during the common statehood. This dualism sprang from the different historical development of both nations in different state units.

Constitutional arrangement of common Czechoslovak state did not reflect adequately the existence of two nations. The fact that emancipation efforts of the Slovak nation were not embodied in proper constitutional arrangement contributed to the fact that Slovaks have never identified with the Czechoslovak Republic and the sense of Czechoslovak reciprocity never emerged. Reciprocity and existence of Czechoslovak nation in political way were essential for the survival of the common state.

Relations between Czechs and Slovaks tended to worsen. For almost 70 years unpleasant issues of Czechoslovak relations have not been solved. Burden of the past and lack of tolerance, which resulted in mistrust and suspicion on both sides, inevitably reflected in the events of 1989.

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