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Czechoslovakia: The Short Goodbye
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BOLSHEVIK CZECHOSLOVAKISM 1945-8

Essentially the same reasons existed for the re-creation of a common Czechoslovak state in 1945 as had existed for its creation in 1918. Despite the immediate mass expulsions of Germans and Hungarians at the close of the Second World War - today we would call it ethnic cleansing - a significant Hungarian minority remained in Slovakia and provided the majority of Slovaks with a compelling reason for restoring a stronger state[74]. For the Czechs, the threat of a revanchist Germany loomed large. The brutal expulsion of ethnic Germans from the Czech lands, ending in the main by November 1946, could not wipe away Germany's historical connection to the area, and Czechs were unlikely to anticipate a democratic and contrite Germany rising from the ashes of the Third Reich. As in 1918, the Allied peace-makers were keen sponsors of a renewed Czechoslovak state. The Allied Powers acted on the assumption that the legal continuity of the interwar states should be restored wherever they had been violated by Nazism or its consequences.

The impulse behind the restoration of Czechoslovakia, however, was not simply pragmatic. Despite the previous eight years, it seems that it was still widely felt across Czechoslovakia that the interwar state had by no means been a disaster; on the contrary, it could be remembered as the most advanced state of the region, both politically and economically. Optimists could argue that Czechoslovakia was a thwarted plant - nipped in the bud by economic depression and German military force. In Slovakia, a consensus also apparently existed that in a new Czechoslovakia the mistakes of the previous Republic might be rectified and a new partnership created. The fact of the independent Slovak state had meant a coming of age for Slovak national consciousness, and even for those who had fought against the clerico-fascist regime; Czechoslovakist, Protestant Slovaks pledged allegiance to a new Czechoslovak state 'without the old centralist mistakes'[75].

In March 1945 the Slovak National Council - still powerful at home - passed a resolution echoing the Christmas Agreement. *The Standpoint and Requirements of the Slovak Nation* proposed that Czechoslovakia be formed as a loose federation, with only foreign trade, defence and foreign affairs to be under central authority; temporarily, Slovakia was even to administer customs and currency as a separate territory[76]. Also in March 1945 the Slovak National Council went to Moscow to meet with the Czechoslovak Communists in exile and the (London) Czechoslovak Government. Here they discovered that the Slovak voice would be heard only at the discretion of these 'Czechoslovak' forces. The future of Czechoslovakia was to be decided at round-table talks between the two exiled parties (Moscow and London), with the SNC delegates being brought in only on issues pertaining exclusively to Slovakia[77].

While the Slovak National Council's role in the Uprising and Slovakia's aspiration to equality were recognised in Moscow, the SNC's federal model remained patently unacceptable - not to the Soviets - but to the 'Muscovite' Czechoslovak Communists, who stood at the forefront of Czech efforts to reduce Slovak powers, regardless of their earlier promises to their Slovak comrades. Guided by the Soviet model of regional cultural autonomy and rigid political centralisation, Czech Communists clearly viewed themselves as the leading nationality in their republic. Like the Russians in the USSR, the Czechs designated themselves the nationality of greatest maturity in dialectical terms, best placed to direct the new state toward the socialist future[78]. However much this was understood by Slovaks as a transparent reworking of the 'older Czech brother' as the 'older Czech comrade', the Czechoslovak Communist Party was the only power that Slovak Communists were unable, following the discipline and context of the time, to resist. The last stages of the war had clearly pushed events in the Muscovites' favour. Through the winter of 1944 and 1945 the Soviet army overran large parts of Czechoslovakia, and the Muscovite Communists could subsequently employ some strategic subtlety in their dealings with the non-Communist political parties gathered in Moscow. The latter accepted the Communists' proposal for a 'National Front of the Czechs and Slovaks', the Communists camouflaging their intentions by offering the equitable distribution of three posts to each of the six parties represented at the Moscow conference[79].

The Moscow negotiations produced a programme for the Third Czechoslovak Republic. Announced on 5 April 1945 in Košice, the new Czechoslovak Government promised guarantees of Slovakia's autonomous status. The exact divisions of competence remained to be resolved, however, and this ambiguity turned out to be a false hope for the Slovak National Council. Against the Council - still constituted by the Slovak democrats and the Communists - were ranged not only Czechoslovak Communist Party discipline but also financial considerations; Slovakia remained the weaker power economically and depended entirely upon a Czech sense of enlightened self-interest for any chance of an equalising constitutional settlement. By the end of May 1945 it was clear that the Slovak Communists were really outflanked; they had no robust ideological justification for their claims and, perhaps more importantly still, they lacked the support of those now Prague-aligned Slovak Communists who had not participated in the Uprising[80]. Fatally for Slovak interests, a joint-session decree resolved that the Communist Party of Slovakia would become merely a part of a united Communist Party of Czechoslovakia and would be subject to a common leadership[81]. This common leadership's first instruction to Slovak Communists was to drop their federalising proposals. They conceded, convinced that unanimity was crucial in the favourable postwar environment for Communism.

Follow-up negotiations to the Košice Programme brought about successive 'Prague Agreements', the first on 2 June 1945, the second on 11 April 1946. These agreements began the steady erosion of Slovak autonomy. An interim confederative arrangement enshrined in the first gave way to an extension of presidential powers to cover Slovakia in the second, though Slovak members of parliament maintained some rights of confederative veto[82]. Following the humiliation of the senior Slovak Communists of the Uprising, Karol Šmidke, Gustav Husák and Ladislav Novomeský[83], the wartime common front of the Democratic Party and Slovak Communists finally collapsed, leaving the way open to a Czech, and this time Communist-led, reassertion of centralised power.

The 1946 election revealed to Czech Communists the reality that support for Communism in Slovakia was relatively weak. For Slovak Communists the results meant the fatal weakening of their still cherished autonomist platform. On 26 May 1946, the Communists triumphed in the Czech lands with 40.17 per cent of the vote, but were defeated in Slovakia, even with 30.37 per cent. The Slovak victors, with a massive 62 per cent, were the Democratic Party, but a Democratic Party which had made a deal with moderate L'udáks and so inherited the Catholic vote. The Slovak Communists thus found themselves in the awkward position of wanting to defend the jurisdiction of a Slovak National Council set to be dominated by the 'bourgeois' Democratic Party. This case was simply unsustainable - contesting the policy of recentralisation for the sake of a Democratic Party with new clerico-fascist overtones amounted to an unthinkable breach of Communist discipline and doctrine. Shortly afterwards the Communist Party invited its partners in the Czech National Front (Social Democratic, National Socialist and Czechoslovak People's Parties) to cooperate in restricting Slovak national powers and curtailing clerical influence.

The result of these events was the Third Prague Agreement of 28 June 1946, which further restricted Slovak authorities, most notably those of the Slovak National Council, whose legislation would henceforth require central ratification. To reinforce the point that the SNC was no longer deemed a 'progressive social force' the agreement was signed, not on behalf of the Slovak National Council but by the 'Slovak National Front'. When the agreement was ratified by the Slovak National Council on 16 July 1946, Lettrich, chairman of the Council and leader of the Democratic Party, proposed the motion on the understanding that 'the Slovaks were making a big sacrifice in the interest of the Republic and expressed the hope that their gesture would find a ready response on the part of the Czechs'[84]. The Slovak understanding of 'Czechoslovakism' nevertheless looked set to be reconfirmed, this time by Czech Communists who decried the 'bourgeois' First Republic.

Following the Communist *coup d'état* of 25 February 1948, the all-important Constitutional Committee fell to the disposal of the Party. Grounds for the coup had been prepared by Tiso's trial and execution as a war criminal and the uncovering of a (fabricated) L'udák conspiracy at the centre of Slovakia's Democratic Party. The new Communist Prime Minister and soon to be President Klement Gottwald entrenched as far as possible the idea that Prague should maintain strict and central powers. The newly purged Constitutive Assembly abolished the Slovak right to a veto in Slovak affairs on 16 April 1948, and on 9 May it approved a new constitution. This removed those vestiges of autonomy left by the Third Prague Agreement while nevertheless declaring the Czechoslovak Republic to be a state of 'two Slav nations possessing equal rights'[85].

The statement about 'nations' and state was at least now relatively accurate following the massive ethnic cleansing of Hungarians and Germans. *De jure,* however, Slovakia's formal constitutional status was restored to that of part of a unified, Czech-dominated Czechoslovak state. *De facto,* moreover, Slovakia's constitutional status had become an irrelevance, since legality was now the property not of parliament but of the Presidium of the Central Committee of the Czechoslovak Communist Party and, eventually, of its political secretariat. With the expulsion of the Germans, Czech administrative dominance was clearer than ever before and Czech national identity unchallenged within the Czech lands for the first time since 1918[86]. The democratic division of powers was at an end; of greater significance for Slovakia than constitutional changes was the formal unification of the Slovak Communist Party and the Czechoslovak Communist Party into one in September 1948.

The assimilation of the Slovak Communist Party into the Czechoslovak Party was almost a caricature of prewar democratic developments, and it was viewed by some as an act of Czech revenge[87]. Communist practice could still be filtered through national perceptions. Those principles supposedly derived from scientific law, such as the belief that material equality dissolved national sensibility, were often interpreted as old-fashioned national manoeuvring. The preferential investment in Slovakia, which began in the 1950s and was accelerated after 1968, was often perceived stereotypically by Czechs as merely an intensification of Slovakia's prewar tendency to exploit Czech idealism. On the Slovak side, the Communist doctrine of democratic centralism and the leading role of the Party could be seen as a minimal facade for continuing centralised rule from Prague. Both impressions arguably had a basis in fact.

Czechoslovakia at this point was in an extraordinary position -broken apart by war and now hammered back together by Communism and politically transformed; the huge tensions and divisions of the interwar and wartime period were now supposed to be swept aside by an entirely new order of society. Socialism, or rather, by 1949, Stalinism, purported to bring about harmony and reconciliation on all fronts. This, however, was an enforced harmony, and, as already suggested, it did not mean the resolution of the national question, but the aggravation and obscuring of it. Given the *realpolitik* reasons for Czechoslovakia's creation in 1918, the expulsion of the vast majority of Sudeten Germans from Czechoslovak territory appeared, ironically, to destroy one of the platforms upon which Czechoslovak solidarity had depended. In practical terms, however, the fact of Slovakia's siding with Germany in the late 1930s had already destroyed the internal cohesion that the German threat was supposed to create. A possible solution to Slovakia's deeper grievances might have been

federalisation - the cherished hope of the Slovak resistance movement. With federation denied, however, it asked a great deal of socialism that it should transcend (and not simply repress) Czech and Slovak differences. Was it conceivable that Czechs and Slovaks would be reconciled under a secularising, homogenising and modernising ideology that, in many respects, stood as a utopistic caricature of the Czech liberal vision of the 1920s?

THE 1950s: SHOW TRIALS

The Prague leadership responded to Soviet pressure for ever greater obedience to Moscow with the full Stalinisation of the Party and its tactics. The result in terms of Czech-Slovak relations was that the forces behind Slovak nationalism, in its clerico-fascist, but also in its more benign pro-federal forms, were systematically attacked. When attempts to uncover the true scale of the ensuing political trials were inaugurated under Alexander Dubček's liberalising offices in 1968, reports concluded that some 83,000 citizens had fallen victim, even before those persecuted through collectivisation were taken into account. The Catholic Church found itself under pressure at every level: clergy, laymen, believers, and even officials connected to charitable church institutions. Of greater importance for the position of Slovaks within the Communist polity, however, were the trials at the senior Party level.

In accordance with the Stalinist strategy of the time - random and targeted terror - President Klement Gottwald purged the Party of those prominent Slovaks who had ever proposed improvements in Slovakia's political status, and those whom the Party could usefully suspect of such a thing. Relatively unsurprising was the crushing of the Democratic Party - its membership of over 300,000 was reduced to a few hundred officials. More shocking was the swathe cut through Communist veterans of the Slovak National Uprising and the wartime partisan struggle. In Slovakia, all but three of the political commissars and commanders of the partisan movement were arrested and the army *en bloc* found itself 'beheaded' of its experienced officer corps. Some 273 top Party officials were tried between 1952 and 1954. The two main characteristics of the trials were that those Party-faithful who had helped establish the existing system and had been the Party's backbone through the war were now in the dock, and secondly, that these trials were a direct reflection of Soviet international interests and Stalinist paranoia[88]. The trials of the early 1950s[89] were directed at three distinct groups in senior Party positions: those who had spent time abroad ('cosmopolitans', 'Titoists'), Jews ('Zionists') and Slovak 'nationalists' ('bourgeois nationalists').

Top-level purges had begun in earnest when the Central Committee expelled thirteen members and two candidates of this senior Party organ in February 1951. Amongst the expellees were the Slovak war veterans Gustáv Husák, Ladislav Novomeský and Karol Šmidke - already in disfavour and reprimanded for 'bourgeois nationalism' at the Ninth Congress of the Slovak Party in 1950[90]. During trials designated for 'nationalists', Husák was jailed under a life sentence[91], and Novomeský sentenced to ten years for the 'betrayal', paradoxically, of the Slovak National Uprising. The prosecutor's paranoid identification of these Communists with the bourgeois, fascist nationalism of the Hlinka Slovak People's Party meant that the memory of Slovakia's wartime betrayal was once again recycled and Czech recriminations for Czechoslovakia's betrayal implicitly renewed. It was typical of the perverse psychology of the terror that the trials attempted to associate these 'bourgeois nationalists' not only with fascism but also with Zionism. Eleven out of the thirteen senior Communists executed in the trials were Jews, and efforts were clearly made to mobilise latent Slovak anti-Semitism to further discredit popular Slovak leaders before they came to trial[92].

The cold-bloodedly tactical nature of the purges, aimed first and foremost at appeasing Moscow, was undeniably terrible for Slovakia, silencing many of its most respected leaders and coming as it did a mere five years after the constitutional promises following the end of the war. Any political expression of Slovak national grievance or aspirations, even as Slovakia underwent forced heavy industrialisation and collectivisation, was rendered taboo not just through the 1950s, but for the foreseeable future. Stalinism ensured that Slovaks experienced only the repression of the burning issues of their political culture - national recognition and equality of political representation. Czech national chauvinism was arguably no longer necessary when assertions of national identity were systematically suppressed. Though Slovaks would eventually rise to the very top of the Communist ladder, their experiences as a nation in the 1950s *are* essential in explaining how antagonistic were the common Czech insinuations, after 1968 and again after 1989, that Czechoslovak Communism had been a system somehow more of Slovakia's taking, more sympathetic to the Slovaks' putative 'primitive political culture'.

1968 - BRATISLAVA SPRING?

By 1963 it was clear that the Czechoslovak economy was beginning to stagnate. In such circumstances Slovakia looked set to lose the preferential investment that had revolutionised its economy in the 1950s, a prospect which could only draw together the two taboo issues of nationality and systemic change. The Soviet leader Nikita Khrushchev went public with his denunciation of Stalinism at the Twenty-second Congress of the Soviet Communist Party in October 1961, and even Czechoslovakia's most habituated Stalinists could not withstand the pressure from Moscow to acknowledge past excesses. Thousands of victims of Stalinist injustices were discreetly released, but the state recoiled from the prospect of public redress. Many of those in the regime of Antonín Novotný were all too evidently implicated in the brutality they were now expected to unmask and criticise, including Novotný himself[93].

First Secretary Novotný cremated the embalmed remains of his Stalinist

predecessor, Klement Gottwald, and accepted that a massive statue of Stalin overlooking Prague should be removed. Tokenism, however, was his limit. When an up-and-coming Slovak apparatchik, Alexander Dubcek, pressed for political rehabilitations and articulated the problems of Slovak underdevelopment, it seemed highly likely that Party hard-liners would teach him the lessons conventionally reserved for 'nationalists'[94]. Remarkably, Dubček not only survived, testimony to the growing weakness of the Novotný regime, but found himself on a commission investigating the political crimes of the 1950s.

When the shocking results of the Kolder Commission were presented to the Central Committee in April 1963, Dubček again lobbied for comprehensive rehabilitations, including the clearing of all accused of 'bourgeois nationalism'[95]. The report was made public in August 1963, and it added to the stir caused by Khrushchev's attempted reforms of the 'model' Soviet system. In Slovakia Dubček had in April sharply criticised the Slovak First Secretary, Karol Bacílek, for his part in the repression and had been chosen as Bacílek's replacement. Though Novotný tried to overwhelm Dubček with conformists, the Slovak party, having assimilated its success in defying Novotný, rallied to his defence, and henceforth his rise in Slovakia undoubtedly carved out not only national, but also reformist, territory inside the still repressively centralised state.

The reaction of the Slovak press was increasing openness. The Slovak writers' congress in April 1963 brought forth bitter accounts of earlier repression and recriminations against their still high-ranking instigators[96]. In spring 1963, the weekly magazine of the Union of Slovak Writers, *Kultúrny život* (Cultural Life), began to address formerly taboo subjects. With a circulation of over 100,000, *Kultúrny život* was one of the few publications with a state-wide circulation and readership. The Slovak Party paper *Pravda*. (Truth) also began to criticise Party policy[97] - an unheard- of apostasy[98]. A war of attrition ensued between Dubček, with the growing body of Czech and Slovak reformers at his side, and the old guard. From 1963 onwards Dubček's activity could not but reawaken Slovak hankerings after meaningful powers of national representation[99], significant institutional changes, even federalism[100]. To separate this desire for federalisation from a desire for liberalisation would be unwarranted, however. For many of those proposing it, federalisation represented a democratising project - a guarantee that Slovakia as a community would no longer find itself systematically at one remove from decision-making. Although Slovaks would later be accused by Czechs of having pursued their national interest at the expense of democratisation, the reality was that in the early 1960s the impulse for reform was very much emanating from Slovakia. Moreover, as the reform movement flourished across the country, Slovak institutions and public opinion continued to participate and endorse every aspect of the democratising project.

When a showdown within the Party finally took place in 1967 the Slovak question emerged as only one point in the catalogue of failures for which the regime was finally called to account[101]. Czechs fearful that Dubček would come to the fore of the Party as a Slovak nationalist seemed reassured of his even-handedness within a few months of his gaining the Party leadership, when Czech opinion polls rated him highly[102]. The Central Committee elected Dubček First Secretary on 3 January 1968, leaving Novotný the Presidency only until 22 March.

FEDERALISATION – A COMPROMISE

Since 1948 the idea of federalisation had lingered in the shadow form of institutional asymmetry, i.e. in the survival of moribund Slovak organs without Czech equivalents and a Slovak branch of the Communist Party subordinate to the Czechoslovak Party[103]. This asymmetry had encouraged the already strong tendency of Czechs to identify Czechoslovak institutions as correspondingly Czech, a fact that was now decried in 1968 in the reforming Action Programme that emerged under Dubček's leadership[104]. When the issue of how to reform the state re-emerged the debate centred not on the question of whether to federalise it, but how. The asymmetrical model was evidently no longer acceptable to most of the Slovak elite. The aspirations of Slovakia's wartime resistance movement had clearly taken root as a profound Slovak consensus[105]. On 15 May 1968, a committee was established to prepare a draft law on federalisation. The Slovak National Council unilaterally prepared a draft proposing two semi-independent states: the Czech Republic and the Slovak Republic, in which the federation was reduced to an 'umbrella construction' with powers mainly over defence and foreign policy. The Czechs presented two different drafts. One suggested a strong federation; the other also proposed, remarkably and for the first time, a looser bond between the two republics[106], though in a version still viewed by the Slovaks as unacceptably asymmetrical.

In June 1968 the National Assembly approved the 'Constitutional Law on the Preparation of the Federation', founding at last a Czech National Council as an equivalent institution to the Slovak National Council. Slovak rights of veto were also reintroduced for matters covering Slovak national interests - the principle previously cancelled by the Prague Agreements. The Slovak victory was by no means secure, however. The members of the new Czech National Council were not to be elected but 'presented' by the National Front, a reflection of the continuing Czech perception that the Czech National Council could only be a redundant body so long as the state National Assembly continued to exist[107].

Czech Communists had accepted the principle of federalisation, but its impetus had been Slovak. Czechs evidently realised that the Party needed re-legitimising, and that the solution for Slovakia was obviously constitutional. However, as would shortly become clear, the federation was put in place to satisfy Slovak aspirations and not out of any independent Czech desire to decentralise power. The entire project was put in doubt, moreover, when, on 21 August 1968, five armies of the Warsaw Pact occupied Czechoslovakia in order to destroy the reform movement, and Dubček was taken, separated from his colleagues and blindfolded, to Moscow.

Dubček's Action Programme had proposed a reconstitution of the emasculated Slovak National Council as a working legislature and the establishment of a Slovak Council of Ministers as an executive - both to be animated by an enhancement of Slovak competences[108]. Even if the Soviets were appalled by Czechoslovakia's experimental socialism they were not blind to the problem of legitimacy and thus, having followed the lesson of the 'Slovak' time bomb, they duly applied their own experience of exploiting constitutional guarantees. It was agreed, with Soviet encouragement, that federalising constitutional changes would be formally promulgated as of 28 October 1968.

As it transpired, Constitutional Act 143/1968 recognised the inalienable right of the Czech and Slovak nations to self-determination, even to the point of secession. But also explicitly, and crucially for post-1989 discussions, it declared the essential 'sovereignty' of the republics: the Czech Socialist Republic and the Slovak Socialist Republic. The relationship of republic to federation was to be based formally on cooperation rather than subordination. The federal government and its organs could perform activities on the territory of the republics only if given explicit legal authorisation[109]. A federal bicameral parliament was to be the supreme legislative body and this would become tricameral when considering constitutional legislation, which would have to pass by a three-fifths majority in both the Chamber of the People and the now nationally separated Chambers of the Nations. The constitution thus provided a guarantee against *'majorizácia'* - the power of the Czech majority to outvote the Slovak minority on issues involving national interests.

Though many among Dubček's supporters had realised that there was no surer way to reinforce the state than by fulfilling Slovak aspirations as quickly as possible[110], clearly not all Czechs understood enlightened self-interest in the same way. In the commentary of the time it was not unusual to find the birth of the Czech republic interpreted as 'an exigency to which the Slovaks have led us... Czech public opinion understands the federalisation of Czechoslovakia in no way as their victory, but as historical necessity'[111].

The federal package that emerged was nevertheless even theoretically inconsistent. Though parity between the two republics was a central characteristic of parliamentary structures, including committees, the principle was not applied to bureaucratic, ministerial or government appointments, where majority rule continued[112]. Thus the principle of national parity applied most strongly in those institutions weakest in a Communist system - the national legislature and constitutional court - and was weakest of all in the federal bureaucracy, where decision-making and implementation had a critical impact on policy[113]. As post-invasion 'normalisation' took hold, moreover, the reshaped Communist Federal Assembly became as toothless as those that had gone before. Though the new Federation law was based on divided sovereignty 'from below', the pyramidal nature of the Communist system once again dictated that real power came from above - not from government, but from Party structures, according to the Principle of democratic centralism. The executive power-sharing virtues of the constitution provided little protection in practice, and its confederate elements were likewise a facade (foreign policy, defence, currency, federal material reserves and federal legislation were the only policies supposedly under the exclusive purview of federal organs)[114].

The 1968 amendments to the 1960 constitution, while rapidly overruled in practice, were also formally weakened by amendments in 1970 which further diluted the original division of competences. Where the 1968 law had referred to the 'integration of two socialist economies', decentralising various economic competences, the 1970 revision proclaimed the Czechoslovak economy to be unified. Further changes consolidated the coordination of security and social control from Prague, and dual citizenship, briefly symbolising the primacy of Czech and Slovak nationality, was also abolished[115]. Even before 1970, a fatal blow had fallen with the Soviet-enforced prevention of the federalisation of the Communist Party. Proposed in Dubček's Action Programme, Party federalisation had been seen as an essential condition for the real differentiation of policy. Through the 1970s and 1980s Czechoslovakia was re-established as a pillar of Soviet orthodoxy, surpassed in its conservatism only by East Germany[116].

BETWEEN SCYLLA AND CHARYBDIS

Though public support for reform had become marginally deeper and better defined in the Czech lands than in Slovakia - an unsurprising consequence of the former's longer history of self-government - 1968 was neither intrinsically nor solely a Czech phenomenon. The abiding Czech historical perception that it was, that democratic rather than structural reform impulses were essentially Czech, came from an important continuity in Czech political expectations. As one historian has noted, 'the Czech population considered the Czechoslovak Republic to be their state and, in general, had no objections to the centralised system. Czech demands were for democratisation'[117]. These same preconceptions have tended to blur the extent to which Slovaks had perceived federalisation not just as a good in itself[118], a narrowly nationalistic demand, but as a peculiarly Slovak prerequisite for those same democratic goods supposedly desired only by the Czechs.

Slovakia's theoretical right of veto for constitutional legislation was a major point of tension in 1968, as it would be again after 1989. For Slovaks, federalisation was not only consistent with democratisation, but the veto provided a structural guarantee that Slovak interests could not be simply overridden by the natural Czech majority in a working parliament. Unfortunately for Czech-Slovak relations, the Czechs persisted in understanding democracy as a system in which the individual, and not the nation, was the exclusive source of authority. In the Czech conception of democracy, therefore, majority rule was the only valid basis of decision-making: a patently disingenuous idea in a distinctly bi-national state. Moreover, the Slovaks could cite economic reformist arguments on their side; the Czech preference for centralised rule

by the 1960s ran against the economic reform arguments of the day, which generally recommended that the centre relinquish its complete and initiative-inhibiting control.

The Czech insistence that the reform impulses of 1968 were essentially Czech is also simply a-historical, not least in terms of leadership. Alexander Dubček, a Slovak who had fought as a partisan during the National Uprising, and was as strongly aware as anyone of Slovakia's impoverished past, was also a socialist of almost Fabian instincts, with profound beliefs in the necessity of democratic freedoms. As he insisted subsequently, 'I was not so naive as not to see that it would only take time before the changes we made yielded to a full multi-party democracy. I knew that, and Brezhnev knew that, of course. So why won't the critics see it?'[119] The Soviet crackdown and the ensuing twenty years of Communist 'normalisation' clearly had a strong editing effect on public sentiment. The particular conformism of the Slovak Party *apparat* following 1968 appears to have eradicated from Czech memory all recollection of the highly contrasting state of affairs in Slovakia in the early 1960s.

More than any other period under Communist rule, the aftermath of the so-called Prague Spring brought existing national stereotypes back to the political surface and reinforced them for another generation. To a striking degree the events of 1968, far from engendering new prejudices, only reworked the old, recycling, rather than reinterpreting the past[120]. The despair felt by pro-reform Czechs and Slovaks alike at the destruction of 'socialism with a human face', moreover, lent a distinct bitterness to the charges that emerged in the aftermath. Two of the most enduring views to emerge from the '68 experiment and its demise would greatly inform evaluations of the 'other side' during disputes in the 1990s.

THE CZECH VIEW

Though there was an attempt among Czech politicians of the right after 1989 to play down the popularity as such of the '68 reform movement, demoting it to a factional battle between Party cliques, a second Mainstream Czech view maintains that the liberalising impulses of 1968 were intrinsically Czech. According to this view, Czechs alone had called for cultural and political emancipation, and Prague had formed the centre of radical activity[121]. Slovak reformers, this view insists, worried only about Slovakia's status. As Petr Pithart, Prime Minister of the Czech Republic between 1990 and 1992, put it, 'The reform movement which culminated in 1968 bore the distinct seal of the Czech genius loci. Slovakia left its mark in its emphasis on a greater degree of national self-determination, which could only mean a weakening of the democrats' position'[122]. According to this reading, Slovakia remained more watchful and typically conservative, if not indifferent to rolling back the Communist state. Slovakia's real endeavours were opportunist and, worse still, selfishly nationalistic. According to an old, and now repeated, Czech saw, nationalism always brought out the worst in the Slovak tendency toward primitive politics, vehemence and self-dramatisation, something the liberal and rational Czechs had always found hard to understand. Slovakia sought only federalisation out of the revolutionary flux in 1968, and engaged in a Faustian bargain with the Soviet occupiers to secure it -just as after Munich in 1938 they were shaming not just their nation but also the state in benefiting from its humiliation. With federalisation secured, Slovaks exploited their 'fifth column' status to extract massive Czech subsidies for Slovak industry, and encouraged Soviet patronage and protection. Gustáv Husák, the author of the greyest days of Communist 'normalisation', this argument ran, was reasserting through Party favouritism the Slovak nationalism for which he had been imprisoned after the Second World War.

THE SLOVAK VIEW

Not surprisingly the Slovaks' version of events differs radically. From their perspective, the events of 1968 amounted only to the fuller realisation of the Slovak reformist movement and Dubček's influence. These had already taken hold in Slovakia in the early 1960s, when Slovak economists insisted that the economy required liberalisation and a parallel, political opening. These facts were lost in an international glamorisation of 1968 which focused entirely on Prague, more beautiful and sophisticated as that city was. While the Czech Antonín Novotný still clamped down on the Czechs, Slovakia had enjoyed so much freedom in its publishing that censored Czechs had sought refuge in Bratislava publishing houses - another fact forgotten in the 1970s and 1980s, when the dissident movement was, for complex reasons, disproportionately Czech.

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

THE VERDICT ON THE FEDERATION AT THE END OF THE 1980s

The last twenty years of Czechoslovak Communism could be characterised as a phenomenal balancing act. The prevailing post-invasion policy was one of 'no

surprises'[123]. The leadership of Soviet normalisation in Czechoslovakia, while not entirely senile and decrepit by Soviet standards, was nevertheless unchanging, and it engaged with the national question only minimally and only in the language of economic achievements, namely, the claim that Czech and Slovak economic conditions were finally equalised. It is hard to give the flavour of normalisation in Czechoslovakia and of the sense of profound stagnation in every aspect of social and political life, but if you can imagine living in a melancholic, low-budget, black-and-white, twenty-year-long version of the film *Groundhog Day,* you will have some idea of the atmosphere of the time. What diagnosis, then, could reasonably be offered for the future of the Czechoslovak state on the threshold of 1989, when the dominant characteristic of the state was that its national question had been deeply repressed for the previous twenty, indeed forty, years?

Of course, no definitive judgement is possible, but what is most striking about the condition of national relations at the end of the 1980s is precisely their uncertainty - their extreme contingency, formally, the Czechoslovak state was a federation with a powerful right of veto for Slovakia in constitutional affairs; in practice, the constitution was quite meaningless as real power continued to emanate from the centralised and unified, Czech-dominated Czechoslovak Communist Party. Bi-national relations were nevertheless maintained via long-developed political ties, factional balances within the Party, personal connections, understandings and obligations, all in a system in which the explicit discourse of national interest was not permitted. Although Czechs and Slovaks had accumulated a fund of potentially corrosive political events, the Communist historical record, the only record available to the vast majority of Czechs and Slovaks under the age of fifty, portrayed national relations as perpetually harmonious and fraternal. From the late 1940s onwards, the clerico-fascist Slovak state was portrayed in Communist history as a German imposition, opposed by the vast majority of Slovaks, who were, needless to add, profoundly Communist in their aspirations and mentality, just like the Czechs! Since Communist renderings of history had nevertheless been completely internally inconsistent, modifying interpretations of events to suit the vagaries of Soviet foreign policy, the condition of Czechs and Slovaks alike was one of not knowing what history to trust. As the dissident playwright Václav Havel so eloquently put it, the main endeavour of Communist rule over the years had become one of 'organised forgetting', the only context in which Communist achievements might shine.

Economically, the picture in the late 1980s was likewise contingent. The Communist Party had claimed for over a decade that economic equality between the two republics stood as one of the lasting achievements of socialism. Moreover, economic data were aggregated across the state as a whole, making it extremely difficult to prove or disprove any claims about separate national economic performance or about the degree of economic dependence of one republic upon the other. Emergency reforms proposed in 1988, however, indicated an economic crisis precisely because they were based explicitly on the conclusion that the 'equal' Slovak economy was fundamentally less able to absorb investment compared to the Czech. In 1988 even the Panglossian Czechoslovak Communist Party understood crisis management as necessitating a reorientation of investment to the more profitable Czech lands. What impact this admission might have on national relations given the end of Communism, however, was anybody's guess[124].

In geopolitical terms, membership of the Soviet-dominated military alliance, the Warsaw Pact, had ensured that the existence or non-existence of Sudeten Germans within a Czechoslovak state hardly mattered; Czechoslovakia's geopolitical position was fixed as a front-line state of Communist orthodoxy, ranged against the capitalist West. Again, what sense of common geopolitical interest in a Czechoslovak state would exist in a new military world order could not be anticipated. The total collapse of the Warsaw Pact through 1989-1990 withdrawal of Soviet troops from Czechoslovak soil by June 1991 would place Czechoslovakia, like every other state of the Soviet bloc, in a security vacuum, a fact that, intuitively at least, would seem to render secession exceptionally risky, and make the maintenance of as large as state as possible unusually attractive.

The picture of Czech-Slovak relations is hardly clarified by public opinion polls, for obvious reasons a somewhat neglected tool under Communism. In one of the few surveys on this topic, conducted by Radio Free Europe and based on 1,200 interviews among Czech and Slovak visitors temporarily in Western countries between 1974 and 1975, 72 per cent of Czechs and 81 per cent of Slovaks thought the federal government treated both republics 'equally'. 17 per cent of Czechs as against 2 per cent of Slovaks felt the government favoured Slovakia, whereas only 12 per cent of Slovaks felt the government favoured the Czech lands, as against 1 per cent of Czechs. With such a small and unusual sample, however, the RFE survey is essentially a shot in the dark. In a domestic poll taken in April-May 1989 the majority of both the Czech and Slovak respondents were found to believe that relations between Czechs and Slovaks were either friendly or 'rather friendly' (63 per cent), a lower count than the 79 per cent of respondents in 1983 who had evaluated their relations positively. Czechs, moreover, were again less positive than Slovaks about national relations (66 per cent versus 76 per cent) [125].

To try to relate vaguely worded and isolated polls of the 1970s to the vaguely worded polls of 1990 is, I would argue, a treacherous exercise. Moreover, to credit the expressed opinions of the 1970s and 8os with predictive properties is to ignore the potential of the anti-Communist revolution of 1989 to rekindle either optimism for the future of a common state *or* optimism regarding the opportunities for small, newly independent nations within a fully liberated Europe. It would be equally unwise to ignore the potential for a new, non-Communist political leadership to reframe the national question in an attractive and manageable light. The picture, again, is one of extreme contingency.

Though the legitimacy of the existing Czechoslovak state was profoundly in doubt by 1989, the year of Communism's collapse, the circumstances outlined above ensure

that the exact nature of that illegitimacy will remain unclear. It was in the nature of the regime, and of dissent, that only dissident circles were able to evince nationalist and oppositionist attitudes, and such dissident circles were a tiny minority of the population: a very particular cross-section of the religious, artistic and intellectual elite of the two republics. When these same dissidents came to power through the anti-Communist revolution of November 1989, however, their perceptions of national tension became deeply significant.

The two national dissident elites appear to have acted as a repository of some of the most comprehensive national stereotypes, uninhibited and unaltered as such national stereotypes had been by any open ethnic conflict or overt weakness in the 'normalised' Communist state. As we shall see in later chapters, the role of these dissident figures from the 1970s and 1980s in the Czechoslovak debate in 1990 to 1992 would be formative, though not decisive. Their respective national views, already established by 1968, had been greatly reinforced by the apparently diverging development of anti-Communist protest between the two republics under normalisation.

When the dissident Charter 77 movement was founded in a desperate effort to hold the Communist regime to its commitments to the Helsinki Final Act of 1975, those that risked everything to sign it were disproportionately Czech. Among the first 243 signatures collected when the Charter was created, only one was that of a dissident living permanently in Slovakia - Miroslav Kusý[126]. As František Kriegel complained to *Die Welt* in 1977: The Slovak minority exercises power over the Czech majority, although the federation meant to establish parity. But today, Slovaks hold all the key positions, and considerable financial resources are flowing to Bratislava. They [the Slovaks] have thus accomplished much more than they had been aiming at, and therefore, they will also not identify with our cause[127] [Charter 77]'[128].

Alexander Dubček, ever the federalist, described the Charter as 'a courageous initiative in the tradition of Czech political and cultural defiance going back to Austria-Hungary'[129]. The overbearing 'Czech-ness' of its organisation, however, was later cited by others as actually accounting for Slovak non-participation. The Slovak writer Vladimír Mináč went so far as to call the Chartist movement 'Czechoslovak-ising'[130]. Indeed, no Slovak input into the Charter had been sought before its publication[131] - as with Ludvík Vaculík's trenchant critique, 'Two Thousand Words', issued in 1968[132] - an important reflection of the deep and persistent Pragocentrism of Czech dissent.

Commentators have noted a systematic discrepancy between the Czech and Slovak republics in the level of anti-Communist activism[133] , pointing out that of the individual instances of regime retaliation against dissidents in the late 1970s only 4 -5 per cent occurred in Slovakia, and over half of these targeted just two Slovak individuals. Others have pointed out, however, that the Slovak proportion of dis-sident activity increased steadily into the I98os[134], and indeed, Czech assessments of Slovak protest routinely ignore the real and unprotected locus of Slovak dissent - their persistent religious affiliation, despite the regime's attempts to co-opt the Catholic Church throughout the 1970s, mass pilgrimages and religious demonstrations were proof of a profound and sizeable Slovak opposition to the culture of Communism - if not active 'pro-democracy' dissent - and yet this appears to have done little to halt the Czech intellectuals' recourse to stereotypes. If the Communist regime of the 1970s pursued a carrot-and-stick policy toward religious believers it was always clear, at least to Slovaks, that any independent religious initiatives and associations would face the same abuse experienced by the Chartists in Prague. In a signature campaign in 1988 calling for religious freedom some 300,000 of the 500,000 names collected were Slovaks. By way of reaction, the regime brutally repressed the subsequent candlelight gathering in Bratislava of 2000 believers led by František Mikloško[135]. That Slovak religious protest was persistently disregarded as 'dissent' by the Czechs is thus noteworthy, particularly since Czech dissidents were content to view religious protest in Poland as both anti-Communist *and* pro-democratic.

Clearly, among many in the Czech intellectual elite there was a mistrust of this separate Slovak religiosity which bordered on the chauvinistic. Religious affiliation was not readily accepted as indicative of the liberal yearnings supposedly prevalent among Czechs. It was instead considered a sign of an essentially unreconstructed and pre-democratic political culture - by implication, the culture of the clerico-fascist Slovak state of the Second World War. For the Czech dissidents to hold such a view, however, was to be wilfully blind to their own isolation. As the Polish dissident Adam Michnik commented in 1982, 'The underground in post-1968 Czechoslovakia... includes... small groups of declasse oppositionists whose spiritual atmosphere resembles the first Christian communities hiding in the catacombs more than they resemble an illegal political opposition movement'[136]. In practice, Slovakia's isolation from Czech dissident activity was actively enforced by the Communist regime[137]. Moreover, by focusing on Slovakia's lack of secular anti-state organisation as positive evidence of apathy, and by maintaining so low an opinion of Slovak political culture, many in the Czech dissident elite unintentionally reinforced the regime's own efforts[138].

While Radio Free Europe felt able to conclude that 'traditional rivalry between Czechs and Slovaks' was 'at an encouragingly low ebb in 1974 - early 1975'[139], a resurrection of the kind of alliance of the national reformist-dissident elites witnessed in the 1960s appeared more elusive in the 1980s[140]. The Slovak dissident elite was particularly isolated, having lost not only the sympathy of the Czechs but the strength of their own numbers in 1968, deliberately divided as they had been by nominal federalisation and the softer purges inflicted on the Slovak wing of the Communist Party[141].

In November 1989, the entire character of the state was thrown into question by the anti-Communist revolution sweeping at last across Central and Eastern Europe. The Czechoslovak state's attempt to simply hold the nationalities question at arm's

length now collapsed along with the rest of the *status quo.* The so-called 'Velvet Revolution' in Czechoslovakia not only aimed at destroying the previous rules of the political game, but more successfully broke the bi-national political ties sustained by the factional balances and personal networks maintained within the Czechoslovak Communist Party. The already ambiguous political relationship between the two republics was now reduced to its most unstable institutional basis; a dubiously confederative constitution and parliament, a legal framework which, in the absence of the all-regulating Party, was untried in practice, extremely decentralising in some of its provisions and respected neither by the federal centre nor by the republican periphery. Even the term Czechoslovakism carried ambiguous connotations in Slovakia. When said in derogatory tones 'Czechoslovakist' was a shorthand expression for 'someone who believes, or is clearly assimilated, in a composite national identity, though historically this identity is merely a guise for Slovak assimilation into Czech culture'.

Without consensually established and binding connections it seemed unlikely that the market and democracy would diminish national friction, at least in the short term. On the Slovak side it seemed more probable that Slovaks would see democratisation as the opportunity for achieving in practice the deep federalisation that until now had existed only in the unexamined texts of the constitution. On the Czech side it appeared that a dissident-dominated government, more than others, would treat such overtures with suspicion. A domestic consensus regarding Czechoslovakia's history and function scarcely existed, raising the further complication that the state after 1989 might suffer as much from unstable and ideologically driven interpretations of its history as it would from historical events themselves[142].

NOTES

74. The Czech lands, crucially, became more or less ethnically homogeneous. Across all of Czechoslovakia, the proportion of Czechs and Slovaks in the population rose from 64 per cent (1921) to 94 per cent, see Leff (1988), p. 93.
75. ibid., p. 91.
76. Rychlík (1995), pp. 189-90.
77. Jelinek (1983},p.83.
78. ibid., p. 81.
79. Mamatey and Luža (1973), p. 392.
80. See Kirschbaum (1995), p. 227.
81. Vnuk (1983),p. 325.
82. See Rychlík (1995), p. 191.
83. One of the Slovaks now preferred was Široký; hostile to the 'Uprising Generation', and burdened, for Slovak audiences, with a thick Hungarian accent: Jelínek, ibid., p. 92.
84. Vnuk (1983), pp. 331-3.
85. Article II. 1948 Constitution; see Pechota (1992), p. 8.
86. See Leff (1988), p. 124.
87. Viewed as the weak link in the Czechoslovak scene by Czech Communists, Slovakia fell prey to some paradoxical tactics. In 1947 the Communist Party assisted in fomenting anti-Communist activities in Slovakia - the logic being that these would hasten a final takeover (secured with the alleged L'udák conspiracy). '[E]xtra-parliamentary activity, anti-Czech, anti-Czechoslovakia, anti-Communist, and anti-Jewish demonstrations and riots were grist to the Communist mill', see Jelínek (1983), p. 99.
88. All of these figures for levels of persecution are taken from Karel Kaplan's *Political Persecution in Czechoslovakia* 1948-1972, Research Project: Crisis in Soviet-Type Systems, Study Number 3, pp. 9-23.
89. The show trials are often referred to as the 'Slánský process' after the trial's most senior victim and supposed ringleader, Rudolf Slánský (Secretary General of the Party). The particular persecution of Jews reflected the USSR's changing policy in the Middle East and the rising Soviet exploitation of anti-Semitism.
90. From Suda (1981), p. 247.
91. An experience which, to Dubček's horror, did not prevent Husák from launching a second wave of punishments when installed as First Secretary following the repression of Prague Spring in August 1968.
92. See Leff (1988), pp. 167-9.
93. Klement Gottwald had died suddenly in 1953, having contracted pneumonia at Stalin's funeral, and he was replaced as President by Antonín Zápotocký, who died in 1957. Novotný was a secretary of the Party, 1951-3 and First Secretary, 1953-68, combining this with the Presidency of the Republic after 19 November 1957.
94. See Dubček, op. cit., p. 83.
95. These included Gustáv Husák. Dubček found Husák a place at the Slovak Institute of History, where he applied himself to the history of the Slovak National Uprising, op. cit., pp. 86-93.
96. A precursor to the more famous and feted 'Czechoslovak' writers' congress in June 1967.
97. See Dubček, op. cit., p. 89.
98. In June 1963 Novotný instructed the Slovak Party to restrain it - a clear sign that Slovak structures had broken out beyond central control, see Leff (1988), p. 111.
99. In 1964 Dubček succeeded in wresting a limited expansion of National Council powers - another sign of the holding operation underway at the centre. The remnants of Slovak national institutions left after 1948 actually made Prague extremely prone to demands that they be operationalised when reformist moments arose, ibid., p. 112.
100. In August 1964 the Slovak National Uprising was accorded some real recognition, with Kruschev and Novotný attending celebrations. There was even some acknowledgement of Slovak non-Communist, as well as Communist participation in the event, see Golan (1971), p. 195. Only months before his own downfall in October 1967 Novotný resorted to visiting Slovakia in an attempt to improve his image there. The visit was, however, disastrous. Most extraordinary was Novotný's suggestion that *Matica Slovenska* move its museum to Prague. Matica Slovenská, or 'Mother Slovakia', was Slovakia's mam cultural organisation. Founded in1861 it had since then safeguarded Slovak language/literature and was synonymous with national survival. As Dubček observed with glee, following this spectacle 'relations between Novotný and Slovaks of almost all stripes became irreparable', op. cit., p. 115.
101. See Leff (1988), p. 119.
102. ibid., p. 171.
103. In 1960 a new constitution had been created for the sole purpose of signalling the

supposed elevation of Czechoslovakia from the 'socialist stage' of development to that of its embarkation upon 'Communism' proper. The constitution of 11 July 1960 had claimed that a 'socialist democracy' had replaced the vaunted 'people's democracy' of 1948. This 1960 constitution neglected to address Slovak autonomy even more than had its predecessor, abolishing the already powerless Board of Commissioners.

104. This stated 'that the very asymmetrical arrangement was unsuited by its very character to express the relations between two independent nations, because it expressed the standings of the two nations differently. The difference was mainly in the fact that the Czech national bodies were identical with the national central ones... This prevented the Slovak nation, to all intents and purposes, from taking an equal share in the creation and realisation of a countrywide policy' Action Programme, reproduced in Robin Remington's *Winter in Prague: Documents on Czechoslovak Communism in Crisis* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: MIT Press, 1969), p.
105. Leff (1988), p. 122.
106. Rychlík (1995), p. 196.
107. ibid.
108. Pechota (1992), p. 12.
109. Hendrych (1993), p. 46.
110. Leff (1988), p. 124.
111. J. Lederer, *Reporter* 23 January 1969, quoted in Leff, ibid., p. 125.
112. ibid, p. 127.
113. ibid., p. 254.
114. See Rychlík (1995), pp. 196-7.
115. See Leff (1988), p. 247.
116. Husák's post-invasion desertion to the forces of repression was a ready signal to many Czechs that Slovakia's prior engagement with reform had been motivated by nationalist expedience rather than democratic instinct, see p. 174.
117. Rychlík (1995), p. 195.
118. The scale of Party efforts to suppress the notion of Slovak national identity can be seen from the fact that until 1968 Bratislava had no formal legitimacy as a Slovak political centre or capital; see Leff (1988), p. 107. This omission of institutional recognition reminded Slovaks of their predicament under Hungarian rule.
119. From Dubček, op. cit., p. 277.
120. Leff (1988), p. 163.
121. In fact, in addition to the history of the movement's origins in Slovakia, Slovak public opinion in June 1968 clearly endorsed the full reform movement: in a June poll, 92.9 per cent of the respondents gave their support to the reform movement by agreeing that the Action Programme would positively influence the development of Czechoslovakia; in another poll a month later, 86 per cent of the respondents were in favour of broadening the measure for individual freedom, from Kirschbaum (1995), p. 242.
122. Pithart (1995), p. 204.
123. Leff (1988), p. 254.
124. Following the recentralisation of the early 1970s, the concept of two national economies was treated as a 'rightist heresy propagated to disintegrate the state' (ibid, p. 248). Political 'achievements' were hardly to be attempted following the invasion, making Czech/Slovak economic parity one of the few available foci of Party propaganda. Economic achievements had to fulfil the legitimating role normally ascribed to the entire panoply of government - an unsustainable social contract, as it turned out.
125. Jan Misovic, 'Názory na vzt'ahy národov a národnosti ČSSR', *Informace*, March 1990, quoted in Wolchik (1991), p. 114.
126. See Wehrlé (1994), p. 254.
127. The Charter's spokesman, Jiří Hájek, commented that Slovaks were 'sufficiently enlightened' to be soft on each other, in Wehrle (1994), p. 254.
128. *Die Welt*, 17 February 1977.
129. Dubček, op. cit, p. 264.
130. Kirschbaum (1995), p. 248.
131. See Leff (1988), p. 266.
132. '2,000 Words to Workers, Farmers, Scientists, Artists, and Everyone' was published in the respective journals of these workers in June 1968 - a call for 'action from below', in Golan (1971), p. 297.
133. See Precan (1983) or Wehrle (1994).
134. See Leff (1988), p. 264.
135. Kirschbaum (1995), p. 248.
136. Adam Michnik, *Letters From Prison: And Other Essays* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1985), p. 50.
137. As Miroslav Kusý has testified, Czech dissident visitors to their Slovak colleagues were typically arrested and sent back to Prague before reaching their destination. Václav Havel moreover has indicated that Charter 77 was exclusively Czech, at least at the very beginning, so as to ensure against police detection and intervention, in Wehrlé (1994), p. 253.
138. ibid.
139. Radio Free Europe, 'Are the Czech Lands or Slovakia Favored by the Federal Government?' Audience and Public Opinion Research Department, 1977, p. 9.
140. Leff (1988), p. 262.
141. Such 'favouritism' was eminently reversible, however, based unstably as it was on the Soviet expectation of a corrective Slovak influence at that time and compensation for the otherwise profound recentralisation of 1970. National representation in government seemed well established by the 1980s; between 1969 and 1983 Slovaks received about one-third of ministerial portfolios - a proportionate level hitherto never achieved, though Czechs continued to monopolise the head of security and control operations. While the advance was impressive it was also due to the persistence of individuals in office. It is thus difficult to separate the changes in 'principle' from the hard facts of 'oligarchic petrifaction' in the last twenty years of the state (ibid., p. 253). Such tactics were anyway only a minor part of the Soviets' wider plan through the 1970s - the accelerated assimilation of Slovak and Czech identity. For a superb study on the uses of nationalism in Soviet-type states see Connor (1984), p. 447.
142. Few authors have analysed Czechoslovakia in anything approaching its historical entirety (1918-92), the exceptions being F. Wehrlé and C. S. Leff, who have done much to explain the foundations behind evidently 'diverging constructions of history' (Wehrlé (1994), p. 241). Until recently, anyone reading Czech Slovak history faced an unusual burden of ideological 'decoding'. As several post-Second World War studies pointed out, Slovakia had tended to be subsumed within histories of the First Republic (1918-38) as if it represented no more than a province of the Czech-dominated whole. The perception that the story of Slovakia had been neglected spurred an alternative but often equally polemical literature, particularly from émigré Slovaks and their descendants. Within the country, the history of

the state was thoroughly hijacked following the Communist takeover in 1948. It is thus important to appreciate how ill-served mediators in the national dispute would be, after 1989, by the overburdened ideological narratives within Czechoslovakia's history books.

In: Innes, Abby (2001), *Czechoslovakia: The Short Goodbye*, Yale University Press, New Haveh, pp. 19-38.