

From Velvet Revolution to Velvet Divorce

POLb1135 Slovak Politics

Communist Regime in Czechoslovakia

- Rigid nature of the regime
- The impact of normalization
- No political liberalization (unlike Poland or Hungary)
- Absence of dialogue between the regime and the opposition



Second half of the 1980s

- Rising discontent in the society
- The regime as a set of compulsory rituals without legitimacy
- **Candle demonstration (1988)** in Bratislava
 - First mass demonstration against the regime
 - Organized by catholic dissent
 - Request for respecting the citizen freedoms
 - Suppressed by police and state forces



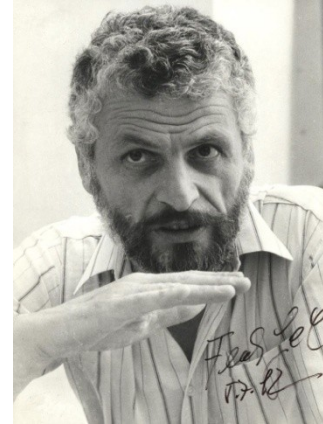
November 1989

- Mass demonstrations against the ruling regime
- Creation of **two** main dissent movements:
 - Civic Forum (OF) – Czech Republic
 - Public Against Violence (VPN) – Slovakia
- Regime forced to enter discussions with the opposition
- Evident inability of KSC to react to the new situation



Public Against Violence

- Slovak dissent movement
- Leaders – Fedor Gál, Ján Budaj
- Comparison with Czech OF:
 - Higher support towards non-political politics
 - Less pragmatic than OF
 - Lesser interest in gaining political positions
 - Primary aim to **control** and not to directly **rule**



Reconstruction of the Government(s)

- A Game of Thrones in Czechoslovakia
- Proof of differences between OF and VPN
- Petr Pithart as Prime Minister of Czech government
- Slovak government:
 - 9 non-partisans, 6 communists, only 1 person from VPN
 - Prime Minister – Milan Čič – Minister of Justice in 1988-89

Change of Tactics in 1990

- VPN understood its mistake when it was **too late**:
 - End of euphoria from November 1989
 - Dubček not elected as president
- Unsuccessful efforts of VPN to gain positions:
 - Slovak parliament refused to elect Budaj as its chairman and kept this post for communist official Rudolf Schuster
 - After that VPN did not even try to get the office of Slovak Prime Minister

Crisis of VPN in 1990

- In spring 1990 the support of VPN declined to 10%
- Reaction – adding communists on candidate lists:
 - Dubček, Čič, Schuster, Čalfa, Kováč
 - VPN thus legitimized their political careers in the post 1989 situation
- This pragmatic step helped VPN to win elections 1990



5 VEREJNOSŤ PROTI NÁSILIU



Zdroj: SNM

Slovak Party System After 1989

- Restoration of party plurality
- The main rivals of 1989
- Historical parties
- New parties

Fate of KSC and KSS

- **What happened to them?**

- a) changed the name and transformed to social democracy

- b) changed the name and remained the same

- c) kept the same name and ideology

- d) lived long and prospered



Rivals of 1989



- **Communists (KSS):**

- Cooperation with KSC until elections 1990
- Transformation to social democracy → 1991 – **Party of the Democratic Left (SDL)**
- Leader – Peter Weiss

- **VPN:**

- Originally right-winged and liberal
- Dissent movement

Historical parties

- **Slovak National Party (SNS):**
 - Official claims of its rich history
 - Very questionable historical link
 - Strong stress on the position of Slovakia

- **Democratic Party (DS):**
 - Weak historical link
 - Civic, right-wing orientation
 - Remained without bigger support



New Parties

- **Christian-Democratic Movement (KDH):**

- Christian and conservative values
- Catholic dissent
- Leader – Ján Čarnogurský



- **Hungarian parties:**

- Smaller parties
- Support by ethnic Hungarians
- Mutual cooperation



1990 Election

Party	Votes (in %)	Seats
VPN	29,4	48
KDH	19,2	31
SNS	13,9	22
KSC / KSS	13,4	22
Hungarian parties	8,7	14
DS	4,4	7
Green party	3,5	6
Others	7,6	0
		150

Government after 1990 election

- Officially center-right government
- Prime Minister – Vladimír Mečiar (VPN)
- Impact of previous personal changes in VPN:
 - Most executive posts of VPN gained by former communists
 - Internal tension about the character of economic reform
- Conflict between VPN's liberal leadership and Mečiar → new Prime Minister Čarnogurský

Party System in 1990 - 1992

- Intensive dynamics
- Low stability of party system
- Secessions and emergence of new parties
- Most parties affected by these trends (VPN, KDH, KSS-SDL, SNS)
- New parties ended as marginal – with only one crucial **exemption**

Birth of a new star

- Escalation of conflict in VPN
- Party of two faces – liberals vs. former communists
- 1991 – Mečiar creates Movement for a Democratic Slovakia (HZDS)
 - Slower economic reform
 - Populism
 - Nationalism
- Overwhelming support of Mečiar in society (80-90 %)



Let's Move on to Czechoslovakia

Czechoslovakia after 1989

- November 1989 opened discussions about the character of the state
- Different ideas about:
 - The role of federation and of both republics
 - The speed and shape of the economic reform
- December 31, 1992 – end of the game

Two Isolated Party Systems

- Most parties operated **within their „national“ borders**
- Communists:
 - Together in elections 1990
 - Czech hardliners vs. Slovak reformists
 - Dissolution into two separate parties in 1991
- Unsuccessful efforts to make party links:
 - Greens, Christian Democrats, Social Democrats
 - Czech Civic Democratic Party (ODS) and elections 1992

The Hyphen War (spring 1990)

- Conflict about the name of the federation
- Slovaks wanted to add a hyphen → Czecho-Slovak Republic
- Czechs refused this because of its usage in 1938-1939
- Hyphen:
 - Symbol of equity between nations for Slovaks
 - Reminiscence of a negative experience for Czechs
- Final solution – Czech and Slovak Federal Republic (CSFR)

Slovak Parties and Czechoslovakia

- Diverse ideas about the statehood
- Independence was not a goal shortly after 1989
- After elections 1990:
 - **Stronger position** of Slovakia within the state (VPN)
 - **Confederation** – to grant Slovakia a sole chair and a star in the European Union (KDH)
 - **Independence** (SNS)

Discussions about the CSFR

- Aims of Slovak governing parties:
 - Stronger position of Slovak political institutions
 - Stronger republics within a weaker federation
- Beginning of 1992 – **agreement in Milovy**:
 - Compromise between Czechs and Slovaks
 - A weaker form of federation
 - Led to split of KDH → Slovakia refused the agreement
- Mečiar and HZDS took the lead as protectors of Slovak nation and its interests

Last Federal Election (June 1992)

- HZDS offered five scenarios to its voters:
 - Federation
 - Confederation
 - Union
 - „Benelux“ model
 - Independence
- Election results:
 - Success of HZDS (and Czech ODS of Václav Klaus)
 - Failure of pro-federal parties

End of the Federation

- **Declaration of Independence of the Slovak Nation:**

- July 1992 (shortly after the elections)
- Appointed by the Slovak parliament
- Proclamation of sovereignty of Slovakia

- **Constitution of the Slovak Republic:**

- September 1992

- Both KDH and the Hungarian parties voted against or did not vote at all



End of the Federation

- Debates after elections 1992 between HZDS and ODS
- Important feature – political leaders refused to enter federal government
- 25.11.1992 – Federal Assembly approved the Constitutional law 542/1992
- Alternative ideas or a referendum were rejected
- 1993 – Czech Republic and Slovakia

The People's Choice?

- Survey in **1993** - if referendum would be held (ČSFR):
 - 29 % for split
 - 50 % for federation
- In later years the split gained a more positive stance
- Survey in **2012** – split of ČSFR (Czech Republic):
 - 37 % for
 - 36 % against
 - 27 % do not know

What has Changed?

- Typical issues of arguments between Czechs and Slovaks before 1993
 - The flow of public money
 - Who allowed communists to rule since 1948
 - Who is the strongest nationalist

And now...



Legacy of 1989 - 1992

- Vladimír Mečiar labeled himself as the founder of Slovakia
- Parties that voted against the split of federation got an image of those who „*did not want this state*“
- Need to find a new target for Slovak nationalists